

Workers Power

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TORIES CAN BE BEATEN

...But not by Kinnock's methods!

THE KNOWSLEY BY-ELECTION and the Labour NEC's continued onslaught against Militant supporters on Merseyside both indicate just how near the Labour leadership is to bringing about the nightmare of another five years of Thatcher in Downing Street.

The Knowsley result represented a drop of 9% in Labour's share of the vote compared with 1983. The cost of forcing a Kinnock's candidate on the Labour party was a richly deserved rebuff. Over ten thousand Labour voters stayed at home.

It is scarcely open to doubt that had the Knowsley party and Les Huckfield stood as the Labour candidate against Neil Kinnock's chinless wonder they could have rallied thousands of Labour voters against the right's promise-nothing policies.

The result of conceding to the right will not be to stop the witch-hunt in Knowsley. An NEC enquiry will lead either to the disbanding or straitjacketing of the party.

A further blow is Kinnock's success in intimidating Militant and its left allies into conceding the resignations of Derek Hatton, Tony Mulhearn and Felicity Dowling from their council positions. This came not two weeks after Hatton boasted to the Militant rally that "they'll never stop me being the deputy leader of Liverpool City Council."

Since Knowsley Kinnock has switched to an attack on the "sensationalism attached to the actions of a few councils" - Labour not Tory! He has blamed these councils for "zealotry" and "idealism made to look like extremism" which provokes lurid headlines. A handful of Labour councils try to defend the conditions of working class people and the victims of discrimination and prejudice, and Kinnock rushes to the microphones to denounce not the slanderers but the slandered.

This pattern has been repeated on issue after issue from the Miners' Strike onwards. Nor has this wretched, unprincipled behaviour even been crowned with the laurels of popularity. Labour is still bumping along around the 38-40% mark in opinion polls - still more often than not behind the Tories.



Despite a collapse in Alliance support Labour has made little headway. Kinnock mimics Thatcher's phraseology about enterprise in a desperate and visibly pathetic attempt to court the 'yuppy vote'. Yet the consequence is that in the vast areas menaced by unemployment Labour is incapable of mobilising any active enthusiasm.

Kinnock has been able to impose his right-wing policies and his witch-hunting on Labour's ranks because they genuinely wish to get rid of the Tories in the General Election that is likely in 1987.

Many sincere Labour supporters have bought Kinnock's lie that the price of victory is the expulsion of Militant and the surrender of pro-working class policies. Others believe that by keeping quiet until after the election more advantageous circumstances will come along.

But you can't halt the offensive of the right-wing by moving rightwards yourself or by shutting up in the name of unity. Nor will such surrender aid by one percentage point Labour's hopes of defeating the Tories.

Every serious working class militant wants to see the Tories go down to defeat. An electoral defeat would be a serious setback - if only a temporary one - for the bosses because, at the moment, they still want the Tories to carry on their hatchet jobs for them.

Workers hope that Labour will be more sympathetic or at least

more responsive to the pressure and demands of the unions and the base of the Labour Party.

The weak side of this hope is that it ignores the fact that once in office Labour is always open to the tremendous pressure of the whole vast machinery of the bosses' state.

It is under the pressure of the capitalist economy, tied to 'defending the pound', forced by the City, the IMF, the EEC to protect this capitalist economy always at the expense of workers' interests. This is always true. Anyone who denies this is flying in the face of six periods of Labour government.

POSITIVE SIDE

But the hopes and expectations of workers do have an important positive side that must be built on. They show that working people hate Thatcher and her 'popular capitalism'. That they loathe the endless dole queues and closed hospitals and they want to see the Tories out and Labour in.

But to have any effect these hopes must become something more. They must become demands. If the Tories have added three million to the dole queue then we must demand that Labour puts them back to work and not over six years.

If the real value of government spending per head of the population

WORKERS' SANCTIONS AGAINST APARTHEID

THE DRAMATIC PULL out by Barclays Bank from its major South African holding is one of a flood of 'withdrawals' in the last month. These testify to the brave fight of the liberation movements as well as the extent of the campaigns pursued by Anti-Apartheid movements internationally against the major multinational investors in South Africa.

For General Motors, for instance, the 'hassle factor' just got too much. For most, the declining profitability of their investments simply meant 'apartheid no longer pays dividends'. But the liberation and working class movements in South Africa warn that many of these 'withdrawals' are little more than cosmetic exercises designed to preserve the good names of the companies in the West while letting them continue to profiteer from their South African interests.

For instance, Barclays is still tied to the South African regime through loans, General Motors is planning to ship parts for assembly, and the firm replacing Playtex in South Africa will continue to market Playtex goods. In addition a massive network of sanction-busters is in place should further government action on trade be forthcoming.

The campaign for disinvestment in South Africa is at best a strategy for the slow bleeding to death of the regime. At worst it is just consolidating a huge South African imperialism dominated by one or two trusts. What is needed is its sharp strangulation. That is why in Workers Power we continue to argue for workers' boycott action, to stop all trade to and from the Republic.

A working class solidarity movement should also keep in close

touch with trade unionists in South Africa to ensure that the help we give is what they need, when they need it. For instance, when General Motors completes its pull out, it will be vital for workers in GM to continue to give support to their counterparts in the South African firm.

The Conference for Trade Union Sanctions on 13 December is an opportunity for trade unionists committed to organising boycott action to discuss the details and problems of campaigning and organising. For instance, at present there are more instances of boycott action than most activists know about.

So communication needs to be improved in order to give ammunition to those trying to build new action. There will also be an opportunity to discuss how to win wider sections of the movement to a workers' boycott perspective and in particular to prepare for the Anti-Apartheid Movement's Annual General Meeting which takes place in London on 10 and 11 January.

The AGM will be discussing both constitutional changes and resolutions on the movement's work in the next year. We urge delegates to speak for and support motions calling for effective trade union boycott action and direct links between trade unions here and in South Africa. They should oppose those constitutional changes which will reduce the powers of the Annual Meeting to decide policy.

In the next period it is crucial that debate on strategy is as public as possible, and that the supporters of the workers' boycott strategy argue with all the vigour that the situation in South Africa requires. ■



fighters against the Tories too vigorously. Quite the opposite.

Every strike, every demonstration shows the unbroken will of the labour movement. The Tories have almost total control of the media. Kinnock-style media wooling won't get even his milk-sop message across.

The miners forced their message across - on the picket lines, on the streets and on the media too. This year so must the teachers, so must the printers, local government workers and car workers.

We must stop the prolonged electioneering turning into a TV spectacular - one that leaves workers passive and bewildered, waiting for a saviour. Our struggles must break into the election campaign so carefully being groomed and stage-managed in Walworth Road.

If we do this we can restore the solidarity trampled on by the right-wing. We can lay the basis for a renewed offensive. We can turn 1987 into more than just an election year.

For if the workers' movement really mobilises it can do a whole lot more than defeat the Tories at the ballot box - desirable as this is. It can stop Kinnock landing us with another demoralising and disastrous Wilson/Callaghan style Labour government.

But to do this the pressure, the action, the demands will not have to stop after election day but redouble. The bosses' resistance will not stop if Kinnock wins. We will have to mobilise in new ways to enforce our demands, both against the ruling class and against the spineless Labour leadership.

We will need to build action councils capable of mobilising a counter-force to the bosses' state; political mass strike action and workers' defence squads.

If we are serious about what we want to do - to end mass unemployment and deprivation but this time for ever - then we must find the means to do so.

This means is not and in the final analysis cannot be a parliamentary election or a Labour government.

It must be a revolution and working class power. But first we have to convince thousands and millions who desire the end to discover the means to achieve it.

We can start in 1987. □

editorial

'POPULAR CAPITALISM'

WORKING CLASS PEOPLE have been bombarded by a ceaseless stream of nakedly pro-capitalist propaganda over the past six months, urging them to buy shares in British Gas.

"Tell Sid!" is a multi-million pound campaign. Its object is to create ten million new shareholders. Its patronising tone assumes that the Sids of this world don't need any information on the gains or risks of shareholding in general or the prospects of British Gas in particular.

It is obviously aimed at those who cursed themselves for missing out on British Telecom's bonanza. Of course those mug enough to tie their savings up in 'buying' a nationalised industry will not make much on this one. The financial papers have made this pretty clear to the big investors. But the campaign does allow the government the excuse to spend millions on boosting the image of 'popular capitalism'.

Of course, the notion of wider share ownership somehow democratising industry is a big joke. Even if thousands or millions can be persuaded into taking out a few shares in the sold off state enterprises, the inexorable process of concentration of ownership soon re-asserts itself.

Thousands of Sids sell their shares and a handful of sharks in the City of London buy them up. This can already be seen with the Tories de-nationalisations. Amersham International de-nationalised in 1982, had at launch 63,800 shareholders. Now it has 6,600.

British Aerospace has halved its total of shareholders since 1981. In only two years British Telecom's 2.1 million shareholders are down to 1.6 million. In Jaguar, ownership has decreased from 125,000 to 43,000.

It is difficult to find out what percentage of adults own shares, since records are neither compulsory nor public. An NOP Survey found 14%. A MORI poll for the *Economist* found only 8%. Hardly a nation of investors.

In reality this fleeting share ownership is mainly an extra dividend to the middle-classes for voting Tory and, more importantly, an ideological cover-up for selling into a few hands the most profitable morsels of state industries that were invested in from everyone's taxation.

It is a way of countering the Labour argument that these were the nation's industries or public property - an argument already weakened for millions of workers by poor or declining services or by the fact that managements in British Steel, Coal, Gas and so on behaved just like any other bosses.

Thatcher's rosy picture is of a 'share-owning democracy' to double up on the 'home-owning democracy' the Tories have long cultivated. Give the top layers of the working class a stake in private industry and a significant force for conservatism (with a little and a big C) will have been created. The bottom layers can then be left to the tender mercies of unemployment, part-time or casual work, rotting council houses and poor-law social services.

The Tories believe that a liberal policy with wages and the white-collar professions, plus the occasional bonanza, like the present sell-off, is sufficient to create large electoral base.

Lawson's so-called U-turn is part of this process. In reality it is an S-turn with the election marking the second turn that will set them off in another wave of cuts and demolition jobs in the interests of the City of London - 'the Capital of Capital'. And in case the Tories' economic gimmicks don't fully do the trick then they are preparing for the election by launching a systematic campaign to stir up the most rabid prejudices in society.

Racism, gay-baiting via the AIDS scare, attacks on promiscuity, rantings about football hooliganism and law and order, an onslaught on sex-education and much more besides, are all deployed by the Tories to consolidate their middle-class base.

But despite all the resources Thatcher possesses she is far from guaranteed a third victory. Seven years' experience felt in every working class and in not a few middle class homes tells heavily against all the celluloid showbiz propaganda. Two factors can smash all her plans. One is an objective factor, the other subjective.

Objectively success or failure will depend on the time or arrival and the scale of the next economic recession. Or rather when it makes itself felt in collapsing production, in mounting unemployment, bankruptcies and closures.

Subjectively it will depend on whether the working class and the Labour movement shows itself a force to be reckoned with. And this means primarily not just as an electoral force but as a power in the workplace and on the streets that will not let the Tories get away with their vandalism.

Whilst the Tories have won big battles it has cost them. The miners cost them several billions. Since then workers as different as the print workers and the teachers have shown they were no pushover. The Scottish teachers, British Telecom workers, London Transport workers, Silentnight, Hangers and the Sea Link workforce, all either have shown, or are showing, that they will not be pushed around at will. And this despite the most appallingly cowardly and incompetent leadership.

In the top ranks of the labour movement a rancid pessimism holds sway. There is not an ounce of fight in the likes of Willis, Dean, Edmonds, Jordan or Laird, let alone Hammond.

So is a Tory victory inevitable? No, not at all. No more so than a Labour victory. The class struggle will, in a crucial sense, decide. In 1987 there is everything to fight for. If we sit back and accept what comes then Thatcher will win a 'popular mandate' for more and worse attacks. On all fronts we must fight back.

We have no choice!

MINISTERING TO WOMEN

LABOUR'S PROPOSED MINISTRY for women reflects the pressure that has been exerted by women in the party and the unions for the Labour Party to carry out some of its policies on equality if it gets into office.

At a conference in Lambeth on Saturday 29 November, called by the Greater London Labour Party Regional Women's Council, the structure and plans for such a ministry were discussed. Similar conferences and consultations are to be held around the country.

The meeting was open to all, party members or not, and attracted about 100 women, despite having many obstacles placed in the way of building it by the party hierarchy.

The message from the main platform speakers like Jo Richardson was essentially that we need to use a Women's Ministry to gain access to the decision making at the top, with a "small high powered ministry in the cabinet office" which would have "access to the Prime Minister to persuade him of the importance of our demands". This central lobbying would be backed up by women's units in all government departments, plus Regional Advisory Boards where women's organisations could put forward their views.

CAUTION

Working class women should look cautiously at the real possibilities of such a structure responding to their needs. Since the Ministry would be part of a future Labour Government, the likely gains for women need to be seen in the context of the general policies of such a government.

To see what this might mean for women just look at the question of jobs. There are well over 4 million people without jobs. Many are women who do not even

register because they cannot 'prove' to the state that they are available for work because they have children. Every single one of those women (as well as unemployed men) need to be given the opportunity of having a decently paid job, full or part time, or full benefits when unable to work for whatever reason.

Labour policy aims at "cutting unemployment by 1 million within two years." Apart from asking what the other 3 million are supposed to do, the plans say nothing about ensuring that women get real equal opportunities for work. It is not enough, as many women at this conference suggested, for the Women's Ministry itself to be the body benevolently lobbying to ensure that a good proportion of these jobs go to women. A working class women's movement is what is really needed to take up the right for a woman's right to work.

DEMANDS

The proposal to set up a Ministry for Women should be critically supported, but not left to the bureaucratic control of civil servants and MPs. Nor should illusions in its potential for eradicating women's oppression be sewn. Working class women in the unions, community groups and through the Labour Party, should place demands on any Labour Government and Women's Minister to reflect their needs. These include: full equal pay and a guaranteed minimum wage for all workers, based on the average industrial wage as determined by the unions and working class women's organisations in the community; a massive programme of public works and job creation under union control, with work sharing with no loss of pay when employers try to sack workers; expansion of the health service to meet the needs of all



Women's demands must be won

women, including free abortion and contraception available for all on demand; positive discrimination in favour of women for jobs and training where they are under-represented; free child care, 24 hours a day for all, and for an end to discrimination against lesbians on issues like the right to a job and the right to be a parent.

Unless these demands are won then the current leadership of the Labour Party would only make the Ministry of Women a bureaucratic structure whereby certain highly limited reforms may be pushed onto a reluctant government. The first step in fighting for these demands should be a national conference of working class women sponsored by the Labour Party, but open to delegates from unions, working class women's community groups and campaigns, such as miners wives groups, black women's organisations and lesbian organisations. It should be thoroughly democratic - open to resolutions from the delegating bodies, and with plenty of time for debate. Such a conference would not only be able to formulate clear demands on Labour, it would also be a launching pad for the working class women's movement that can alone enforce these demands on any future Ministry for Women.

by Helen Ward

AFA'S ERRORS

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION (AFA) mobilised nearly 3,000 people against the National Front's Remembrance Day parade. The turn-out was good. But the organisation and policies displayed by AFA's leadership was, frankly, alarming.

The AFA leadership is trying to do 'an ANL'. It wants to build a broad, popular anti-fascist movement rather than a workers' united front against fascism. To this end it tones down AFA's formal (and correct) position of confronting the fascists physically in order to woo friends amongst the reformist leaders and celebrities whose support it hopes to enlist.

For the same purpose it tried to mobilise for the march by arguing that the fascists were unpatriotic and that the second imperialist bloodbath was a 'war against fascism'. One leaflet stated:

"This regular Nazi stunt is an insult to the thousands of British and Commonwealth service-people who gave their lives in the war against Nazism."

This disgraceful social-chauvinism plays into the hands of the fascists by encouraging nationalist sentiments amongst the working class.

The second world war was a war for profit, not a war against fascism by Britain and the USA.

On the Remembrance Day march the practical implications of the AFA leadership's drift toward class collaboration were revealed.

As the March progressed it became clear, that despite the AFA's leaflet's claim that the march would 'pass the cenotaph' (i.e. where the fascists were), we were marching well away from the fascists.

DIVERSION

The mystery tour ended in a field outside the Imperialist War Museum in Lambeth on the other side of the river! This diversion was obviously carried out with the full knowledge of the AFA leadership. A small stage had been erected for the list of worthy speakers we were expected to stand around an listen to.

This wild goose chase was too much for the majority of the marchers who were under the impression that they would be

taking part in some anti-fascist action.

When rumours came through that the picket at South Africa House was under attack from fascists, Workers Power quickly responded by agitating for forces to return to Trafalgar Square to defend the picket.

The majority of anti-fascist including many anarchist comrades, were with us, and with efficient stewarding, we marched back to Trafalgar Square to defend the picket. But the AFA leadership did all they could to prevent our initiative. Some Red Action (sic) supporters tried to stop us by threatening our comrades with physical violence. These pub-talk anti-fascist fighters were as ineffective at stopping us as they were at smashing the fascists.

The AFA leadership must learn from these events that to build an effective anti-fascist organisation it must be solidly working class based. If it does not then the present leadership must be replaced. A new popular-frontist ANL mark two will not defeat the anti-working class racist thugs in the Front.

■ No Class Collaboration!

■ Build AFA into a genuine workers' united front against Fascism!

by Pat Spackman

workers power

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FIGHTING FUND

This month the fighting fund got within striking distance of fulfilling the £2000 target we set two months ago. Our thanks to groups of supporters in South London who sent in £210 and Reading who sent in £100. We also thank individual supporters in Cardiff (£20), Hackney (£12), Ilford (£15), Stoke-on-Trent (£27) and Nottingham (£30). This amounted to £414. Our total is now £1514. We have got just four weeks to raise £486. So don't forget to send in the cash before the Christmas rush delays the post!

DURING DECEMBER NEIL Kinnock and the Labour leadership will go onto the offensive over Labour's defence policies. Keenly aware of their vulnerability to Tory propaganda, Kinnock has decided the best form of defence is attack. The trip to the USA to reassure Reagan and hoped for friends amongst the Democrats, will be followed by a TV broadcast and the launch of a new document outlining Labour's case.

The thrust of this campaign will be to prove the viability of Labour's non-nuclear defence stance. Kinnock is already busy trying to demonstrate that he is no threat to the armed forces establishment. In Germany he followed in Thatcher's footsteps by getting himself publicity shots driving around in a tank. He has peppered all of his recent speeches with declarations of his personal commitment to a well armed non-nuclear Britain.

Despite all this, can Labour hope to confound the Tories' propaganda that they are leaving Britain defenceless? More importantly, can the party avoid a repeat of the situation in 1983, when, on the eve of the election, the right-wing publicly pilloried and disavowed the defence policy? The kid-glove treatment Healy got during the conference when he effectively disavowed party policy shows which way the wind is really blowing.

WEAK LINK

The left and right in the party realise that defence policy is one of the weakest links, precisely because it looks in two different directions at the same time. On the one hand, Labour are committed to sending back Cruise missiles, scrapping plans to buy Trident submarines, phasing out other nuclear weapons in negotiation with the USSR, and closing four major US nuclear bases in Britain. These policies reflect, to some extent, the pressure of Labour supporters in the party and unions as well as the more general unease of larger numbers of non-Labour sections of the middle class. The horror of nuclear war and the use of Britain as an aircraft carrier from which to bomb Tripoli have all served to increase anxiety and mistrust; sentiments that Labour are keen to exploit electorally.

On the other hand, Labour is committed to NATO which does not wish to see any of the above happen. In mid-1985 Labour spokesperson on defence Denis Davies said that:

"We believe being part of NATO is the best possible defence for Britain."

Indeed the 1983 election manifesto 'New Hope For Britain' argues that continued allegiance to the 'collective security' system of NATO is the best defence against 'external aggression'.

DECLINING

In the Labour Party's most extensive document on defence *Defence and Security in Britain* this threat is pinpointed:

"We recognise that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies have a large military capability which could pose a potential military threat to Western Europe."

This pro-NATO sentiment goes back to formation of NATO itself in 1949 when Labour was in office. In return for American aid to prop up a sick, declining British imperialism Labour conceded the right of the USA to set up bases in the UK as part of a global network. The purpose of these bases, which today number 130 (30,000 personnel) in the UK and 3,000 around the world, was candidly put by *Business Week*:

"With its nuclear umbrella and armed forces, the US stood ready to guarantee this open economic system against threats from the Soviet Union on the outside and enemies that might close off certain markets and needed resources such as oil on the inside. As both banker and cop, the US was the guarantor

DEFENCE OF THE REALM

of the postwar global economy."

The 'Soviet threat' was for public consumption. The USSR had never had troop combat superiority in Western Europe and at best rough parity in the nuclear sphere. Even arch pro-NATO runner like Dennis Healey has admitted that:

"There has been no time since the Second World War when Western Intelligence believed the Russians had in their plans an all-out attack on Europe."

The real purpose of anti-sovietism is that imperialism requires military superiority over it in order to fulfil its strategic goal of weakening, and even conquering, the degenerated workers' state. The idea of a 'Soviet threat' gives it ideological cover in gaining and sustaining this superiority.

Successive British governments have backed NATO to the hilt. Not, as the left would have it, because they were feckless and subservient but because outside of the USA itself no imperialist country in the world earned so much of its profits, and held so much of its capital assets abroad, as does Britain. Labour's leaders are as firmly committed as Thatcher to wielding a big stick to protect these bosses' interests. Nor will a NATO engaged in an East-West dialogue, as proposed by Labour, make much difference. The military pact is, in the end, a guarantor of imperialism and that will eclipse any 'dialogue' that NATO might engage in.

EASIEST

Of Labour's policies the decision to scrap Trident and run down Polaris is the easiest to accomplish. Although opinion polls indicate the 'public desire' for Britain's own independent nuclear deterrent is as strong as its anti-Americanism, Trident and Polaris could go without threatening to bring down NATO. For Thatcher and the SDP, Trident/Polaris is a sign of Britain's status as a world power. But Britain under Labour could adjust itself more easily to its declining position. Already most member states do not possess their own 'independent deterrent' but simply accommodate US nuclear bases.

The decision to kick the US bases out, however, is of a different order. Casper Weinberger and Kinnock's friends in the Democratic Party have already made it clear there are no takers in the USA. While some countries in NATO

(e.g. Scandinavia) have no US nuclear bases, Britain is far more important than these countries, in political and military terms, to the USA and the NATO alliance. The loss of bases in Britain would, despite some isolationist tendencies in the US, be fought by US imperialism tooth and nail.

Finally Kinnock fails to face up to the fact that the chief feature of the non-nuclear/US bases countries in Europe is anti-Sovietism. Labour on the one hand wants to acknowledge this by boosting conventional forces yet at the same time campaign against anti-Sovietism through NATO!

The truth is that when it comes to the crunch Kinnock will 'modify' Labour's proposals under US pressure. Remember the Greek Socialist government's pledge to kick the US bases out? Or Spain's Socialist government's determination to leave NATO? Through a process of 'consultation' these policies were reversed when in office. Kinnock has already backpedalled in recent months. He has now changed his mind on allowing US nuclear armed ships into British ports. More policy trimming will inevitably follow.

The Labour Left's alternative to Kinnock is contained in a pamphlet by Ben Lowe *Peace Through Non-Alignment*. Although it is a good summary of the role and history of NATO and Labour's support for it, it is soaked in 'little Englandism'. It correctly observes the contradictory nature of Labour's defence policies and seeks to render it consistent by pulling Britain out of NATO altogether. It sees all the fundamental problems and reactionary features of British imperialism's foreign policy as attributable to its links with and domination by the USA.

Lowe's main argument is that now that 'unilateralism' has won such widespread support, the left can move on to prioritise 'non-alignment' as the next key step. For a start Lowe should recognise that this 'unilateralism' and the present willingness of the likes of Healey to keep their criticisms subdued has got nothing to do with internationalism and everything to do with a recognition that an 'independent deterrent' is too much for an ailing British imperialism to sustain.



This whole approach is mealy-mouthed and essentially nationalist. Lowe stresses that Britain's withdrawal would not damage NATO too much militarily. But it would and that is precisely why socialists demand and fight for it. We need to cripple as much as possible the unified military capability of the west and its ability to defend and extend its oppressive rule.

Against the charge that this will leave us defenceless, we need to reply by explaining who the actual, everyday enemy of the mass of the British people is. Our jobs, our services, our wages and our working conditions are all under attack from British capitalists. Foreign capitalists invest here and do the same, to be sure, but in conjunction and collaboration with the stockbrokers and bankers of the City of London. And, when we resist our ruling class it is not Russian policemen who smash up our picket lines, or Argentinian troops who drive scab lorries and ambulances - it is the forces of the British capitalist state. Abroad, the army is not protecting us, it is protecting British capitalism's investments. All of this adds up to a straightforward answer to the Labour left's petty nationalism and the right's unquestioned loyalty to imperialism - the main enemy is at home and our allies are those who suffer exploitation and oppression at the hands of our rulers (like the Irish nationalists) or other capitalist rulers. The workers of the world are natural allies. They must become conscious allies.

OBSCURING

The Labour left's anti-Americanism and its calls for 'non-alignment' only serve to obscure the independent predatory and imperialist character of Britain; they stress the privileges of the USAF here but are silent about the role of British troops. Lowe constantly stresses the divergence between US and European interests. For example, he argues that Star Wars is not in Europe's interests, nor anti-Sovietism (due to trade links, proximity to the USSR etc).

But he ignores the fact that several European countries are participating in the project. Its relevancy to Europe is that it can be used as an offensive weapon against the USSR. This stems from the fact that despite trade links and so forth the deepening crisis of imperialism means that they will never renounce the idea of restoring capitalism to parts of the 'Eastern bloc' or the USSR.

'Independence' or 'non-alignment' are fictions for an imperialist nation. In the epoch of world economy, of global interests, Britain least of all, as a major centre of finance capital, can opt out of a foreign and military policy that aggressively protects what it has from the claims of its rivals. Alliances of self-interest, which reflect the relative strengths of the partners, are equally inevitable so long as imperialist capital exists. While revolutionaries support the fight for getting Britain out of NATO we do so in order to weaken both British imperialism and NATO, the easier to overthrow both. For the same reason we must hold Labour to all aspects of its unilateral disarmament programme.

BUT 'non-alignment' does not even solve the contradiction in Labour's defence policy as the left think.

STRATEGY

Only an anti-imperialist, anti-militarist strategy does that. An imperialist Britain, headed by Labour, with the power of the City and multinationals intact, will be compelled to wage more Falkland-type wars as the crisis deepens the crisis. Conventional weaponry will be sufficient to produce a holocaust of its own.

Peace will only come through destroying the cause of war, namely imperialist capital. In any conflict between it and a semicolon, we support unconditionally the oppressed nation, as we did with Argentina in the Malvinas war. Similarly we defend the right of the USSR to protect itself from the designs of imperialism to restore capitalism there and in Eastern Europe.

In our own country we fight to weaken Britain's own imperialist capability, as well as breaking up the NATO alliance. Not a penny or a person for the armed forces whose role is the suppression of workers struggles at home and profit protection abroad. While we fight to deprive the bosses and their governments of weaponry, we aim to arm the working class. We reject 'disarmament' as a slogan since it teaches passivity and pacifism to the working class, which needs to learn the use of arms to overthrow its own rulers. While we will struggle alongside all those prepared to weaken NATO and even partially disarm the government by the methods of class struggle, we will not pander to illusions that a non-NATO imperialist Britain can pursue a progressive foreign policy. Only a workers' government that has put an end to imperialist capital rule in the economy and politics can pursue a genuinely internationalist foreign policy.



...but how can we stop Labour's endorsement of British imperialism

WHERE IS THE WRP GOING?

JUST OVER A year ago the Workers Revolutionary Party exploded. It expelled its founder and long-time leader Gerry Healy. His coterie of actors and corrupt functionaries departed with him. The new WRP declared a commitment to open discussion.

These developments were healthy. We welcomed them and publicly put forward a principled call for revolutionary regroupment. A year on the best opportunities for such regroupment have come and gone.

Two more splits wracked the WRP; that of the group around Hyland who were loyal to the International Committee and that of the Banda group who are now wallowing in the mud of Stalinism.

It has to be said that, despite endless hours of discussions and acres of print, the remnants of the WRP are still far from solving the problems posed by the split.

Under the sign of open discussion and debate in *Workers Press* there in fact resides considerable disorientation and outright confusion.

The strength of *Workers Press* was its recognition that the old WRP both issued sectarian bureaucratic dictates to the class struggles and engaged in shadowy backstairs opportunist manoeuvres. The post-Healy WRP wanted to right these wrongs and immerse itself in real workers struggles as they are not as Healy imagined them to be.

ABDICATED

But in doing this *Workers Press* has too often abdicated leadership from within the struggle. The paper acts as a 'tribune for the oppressed and exploited' reflecting the existing state of various struggles but failing to map out the Trotskyist path such struggles must take to be successful. In fact the absence of a coherent political line seems to be something the WRP leadership are turning into a virtue.

The WRP's general view of the British class struggle is one of an undifferentiated willingness on the part of the masses to fight Thatcher. Only the leadership is preventing a fight from developing and, in the words of the WRP Manifesto "driving out this Tory government". Behind this vague formula very different perspectives are at work in the WRP.

On the one hand Simon Pirani explains that it means mobilising for action on the scale of the miners' strikes once again. He ridicules any and every attempt to woo the middle class. Savaging Kinnock he declares:

"Bidding for middle class support also means trampling opposition." (*Workers Press* 11/10/86)

On the other hand for the long-standing WRP 'theorist' Cyril Smith the middle class are pivotal to all of our hopes for a socialist future. In an article calling for an immediate election Smith opines that the poor old badly done to middle classes were 'understandably bewildered' and that:

"The middle class are not unwilling to fight. The long drawn out teachers' struggle proves that. What the middle class lack is decisive leadership fighting on socialist policies." (*Workers Press* 22/11/86)

Cyril Smith's belief that the middle class holds the key to the future is laughable. For a start he puts teachers within the middle class. For a man who uses the phrase 'Marxist theory' with every breath, his confusion of white collar workers in capitalism with the petit-bourgeoisie comes as something of a surprise. A Marxist theorist who cannot tell one class from the other!

This error in theory, however, relates to a profound error in practice. Smith has not broken with Healyism. The WRP's previous slogan of 'community councils' was a liquidation of the marxist slogan of soviets into a pale replica of popular frontism.

This exaggerated view of the centrality of the petit-bourgeoisie reflects the pressure of that same class nothing less. It echoes Kinnock's sentiments about wooing the middle classes that comrade Pirani correctly condemned.

Smith's touching concern for the middle class contrasts sharply with his disdain for communist tactics towards the bedrock organisations of the working class - the trade unions. Smith rejects outright, the building of rank and file movements. In a polemic against us he condemns the term 'rank and file' as sociological and un-Marxist. Against our crude notions - like the classic use of the united front in the trade union field - Smith counterposes "fighting for Marxist theory" (*Workers Press* 9/8/86). He lumps us with the SWP(GB) as 'syndicalist'. Nice one Cyril!



Healy: longstanding leader of the WRP

However, perhaps he should apply the same label to WRP leading member Hughie Nicol. Comrade Nicol realises that the 'fight for theory' is pretty meaningless, other than for the learned middle class so beloved by Smith, unless it expresses itself in a Marxist strategy and tactics for the class struggle.

Thus comrade Nicol, in addressing the problem of fighting unemployment, echoes our 'syndicalism' by calling for:

"Mass movements... in the localities to facilitate the independent action of the working class" (*Workers Press* 1/31/86)

We fully endorse comrade Nicol's call, but the positions advocated by comrade Smith's are a million miles away from Trotskyism. Nor can the opinions of one of the

leading speakers and writers for the WRP be dismissed as merely 'individual' views.

The plain truth is that the WRP has not politically reconstituted itself since the expulsion of Healy. It has shrunk in size dramatically. The comrades who are left in it share a common past, but not, as the examples cited above prove, a common perspective for the future.

The problem with comrades who clearly disagree with Smith is that they have only a pre-1970's version of Healyism (before the entrance - stage right - of the theatrical fraternity) to offer against him.

Their perspective is based on an uninterrupted rising class struggle offering Marxists short-term opportunities for leadership of the masses. Thus in assessing the Durham miners' gala, Norman Harding wrote:

"... this was the very pulse beat of a very determined and undefeated working class." (*Workers Press* 11/7/86)

This theme was echoed by a front page article implying that the recent strikes in the Durham coalfield proved that the fighting spirit of the miners was 'not defeated' (*Workers Press* 27/11/86).

These perspectives are riddled with dangers. Of course, the fighting spirit of sections of the NUM is undefeated. But, the NUM itself was defeated in its struggle. The loss of over 40,000 jobs since the strike is a painful reminder of that. The inability of a militant area like Yorkshire to mobilise action to prevent the closure of Cortonwood - the pit that detonated the great strike - is proof of the same.

There were tremendous gains stemming from the strike, but the defeat undeniably tilted the balance of forces in industry towards the bosses and, as importantly towards the Kinnockites in both the Labour Party and the unions.

To ignore this and to rely instead on some sort of objective, upward process is to blind yourself to the tasks of the day. Tasks that centre on organising the rank and file of the labour movement to defend itself now and to prepare to resist any future attacks from a Kinnock led government. Worse, it leaves the WRP hopelessly at sixes and sevens over how to relate to the Labour Party at all. Witness the Liverpool branch's support for the real sectarians of the RCP in Knowsley.

It is distressing to realise that after one year the WRP had not rediscovered even the basic positions adopted by revolutionary communists in elections towards the bourgeois workers' party. A vote for the RCP was in every sense a wasted vote. The RCP's strategy is imbued with Third-Period type ultra-leftism, so easy for an organisation that disdains participation in struggles within

Workers Press

the real organisations of the working class. Its election manifesto was invariably a collection of truisms, not a manual of revolutionary action. The RCP was not a revolutionary alternative to Labourism. We could not recommend them to the Knowsley workers.

To advocate a vote for the RCP as a protest vote was to cut with the despair and confusion of Knowsley's Labour ranks not direct it into a challenge against Kinnock. Only a vote for an opposition candidate chosen by the CLP itself - such as Huckfield - could have done that.

LINKED

In its absence we were obliged to vote for Labour, not because we agree with their programme (its 'left' or 'right' colouration is irrelevant) but because this party is linked organically to the mass of the working class. A common vote in the absence of a revolutionary candidate is an elementary united front step at the ballot box.

It seems to us that the WRP leadership is complacent about the existence of competing (or even a non-existent) perspectives within the WRP. This complacency has been given a potential 'objective' justification. The expulsion of Healy, we are told, was not simply the surgical removal of someone who most people in the left knew anyway was a thoroughly despicable operator. No, it is a world historic event. In 'What is Healyism?' (*Workers Press* 21/6/86) Dave Bruce, after modestly comparing the struggle over philosophy in the WRP with the struggles of Francis Bacon and Descartes against medieval obscurantism, declared:

"The explosion in the party has created the conditions worldwide for a complete re-evaluation of Trotskyism, a negation of the previous period which both preserves and destroys what has preceded this stage."

No less!

In somewhat plainer English this means that on the one hand we can all get together for discussions without bringing them to any definite conclusions. On the other we can prepare the ground for a regroupment, without confronting the thorny problem of its programmatic basis, with those forces who do not demand princi-

pled agreement prior to fusions - namely *Socialist Viewpoint and International*. After all, the world out there, the objective process, will solve our problems.

The WRP leadership see themselves as a catalyst in a process of international Trotskyist regroupment; a centre of world attention which will lead to a re-unification of the Fourth International. All this providing sharp political characterisation of the participants in the open discussion is avoided.

The problem is that Workers Power wants to be part of an open discussion but within it characterises the errors, as we see them, of others. Hence there is a tendency for us to be excluded from the 'open discussion'.

We were recently excluded from a Trade Union School jointly organised by the WRP, and the group around the journals *Socialist Viewpoint and International*. The grounds for our exclusion were according to the latter two groups, because of our political characterisation of them. The WRP went along with this political exclusion, despite the fact that their members had openly publicised the event in the labour movement, giving us invitation leaflets.

Worse still, in order to justify our exclusion a minor industry in rumour-mongering and smears has been created. At the level of childish factionalism WRP members have been told by their Central Committee that we are trying to cultivate relations with the Banda-ites. Our challenge to these erstwhile comrades-in-arms of Cliff Slaughter and Cyril Smith, to debate Vietnam, is being construed as a political concession to the Banda group. Of course had the debate on Stalinism with Banda been had with his followers while they were inside the WRP some of them might have been saved. But the struggle over shares and apparatus took precedence.

To the numerous WRP members who are alarmed at the drift of their organisation we say two things. First do not allow your leaders to turn the understandable disorientation that occurred post-Healy into a permanent feature. Debate was and is a necessity. But its purpose for Marxists is to enable us to decide on questions and then to act. To this end we will participate in any International Conference of Trotskyist forces in 1987 and will resist any attempt to exclude us.

Secondly, do not be fobbed off by the leadership's claims that the objective process will solve your problems for you. It will not. To think and act otherwise is nothing other than centrism. Trotsky, in struggling to build the FI, warned against such an attitude:

"Marxists, however, are not fatalists. They do not unload upon the historical process those very tasks which the historical process has posed before them. The initiative of a conscious minority, a scientific program, bold and ceaseless agitation in the name of clearly formulated aims, merciless criticism of all ambiguity - those are some of the most important factors for the victory of the proletariat." (*Writings* 1935-36)

If, as we believe, you have difficulty finding satisfactory answers from your leadership then we say, join Workers Power.

by Mark Hoskisson



Cliff Slaughter launching the "open discussion"

INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE

LANGUISHING INSIDE THE overcrowded prison-houses of the world are the victims of the class war. Tamil freedom fighters in Sri Lanka, Irish republicans, miners in Britain and Bolivia, Solidarnosc trade unionists in Poland and thousands of heroes and heroines of the South African revolution are behind bars, deemed criminals by those who rule us. Yet, what is to be done about the class-war prisoners of the world?

For the tasks of today, we must learn the lessons of yesterday. Revolutionary Marxists have a proud history of class-war prisoners' aid. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the work of the young Communist International and its national sections in the 1920s - especially that of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) in building the organisation which became known as 'International Labor Defense'.

In the wake of the victorious October Revolution in Russia there followed a massive upsurge of working class militancy the world over. In nation after nation, the proletarian masses assaulted the citadels of capitalist power. The capitalists reeled, regrouped and launched the counter-revolution - the White Terror. Throughout Europe and the U.S.A. strikers were either killed by the state or incarcerated. In India, Africa and China fighters for national liberation were subjected to unsurpassed brutality by their 'civilised' imperialist masters.

In 1924 the Communist International launched 'International Red Aid'. The primary function of this International united front of revolutionary and reformist workers, was the organisation of proletarian protest for the release of the victims of the White Terror. The Comintern also instructed the national Communist Parties to build organisations along the same lines.

ENTHUSIASM

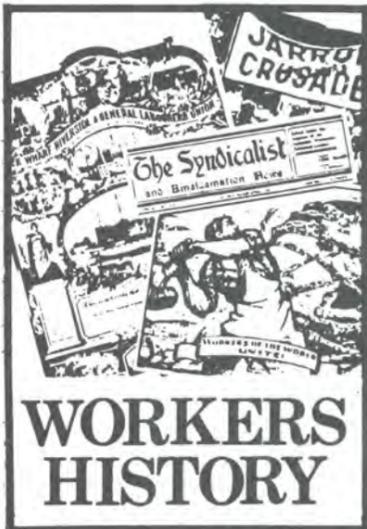
The leadership of the CPUSA initially dragged its feet. Jim Cannon had been in Moscow attending a plenum of the Comintern discussing class war prisoners' aid with the veteran IWW leader Big Bill Haywood who was in exile in Moscow - he faced a 20 year prison sentence in the U.S.A. Cannon came back to the States with some real enthusiasm for the task of building a proletarian prisoners' aid organisation. While most CP leaders started out wanting what Cannon called 'a very quiet inoffensive operation' he eventually won them over to the need 'to expand the operation and make something out of it'. He did so and later described this period as one of the 'cleanest' memories of his days in the CPUSA.

Cannon and his co-workers organised a national conference in Chicago in 1925, to launch 'International Labor Defense'. The conference was a limited success. There were few political wrangles, and the delegates agreed a constitution which made the ILD a membership organisation to which both individuals and working class organisations could join or affiliate. In recognition of his political and organisational abilities, the conference elected Cannon National Secretary.

The one problem was that support for the ILD idea was restricted to the Chicago and Mid-West areas. The ILD needed to reach out to the other bases of potential support. As a partial answer, the conference sanctioned

a propaganda organ to spread the word. This became the illustrated monthly *Labor Defender* with Shachtman as editor. Soon *Labor Defender* had a bigger sale than the entire CPUSA press.

The right-wing of the labour movement charged that the ILD was a CP front. This cheap attack did not cut much ice with militant non-CP workers who joined the ILD in large numbers. For a start the ILD was founded on a united front basis.



In other words it was strictly non-partisan. Cannon pointed out:

"The International Labour Defense . . . was specifically dedicated to the principle of non-partisan labor defense, to the defense of any member of the working class movement, regardless of his views, who suffered persecution by the capitalist courts because of his activities or his opinions."

And referring to some 106 prisoners being helped by the ILD Cannon pointed out that not one of them was a CP member. They were simply 'our own kind of people' - proletarians.

Of course CPUSA members were in the leadership of the ILD but they won leadership by their exemplary work and political reasoning. Moreover, what is wrong with openly proving the worth of communism in front of workers? Every other party strives for influence within united campaigns. Why should communists not do the same? Building the party inside the united front - providing it is done on the basis of observing workers' democracy - is entirely legitimate. The right wing, as Cannon observed, are merely playing with hypocritical double standards in charging the communists with wanting to get credit for united

front work:

"But don't people who represent all kinds of causes and organisations do what they consider their good works with this double motivation . . . Catholic nuns who dedicate their entire lives to the service of sick people in hospitals undoubtedly feel they are doing the Lord's work. But they also hope and expect that the church will gain credit from their dedicated work."

The ILD set itself two tasks. Firstly it provided material aid to the prisoners and their families. Every month the ILD sent \$5 to each prisoner and \$25 to his or her family. Secondly it undertook the propaganda and agitational tasks of publicising the case of the prisoners, the nature of capitalist 'justice' and campaigning on a national scale.

By the time of the second ILD Conference in 1926, the organisation had expanded into most proletarian areas of the States. It even had full time organisers in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Cleveland. All in all, there were 156 ILD local branches, and a total affiliated membership of 75,000 plus 20,000 individual members.

It was the famous Sacco and Vanzetti case which saw the ILD at its best. Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchist workers captured during the red scare 'Palmer raids' of the early 1920s. The two anarchists were framed on trumped-up 'terrorist' charges and imprisoned. Initially the Sacco and Vanzetti defense committee was in the hands of a tight-knit Boston anarchist group, and it was not making much noise outside Boston. As Cannon later remarked:

"The campaign didn't get under way until the ILD came in on the propaganda side."

With the ILD and *Labor Defender*, the Sacco and Vanzetti campaign got a national voice. The ILD organised Sacco and Vanzetti conferences, demonstrations, resolutions and poster campaigns. Defense meetings were proving so effective that in Chicago alone twenty such meetings were broken up by the police using tear-gas and clubs.

BESIEGED

Through International Red Aid protests were organised and centralised in dozens of countries. American embassies were besieged by demonstrators and flooded with protest letters.

In the USA, Cannon was beginning to get the measure of the

twin dangers of ultra-leftism and rightism in defense work. The 7 year imprisonment of Sacco and Vanzetti had wrung crocodile-tears from the liberal bourgeoisie, who wanted to steam-roller the defense campaign down a purely legal road. Cannon and the revolutionaries in the ILD fought hard against this rightist tendency. Their articles in *Labor Defender* loudly proclaimed:

"No faith in capitalist justice and institutions."

Since the same capitalist state had imprisoned these two workers, it was hardly likely to benevolently release them. Moreover, the master-class of Massachusetts was clearly using legal tricks and frauds to take the steam out of the growing mass campaign for the freedom of Sacco and Vanzetti. Faced with tricks like these the *Labor Defender* argued:

"We have no grounds for the belief that there has been the slightest change of plan by the executioners . . . It is true that the case is now before the judges of the Supreme Court. But this gives us no hopes. It has been there before and we know what to expect from that source."

Of course the ILD did not ignore legal defense, despite pressure to do so from some ultra-lefts around the anarchist movement. In 1925 Cannon wrote:

"Such slender legal resources as yet remain must be utilised. That goes without saying."

The capitalists in bourgeois democratic countries have been forced by years of struggle to give some 'democratic rights' to the workers. The ILD correctly exploited these 'rights' as a tactic to gain time and publicity. But their strategy was class-struggle action worldwide to save Sacco and Vanzetti from the chair. The call of *Labor Defender* to the workers of the world was: 'Demonstrate and Strike for Sacco and Vanzetti'.

VENGEFUL

In prison, Sacco and Vanzetti fully supported the militant class-struggle line of the Cannonites in the ILD realising, in the words of Vanzetti, that:

"Only the revolutionary workers, the people can give us life and freedom."

Not once did the two anarchist workers consider a request for pardon (and thus an admission of guilt for crimes they did not commit), although this might have saved them.

For 7 years the power of the militant workers of the world kept Sacco and Vanzetti from the elec-



Sacco and Vanzetti

tric chair. But, by August 1927, the U.S. capitalists - having ridden the post-war wave of militancy, felt confident enough to carry through their brutal, vengeful murder of the two anarchists. This 'legal lynching' as Cannon called it was no 'miscarriage of justice' or 'tragic accident'. In the Sacco and Vanzetti case, like the too numerous cases of other class-war prisoners, it was class against class. Sacco and Vanzetti were symbols of the fighting spirit of the revolutionary proletariat. Their electrocution, by order of capitalism's black-gowned grand inquisitors, was designed to teach the workers of the U.S.A., particularly the vast number of immigrant workers, a painful lesson: leave capitalism alone or you too will be sent to the chair. It had the opposite effect. It created martyrs, symbols of resistance to each generation of workers since. *Labor Defender* was right to declare:

"They went to death calmly and bravely without fear or embarrassment. It was their murderers, the governors and the judges who hid their faces in fear and shame. Yes, their names will live forever, for the electric current that killed them has burnt their names permanently into the hearts of the toilers of the world. Their miserable executioners will be buried in oblivion while the names and struggles of Sacco and Vanzetti still remain a shining guide to the masses, an inspiration to the oppressed everywhere."

The Sacco and Vanzetti campaign was the height of the influence of the ILD. It collapsed a year later, due mainly to the faction fight in the increasingly stalinised CPUSA. The CPUSA expelled its revolutionary wing, the followers of Trotsky. This included Cannon and the best party elements in the ILD. The stalinist CPUSA had little taste for principled class-war prisoners' work, and even less political ability. The ILD became a casualty of the stalinist counter-revolution.

UNITED FRONT

The small band of American Trotskyists continued labor defense work in the spirit of the ILD but were unable to do so on the same scale. Yet many of those workers who joined Cannon to found the Trotskyist party in the US, did so because of their political admiration for the work of the 'Cannonites' in building the ILD.

Today, a united front, international and national, for the aid and release of the prisoners of the class-war must be at the top of the political agenda for all class conscious workers. The various international tendencies that lay claim to Trotskyism must be pressured into building such an organisation. The non-sectarian, class struggle model of the ILD must be our guide. Every class-war prisoner is an affront to our proletarian honour and undermines our capacity to fight. Every worker imprisoned in the cause of labour must be released. But only by proletarian revolution will we overthrow the capitalists' prison house system once and for all. Then, and only then, will we have truly avenged Sacco and Vanzetti and all the other class-war prisoners murdered in the fight for proletarian emancipation. ■



Mass demonstration against the legal lynching

WAPPING- ONE YEAR ON

FOR NEARLY A year now Rupert Murdoch has successfully produced four national newspapers without employing any printers. Not only has he done this with scab labour but has done it with unionised scab labour in the printing plant and in the distribution network. Into the bargain newsprint prepared by Murdoch's company in daily being used by trade unionists in Fleet Street.

So effective has this union busting operation been that other employers now only have to hint that they might follow Murdoch's example and the print union leaders immediately sign away the jobs of thousands of their members. There are, at present, some 16,000 unionised printers in the London based national titles. Unless there is a major reversal in the unions' headlong retreat there will be less than a quarter of that number within the next two years. The lessons of the still continuing strike action by the NI printers need to be learnt in order to both win this dispute and resist the print bosses' onslaught in London which is fast gathering force.

After nearly a year, the News International strikers are still there. Twice they have rejected, by big majorities, Murdoch's 'compensation' offers. Every minute of every day there is a picket of the Wapping plant. Twice a week there are major demonstrations of printers and their supporters. The will to win and the determination to fight are there, the question remains, how to focus that determination into methods that can force Murdoch to back down?

NO FIGHT

The leadership of the print unions, Dubbins of the NGA and Dean of SOGAT, made it clear from the very start that they would not do anything that would break the law. As we said in *Workers Power 80* (February 1986), because all effective trade union methods of fighting are illegal this simply meant that they were not going to fight. Dubbins, at the time, argued, "We are in this dispute to get sympathy from the public". The project of trying to convince the readers of the *Sun* and *The Times* to become more class conscious was the result of this substitute for a fighting strategy. And, while a boycott is a gesture of solidarity it cannot be considered as in any way a means of exerting decisive pressure on Murdoch. Dean and Dubbins never expected to win the dispute. At best they were aiming for a negotiated deal with Murdoch that would result in some workers being taken on with some rights of bargaining for the print unions. As Dubbins put it: "We are prepared to change. We are prepared to negotiate. We are prepared to reach agreements which take on board new conditions and working practices."

BATTLES

But the strikers had other ideas. The token pickets at Wapping soon became mass pickets. The Saturday demonstrations and pickets of printers and their supporters grew into pitched battles with the police. The refusal of the national leaders to take any part in the fight allowed a new, London based, leadership to emerge as the real coordinators of the action.

The clash between strikers and national leaders came to a head at the first mass meeting on May 19th(!). Dean was shouted down. The immediate cause of the strikers' anger was the national leadership's decision to call off the

WHAT IT HAS COST

The refusal of the trade unions to mount a determined fight against Murdoch has encouraged the other print bosses to step up their own attacks on jobs. Since 1981 SOGAT and NGA between them have lost some 14,000 jobs in London. Of those over 12,000 have gone in the last year. Apart from 5,500 at News International the other major cuts have included:

2,000 redundancies agreed at the Mirror Group last December when it was already widely known that Murdoch was about to transfer to Wapping.

1,800 out of 3,300 at the Telegraph, this includes 50% of the NGA compositors and 84% of the foundry workers. SOGAT machine shop will lose 400 out of its previous total of 550.

2,300 jobs from a total of 7,000 at the Express were signed away in the Spring.

400 out of a workforce of 1,500 have gone from the Financial Times, half of them NGA compositors.

200, 20% of the total, have gone at the Guardian.

pickets of distribution depots in accordance with a High Court injunction. The background, however, was the violent attacks by the police against the mass picket on May 3rd.

At the time we argued, "Recent developments within the strike have shown just how vital it is that the strikers themselves take the strike directly into their own hands. This must be done by building a strike committee directly accountable to mass meetings of the strikers." We also noted that, "The London District Committee (LDC) presented itself as the alternative leadership to Dean and Co."

It was the leaders of the LDC, in particular the Stalinists Bill Freeman and Mike Hicks, who, the following month at the SOGAT Biennial Delegate Conference, manipulated the votes of London delegation to ensure that leadership of the dispute remained with Dean. The dispute was to be run as she wanted it - and that meant within the bounds of Thatcher's anti-union laws.

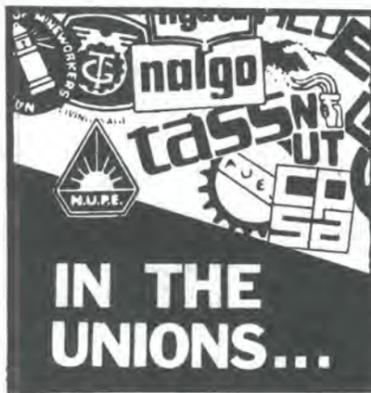
The SOGAT conference marked a turning point in the dispute. Since then there have been no attempts to turn the Saturday demonstrations into effective pickets. The demonstrations have certainly continued, but they have become passive and routinised. The Stalinists use the demonstrations, that they tightly control, as a means of keeping the strikers active but without allowing that action to seriously challenge the stranglehold of the bureaucracy.

ENCOURAGED

The downturn in the dispute obviously encouraged Murdoch. Immediately after the end of the SOGAT conference talks were arranged in New York with Eric Hammond, the arch scab herder of the EETPU. Another 'final offer' was being prepared. As it turned out the new offer was not significantly different from the one that had been rejected in June.

Unable to make any headway against Murdoch in new rounds of negotiations in September, the leaders of SOGAT and NGA allowed the new ballot to go ahead but, typically, abdicated all the responsibilities of leadership by making no recommendation on how strikers should vote. The strikers themselves were made of sterner stuff and rejected it by an even bigger majority than in June.

The ballot rejection was a major set back for Murdoch but, since he was not confronted by any serious opposition, he could afford to change tack and adopt a more long term tactic. He offered the terms of his 'final offer' to strikers as individuals. Clearly he had learnt a thing or two from the miners' strike and decided to try chipping away the support for



the strike rather than attacking it head on.

So far he appears to have convinced about 1600 strikers to accept his offer. This is a testimony to the determination of the strikers. It means that some 4,000 are still determined not to accept defeat, even in exchange for large amounts of cash in the short term.

Out of such determination a victory over Murdoch could still be achieved. But without a major change of tactics, without hitting Murdoch's profits through effective dislocation of his production and distribution, this will not happen.

The suffocating routinism of the last year has not prevented the emergence of two oppositional tendencies amongst the strikers. Both are militantly opposed to the do-nothing methods of the official leaders.

By virtue of its chosen methods the first group must remain clandestine. From the outset it has ensured that it must remain a



minority, it must operate on behalf of the majority of the strikers. No one doubts the sincerity of this group.

Indeed, their actions have perhaps helped to maintain the optimism of the strikers at times. All the same the working class does not need Robin Hoods to fight its battles for it. To quietly organise the most militant minority to attack Murdoch ultimately means to abandon the not quite so militant majority to the control of the Stalinists. It might be easier to convince a hundred or two of the need for direct action but we will not win until we can convince the thousands.

The Fleet Street Support Unit is, in some respects, closer to the thinking of Workers Power. Its principal argument is that the Wapping dispute is central to the future of the whole of Fleet Street and, therefore, the whole of Fleet Street ought to be involved in the dispute. Fleet Street Out! is its main demand and it has also long recognised the need for the election of a rank and file strike committee, responsible to mass meetings.

We agree with both demands. However, the FSSU has not yet made an impact on the dispute despite its correct positions. This is because it has never clarified exactly what its own role should be. It is composed of strikers, non striking printers and supporters of the printers and as such has never clarified whether it should be a support group or a caucus of militants within the strike.

We believe that both are necessary but that they should not be conflated. The job of a support

group is to argue within the Fleet Street chapels for direct action in support of Wapping. The most obvious starting point is the boycotting of Murdoch-produced pre-prints. Equally there is a crying need for a caucus of militants within the strike itself. The starting point here is the demand for mass meetings and the election from a mass meeting of a strike committee to control the running of the dispute. So far the FSSU has not taken any steps to overcome the paralysis resulting from the confusion over its role. With the strike entering its second year, there is a real danger that Murdoch will succeed in tempting more strikers to leave on an individual basis. While such scabbing needs to be condemned, it cannot be fought purely on a moral basis. A lack of a strategy to win will demoralise strikers. That needs to be tackled by militants now.

The key will be winning effective solidarity action and spreading the action to other papers. The fight for mass meetings that can decide the key issues of the strike and for a strike committee elected from such meetings to democratically run the strike must be renewed. More strikers must be won to these ideas, through vigorous 'interventions by militants', like those in the FSSU, seizing every opportunity, every picket and demo, to put the case for these ideas. And, in what remains of Fleet Street, the forces need to be rallied for action now not simply to win solidarity with the NI strikers but to fight the job-stealing plans of all the press bosses.

by Steve McSweeney

THE GROUP THAT NEVER WAS!

THE STALINIST-DOMINATED Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) leadership has always denied the existence of any political organisation within the union. It attacked the creation of the SCPS Broad Left (BL) saying the the SCPS (and trades unions in general) was no place for the disruptive influence of politically motivated organisations.

However, a document has come into our possession which confirms the existence of a secret broad left in SCPS beyond any doubt. It is a document of the secret group and it must be said that for a group that supposedly does not exist, they have some fairly impressive structures. They have (non-existent) regional groups and (non-existent) departmental groups.

Furthermore the document exposes the Stalinist intentions of the secret BL. In deciding the criteria for membership it says:

"The politics of the group must be defined by a clear understanding of what self discipline (both politically and to each

other) is required to achieve the change to Socialism we are working for... (It must not be) simply a forum to provide intellectual exercise or sectarian debate for those unwilling to abide by any kind of collective discipline. By implication, therefore, there is no place for Trotskyists in such a grouping."

And when discussing how to relate to the SCPS Broad Left, the document complains about the 'serious setbacks' suffered at the 1986 annual conference due to an alliance between the ultra-left (SCPS BL) and the right wing. The serious 'set-backs' included the election of the national Executive Council by the membership and the provision of election addresses by the candidates.

And when it comes to addressing the open SCPS BL, the paper considers three options - ignore them, reach some sort of accommodation with them or:

"To actively campaign against

the Trotskyist elements running SCPS Broad Left and in particular to concentrate our efforts on tackling the SWP and Militant and exposing them for what they are."

Needless to say they went for this third option.

All of this confirms the real nature of Stalinism in Britain. Not powerful enough to control the trade union bureaucracy so beloved by it, it plays the role of sergeant-at-arms for that bureaucracy. In return for a little influence it works overtime to try and destroy opposition to the union bureaucrats, trampling on workers' democracy in the process. But real Trotskyists - who, like us, are the most intransigent defenders of workers' democracy - will defeat Stalinism. Every genuine rank and file militant must be won to helping us.

- Down with secrecy!
- Down with Stalinist witch-hunts!
- Long live workers' democracy!

CHRISTMAS REVIEWS

IT IS NO good pretending - even socialists give each other presents at Christmas! In fact a mid-winter celebration is a long standing, pre-Christian tradition and one that will continue under socialism. To be sure, we would argue that a socialist mid-winter festive season be stripped of the religious, commercial, hypocritical and sickeningly sentimental aspects that mark Christmas under capitalism.

But for now we'll confine ourselves to a survey of a few books that can be read or bought as presents this Christmas, or that we feel duty bound to warn our readers against wasting their money on!

STREET WISE

The End Of The Street by Linda Melvern

Methuen £9.95

VERY LITTLE OF this book actually takes place in the Fleet Street of the title. Instead the author infuses with false drama the minutes of meetings between Murdoch management and prostrate trade union bureaucrats in posh South Kensington hotels. With the craft of a pulp fiction writer, Linda Melvern, one-time Sunday Times journalist, has reconstructed some of the events culminating in Rupert Murdoch's sacking of 5,500 printworkers.

For the author, the tale she tells most definitely ends there on 24 January 1986 with the start of the strike which marked the final transfer of News International production to Wapping. For Melvern it sounded the death knell for the whole of Fleet Street. Her account of the first few months of the strike itself figures only as an afterthought.

Despite her pained attempts to assume an objective pose, the author's sympathies clearly do not lie with the victimised printers and clerical staff but with the more or less agonised deliberations of the journalists at Murdoch's four titles. Irrespective of the eventual decisions taken by individual NUJ members, Melvern identifies with the apparent anguish of former colleagues at the Sunday Times. Very few of the NUJ 'refuseniks' seemed too concerned with arguing for solidarity with fellow trade unionists in SOGAT and the NGA, but many resented the transparent loss of editorial independence.

In the way of anecdote there is much that is new in these pages but very little that is illuminating. In particular, there is virtually nothing in the way of an analysis of the historical relationship between the Fleet Street press barons and the print unions and this is certainly not the place to look for an explanation of the crisis of profitability in the national print which led inexorably to the showdown over Wapping.

Instead we are treated to lengthy descriptions of individuals' appearances: glimpses of Brenda

Dean's wardrobe, the rings worn by a Murdoch minion. Occasionally there are snippets that capture something of shop floor life in Bouverie Street before the Sun's "flight to freedom" (that is, from obstacles to higher profits). The dirt, the dangers posed by the ageing presses, and the literally deafening noise, are all mentioned, suggesting that the print unions for all their supposed 'unbridled' power had traded high real wages for safety and tolerable working conditions.

The archaic sectionalism of the Fleet Street chapel structure becomes painfully apparent in these pages. At one stage, the FoC of the SOGAT machine chapel at the News of the World had all but signed a separate deal to bring his lads into Wapping. At the same time, however, we also see NGA members use their industrial muscle to stop the Sun in the midst of the miners' Great Strike. It was a fine example of politically conscious control over the presses, led by NGA FoC John Brown.

Melvorn performs one undoubted service to the labour movement in documenting the depths of the EETPU's collaboration with News International in securing the move to Wapping. Melvern provides far and away the most detailed account so far of the EETPU's recruitment of a scab labour force in the Southampton area under the guidance of Area Secretary Mick Scanlon. Peter O'Hanlon, an area official of the electricians north of the border, did the same job for Murdoch's Kinning Park plant in Glasgow.

The evidence offered here makes a mockery of Eric Hammond's feigned ignorance of the whole poaching/scabbing operation and furthers the argument that the EETPU bureaucracy has indeed become a fifth column in our midst. Her chapter on the EETPU's role makes *The End of the Street* something more than an occasionally entertaining read and shows it to be a substantially researched journalistic history. At £9.95, however, it is not likely to be top of the list of strikers' Christmas reading. □

by George Binnetts



Putting the finger on Murdoch's fifth column

PLUTO'S SWAN SONG

Southern Seas by Manuel Vazquez Montalban

Pluto Crime Series £3.95 pbk

SO FAREWELL THEN Pluto Press. Aficionados of the detective novel will sorely miss the late publisher's Crime Series which valiantly tried to promote the true spirit of the genre - radical critiques of capitalist society in the manner pioneered by Hammett and Chandler in the 20s and 30s.

The only consolation is *Southern Seas*, the last and best of the Crime Series. The star of the novel is Pepe Carvalho, the ex-communist turned private investigator. Our Pepe, now he has waved adios to the proletarian cause, has sunk into the dubious delights of unrestrained hedonism; namely, a personal crusade to find the ulti-

mate in food and wine. (Anybody who needs a crash course in Spanish cuisine would do no better than to read this book).

Unfortunately for Pepe, hedonism is an expensive pursuit which occasionally entails some sleuthing to bring home the Salamanca ham. As luck would have it, Pepe is hired by the wealthy widow of Senor Pedrell, a murdered Barcelona building contractor. The mystery surrounding Pedrell which his widowed wife and her bourgeois business friends want solved, is not who murdered Pedrell (they don't care), but what he did in the year before his death when he disappeared without trace.

Pepe starts sleuthing and soon finds himself in the depths of post-Franco Spain. It is not a pleasant place. Underneath the new but fragile bourgeois-democratic facade

lurks the old fascist spectre. As Pepe remarks about the first post-Franco election: "Curiously, none of the election programmes said anything about tearing down what the Franco regime had built. This is the first political change that respects the ruins." Nor has bourgeois democracy meant much change for the proletariat, whose lives are still nasty, brute-like and short. All of which shakes up Pepe enough for him to do the right thing and line up with the poor and oppressed against the rich.

Southern Seas will tell you more about Spain today and the nature of the crisis of capitalism and the Left there (Montalban is a leading member of the Catalan CP) than many a non-fiction. It's also a ripping good yarn. □

by Jon Lewis

REVOLUTION'S FLESH AND BLOOD

The Forging Of A Rebel: The Clash by Arturo Barea Flamingo 1984

The Disinherited by Michel del Castillo Serpents Tail 1986

COMMEMORATION OR CELEBRATION? This has been a dilemma for many in this year, the fiftieth anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. Either way the revolution and war have been remembered more outside of Spain than within it during 1986. A timorous Socialist Party government, looking over its shoulder at the restless and reactionary Generals dares not antagonise them with a celebration of those glorious days when the Spanish workers disarmed the military and ruled the streets of Barcelona and Madrid.

These books, banned for years in Franco's Spain, reveal in their own way just why the militarists and reformists do not want to remember. In these novels you see the scars, that today mark a divided nation, displayed as open wounds.

English-speakers are probably more familiar with the civil war works of Orwell, Hemmingway or even the translation of Malraux's *Days of Hope* than they are with the offerings of Spanish authors. But whatever the sympathetic, even partisan, sketches they offer, they are dwarfed in every way by the novels of Barea and del Castillo.

Barea's work is the final part of an autobiographical trilogy. The first two volumes, *The Forge* and *The Track* deal with his childhood in Madrid and his time in the army of occupation in Morocco after the First World War.

The Clash opens with Barea in his mid-thirties, stuck in a rut as a patents officer, bored by his marriage yet hardly finding an escape in a mistress. Barea dissects the hypocrisy of bourgeois morality in the family, in the church, but without a trace of self-justification for his own actions.

With the opening of the civil war the central tension and moral dilemma emerges; how, or even whether, to defend this stifling, morally cramping Spain from fascism? Not being consciously political he gropes his way to an uncertain sense that he must help the Republic. By enlisting in the Propaganda Department as the radio 'Voice of Spain' in Madrid he finds his niche. As the narrative unfolds Barea's deep compassion for the Spanish workers, who have raised themselves out of their



In defence of the revolution

degradation and subordination, gets stronger. The self-sacrifice, the humour and humility of the Madrid proletariat comes through very strongly.

But in the end this is a book about Barea himself and the most compelling parts of it concern the disintegration of his emotions and intellect under the enormous pressure of the work and of the siege of Madrid. His reconstruction of his descent into this pit of psychological torture counts as the strongest and most affecting part of *The Clash*.

Whereas Barea has given us a superbly crafted narrative, rich in detail, del Castillo has written a novel of ferocious, raw power. The main characters are drawn with incredible sympathy - as diverse as they are. Only, the youth of the Zone (shanty town outside Madrid) who rescues himself from lumpenisation by finding 'the party', is the central figure. His naive faith gives way to disillusionment and even personal moral degradation in the course of the civil war. Castillo has written simply and it often appears like a Socratic dialogue between contending political positions in the revolution. Never

does it descend into caricature, however.

Del Castillo has written of the most oppressed section of the working class, whereas Barea deals with its activist vanguard. For that reason perhaps del Castillo has written a much more pessimistic novel in which those in whose name the revolution is fought are left, at the end of it all, untouched. Above all, he is preoccupied with the individual, forlornly striving 'to make sense' of what is happening, torn apart by the felt contradictions of defending personal liberty in a revolution, of embracing violence in the pursuit of justice, of human frailty faced with inescapable historical tasks. Castillo ends up endorsing a return to religion, but a religion which is never comforting but merely an individual retreat from the unending brutality of Stalinism within the revolution; a retreat itself beset by self-doubt.

After you have read Trotsky and Morrow on the politics of the civil war read either (better still, both) of these books which are of the flesh and blood of the revolution. □

by Keith Hassell



War and the International by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson
Socialist Platform 1986

THE SECOND VOLUME of Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson's history of the Trotskyist movement in Britain is as well worth careful study as their first, *Against the Stream*. The latest volume, *War and the International*, centres on a number of important questions: the attempts to forge a united British section of the Fourth International, the role of Trotskyists during the war and entryism and the Labour Party, the issue which was eventually to lead to the destruction of the only unified British Trotskyist organisation.

The history of British Trotskyism is littered with splits and fusions. The period covered by Bornstein and Richardson is no exception. In the two years from 1936-38 British followers of the Fourth International (FI) made their most sustained effort to achieve a united group. At the start of 1938 there were three main Trotskyist groups in Britain: The Militant Group, the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) and the Workers International League (WIL), a split from the Militant. They were later to be joined by another group with separate origin, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). By the close of 1938 there were 2 main groups: the RSL and the WIL. *War and the International* traces the fortunes of these two organisations.

The RSL, recognised as the official section of the FI in Britain, was formed as a result of a unity conference held in August 1938. It was a fusion of the old RSL, the Militant Group and the RSP. The "Peace and Unity Conference", as it was called, was organised largely on the initiative of SWP(US) leader, James P Cannon, who was in Britain acting on behalf of the International Secretariat. The "Peace and Unity Agreement" put to the conference by Cannon was signed by all but the WIL who claimed the fusion was unprincipled.

The authors give much coverage to this important conference but seem to take a one-sided pro-WIL view of the fusion.

The basis for unity at the British conference was the basis for the founding conference of the Fourth International, the Transitional Programme and the WIL condemned this as inadequate:

"The overwhelming bulk of the time that we spent at that conference (Peace and Unity) was devoted to an exposition of the document 'The Transitional Programme of the Fourth International'. We spent practically no time at all in discussing what were the differences between the British Trotskyists, what common bases could we actually fuse on. The argument of the Americans was that we could fuse on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International, and we took the view

BRITISH TROTSKYIS

that that wouldn't work - it wouldn't keep the organisation together." (Authors' interview with J Haston 1978, p21)

The WIL refused to participate in the fusion, describing the new organisation as being "founded on a compromise with sectarianism" in their statement to the International Congress of the FI.

Many of the WIL's criticisms of the fusion were valid. The conference failed to resolve a series of problems in relation to programme and tactics in Britain and the attitude revolutionaries should adopt towards the Labour Party. This is indicated in the Peace and Unity agreement, it states:

"The main emphasis in the next period is to be placed on work within the Labour Party."

but that

"members at present devoting their full activity to propaganda work outside the Labour Party are not required to join it."

Given the very different positions on the Labour Party held by the three fused organisations this formulation was wide open to confusion. The Militant Group, as previously, were committed to entry but the RSP were totally against entry on principle arguing:

"Never must the revolutionary banner be lowered in capitulation to such a party."

Despite these valid criticisms however, the WIL are not totally blameless. The urgency to establish a fused British section resulted in the forging of an unstable unity. But the fact remained that the fusion initiative was timely since it took place against a background of the growing threat of war, a threat recognised by Trotsky and the International leadership. Secondly, in view of this, Trotsky was anxious to found the FI and secure its sections in each country before world war broke out. In turn this demanded a greater sense of international responsibility and urgency towards the fusion than the WIL showed. For example, the WIL failed to extend its criticisms beyond one single letter to the founding conference of the FI, a letter that concentrated exclusively on British, rather than international matters. The fact that they also failed to send a delegate to this important conference, pleading poverty, places a question mark over their seriousness about reaching agreement.

Almost immediately after the



The banner of Trotskyism in Britain rescued from obscurity and Stalinist slander

Peace and Unity Conference war was declared. Between 1938-44 a bitter but very significant debate took place within British Trotskyism over this question. At issue was how the Leninist policy of revolutionary defeatism was to be implemented. To write off the position of the RSL as pacifist, as the authors do, is incorrect.

The failure of the declining RSL was their too rigid attempt to apply a revolutionary defeatist position and their refusal to face the question of how workers were to be broken from their defeatist positions. This was where the RSL floundered, keeping them back - on the whole - from the healthy industrial intervention which the WIL so successfully developed. However, they avoided the opposite pitfall of an opportunist adaptation to the consciousness of the workers in a way that the WIL did not.

In their "Thesis (on the crisis of capitalism and the tasks of the British sections of the FI)" the RSL explained,

"The basic task of revolutionary socialists in such a period is not to seek opportunist 'short-cuts' to the mass but to explain patiently the reactionary nature of the war."

Also in their Militant Labour League manifesto they wrote,

- * Class war on imperialist war!
- * No coalition with capitalism.
- * Not a ship, not a gun, not a man for imperialist war.
- * Down with the social-patriotic Labour and Stalinist leaders.

The differences between the two organisations became most acute after the fall of France in June 1940. The WIL explained this event by pointing out that the French ruling class had not been committed to a fight against fascism:

OBITUARY

We print below an obituary to Roy Tearse by the authors of *War and the International*, Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson. Whilst we could not agree with Tearse's later political views we share with comrades Richardson and Bornstein respect for his memory and for the work he performed in building both the WIL and the early RCP into healthy, interventionist organisations. We thank the comrades for contributing this obituary to our paper.

THE DEATH OF Rawlings Tearse a week before the end of October brought to an end a career of courageous and unequal struggle against overwhelming odds, both social and physical, on the part of probably the most remarkable figure ever to adhere to British Trotskyism.

Tearse was born into a working class family and went into the navy as a youth in 1934. In 1937 he was struck down by polio and dismissed from the service to fend for himself. Of exceptional ability, his experiences sharpened his mind and turned him to social questions, and he joined a group of war resisters in the ILP in 1939. As a result of their activities, national figures coming to Tyneside to support the war were assured of a hot reception, which even came out on the BBC.

But having witnessed the Communist Party's chauvinism before 1939, he was not attracted to their point of view, and in December 1940 along with T. Dan Smith he wrote a devastating critique of the policy of the 'People's Convention', identifying it as yet another attempt to float a Popular Front. He was attracted instead to Trotskyism, and came down to London to work with the WIL. In little more than two years he had been elected shop steward in De Havillands and had recruited another three stewards to the group, which dominated the AEU Edgeware no. 3 branch.

He had an intuitive grasp of how workers would react to a given situation, and a gift for communicating with them and drawing them into activity that led to his being chosen as Industrial Organiser of the group and organiser of its Scottish District. There he helped refound the Clyde Workers' Committee and its offshoot, the Militant Workers' Federation.

His abilities were valued to the extent that the Barrow Strike Committee made him an unofficial member, and greatly appreciated the guidance he was able to give to bring that remarkable wartime strike to victory. Some months later he was responsible for helping to organise the struggle of the Apprentices against the Bevin Ballot Scheme, where he gave invaluable advice on how to conduct the struggle and frame the propaganda for it in terms that would prevent the apprentices from being isolated. His work on the strikers' behalf brought him into court, where he acquitted himself with dignity and honour and collected a prison sentence.

Tearse was no mere agitator, and early on began to sense that the perspective of postwar slump was out of joint. His critique of the evasions and dishonesties of the International Secretariat stripped them of their pretensions to leadership of any sort, and he gained Healy's undying hatred. He was expelled from the movement for refusing to break his links with Jock Haston on his resignation.

He was obliged to set aside his activity on behalf of the Trotskyists when his wife died, leaving him with two young children to bring up, and as he could not support them by manual labour, he turned his not inconsiderable talents to mathematics. Here he so excelled himself that he became a lecturer and was able to bring his new insights to bear upon the problems of Marx' *Capital* when he returned to politics following the upsurge of 1968. In discussions with young people in the International Socialism group he was able to shoot great holes through the model on which rested the theory of the permanent arms economy, and lifted the level of their Marxist education accordingly.

Tearse was in a poor state of health for the last years of his life, but his courage never failed him. When he heard of the threatened closure of the hospital unit treating him, he organised the patients and others with the result that nearly a quarter of a million was raised to stop it. Tearse expressed in his own person the bravery and insight of the Trotskyists during the war, a permanent reminder for the movement today of the sort of dedication required to change the world. ■

Al Richardson and Sam Bornstein

In brief ...

Use the little bit of leisure time that Christmas provides most of us with to read. There are plenty of good books around that could be got through with both pleasure and enlightenment over the holiday period.

Peter Fryer's *Hungarian Tragedy* (New Park £2.95) has been republished by the WRP. In doing so they have performed an important service. This is a fine eye-witness account of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Thirty years on, the book is still a moving indictment and reminder of Stalinism's counter-revolutionary role.

Also re-issued this year was Paul Frolich's *Rosa Luxemburg* (Pluto £5.95). If you've seen the film, now read the book! Well not quite, although there is a picture not of Rosa Luxemburg but of Barbara Sukova on the cover. In fact this remains the best book for an account of Rosa's political ideas and struggles. It was conceived as a rebuttal of the mounting slanders that the Stalinists heaped on this great revolutionary in the 1930s. Film goers who want more

personal detail will have to refer to Nettl's two volume biography.

Another great revolutionary is the subject in *Trotsky: A Photographic Biography* by David King (Basil Blackwell £19.50). The David King collection of photographs forms an impressively continuous record of Trotsky's life. Photographers caught Trotsky at key moments of his life's work. Many show Trotsky in action - on the speakers rostrum, on the armoured train from which he led Red army campaigns, speaking at Joffe's funeral at his last public appearance in the USSR.



The collection also shows the last days of Trotsky's life and the bloody aftermath of the fatal visit by Stalin's hired assassin. A useful biographical commentary by James Ryan makes this a book for revolutionaries to read, not one for poseurs to exhibit on their coffee tables. Unfortunately its price puts it into the latter bracket though if you join the Bookmarks club you can get it for £10.

On a lighter note the marvelous cartoons of Steve Bell are compiled in *The Unrepeatable If* (Methuen £3.95). A merciless attack on the hypocritical values of Thatcher and her gang is conveyed with sharp and anarchic wit through the mutterings of the penguin, the monkey and of course Kipling.

Last but not least is *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor* by Cameron McCabe (Penguin £3.95) published originally by Victor Gollancz, of Left Book Club fame, in 1937. It was republished in 1986. Part spoof of the US 'classic' detective novel, part savaging of the bourgeois notion of justice, it is a book that we heartily recommend as an alternative to the twenty ninth television repeat of the *Wizard of Oz* on Boxing Day.



WIL'S WARTIME TRIALS



proletarian military policy whereby the workers will be enabled to wage a genuine revolutionary war against Hitlerism and every other brand of fascism."

What the WIL slipped into was not defencism, but a centrist adaptation to defencist sentiments. They ran the danger of being seen to argue with the British imperialists on the best way to conduct the war against fascism, rather than agitating sharply for the slogan "the main enemy is at home".

The book gives a vivid and detailed account of the important and leading role the WIL played in the industrial struggles during the war. In doing so it points to the real strengths of the WIL. From 1942 onwards the WIL intervened in all major industrial disputes and was more successful than any other organisation in its attempts to fill the vacuum left by the CP which was busy sabotaging strikes as its contribution to the war effort. The authors recount the very significant two day sit-in strike at the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) in Nottingham, April 1942. This and other strikes at the ROF, led by members of the WIL, produced some of the highest expressions of working class struggle during the war.

VICTORY

The authors describe how Roy Tearse, the WIL's industrial organiser, was made an honorary member of the strike committee at the Barrow Vicker's shipyard - a strike 9000 strong which despite government threats was a resounding victory and the only successful major dispute of the war. There are many other examples of Trotskyist industrial agitation during the war detailed in the book, not least the Tyneside Apprentices strike against industrial conscription in 1943-44, the pinnacle of the WIL's industrial influence.

That these achievements of the Trotskyists have remained unnoticed (or rather hidden) in the standard labour movement histories, written by members or sympathisers of the

Communist Party, is not surprising. We owe a debt to the authors of *War and the International* for re-writing this history and indeed for their illuminating accounts of the social-patriotic role played by the CP during the war. They show how after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the CP became the greatest advocate of increased production in the factories, increased exploitation, the most active strike-breakers and more often than not the instigators of witch-hunts against Trotskyists.

One example of a CP leaflet quoted in the book is particularly illuminating:

"They (the Trotskyists) are a virus that must be cleared out of all contact with the working class organisations: TREAT A TROTSKYIST AS YOU WOULD TREAT A NAZI."

In 1943-44 the RSL's membership was badly in decline whereas the WIL had gone from strength to strength. The International intervened once again to place the question of fusion on the agenda. After protracted discussion the two organisations fused in March 1944 to form the Revolutionary Communist Party (no relation to the present usurper of the name) with Haston and Grant in the leadership. The membership stood at 335, a split of 260/75 in the WIL's favour. Many of the earlier questions, particularly around Labour Party work, remained unresolved - though this time the majority was reversed in the WIL's favour. Bornstein and Richardson give a detailed picture of the factionalising (particularly on the part of the IS sponsored manoeuvrist, Gerry Healy) and the difficulties of the unresolved questions on the Labour Party facing the new organisation - both of which were to result in the downfall of the RCP.

An 'entrant faction' was formed at once with the aim of steering the RCP into the Labour Party, arguing that the 'open tactic' could only be justified by the special circumstances of the war. This was based around the Minority faction in the RCP led by Healy, Goffe and later Lawrence. This faction,

truly a minority, with the help of Pablo and the IS pushed their argument calling for complete entry which they presented as "mass work" until they split the organisation.

In November 1947 there were again two Trotskyist organisations in Britain. Major responsibility for this split lay with the Secretariat and Pablo/Mandel. Apart from sanctioning the split and recognising two affiliates (against the FI's own statutes), the whole conduct of the Paris-based international leadership was to assume and assert authority in a bureaucratic manner rather than earn the right to exercise it.

The Healy faction were totally wrong in their perspectives justifying entryism - a ludicrous catastrophism typical of Healy up to today. Moreover the manner in which they proposed implementing the tactic was liquidationist. But, while Haston and Grant were right in 1946 as against Healy, on perspectives, their own tactic of open party building was running into a blind alley.

PERSPECTIVES

They were unable to grasp the significance of their own failure to achieve mass growth during the upsurge of working class activity in 1945 which brought the Labour government to power. They persisted with a mass party perspective at a time when the actual tasks confronting them were the consolidation of a Trotskyist cadre. Far from being helped by the leadership of the FI, they were systematically undermined by that leadership. When the Haston/Grant leadership finally accepted defeat and proposed entry into the Labour Party in 1949, they did so as a demoralised force submitting to the bureaucratic rules being laid down by the IS's loyal servant, Healy.

For the authors of this book this sorry tale can be explained by the failure to enter the Labour Party in 1945 and stay there. For them 'entryism' is a strategic task, not a tactic. This leads them to conclude that the RCP's decline was largely inevitable. We would reject such an outlook. While 1945 did represent a missed opportunity, a readjustment of perspectives the-

reafter could have kept the RCP on an even, if not spectacular, keel. The general crisis of the FI and the unprincipled factional attack on them prevented the British leadership making such a readjustment.

It is clear from our review that there are differences we would raise, and indeed have debated in honest and open manner, with the authors of *War and the International*. It is clear that these two volumes are significant and valuable contributions to the history of the Trotskyist movement. It is a greater pity therefore, that the authors have chosen to blight their second volume with an idiosyncratic tirade on modern Trotskyism. On two occasions in the preface and conclusion these authors, who have so carefully distinguished between the Militant Group, RSP, WIL, RSL and their factions and tendencies, lump the whole of modern Trotskyism into one bag.

"Thus the many Trotskyist groups of today construct their programme as a man strings beads . . ."

or worse: "The smaller groups (ie non-Militant, SWP or WRP - WP) are less stable and imitate the larger, so there is little point in extending the analysis to them once the case is made out that under the outer husk of 'Trotskyism' something very different and familiar remains." The fact is that the authors' present politics are a mixture of workerism and Stalinophobia, laced with an over-defensive attitude to 'British' Trotskyism with the consequent view that much that was weak in it was a foreign imposition.

Moreover, it simply will not do to rubbish the post-war history of Trotskyism. It needs a critical evaluation such as we have attempted in our book *The Death Agony of the Fourth International*. The preface and conclusion, therefore, with their intemperate overgeneralisations, stand in marked contrast to the bulk of the book.

Despite this, do not let the preface and conclusion put you off this excellent book, buy it and order it for your library. □

by Sue Todd

"The only way in which Paris could have been defended and France saved from invading fascism was by the arming of the workers. Only the armed people, a nation in arms could have held up Hitler's advance." (Youth for Socialism Feb 1941)

Closer to home, and indeed shown by examples in the book, the WIL was arguing a similar case for British workers. In their leaflet "Britain's War production in Chaos" (February 1942) the WIL claimed that Socialist Appeal (their paper) had

"consistently put forward a

AIDS-COPING OR CURING?

AIDS: A Guide To Survival by Peter Tatchell GMP (£3.50 pbk)

THIS BOOK IS "intended as a brief . . . guide to understanding, preventing and fighting back against AIDS. It is particularly aimed at people who are HTLV-3 positive, or who have AIDS . . . "As such its chief defect is Tatchell's over-emphasis on an individual solution to the spread of AIDS.

In the book he gives a guide to the disease and how to prevent it as well as his opinions on how to deal with it if you contract it. Here his thoroughly middle-class approach manifests itself. He talks about taking on a healthy diet (wholegrain rice with chopped chicken, natural live yogurt and so on), lots of exercise and relaxation. The daily grind of work that is the norm for working class people, is totally left out of account.

He outlines other precautions such as non-penetrative 'safe-sex' and while some of his advice and proposed precautions are sensible, the real emphasis should be on arguing that to solve the problem, to find a cure, involves much more than urging an individual solution. In part, Tatchell recognises this himself when in the last chapter he exposes the government's criminal negligence in combatting AIDS and the reactionary way the disease has been used to persecute gays and reinforce bourgeois morality.

The problem of AIDS must be confronted politically in the first place. It is a political problem. This was graphically revealed by the launch of the Tories' campaign on AIDS. Whilst the government looks set to embark on a safe-sex education campaign (ie stick to one partner) it has, at the same time cut the research budget for AIDS by £4 million.

Tatchell, to some extent, recognises the dangers of advocating safe sex as a solution as he says "the restrictiveness of safe-sex unhappily echoes the homophobia and puritanism of the New Right." However he then adds "yet in the absence of a medical cure for AIDS, it is hard to see how either gay people or heterosexuals have any real alternatives".

This premise is fundamentally flawed. We must demand as the thrust of any campaign that the resources are put into finding a cure now. We should not accept the predictions of the medical profession that we will have to wait 5 to 10 years. We should fight for massive funding for research into a cure now, for the nationalisation of the drug companies, for international medical and research co-operation and for an end to the use of imperialised countries, in particular black Africa, as guinea pigs at the service of the imperialist countries. Only then, can we expect a real answer to the threat from AIDS to be found □

by Ian Hassell

Sex is Not Compulsory: giving up sex for better health and happiness by Liz Hodgkinson Columbus Books 1986 (£4.95 pbk)

THE POPULAR PRACTICE of blaming all the evils of the world on the permissive society now has another advocate. But rather than cloak her moralism in the dismal garb of the church, Liz Hodgkinson dresses it up in the flamboyant colours of feminism.

Starting from the first half of the title, the book claims to put forward a free choice for women to reject the tyranny of sexual freedom which has left so many unhappy and feeling inadequate. But the content of the book has nothing to do with choice or liberation. It is pure, bigoted moralism.

Of course the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s has not resulted in happy, carefree lives for women. This has disappointed many feminists, leading them to question the role of sexual freedom in women's liberation. Germaine Greer has blamed the contraceptive pill for making women 'available' all the time, and calls for a return to family values to sort out the ills of society. The coincidence of these feminist views with those of the increasing moral backlash from the church and right wing campaigners points to some of the dangers within feminist theory.

This book is ignorant, reactionary and very dangerous. Reasoned argument, the use of research and

the quotation of figures are replaced by unsubstantiated statements, paraded as 'fact'. For example

" . . . frequent sex and frequent masturbation - both of which deplete zinc levels - can adversely affect a man's eyesight, as well as his general health and intellectual capacity."

The old ones are the best: wanking makes you blind and mad! She continues her 'proof' that sex is bad for your health:

"The main point about AIDS is that almost all of those who succumb to the clinical form of disease are living a physically chaotic life . . . It appears that the pursuit of sex in itself weakens the body's defenses against ill health."

She uses pseudo scientific argument about hormones to show that there is no such thing as sexual desire, it is simply something you get addicted to once you start, like heroin. She argues that if we all stopped having sex we would be more healthy and less oppressed, in addition to completely eradicating AIDS. And just to show how firmly entrenched she is in the old moral arguments of the ruling class she adds such 'facts' as

"In the old days (unspecified - WP), there was probably less sexual intercourse, and there were correspondingly fewer attacks of cystitis".

Mind you, while the good old days didn't have much cystitis to contend with, the bubonic plague did

mar them somewhat!

The reason this book is more dangerous than similar tracts that emanate from the church and the new gang of moral reactionaries, is that Hodgkinson is deliberately appealing to women's fears about sex, the reality of sexual frustration that many women feel, the dangers of infections, cervical cancer and unwanted pregnancy. But rather than attacking these problems directly, in a way that allows women to develop sexually, free from such fears, by improving contraception, cervical screening, education on prevention of infections, she prefers to argue for self-denial. There is no element of choice in this argument. The whole book is used as a campaign against sex, not for choice.

She concludes with a chapter on famous people and celibacy. Bernard Shaw and Florence Nightingale both lived into their nineties.

"One cannot say, of course, that celibacy had anything to do with their longevity, but the two may not be entirely unconnected."

And of course, everyone knows someone who had a granny who lived to be 100 and smoked 40 Senior Service a day all her life! If the book did not have such a serious intent it would be tempting to conclude that the only thing definitely unconnected are the two halves of Hodgkinson's brain. □

by Helen Ward



Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization by Donald Filtzer
Pluto 1986 (£25.00 hdbk)

DONALD FILTZER HAS produced an interesting and valuable book which examines the development of the Soviet working class during the first Five Year Plans.

He looks at the contradictory processes whereby the working class dramatically increased in size (threefold between 1928 and 1941), played the pivotal role in the USSR's rapid industrialization and yet was systematically deprived of the last vestiges of the organisations and rights bequeathed it by the October revolution.

The Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR, after defeating the Left Opposition, made a major turn towards centrally planned rapid industrialisation in 1928. This was to be accompanied by the forced collectivisation of the Soviet peasantry which served to drastically reduce the USSR's agricultural output. The Soviet bureaucracy had to find a means to increase the size of the working class faced with a real labour shortage. It also had to find the means of forcing that working class to push up its production at breakneck speed and to crush any collective resistance to that drive.

The shortage of labour did give Soviet workers some bargaining strength in the early 1930s. It was normally expressed in the form of massive rates of labour turnover as workers moved from plant to plant in search of better pay and conditions. In coal mining in 1930 the average Soviet miner changed jobs every four months. Desperately short of labour to meet plan targets Soviet managers devised elaborate schemes to poach each others workers.

SHOCK WORKERS

In this situation of extreme fluidity the regime tried to increase the pace of work and the continuity of production. Work norms were pushed up and shock workers encouraged to blaze a trail of norm-busting that other workers could then be expected to follow. The book shows the problems this ran into.

Most importantly the regime faced collective resistance in many forms. Shock workers were often

STALINISM AT WORK

snubbed and isolated by their fellow workers. Alternately there were many instances where sections of workers would form themselves into collective shock brigades, which collectivized their earnings and maximised the effect of their organised labour. Spurred on, often by real enthusiasm, these production collectives were turned on by the regime in 1931 as a threat to bureaucratic rule. From then onwards shock workers were to be separated out from the rest of the workforces and all wage incentives were to be individualized.

In the period up to 1934 there was a continuing resort to strike action on the part of Soviet workers. Filtzer uses reports of the emigré Menshevik press to show that in 1932 the strike situation was causing alarm to the regime as workers in Leningrad, Ivanovo and Nizhni-Novgorod struck over shortages of food and basic supplies.

The Stalinist regime replied by tightening its repressive grip carefully and gradually. In 1933 a strike committee elected at Putilov was arrested, never to be seen again. Women strikers in Minsk protesting a shortage of bread saw their leaders arrested by the GPU.

In a crack down on abstention-

ism 'black boards' were erected in the plants with the names of 'slackers'. Management's powers to deprive workers of rations and housing were increased. Against a background of famine in 1932-33 such powers gave the management a very real means of disciplining resistant sections of the workforce.

All the evidence seems to suggest that by 1934 the tide of collective resistance to the Stalinist regime had virtually subsided. The regime now moved to further increase wage differentials and the atomisation of the Soviet working class. In this it was assisted by the continuing influx of ex-peasants into the mines and factories. They had little or no experience of the collective traditions of the Soviet working class and were themselves often deeply fatalistic and demoralised after their experience of collectivisation.

The regime drove hard against egalitarianism. Managers were given large houses, cooks, chauffeurs and stablemen on the factory pay roll. Shock workers were given increasingly larger differentials. This process reached its climax in the Stakhanov movement, initiated in August 1935 when this Donbass miner mined a record 102 tons of coal on a single shift. Over the next year Stakhanovism spread

rapidly throughout Soviet industry. As Trotsky understood in *Revolution Betrayed*, Stakhanovism was a means by which the regime created an extremely privileged labour aristocratic stratum of workers both dependent on, and supportive of, the regime. Stakhanovites could easily earn at least 600 or 700 rubles compared to the average of 225 rubles. Some earned as much as 1000 rubles.

The new work norms placed enormous strains on the workforce and the effectiveness of any form of planned target for many industries. In 1937 some mines were reporting that up to half their workforce were not reaching their norms. In addition there was a renewed increase in breakdowns and in industrial accidents throughout Soviet industry. The central leadership around Stalin responded by tightening its Bonapartist grip over industrial managers in a wave of sabotage trials of management and technical personnel in 1936 and 1937.

Stakhanovism led to managerial and economic disequilibrium in the Soviet industry, hence its demise and the reorganisation of lower work norms and concessions on wage levels that the regime introduced in 1938 and 1939. These concessions were however to be

accompanied by draconian new labour laws prohibiting job changing, truancy and extending the category of truancy to include refusing orders to work overtime or work on rest days.

Filtzer understands that the system that developed was neither capitalist nor socialist. As he puts it

"The result was the creation of an historically unique system of relations of production which conformed neither to the production relations of capitalism geared to the creation of surplus value, nor to those of socialism, where the associated producers collectively determine the purposes to which they will put their labour and the methods by which they will carry it out." (p257)

So far, so good. The problem is, therefore, what is it that explains the USSR's uniqueness? For Filtzer, what is unique is its 'planlessness', a concept acknowledged as originating with Mensheviks like Dan, around *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* (*Socialist Herald*).

It is doubtless the case that the methods of bureaucratic management, the absence of proletarian democracy and the nature of the labour process itself have all led to Soviet planning being full of gross irrationalities and disproportionalities. But to leap from the conclusion that because planning is not all embracing and all effective to the view that the USSR is therefore simply 'planless' is to proceed by an idealist method that obscures the real contradictions and nature of Soviet bureaucratic planning.

That Soviet planning is not 'socialist' and does not have the creation of socialism as its objective. In the hands of the bureaucracy the vital force that could bring it to life and restructure it from top to bottom - the working class - is systematically prevented from doing so. In turn it therefore seeks its own, often individual, means of thwarting the plans of the bureaucracy. Those who want to understand the formative experiences of the Soviet working class within Stalinist planning will find this book invaluable. It is not necessary to agree with the theoretical conclusions of the author to recognise the usefulness of this book. □

by John Hunt



New proletarians arriving from the countryside

The Soviet Union Demystified by F Furedi

Junius 1986 (£5.95 pbk)

AS THE TITLE suggests and the author Frank Furedi claims "the Soviet Union needs to be demystified". Furedi's intention in writing this new book is to clarify the debate on the Soviet Union which has, up to now, "tended to find speculation rather than thought".

However, beyond the cursory mention of a number of writers, *The Soviet Union Demystified* fails to take up the central arguments, polemics and discussions which have preoccupied the communist movement for the last fifty or so years. This failing leads Furedi to repeat many of the methodological errors made by other contributors to the debate on the nature of the Soviet Union.

Furedi correctly recognises that the 1917 revolution, led by the Bolsheviks, achieved working class power, the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a nationalised economy under workers' control. He also accepts that the bureaucratic clique around Stalin set about strangling workers' democracy within the Bolshevik Party from the mid 1920s onwards, replacing workers' political power with the rule of the bureaucracy.

Yet Furedi rejects the position argued by Trotsky and the Left Opposition at the time, that despite the expropriation of the working class from political power by the Stalinist bureaucracy, the gains of October were not totally destroyed. The bureaucracy did not carry through a counter-revolutionary restoration of capitalist property relations but based its power upon the post-capitalist property relations achieved by the revolution.

lution. Furedi thinks otherwise:

"In the years of the NEP the revolution was destroyed..." (p33 our emphasis)

In reality, the Stalinist bureaucracy blocked the transition to socialism rather than destroying the revolution completely. Without the working class holding political power the transition to socialism cannot be completed. Only the working class in power has the material interest and ability to develop the productive forces to end, as Trotsky put it, "the struggle for individual existence". However, the development of the productive forces beyond that which capitalism can achieve is equally dependent upon a planned economy where the law of value is abolished. Furedi refuses to recognise the importance of this:

CRITERION

"However, in the transition period between capitalism and communism, nationalised industry has no inherent virtues. The key factor in strengthening the proletarian dictatorship, is not nationalised property in itself, but the establishment of workers' management." (p58)

For Furedi, workers' political power is the only criterion for characterising the Soviet Union as a workers' state, not its property relations:

"From a Marxist point of view social relations, not property relations are decisive." (p58)

This is clearly a false counter-

position. Social or class relations are an expression of property relations and vice versa. Nationalisation by the first workers' state marked the complete expropriation of capitalist private property. On the basis of planned property relations the working class became the ruling class in the Soviet Union. Despite being expropriated from political power by the Stalinist bureaucracy, this did not alter the fact that the working class remained the ruling class, because the post-capitalist property forms in existence remain a precondition without which it is impossible to build socialism. Trotsky made this clear saying:

"Just as the trades unions under capitalism are workers' organisations run by class-collaborationist, bureaucratic castes in the working class, so the USSR remains a state where the working class is the ruling class but where power is in the hands of a reactionary bureaucratic caste." (L. Trotsky, Writings 1935-36 p360)

Furedi relies on a similar method to that used by Tony Cliff of the SWP(GB), who defines the Soviet Union as state capitalist. The class character of the Soviet Union is defined, according to both writers, by whether or not the working class holds political power rather than by the property forms the state is based upon.

However, at least Cliff can produce an answer as to the Soviet Union's class nature, albeit a completely wrong one. Furedi on the other hand leaves the whole ques-

tion begging. In fact he has to circumvent the problem by attacking the use of categories and definitions as unscientific:

"To move away from this obsession with fixed concepts and formal definitions we need to reconstruct the Marxist approach to the study of social development." (p84)

Maybe Furedi thinks the idea of the class nature of the Soviet state is also 'obsessive'? As a result of specific concrete analysis, Marxists attempt to draw out clear scientific definitions of states, political parties, social movements and events. Class distinctions are also used by Marxists as categories. Such clear scientific definitions and concepts are vital in order to deduce programmatic conclusions and work out how revolutionaries should proceed in action. But this all seems rather 'old hat' to Furedi.

MENSHEVIK

Indeed it is on the questions of political programme and the way forward for workers in all the Stalinist states that Furedi reveals just how far away from Marxism he has moved. No mention is made of the other Stalinist states such as Eastern Europe, China and Cuba, and how workers in those countries should act. In passing, Furedi mentions that a social revolution will be needed in the Soviet Union but fails to point out what that will mean concretely.

Trotsky had to deal with such opponents in the 1930s:

"Certain of our critics want, come what may to call the future revolution social. Let us grant this definition. What does it alter in essence? To those tasks of the revolution we have enumerated it adds nothing whatsoever."

Through his contempt for a scientific class analysis Furedi ends up with crude petit-bourgeois impressionism. Based on the fact that capitalism has a higher standard of living and higher quality consumer durables he can speculate that:

"Worse still, there is the danger that post-capitalist society is left with all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of capitalism." (p103)

If this is the case then wouldn't a capitalist restorationist counter-revolution be a step forward for the Soviet working-class? Furthermore there would certainly be little reason for Furedi to advocate defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism as Trotsky did and we now do.

Leon Trotsky, fifty years ago, in *The Revolution Betrayed* 'demystified' the USSR by a scientific explanation of its degenerated revolution. Furedi stands in a long tradition of re-mystifiers linked to the revolution's original Menshevik detractors. Save your money next time an RCP member offers you a copy. □

by Julian Schofield



TEACHERS, RACISM & BRENT

THE SUSPENSION, REINSTATEMENT and now the council's inquiry into Maureen McGoldrick's alleged racist remarks over the telephone, has posed a number of serious problems for anti-racist union militants.

The suspension of McGoldrick, a NUT member, by the council was interpreted by many socialists as demanding a stand either "for" the council's anti-racist policy and a defence of their action, or "for" the NUT's defence of a union member suspended by the employer.

The reality is more complex, demanding that union militants and anti-racists develop a policy and strategy which both defends union members against arbitrary actions of the employer and at the same time enforces a clear anti-racist policy within the schools.

No one has brought forward any evidence that McGoldrick was an open and organised racist, indeed black parents, teachers and the union have been able to point to her support for the council's equal opportunities policies.

It appears, however, that there was a lobby among some white parents and represented among the governors against the anti-racist policies and against the employing of more black teachers. If the alleged remark of McGoldrick that she did not want "any more black teachers" was indeed made, then it was evidence not that McGoldrick was a "hard" racist but that she was unwilling to openly fight the racist lobby.

CLARIFY

Immediately the allegation was made the NUT school group should have called a meeting to clarify the situation. It should have requested from McGoldrick a clear statement of support for increasing the proportion of black teachers in the school and for actively pursuing an anti-racist policy.

Immediately they should have set up an anti-racist action committee of the union members and parents to counter any racist organising around the issue.

The fact that the NUT leadership in Brent immediately jumped to McGoldrick's defence should not have led socialists to have uncritically supported their actions. Their verbal support for anti-racist policies is severely curtailed by their determination to retain their "rights" to run the schools as they see fit.

It is little wonder then that the NUT leadership, dominated by head teachers, jumped to the defence of McGoldrick where the council's anti-racist policy appeared to be treading on the heads' prerogatives. Their quick defence and call for strike action contrasted dramatically with the NUT hierarchy's normal reaction to anti-racist actions - such as the Honeyford Affair or the Daneford School strike. Then, reactions varied from indifference to outright hostility.

ATTACK

The union leadership used the affair to attack the way the coun-

cil's anti-racist policies were being implemented, fuelling the Tory and right-wing onslaught by claiming the policies had created "fear" amongst teachers and proceeding to rule out of order a motion undermining this campaign at a NUT association meeting.

For rank and file NUT members support for the strike was necessary to obtain McGoldrick's reinstatement because the council's evidence was flimsy. But support could only have been within the context of receiving an undertaking from McGoldrick to actively pursue anti-racist policies and to refuse to obstruct council policy on the recruitment of black teachers.

It would also have meant a struggle within the NUT to ensure its anti-racist policies were carried out in action and a fight to remove from office all those who were trying to use the McGoldrick affair to sabotage its implementation.

Neither should anti-racists line up uncritically behind Brent Council. Certainly the council was absolutely right to declare its intention to recruit more black teachers. The fact that a borough which is 60% black has only 200 black teachers out of 2,300 plainly shows the degree to which blacks are unrepresented in education, as in other areas. It should be an elementary demand of socialists and anti-racists that the authority should aim for a minimum of 60% black teachers in schools.

But such an aim demands the allocation of the necessary resources to compensate for the discrimination and deprivation suffered by the blacks in the existing society.

RESOURCES

It demands extra resources for courses aimed at producing larger numbers of qualified black teachers; access courses for those without formal qualifications, conversion courses and such like, all fully grant aided, with necessary nursery provision for black women with children.

Yet Brent Council expects to pursue its "anti-racist" policies within the constraints laid down for it by a resource-cutting Tory government.

At the beginning of the acad-



Maureen McGoldrick



Black Nationalist Kuba Assegai

emic year there were no less than 172 unfilled teaching posts in Brent, and twelve schools functioning without heads. Leaving posts unfilled is a well known method of cutting expenditure. Ron Anderson, Chair of Education, is down on record as declaring there is no more money for education in Brent, indeed with rate-capping looming, unless the council fights, there will be less.

A real anti-racist policy cannot be just combatting racism in schools and increasing the proportion of black teachers at all levels, important as these measures are. It means tackling the chronic housing problems in Brent, improving the social services, above all providing the jobs for black and white kids when they leave school. This means leading a real fight against the Tory attacks which Brent council has shown little willingness to do in the past. Instead, Brent chose, in the case against McGoldrick to deflect the issue away from anti-racism and on to management's right to manage.

One reason that the majority of black parents and teachers at McGoldrick's school supported her, despite the charges, was undoubtedly her record of fighting the council for more teachers and their failure to fill vacant posts at the school with permanent qualified staff. (A record which might well explain some council officers enthusiasm to take action against her.)

POLARIZATION

Neither in this situation does the influence of various forms of black nationalism contribute to providing a correct way forward. The Black Teacher's Collective has been quoted as welcoming the McGoldrick issue because:

"It polarises the community between racists and antiracists". Such a position would clearly end in the isolation of the anti-racists as a tiny minority.

The failure to distinguish between a Maureen McGoldrick, on the one hand, and an out and out racist like Ray Honeyford on the other, would lead to disastrous errors. The latter had to be driven out of the school; to adopt such a policy in the McGoldrick case would lose the support not only of the majority of rank and file teachers but also the majority of black parents.

THEIR TRADE IS SECRECY

THATCHER IS AT the moment weathering yet another storm in the parliamentary tea-cup. Pleading 'national security' as the reason she refused to answer questions relating to the security services in the House of Commons.

Only thanks to an Australian court - outside her powers of command - has any light been thrown on the issues.

On the other side of the Atlantic Reagan is in similar trouble over the Iranian arms scandal. He faces a harder task in that the Congress is in the hands of his political opponents and has greater powers of investigation than its British equivalent. Yet even Congress cannot summon and question Reagan's current advisors.

What do both scandals reveal? That in the modern capitalist state the actions of the chief executive and her or his government are not open to scrutiny or control by the legislature - i.e. by "the peoples' representatives".

The plea of 'national security' by-passes it almost completely and often by-passes the official cabinet of 'ministers' in favour of a 'kitchen-cabinet' - i.e. a private cabal of advisors. In practice the

policies the ruling class requires are decided and carried out in secret. These are legalised where necessary by compliant legislatures.

ILLEGALLY

But when the ruling classes desired policies cannot be so legalised they are carried out illegally. Thus if Reagan wants arms for Nicaraguan Contras or wants to boost the pro-capitalist wing of the Iranian mullahs then he arranges for his advisors to do it illegally and without his knowledge.

If Thatcher and her predecessors want to spy on the labour movement or destabilize a Labour government they have the secret service at their beck and call. After all, the interests of Britain's bosses, their chosen party and its leader, simply are the national interest as far as MI5, the police chiefs and the civil service mandarins are concerned.

This fact is well known to the Labour leaders. It is quite obvious that only the trustiest of Labour right-wingers is ever allowed into

the Home Office. They may squeal about covert operations to destabilize Wilson's mid-1970's Labour Government with political scandals, but when in office they refused to expose them fully to public view.

In Australia the security services were put into action to bring down Gough Whitlam's government which the CIA regarded as a 'security risk'.

But normally these sort of 'cold coup' plans never have to be used. Labour leaders are perfectly responsive to the public pressures of the ruling class and can normally, via the trade union bureaucracy, prevent the working class getting out of control.

But the crises of the last ten years and the collapse of British industry forced Britain's bosses to take a different course to that of consensus and compromise with the Labour movement. That is what Thatcherism is all about.

UNDERMINES

But this carries with it enormous dangers. It undermines the

basis of social compromise. It obliges the Labour leaders to brazenly betray and surrender. It gives them nothing to offer their outraged members. It has led to massive eruptions of open class struggle.

So the ruling class has to prepare another way of ruling - for use in emergencies - the mallet fist. The miners' strike revealed a powerful hint of it, but one still tied by constitutional and legal restraints.

Thatcher's government is not a 'Bonapartist regime' but it has to prepare the procedures and the mechanisms for transfer to one when necessary. That is why she must keep 'national security questions' away from the prying eyes of Parliament.

It is all very well and fine for Neil Kinnock to denounce Thatcher over this case. Labour supporters must ask will he therefore throw open the doors of the MI5 plotters to a full and public labour movement inspection as soon as he takes office? One thing is for sure: his proclamations of patriotism and loyalty give not the slightest grounds for optimism.

by Dave Stocking

by Stuart King

SINN FEIN HEADS SOUTH

It cannot be said that it represents any qualitatively new departure. As far as the Provisionals are concerned the principal method of ending British rule remains the armed struggle.

ADAMANT

Unlike the previous split in 1970 over abstention, which gave rise to the Stalinist Official Sinn Fein (now the "Workers Party") - a party which has totally rejected the military struggle - the present Sinn Fein/IRA leadership is based on an integrated Northern structure and is adamant about its continued commitment to the military campaign.

This point was made by successive speakers at the rostrum defending the change. As if to underline this, Martin McGuinness, speaking on behalf of Sinn Fein's

Ard Chomhairle (supreme council), attacked the "disastrous" ceasefire of 1975, for which he held responsible the old guard around Dáithí Ó Connell and Rory Ó Bradaigh - the principal defenders of the abstentionist position. He confidently warned:

"The IRA will not split . . . if you allow yourself to be led out of this hall today, the only place you will be going is home."

In the event the split took only about one third of those voting against the change of line, that is about ten to fifteen percent of the delegates.

Inevitably there was a debate about the corrupting powers of parliamentary politics. This debate revealed, on both sides, the absence of either a class analysis of the basis of bourgeois parliamentarism or any idea of how socialists might use parliamentary institutions in a principled, working class, revolutionary way.

This would involve first, a clear conception that bourgeois parliaments are part of the state apparatus of the enemy and, as such, need to be destroyed and replaced by democratic workers' councils. Any participation in bourgeois parliaments is aimed primarily at rallying mass working class actions to realise this goal.

But since Sinn Fein merely wish to realise their utopian programme of co-operative capitalism through these parliamentary institutions they cannot but help succumbing to the opportunist and corrosive pressure of bourgeois politicking.

Almost sensing this one speaker asserted in response to the accusation that the Leinster House parliament corrupts:

"Leinster House does corrupt. It corrupts people just as any parliament; even a 32 county parliament would corrupt the weak and the vain . . . but it cannot corrupt a revolutionary."

There is no doubt about the speaker's sincerity. But, in spite of this sincerity, Sinn Fein under Adams and McGuinness view the southern state not in class political terms, as the enemy of the working class, but merely a corruption of the ideal Irish State - a thirty two county republic. For them, precisely their stubborn subordination of working class mobilisation to the dictates of an elitist armed struggle in the North, relegates the role of parliament to the cultivation of a base of sympathy and support in the south, by the same means as the Workers Party have used.

They will be involved in more community based campaigns than the main parties in the South. But these are not seen as part of a class struggle against the state, rather as so many strings to tie a social base to the national struggle.



Jerry Adams addressing the Ard Fheis

gle. At this year's Ard Fheis, a resolution calling on the party to base itself openly on the working class was overwhelmingly defeated.

PREJUDICES

Sinn Fein also dropped its one year old policy on abortion, defending the right to choose, in order to appease its deeply conservative ranks in the rural border areas. These are the areas where it is expected that Sinn Fein would stand a better chance than anywhere else in the Southern elections, providing it panders to Catholic prejudices.

Sinn Fein is not a working class or socialist party in its programme. Its base in the working class communities of the North has to some extent pushed it leftwards. The growth of a working class base in the South through agitational work on social issues cannot be ruled out. But in essence it remains a petit-bourgeois revolutionary nationalist party subordinated in its political perspectives to the dictates of a strictly armed struggle - the "long haul" of an elite minority aimed at the limited and minimum goal of national unity and independence.

The change of tactics will open out Sinn Fein to some extent. It will reveal the contradictions that emerged in the course of the H Block campaign between their goals and the mass workers' action necessary to achieve them. It is up to revolutionary Marxists, trained in the united front tactics of the healthy communist tradition, to intervene, explain and draw the lessons of this experience so that the hopes of forging a revolutionary communist leadership of the working class out of the best elements of the anti-imperialists can be realised.

by a member of the Irish Workers Group



Sinn Fein vice-president John Joe McGill (seated) gets a standing ovation

ON 2 NOVEMBER THE Sinn Fein Ard Fheis (conference) resolved what has been an ongoing and bitter internal row within the republican movement. A majority of delegates voted to abandon the

abstentionist principle in favour of taking seats in the Dublin Parliament (Dail).

While this represents a break with one of the more sterile ideological traditions of republicanism,

FEW FRIENDS FOR IRISH COALITION

WITH FOUR YEARS of coalition rule behind it the Fine Gael/Labour Party government in the Irish Republic enters 1987 having to face the judgement of the electors before the Autumn.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fail are busy topping up their election funds, consulting their PR firms and refining their election poses.

The Fine Gael/Labour coalition narrowly survived a vote of confidence at the beginning of the autumn Dail session. This came after a long summer recess in which the media, the stock exchange and the leaders of the trade unions all started to draw up a balance sheet on a government with less than a year to run.

From all sides the judgement was negative. Fine Gael is the party of big business, the large farmers and the urban professionals. It has dominated a coalition government which has had the longest term of office since the Cosgrave administration of 1973 to 1977. Its supporters had hoped it would use the time to revive the Irish economy.

Yet the last few years have seen foreign investment fall away. Worst of all, the coalition was elected to reduce public spending and hence the level of taxation on business. This they have failed to do. The public debt now stands at IR£19 billion which is 133% of GNP. Half of this is owed to foreign creditors. Servicing this debt takes 13% of GNP. With falling revenues and higher expenditure, due to rising unemployment, taxation and interest rates have risen sharply. Bank rates for business have risen 2%.

The labour movement is hardly jubilant about the coalition's record. Over half of a worker's wages goes in tax. Unemployment is at 235,000, the highest ever, leading to the re-emergence of emigration on a large scale; 30,000 in 1985.

Yet the response of the unions has been fatally compromised by Labour's role in government. Trade union leaders may be well pleased with their ability over the last four years to head off most of the calls for strike action in the public sector in the face of constant government pressure on wages. Yet their ability to strike left poses in the face of unemployment and massive cuts focused on health care, has been severely restricted by the presence of the Labour Party in coalition, a party they have no wish to abandon.

In every attempt to refurbish its image the leadership of the Labour Party set up an "electoral commission". Despite years of Labour Party ministers enforcing severe cuts in all areas of welfare spending this commission did not rule out further coalitions with Fine Gael.



Charles Haughey signs copies of the New Ireland Forum Report

Apparently strict conditions for any further Labour Party participation in a coalition allow trade unions leaders and the 'left-wing' of the party to rally round the present leadership in the lead-up to the general election.

Fine Gael, however, is unlikely to offer Labour another chance at coalition so soon. Despite massive cuts in health carried out by Labour Party minister Barry Desmond, despite the repeated use of the army to scab on striking public sector workers and despite significant victories against teachers and other large groups of workers, Irish capital is not satisfied. The coalition with Labour is blamed for the failure of the government to be even more ferocious in its attacks on workers.

A more attractive coalition partner for Fine Gael has emerged in the form of the Progressive Democrats. Originally a split from Fianna Fail this new party now seems likely to emerge from the next general election with about the same level of support, at least in terms of votes if not seats, as the Labour party.

But as the party of those sections of the Irish bourgeoisie most determined to reduce the national debt, privatise nationalised companies and reduce welfare provisions, it is a party with which Fine Gael could easily coalesce, and ultimately hope to swallow.

However, Fine Gael may not have that opportunity. Polls indicate Fianna Fail as being the party most likely to gain a slim but absolute majority. That party will campaign on a populist programme against 'excessive' cuts and for increased capital spending in selected areas.

Their major problem is likely to be the attitude of the party to the Anglo-Irish agreement. Sinn Fein having abandoned abstentionism threatens some marginal rural Fianna Fail seats. To ward off this challenge and to maintain his position with the party's rural petty bourgeois backbone, the leader Charles Haughey has been willing to criticise the Anglo-Irish agree-

ment as inadequate.

This has not, however, proved popular with the floating vote nationwide. And it may yet cost Fianna Fail more votes than it gains them. But it is important for Fianna Fail to head off the Sinn Fein challenge. For it is in rural areas, not for the moment among the urban working class, that Sinn Fein may have some influence in the forthcoming election.

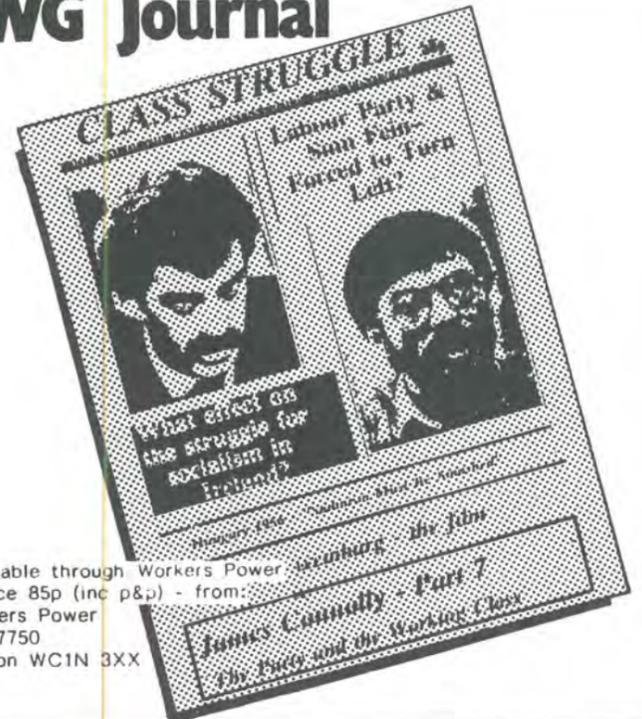
Even if Fianna Fail do win, their fundamental agreement with Thatcherite economic policies means that Haughey will, as he did once before, 'discover' that the economy is so bad that he must attack the workers. It is a paradox of the Irish Republic that despite high levels of trade unionisation the vast majority of the working class are not in any way politically organised as a class. So it is that neither the Labour party nor the Stalinist Workers Party - which has in the past proved willing to support a Fianna Fail government - are providing any alternative for the working class.

Those struggling for the rights of the unemployed have been carefully kept outside the trade union movement. Those fighting for the rights of women are in disarray and retreat following a series of defeats in relation to abortion, divorce and family planning clinics under feminist misleadership. Within the unions despite long and bitter 'disputes' in many sectors of public and private industry the workers still do not possess the democratic structures to call their leaders to account for their secret dealings with the employers.

So it is that most workers will vote for Fianna Fail. But Irish workers face a bleak prospect if their fate is left in the hands of the Irish bourgeoisie. Their most urgent need is to begin to organise within the ranks of the labour movement to provide a revolutionary alternative, not only to both the major capitalist parties, but also to a labour movement leadership which has proven an unstinting ally of the bourgeoisie.

by a member of the Irish Workers Group

IWG Journal



NO RELIANCE ON AQUINO

MRS AQUINO HAS obviously taken the advice given to her during her visit to the USA in September. The Reagan administration, though critical of her temerity in the negotiations with the guerilla New People's Army, had privately urged Aquino to strengthen her control over the government, and to set up her own political party.

And to back her up, the US had given Aquino \$150 million economic and military aid and an additional \$200 million supplementary economic aid. On the same visit, Mrs Aquino secured a \$508 million standby loan from the IMF, plus a \$300 million credit from the World Bank and a pledge of favourable repayment terms on Philippine debt from the commercial banks.

Strengthened by this support from the US Congress, Aquino prepared the ground for her recent move against the arch-reactionary clique around Defence Minister Juan Enrile. He was the chief focus for an armed coup from the right.

But Aquino demonstrated her political skill and continuing bonapartist character by also ousting the rest of her cabinet. This meant that she could rid herself of the 'left' Labour Minister Augusto Sanchez whose reforms had drawn fire from the American Chamber of Commerce and the influential Makati Business Club.

Since the 'February revolution' Aquino has been perilously balancing between the claims of rival classes in the Philippines while endeavouring to strengthen her own position and powers. This is taking place in the context of an unstable economy, a self-confident labour movement and unbroken guerilla movement agitating for radical land reform.

economic problems are still acute, 2.6 million are unemployed (12% of the workforce). Another 5.5 million are underemployed. The streamlining of government departments is expected to put another half a million on the streets.

Aquino has, of course, tried to offload the crisis onto the workers. Conditions on the sugar island, Negros, has reached crisis proportions. The island's economy is hard hit by the collapse in the sugar market. The sugar plantation workers suffer poverty and privation so severe that even the Catholic Church criticises the Aquino government for not carrying out land reform. Aquino's family is a plantation owning family.

There has been a de facto freeze on wages. A petition from the unions for a 25% increase in mandated minimum wage rates in order to make up for some of the 37% inflation last year was turned down by the Aquino government. It declared that labour and management will be left alone to determine wage levels.



Despite this the downfall of Marcos has invigorated the confidence of the organised workers. Since February, the number of strikes have risen dramatically as the workers make full use of what the Communist Party of Philippines (CPP) calls "democratic space". By August, the number of strikes for this year has already exceeded the previous record in 1985.

These were not only over economic issues. Sixty nine per cent concerned complaints against charges of unfair labour practices, a euphemism for dismissal of union members or refusal of management to negotiate with the unions.

At least 60% of the recent strikes were led by unions affiliated to the Kilusang Mayo Uno, the May the First Movement, a national federation of trade unions. Its membership has grown drama-

tically from 100,000 in 1981, when it was founded, to 600,000 at present. It claims to control half the unions in Metro Manila, the main industrial region.

The KMU recruited many members this year due to its successes in repudiating many of the existing Collective Bargaining Agreements. These are called "Sweetheart" agreements, and are in reality, no-strike deals in return for a fixed wage increase over several years. In defeating these agreements the KMU won large wage increases.

The fear in Philippine business circles and the military resulting from this new combativity is well illustrated in the brutal assassination of union leader Rolando Olalia. But the massive demonstration at his funeral only served to illustrate that organised labour is far from intimidated as yet.

Aquino faces the next year more confidently because she still enjoys popular support and she has forced her Chief of Staff, General Ramos, to openly side with her against Enrile. By also stealing some of Enrile's clothes and talking tough to the NPA and demanding they agree to a new ceasefire deadline, she approaches the first anniversary of Marcos' overthrow more confidently.

The proposed new constitution which is expected to be approved by plebiscite early next year will also strengthen her control of the country. The Constitution Committee (Concom) appointed by Aquino proposed a bicameral system with a two-house legislature with Aquino as the president for the next 6 years. It will also give her emergency powers to proclaim martial law (as Marcos had).

The constitution declares the intention that the Philippine should be nuclear-weapon free but leaves the lease in the Military Base Agreement to run until it expires in 1991, and then allowing the President (who will still be Mrs Aquino) free to re-negotiate "subject to the national interest". There will be local and regional elections next after the plebiscite, but no election to the legislature or for the presidency.

During the drawing up of the new constitution, Bayan, a coalition of cause-orientated groups, which includes the Communist Party of the Philippines, presented a list

of 36 demands to the Concom. The demands included land redistribution, restructuring of the military and repudiation of foreign debts, and an end to US military bases in the Philippines. Needless to say, these were not taken up by the Concom.



Cory Aquino

There is a real risk that Aquino's move against Enrile will lead to a dangerous accommodation to her by the CPP. When Aquino was under threat from a military coup led by Enrile, Ocampo, the leader of the NPA (New Peoples Army, CPP's armed wing) pledged armed support for Aquino against any "fascist resurgence".

The CPP now regards its boycott of the February election to be a mistake and that it underestimated Aquino's popularity. In its underground journal *Ang Bayan* in July, the CPP said the national united front (ie a popular front) was now:

"... just as indispensable as the armed struggle in winning total victory."

It went on to stress:

"the need to re-examine and adjust our political categories ..."

The CPP believes that the Aquino government can be nudged left-wards, probably as far as having a coalition government with the CPP. This party is both foolhardy and criminal. Foolhardy because it leaves the CPP itself open to physical destruction by the 'democratic' counter-revolution spearheaded by Aquino. Criminal because even if it was partially realised, it would involve the subordination of the working class and peasantry to the interests of the Aquino wing of the bourgeoisie.

This will leave them open either to being demobilised and cheated of the gains of the last year of struggle or, worse, defenceless and disorientated if faced by a renewed move by the right-wing and the armed forces to assert their power and bring in 'stability' at the cost of workers' and peasants' lives. Such is the experience of all Stalinist

Luis Ingacio da Silva ('Lula'). In the run up to the elections a carefully orchestrated government campaign was run to prove the Workers Party was both violent and subversive.

A group of bank robbers "gave themselves up" to the police claiming to be Workers Party members, while two PT deputies were accused of opening fire on police protecting scabs in a dispute in Lene, Sao Paulo. Despite these difficulties Lula gained 600,000 votes in Sao Paulo while the PT is likely to gain 20 deputies in the Congress. (For a fuller analysis of the PT see *Workers Power* 79)

The PMDB is likely to face growing difficulties in presenting itself as a reforming, progressive anti-militarist party. Already the new austerity measures are providing widespread opposition from the workers and poor who are most badly hit. In the countryside a growing and bitter struggle is developing between the landowners and the landless peasants.

popular front strategies, even those enforced in a militant and guerilla-ist fashion.

Yet Aquino has already given evidence that she will not be wooed by such support. For example, during the negotiation for a ceasefire agreement with the National Democratic Front (NDF - left umbrella organisation in which the CPP is dominant) a leading CP negotiator, Salas, was seized by the military. A demand for his release as part of the ceasefire agreement was not accepted, nor were any of the other demands from the NDF.

A revolutionary communist strategy in the Philippines starts from the need to establish full political independence of the factory and plantation workers from Aquino's fake reforming project, the limits of which are set in advance by her backers among the landlords and big business. No ceasefire should be agreed which leaves the peasants defenceless in the face of the armed forces.

There is desperate land hunger in the Philippines and this land must be seized by revolutionary methods. Peasants' Committees to organise and undertake land seizures must be built. The tasks of the hour are preparation against any future coup attempts and the defeat of Aquino's Bonapartist moves. The workers' strikes and organisations face a daily threat from right-wing assassins.

The peasants face brutal intimidation at the hands of troops. By building workers' and peasants' defence organisations, by arming these organisations, a real people's militia can begin to be built. We say place no reliance on any section of the state forces - build independent workers' defence squads and peasants' defence squads.

STRUGGLES

A new coup attempt must be met with the resistance of the whole working class through a general strike. The building of workers' councils now to prepare for such a strike and to coordinate existing struggles is a burning necessity and a means of moving towards the only outcome of the Philippines crises that will solve the democratic tasks and blaze the path towards a socialist future - a revolutionary workers and peasants' government in the Philippines.

The illusions in Aquino, however, still need to be put to the test. The call for a constituent assembly, not convened by the army as a means of overthrowing Aquino, but by the armed workers' and peasants' organisations, needs to be fought for. In a real constituent Assembly Aquino's reform programme can be put up to the test of popular approval - or rejection. The rallying cry must be not the power of a Bonaparte leaning on the armed forces, but the power of the workers and peasants resting on the armed people. ■

by Din Wong

FOREIGN DEBT

In spite of high expectations, GNP for the first half of this year fell by 3% from the level for the same period last year. Philippines has outstanding foreign debts of \$26.3 billion and debt servicing eats up half of the country's revenue from commodity exports. There will be a shortfall of \$30 million between government revenue and expenditure this year which will have to be paid for by the IMF loan.

Since the 'February revolution' the inflation rate has come down to 2.4% from 37%. However the

BRAZIL

AUSTERITY FOLLOWS ELECTION

THE BRAZILIAN ELECTIONS of 15 November resulted in a sweeping victory for the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB). The PMDB won the governorships in 20 out of 23 states. Its ally, the party of the Brazilian President Jose Sarney, won the other three.

The ruling "Alliance Democratica" will now have clear majorities in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. From 1 February 1987 these Chambers will constitute themselves as a "constituent assembly" to draw up a new constitution.

Even before the final ballots had been counted President Sarney was rewarding the millions of workers, peasants and small farmers who had voted for the alliance, by declaring a series of swingeing austerity measures. Petrol and other fuel prices have been increased by 60%, cigarettes and drink doubled in price, telephone, postal and electricity prices are all being upped.

To prevent this being reflected in higher inflation figures, and thus being the basis for a rise in wages triggered by legal indexation, the government has introduced a "new" (ie fiddled) cost of living index, including only "basic items" consumed by low wage earners.

These measures by the government reflect its growing concern that the Brazilian "economic miracle" is heading for a fall. Brazil recovered from a sharp slump and debt crisis in 1981-3 by a combination of attacking workers' wages and achieving a dramatic increase in exports - especially of manufactured goods. The value of Brazilian exports has risen by nearly 30% since 1980, while exports from the rest of Latin America have actually declined.

The economy has been growing at 7% - 8% a year. This has enabled Brazil to keep up its massive interest repayments to the foreign banks on its external debt of US \$107 billion - the largest in the world. Inflation has been brought under control - down from over 200% in 1985 to a claimed 10% in 1986. Much of the credit for this has been attributed to the "Cruzado Plan" introduced in early 1985 by Sarney.

ABANDONED

This was a series of measures which included a "price freeze" alongside partial indexation of wages. It is this policy which has now been abandoned since the

elections. Growing shortages, a flourishing black market and a dramatic increase in real inflation rates prompted the government to again attempt to solve the economic problems at the expense of the workers and peasants.

The elections, the first to be held free of military control, were heavily stacked in favour of the big bourgeois parties. An estimated US \$1.2 billion was spent in the election campaign. Ermirio de Moraes of the PTB was estimated to have spent US \$60 million on his campaign for the governorship of Sao Paulo.

His opponents spent similar sums on their campaigns. Access to television, the main medium for electoral propaganda in Brazil, was limited to the proportion of seats gained in the 1982 elections, a measure which guaranteed the dominance on the air of the PMDB and PF. Under the electoral law the electoral judge in Brazilia prohibited propaganda through outdoor posters and banned publication of interviews with the candidates!

These measures, while aimed at the opposing bourgeois parties, were especially designed to weaken the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), the Workers Party, led by the metal workers leader in Sao Paulo,

by Steve Foster

JOB'S ON THE LINE

IN JULY 1986 the TGWU brought out the first issue of its automotive group bulletin. It was almost completely dedicated to the views of John Smith, Labour's Shadow Minister for Trade and Industry. Smith tells car workers to look forward to a future Labour government for salvation. Nothing is said about the current situation apart from the 'grinding down of the shopfloor'.

Yet the 'grinding down of the shopfloor' is meeting resistance in the car plants, particularly in Ford's. And this resistance is the springboard from which a fight for a general recovery of rights, wages and conditions can be won.

At the Ford's Basildon Tractor Plant the shop-floor works seven days at a time or six nights at a time before having days off. The biggest complaint is against the role allocated to 'lead operators' or 'S' men (yes men?).

CLASH

In a clash recently between a black worker and his 6'2" foreman, the foreman was hit and the worker was off pay before he even had a chance to be represented. After a week the lads on the line threatened a strike which brought in the district official. The foreman changed his story as did the 'S' man who had originally 'corroborated' it. The black worker was reinstated with a ten-shift suspension. It was the first time the worker had been in trouble in twenty years service.

In Dagenham the 'S' men back up the foremen. A recent case saw a worker 'go down the road' when the union failed to provide the backing. Nonetheless Dagenham has got the only track in the whole of Ford Europe without an 'S' man on it - the reason is that the workers 'walk' when management tries to introduce them. The management have gone to extraordinary lengths to smash effective organisation, including attempting to place a 'nark' in meetings of militant stewards.

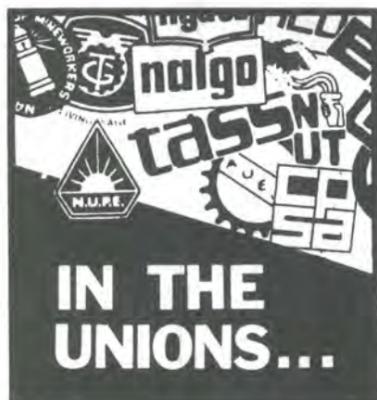
At Halewood MSB when management attempted to ride roughshod over custom and practice methods of allocating overtime

there was a strike. The MSB convenor promised management he'd get the men back. He got them back but five out of sixty of them were short on pay. The management has even got some of the workers transferring car shells from the press shops to the white lines and also across to the paint shops carrying on through meal breaks! The men have shown willing when it comes to a fight but the convenor is just keeping his head down.

HEAD-COUNT

In the Halewood PTA the management are looking for any excuse to cut the numbers of people in 'off the line' workers' allowance and reducing the 'head-count' still further. Workers who had been previously transferred in earlier reshuffles were in many cases 'grade protected'. Some of these men are now in their fifties and have a hard time trying to hold the line. The pace is merciless, 600 cars a shift, 1200 cars every 24 hours. More labour is being taken on and jobs are continuously being retimed as a way of losing workers off some sections.

At Bridgend the workforce have been told that they will finish in five years time! The work, it is said, is to be transferred to Dagenham, but the suspicion is that it will go to Valencia in Spain and it won't be for just a holiday! During the next few months stewards expect offers of early retirement to be issued to the work-



force, followed by voluntary retirement. What is left over will be the skeleton crew. After notice of the closure was announced management tried to get some South African-sourced parts into the plant. Maybe they thought that the closure notice would have softened them up. Well, they reckoned without international solidarity. The parts were promptly redespached back to the dockers who had handled them, accompanied by an unprintable note!

Resistance has taken place then, but it has been sporadic. At the moment many Ford workers will have vague ideas that at least things can't get any worse and may get a bit better under a Labour government. These ideas, while they remain passive, are dangerous. Remember 1978! Under the last Labour government Ford workers were obliged to wage a lengthy strike to break Callaghan's vicious wage restraint policies. They must organise now to resist any repeat performance under Kinlock.

To do this means building on and co-ordinating, via rank and file groups like the Ford Workers'

Combine, actions like those at Bridgend and Basildon. The Combine can and must develop international solidarity as a priority - both with South African workers and with workers throughout Ford's multi-national empire. But it also means formulating demands on Labour to force it, if it wins an election, to reverse the setbacks Ford workers have suffered over the last seven years. Labour must:

- Nationalise the entire car and components industry without compensation and under workers' control. For workers' control of hiring, firing and track speeds.
- Abolish the anti-union laws that currently leave Ford workers who take action against South Africa, for example, open to prosecution.
- Refuse to implement any wage restraint policies.
- Ensure that all women working for Ford's, like the machinists, automatically get equal pay for equal work. Workers' control will decide what constitutes equal work.

TUBE FIGHT LOOMS

BETWEEN 8 AND 22 December, London Underground NUR members will be balloted on industrial action against the onslaught from London Regional Transport's (LRT) London Underground Limited (LUL) management.

Management are looking for a "35% reduction in costs" which will mean a huge reduction in staff. Many stations have already lost staff, leaving them 'one-manned' with only a foreman. A further 1500 station grades are to be removed.

The protection offered to 'surplus staff' displaced after the NUR and ASLEF were defeated on One Person Operated trains is to be withdrawn. LRT/LUL intend to seek 'volunteers' to transfer to other depots. OPO trains, management have decided, will be introduced into deep tube sections regardless of the hazards involved!

The introduction of OPO, the steady erosion of staff and a couple of miserly wage deals 'negotiated' by the union has embittered many of the rank and file. A typical opinion in response to the campaign is: "Oh, they've (NUR) only just realised, have they?" and so on.

What we need to do is organise for all-out action as the only

action that will bring the bosses to their knees. History has shown that one-day strikes act only as tokens - a one-day strike will not sway this management. However, if the bureaucrats at Unty House impose a one-day strike, or similar, we must give it our full support, but fight to extend it with full support from ASLEF and the bus workers - who are also under severe attack!

To this end we must fight for a cross-union rank and file strike committee elected by and accountable to regular mass meetings, in order to keep the bureaucracy in check and make certain our fight is won!

- Vote Yes!
- For all-out action to smash LRT/LUL's assault on workers!

by a London Underground NUR member

CORRECTION

In the article on the NUM in WP Number 88 we mistakenly reported a five day strike at Nantgarw in South Wales against closure. In fact there were two separate days of action at Nantgarw and they concerned the issue of work practices. We apologise to readers for this error.

Above Criticism?

I'm a student at Newcastle University, and I was both interested and a bit annoyed at your critique of Socialist Students in NOLS. Comrades in Socialist Organiser may be the political leadership of SSIN, but they have provided a broad, hard, non-sectarian left in NUS. Now we are at the stage where a left group, without illusions in Labour or in Parliament, may soon determine the direction of one of the largest unions in Britain. This strikes me as a good thing, and though Socialist Organiser hasn't been perfect at hardening up SSIN supporters, to criticise a united, successful left front in a Union in this way seems, well, rather silly.

Mind you, it was well written, so I enclose a cheque for the next 10 issues.

Yours comradely,

D Chapple
Newcastle

WE REPLY

SSIN is more a left-wing student umbrella organisation than a United Front. It's 'Non-Implementation' strategy is ambiguous enough to allow both 'left' and 'right' under its wings. To win more recruits SSIN softens its politics. This approach leads both SSIN and Socialist Organiser precisely to sow illusions in Labour and Parliament. But for Socialist Organiser that's what being 'a non-sectarian left' in NUS is all about.

DANGERS

The article on unemployment in the last paper warned of the unemployed falling prey to racist and fascist ideas if they remained unorganised and abandoned by the labour movement. I don't think there is much danger of the many unemployed black people falling prey to these dangers.

Yours fraternally,

C Brind
London

WE REPLY

Point taken and we apologise for failing to take cognisance of the different dangers facing black and white unemployed people.

Chinese workers strike

ON 10 NOVEMBER three Chinese workers walked out of Wheelers, a seafood restaurant in Brighton, in support of the Second Chef. He was sacked for refusing to cooperate with preparing new menus and new work practices until the workers receive the 5% pay rise that workers in the other Wheelers restaurants got in October.

This strike is the first known strike by unionised Chinese immigrant workers. Chinese immigrant workers have always been open to savage exploitation. Many do not speak any English. Most of them work in sweat shop conditions, with long hours and little employment protection. The vast majority are not unionised and do not know their rights at work.

Workers at Wheelers in Brighton joined the Transport and General Workers Union in 1985 when the then new owner of the restaurant, Dennis Bailey, attempted to impose a period of probation on all the workers, including those who had

worked in the restaurant for over 11 years. He also attempted to increase the length of the sessions each worker had to do and even refused to give the Head Chef overtime pay for work done. He would not recognise the union.

The striking workers set up a picket outside the restaurant and were well supported by the labour movement in Brighton. They successfully turned away the delivery of milk, fresh fruits and vegetables, ice cream and sweets and the collection of refuse. However they have not been able to stop the delivery of the most important goods - that of fish and seafood supplied by Kennedy Brooke, which also supplies the other Wheelers restaurants in the chain. Wheelers has now been granted an injunction forbidding the TGWU to organise a picket with more than 6 people.

It is important that the mass picket should be maintained, not only to dissuade customers from going in, but to stop all deliveries. The TGWU must instruct all its delivery drivers, in particular those working in Billingsgate, to block Wheelers and Kennedy Brooke. The strikers should also make approaches to other workers in the Wheelers chain to join the union and come out on strike. Messages of support and donations to:

Chinese Workers Support Group,
c/o Chinese Information and Advice Centre,
152-6 Shaftesbury Ave,
London WC2

by Din Wong

Dear Comrades,

We are writing to inform you of the sad and sudden death of this month of Jan Rebane, who had been a worker at the Lambeth Trade Union Resource Centre since its opening in 1985, and before that, a worker at the Lambeth Unemployed Centre.

Jan had been a prominent activist in Lambeth since coming to work in the borough. Although not a member of Lambeth Trades Council he attended many of its meetings as an observer, and at the time of his death was active in the Trades Council's South Africa Sub-Committee. He took a principled stand on many questions, and our comrades worked with him on many issues.

Jan was a devoted activist who made an invaluable contribution to the trade union movement in Lambeth, and we would like to extend our sympathies to his comrades, friends and family.

Yours fraternally,

S. London Workers Power

A Memorial Fund has been set up.

Donations to: Jan Rebane Memorial Fund, c/o Lambeth Trade Union Resource Centre, Bon Marche Building, Brixton Road, London SW9 8EJ

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' UNION

I am writing to criticise the formulation in the article "Unemployed Must Be Organised" in WP88 that "... an unemployed workers' movement ... must be made up of the unemployed branches and members of the existing unions".

Surely this represents a departure from the previous often stated position on the need to organise the vast mass of the unemployed who are systematically kept out of the trade unions through restrictive membership rules? The unemployed should not have to wait to be let into the existing unions in order to organise, but should organise in an independent unemployed workers' union now. The article makes no mention of this.

If we say that an unemployed workers' movement should be composed of those lucky enough to be in the existing unions (a minuscule proportion of the unemployed) surely we are excluding the vast majority who cannot join a union or retain union membership?

The article is particularly dangerous given the recent rule change in the TGWU to allow the recruitment of unemployed under

21. This concession must be seen for what it is - designed to head off pressure for a more extensive reform of the rules. Clearly we must seize on the gain and seek to build upon it. But we must not allow our heads to be turned by the idea that sufficient numbers will now be let into the trade unions to form the basis for a genuine unemployed workers' movement.

To suggest that the bureaucrats will allow extensive unionisation of the unemployed such as could form the basis of an unemployed workers' movement is to turn reality on its head.

Yours fraternally,
A Wackett
London

WE REPLY

The formulation referred to in no way contradicts our previous and 'often-stated' position on an unemployed workers' movement. It does not state as the comrade implies that such a movement will be made up exclusively of the unemployed inside the unions. It was merely emphasising that, as an

already organised group, those in trade unions must play a central role in building an unemployed workers' movement. If this emphasis - which should be seen in the context of the TGWU's limited concession on organising the unemployed - has given the impression that we have changed our line then we can reassure readers that we do stand for an independent unemployed workers' movement organising workers both inside and outside the established trade unions. However, it is totally false to say that the article in any way suggested that we were sowing illusions in the bureaucracy and thereby turning reality on its head.



WRITE TO:

The Editor Workers Power
BCM 7750 London WC1N 3XX

BETTER FEWER BUT BETTER

Our recent branch meeting we discussed the London joint meeting to commemorate the Hungarian revolution of 1956. In their contributions comrades asked a number of questions which could not be answered at the time, and it was decided that I should put them to you, on behalf of the branch. They are as follows:

1. Why were there so few members of Workers Power at the meeting?
2. Why was the meeting not advertised in Workers Power? Was it so that your members and supporters would not know about the meeting? Or was it an attempt to show the other groups involved that your political differences with them were so deep that any joint work could only be a token effort?
3. Why was there no report of the meeting in the next issue of Workers Power? We noted that there were articles on the Hungarian events in your October and November issues, and clearly you believe that a study of 1956 is important for Marxists at the present time.

DISAGREEMENTS

We felt that, for us, disagreements on philosophy and history are not insuperable barriers to co-operation between groups internationally claiming to belong to the Trotskyist tradition within the Communist movement.

Although we can only speak for our branch, we believe that it is well known that the Workers Revolutionary Party is committed to examining the history of splits within the Fourth International in the belief that an international reorganisation can lead to the construction of the world party of socialist revolution, while the programme of Workers Power is quite distinct from that.

However, we had come to think that the discussions that had already taken place at local and leadership level in our organisations, the joint participation in the London classes, and the organisational co-operation over Hungary and the commemoration of the Russian Revolution could lead somewhere, and that differences could be thrashed out in an open and comradely manner.

We hope you can explain, preferably in the pages of your paper, why we were unable to resolve our questions and whether they represent differences which we felt had

manifested themselves in an uncomradely way.

Your fraternally,
John Peters
S.E. London Branch
WRP

WE REPLY

We did indeed co-operate with the WRP in organising a series of meetings on the Hungarian revolution. We did so in Sheffield where the only group that proved willing to co-operate with us were supporters of Socialist Organiser. We did so in Birmingham where, despite a prior national undertaking to assist, both Socialist Viewpoint and International declined to co-operate in the work of building the meeting. (Approximately 100 people attended this meeting.)

In both of these cases we took on the brunt of the work to organise and publicise the meetings. Given that you have doubtless written to International and Viewpoint asking them to justify their sectarian behaviour, we will await their explanations in their press and answer your questions concerning one of four meetings we co-operated in (the fourth was in Newcastle).

In fact we sent every available London comrade to the meeting in question. We urged contacts to attend. We brought no-one in from outside London because virtually every member in the country had attended similar meetings in the previous week. We had explained in advance that the meeting coincided with a pre-planned paper production weekend which always taxes our London resources. So too did the preparation and dispatch of three comrades to an advertised public forum on Ireland organised by the WRP. This effort proved a total waste of resources as the meeting was cancelled with no notice given to us whatsoever.

You point out that we did not advertise the meeting in our press. Neither did we do so for the Sheffield or Birmingham meetings. When our October paper went to press we had no finalised details of venues or arrangements. This in no way reflected any intention to downgrade work for the meetings. Our branches carried out their own publicity for each of the meetings. If you remain unconvinced you might do well to post a similar questionnaire to your West Midlands comrades asking them to document our 'token' effort in Birmingham. Or you could



Hungary 1956: discussion of the lessons is vital for revolutionaries today

ask those who were present about our 'token' effort in Sheffield before you jump to rash judgments.

It is perfectly true that we did not carry a report of the London meeting in our November paper. It would, however, have been impossible for us to do so given that the last touches were being put to the paper while the meeting was still proceeding.

As it turned out the meeting did not have the advantages of open and lively discussion that were exhibited in Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield and Newcastle. The day was over-weighted toward platform speeches which, with certain notable exceptions, failed to seriously address either the programmatic lessons to be learnt from the defeat of the Hungarian workers or the tasks confronting Marxists in building solidarity with workers struggles against the Stalinist bureaucracies. As a result discussion from the floor and the workshops themselves were squeezed into an insignificant and inadequate period of time. Attendance at the workshops represented only a tiny proportion of those who sat through the platform orations.

The result was that debate between those who had co-operated in organising the series of meetings was at a minimum. No doubt this did not bother some. Late in the day Socialist Viewpoint insisted on holding a workshop on virtually the same topic as that which one of our comrades introduced. Despite written and telephonic proposals to put the sessions together the Viewpoint comrades insisted on

I have read the article in the November paper on 'Campaign Forum', which discusses how to relate to groups within the Labour Party such as Campaign Forum and Labour Left Liaison.

I appreciate the difference you point out between L.L.L. which seems to be an undemocratic bloc, and Campaign Forum which, at least for the present, seems open to political arguments. But what the article did not make clear was that we are assessing these groupings with a view to arguing our politics within them, to winning a commitment to action on working class needs and demands and, crucially, to winning people to revolutionary politics.

The article says, if you are fed up with Kinnock trampling on socialism, sick of 'socialist' councils collapsing in the fight against rate-capping etc, then join local Campaign Forum groups and argue the political action programme which follows. However, surely we should say as well, if you are fed

up with all these things, isn't it time you realized that the Labour Party will always do this when it comes to the crunch? Discuss revolutionary politics with us, work with us to win over other decent fighters who still have illusions in the Labour Party. One of the possible ways you can do this is to fight for our action programme in Campaign Forums, but this is only one possible way of winning and educating the necessary forces who can lead a real fight against capitalism through the fight for revolutionary, not left reformist, politics.

G Doy
Coventry

WE REPLY

Of course it is necessary to argue for revolutionary politics in bodies like Campaign Forum. Of course we will clash with left reformists. But the point of being involved in Campaign Forum is that it can potentially become a far larger focus for organising against Kinnock on a range of immediate issues than Workers Power supporters alone could. In that sense, in the immediate future, efforts should be made to build Campaign Forums as a means both of resisting the right, and creating a wider audience for revolutionary politics. That way we can turn people's 'fed-upness' into a conscious revolutionary outlook. □

HEFFER WRITES

I found your review of my book (WP88) both interesting and thought provoking, and I appreciated the honest views expressed. There are, however, one or two points in the review that I feel I must correct.

You are wrong to suggest I shut up during the 1974/79 Labour government. I, together with others in the then Tribune group, fought strongly against government policy.

I was actually sacked from being Minister of State in the Department of Industry in 1975 because I not only opposed the government over the Common Market, I spoke in the Commons against it and was dismissed by Harold Wilson.

As a backbencher I fought the economic policy of cuts and the policy of incomes restraint on workers. With regard to the 1983 General Election, as an NEC member and in the shadow cabinet, I was saying that the members of the shadow cabinet should have accepted the party policy on getting rid of nuclear weapons and bases etc, and if they disagreed, they at best should not have opposed the policies openly, as Callaghan and Healey did. That is what I meant when I said 'in election periods one must swallow one's disagreements'.

With regard to putting out the white flag, that I have not done and neither will I. I was putting forward in the book the generally agreed policy of the Campaign Group, that it would be 'counter-productive to challenge the leadership prior to the next General Election'. That does not mean not challenging in political groups, but in an election for leader at the present time. If I felt that one should not fight politically then obviously I would not have published the book.

You can rest assured that I shall continue to the best of my ability to fight for a socialist Britain as part of a socialist world on the basis of class struggle.

Yours fraternally,
Eric Heffer MP
House of Commons

workers power

NO TO JARVIS! NO TO BAKER!

AFTER MONTHS OF negotiations the NUT Executive have ratified the rotten Nottingham deal on pay and conditions. They now have to sell it to the members.

The rottenness of this deal should not surprise us. The pay offer, averaging 16.4% over 18 months, is exactly in line with Baker's offer. It's a slightly enhanced version of the Coventry Agreement - and the entry grade with progression to the main grade dependent on appraisal is still there.

The working year has been increased to 195 days, and the working week is to consist of 231 hours including free periods, plus 5 hours on assemblies, registration and supervision and 4 more on average throughout the year, with a maximum of 5 in any one week, on staff and parents' meetings. In addition, the employers have only agreed 'in principle' to provide cover after one day in primaries, and two in secondaries. We all know what that means.

CONTRACTS

There will also be a 13 point list of duties in contracts - a real Baker's dozen - as it is essentially just a renumbering of his 19 points! The notorious point 19 (on the powers of headteachers) has gone from the list, but only to reappear in the preamble. Burnham is to be replaced by a national joint council - as the NUT has agreed that pay and conditions can be discussed by one body.

Doug McAvooy has justified the deal on the grounds that failure

would have presented Baker with "a golden opportunity to impose his own settlement". This is probably what Baker had in mind when he threatened to impose a settlement - a leadership scared of mobilising the membership and scared of losing the right to sell jobs and conditions - could be relied upon to agree to almost anything.

FIASCO

How could this fiasco (to use Baker's words) come about? Because the NUT Executive failed to mobilise the membership, failed to fight for the action necessary to win the dispute - an all-out strike - and failed to organise a proper levy to finance the dispute. Instead, it relied on a voluntary 'levy' to provide funds and sought to show 'the public' how reasonable the teachers were.

If it looked as if action might make teachers unpopular (like hitting public exams) they scurried off into the undergrowth like panic-stricken vermin. The members were once again wheeled out as a stage army - the object being not to force the employers to concede our demands but to take our leaders seriously. Hence the winding down of action once the employers agreed to negotiate 'seriously'.

The irony of all this is that Baker is still not satisfied. He is insisting on a more hierarchical grading system to reward 'professionalism' (ie undermine unity and collective interest). He wants five grades rather than the two on offer.

Baker published his Education Bill on 28 November. This proposes to do away with collective bargaining in any meaningful sense. With his hand-picked 'advisors' he will be able to impose pay and conditions on teachers. He wants this in place for next October.

Resistance must now continue on three fronts. First, we must work hard to get a massive rejection of the Nottingham deal in the ballot. Here we must emulate the Scottish teachers in the EIS who voted 5:1 against Rifkind's pay and conditions proposals.

Based on a rejection of the Nottingham deal we can coordinate a joint struggle of strike action with the EIS to tear apart the pay and conditions package. This degree of militant action will also be needed to resist Baker's attempt to impose a settlement and his new Education Bill.

SPINELESS

Finally, the militants must deal with the spinelessness of our union leadership which only shows true grit against its own rank and file activists. Plans are afoot to restrict association-to-association contact, gerrymandering electoral areas to keep the left off the Executive and limit funds going to local associations.

We urgently need a rank and file movement that controls and replaces this bludgeoning bureaucracy and turns the NUT into an all-embracing union for militant class-conscious teachers.

by Simon Anderson, NUT

HANGERS; REINSTATE - THEN NEGOTIATE!

THREE MONTHS AGO the artificial limb manufacturers JEHangers tried to impose a massive increase in productivity on the workforce at its main depot in Roehampton.

Within one hour of posting up the new productivity plans, eleven of the workforce were disciplined for failing to speed up. The union members in TASS and FTAT responded by calling an immediate mass meeting which decided on a voluntary overtime ban, and a picket to win the workforce to observe the ban.

The picket resulted in four workers being shopped to the management - by a foreman in ASTMS - and then sacked. The 300-strong workforce immediately struck and were, likewise, sacked.

Since then the workforce has been fighting for reinstatement and are refusing to negotiate on any other issues until this demand is won. They realise that a management that is happy to tear up all previous agreements overnight cannot be trusted one inch.

Support for the strike has been encouraging. The Post Office workers are refusing to cross the picket line, as are Telecom and water workers. British Rail workers have refused to handle Red Star parcels from Hangers. In addition a women's support group has been set up.

Hangers is a subsidiary of the British Tyre and Rubber Company (BTR). BTR is one of the largest British employers in South Africa, with a disgusting record of brutality to the black workers in the townships. Last year 900 workers were sacked by BTR in one township alone. Demonstrating workers have been fired upon by security forces called in by BTR.

The management is trying to rule in a dictatorial way here too. It must not be allowed - here or in South Africa.

The production and repair of artificial limbs is an essential service which must be nationalised under the control of the workers, with no compensation for the parasitic BTR. Links must be built with other workers in BTR and its subsidiaries, and supportive action from other trade unionists must be won.

Messages of support and financial help - especially important now that Christmas is approaching - should be sent to:

Steve Blease
c/o TASS
520 London Road
Mitcham
Surrey
CR4 4Y



Lobby of teachers' pay talks

FBU-SPREAD THE ACTION!

STRATHCLYDE FIREFIGHTERS are engaged in a series of one hour strikes in opposition to the regional authorities plans to axe 128 jobs in the next year.

The Strathclyde region has the worst fatality rate in fires in Europe both for firefighters and the general public. The militancy of local firefighters has meant that they have maintained higher manning levels than the rest of the country.

This militancy was shown by the overwhelming support at two mass meetings for industrial action against the job losses. The recent demonstration in Glasgow saw a large turn-out, not only from Strathclyde, but from every FBU region in the country. At the demonstration FBU General Secretary, Ken Cameron, told how the Labour leader of the council, Charles Ray, had threatened to drive the firefighters "back on their knees". Cameron's response was well received by the demonstration. He said,

"We have no intention of going back on our knees. If mediation fails there will be more lightning strikes and if the council decide to ask the government to send troops in here they will be taking on the whole fire service."

As soon as he arrived in Glasgow local officials were told there was no way there would be any strike in the fire service without a ballot, and this despite executive council's statement to conference this year of opposition to ballots before industrial action. When a ballot was held, the result was just under 2 to 1 in favour of industrial action.

However, since this vote the FBU have come up with alternative proposals to save £1.6 million.

These include the cessation of all casual overtime payments. The FBU banned pre-arranged overtime over ten years ago! But these payments are part of national conditions of service for unavoidable working

over shift-time and for covering for sickness at other stations.

What this deal is doing is trading service cuts for money in wage packets and the worsening of local conditions of service, in return for saving the 128 jobs. If that is not going to the council "on our knees" then what is?

The executive council has reported back to their various regions that this is not really a national issue but concerns only the manning levels in Strathclyde. Conference policy states quite clearly that if one firefighter is made redundant there will be a recalled national conference to call a national strike. The EC are arguing in the name of "realism" that this is not the issue to call a delegate conference over.

If being realistic is cutting our wages and selling our conditions, limiting our struggles to regional one hour strikes, then we are on a hiding to nothing. In 1977 we had to fight against General Secretary Parry and the EC for a national

strike. If the present leadership won't fight we will have to do the same again.

We must step up the action in Strathclyde. The next strike should be used to converge our forces on a lobby of the council. We must demand:

- No job losses.
- No worsening of our conditions in exchange for jobs.

Furthermore, we must spread the action. Other brigades are already threatened with job losses. 88 are to go in Merseyside. A budget shortfall in the West Midlands of £1.5 million will mean another 80 to 100 jobs to go.

Management will be looking at the outcome of Strathclyde as a test of the strength of the FBU. We must not let them pick us off brigade by brigade.

- For a national strike against all job losses.

by Ian Hill, W Midlands FBU

