

# SOCIALIST ACTION

Quarterly Journal of the League for Socialist Action

25p



## **SOCIALISTS & THE TASKS AHEAD : a challenge to the left**

Vol.2 No.2

# **SOCIALIST ACTION**

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Socialism &amp; the Tasks Ahead</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>I. Crisis of Perspective</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>II. Labour &amp; the Social Contract</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>III. The Radicalisation Process</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>IV. The Labour Movement</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>V. Tasks &amp; Perspectives</b> .....	<b>20</b>

**EDITOR: Tony Roberts**

**REVIEWS EDITOR: Michael Hawley**

**TECHNICAL EDITOR: Bob Swart**

**DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Anne Williams**

**BUSINESS MANAGER: Dave Macleod**

**Published by SOCIALIST ACTION, 58 Auckland Rd., SE 19**

**Printed by Rye Express Ltd. (TU), 204 Peckham Rye, SE 22**

**August 1977, London, England**

# INTRODUCTION

A few months back, the IMG launched the first issue of its 'new' journal 'Socialist Challenge'. The aim of this journal was, according to its editor Tariq Ali, "to place the question of revolutionary unity at the centre of our political tasks today". There is no doubt that the IMG is trying to address itself to a serious problem.

Over the past decade or so, the opportunities opening up before the Trotskyist movement have rapidly grown. The wide-scale radicalisation of the late sixties - symbolised in the growth of the Women's Liberation, Black and student movements - has more recently been given a central thrust by the deepening 'politicisation' of the labour movement. This politicisation, creating a major crisis in the Labour Party, has drawn thousands into challenging the 'strategy' of the reformist leaders.

Moreover, the Communist Party is unable to 'take advantage' of the situation since it has become increasingly rent with internal divisions stemming from the contradictions facing Stalinism as a world movement. The attempt to disassociate themselves from the worst crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy to gain increased 'electoral support' has already led to a significant split in their own ranks which lessens their credibility among wide layers on the left.

The possibilities before the Trotskyist movement of reaching out and winning large layers disillusioned with the role of reformism and of Stalinism is greater today than ever before. The main obstacle to this remains - as the IMG correctly notes - the fragmentation of the left which confuses and disillusions those who could be won to revolutionary positions.

How to overcome this fragmentation - how to create a unity which can pose as a real alternative before those thousands beginning to break from the reformist and Stalinist stranglehold - remains the major task in the period ahead.

## Fragmentation

A pre-requisite for beginning such a process of regroupment is understanding the causes and roots of the present fragmentation. It is hardly enough, as the IMG seem to think, to issue 'proclamations' for unity in order for such unity to be established. Such short-cut methods - ignor-

ing the nature of the differences between the left tendencies and how these differences arose - can only repeat the mistakes of the past and lay the basis for the splits of the future.

In many ways, the present 'confusion' can be traced back to the discontinuity of the Trotskyist movement created, in the early sixties, by the serious degeneration of the SLL (now the WRP). This degeneration - symbolised most of all in its hostile attitude to the Cuban revolution - created a major vacuum on the British left.

Such a vacuum was rapidly filled by the growth of groups such as the SWP who, cut off from the traditions of the Trotskyist movement or consciously rejecting them, were incapable of relating to the complex and uneven development of the class struggle over the past decade or so.

Their lack of political 'method' was manifested, most clearly, in their constant tendency to adapt to the milieu in which they were working. This explains their often abrupt changes in position - particularly on the Labour Party - as the milieu in which they were operating changed.

Adaptationism of this sort meant that the recruitment to these groups was never based on a common understanding of the way forward. While the momentum of the class struggle was on the increase, the internal differences were held together but - the moment it slowed up - they burst forth with dramatic clarity. The recent 'splits', divisions and expulsions that have littered the left are, in a very real sense, the price the left is having to pay for its earlier lack of political clarity.

The positive aspect of this process is that it, at least, shows growing numbers have begun to probe the inability of groups such as the SWP or IMG to relate to the real dynamic of the class struggle as it has unfolded over the past decade or so.

## Programme

Such an inability has been revealed in two main ways. First, it is reflected in the 'economism' of the British left which has rendered it incapable of coming to grips with the complex (and often new) forms of struggle that have emerged during the past period such as the rise of feminist or nationalist consciousness in Ireland, Scotland &

Wales.

Refusing often to support and pioneer these struggles has not only alienated wide layers from socialism but has afforded the 'right' the opportunity to launch offensives to divide and weaken the labour movement. The left's response to the racist witch-hunt of last year, the anti-abortion campaign of SPUC or the continued presence of troops in Ireland has been pathetic.

Their virtual abstention on these issues - while making a 'token' gesture in their direction in the odd article in their press - represents an accommodation to the backwardness of the labour movement. It reveals an inability to understand that taking up such issues is not only key in pioneering the rights of the doubly-oppressed but also in rooting out of the labour movement those prejudices which the ruling class will play on in the period ahead to divide & weaken working people.

Secondly, this 'economism' has been complemented by an inability to view these struggles as part of a broader strategy of struggle within the labour movement against its reformist leaders. Groups such as the IMG - and still today the SWP - believed it was possible to 'bypass' the Labour Party without building a serious opposition against its right-wing leaders.

The sectarian 'antics' of the SWP seeking to counterpose itself to the Labour Party - and the accommodation to this position by the IMG in its attempts to gain common 'electoral fronts' with the SWP - represents a diversion from such a process.

## Unity

The 'fragmentation' that exists today is not, therefore, accidental. It stems from the political confusion of the left over the past period as increasing numbers - questioning the limitations of their groups - have split, been expelled or created internal tendencies.

Overcoming such a 'fragmentation' cannot be achieved, as the IMG leadership would like to think, by waving a magical 'unity' wand which ignores the serious differences that exist around strategic aspects of the class struggle within Britain and internationally. Attempts to create a unity on an unclear programmatic basis will only result in a unity built on sand that can 'crumble'

away at any time.

The only way that the present fragmentation can be overcome in the period opening up - and it is an urgent task - is by adopting a perspective that combines:

a) engaging in a serious political debate among the left to clarify points of agreement and disagreement;

b) creating as much unity as possible among the left on key issues - such as Ireland, abortion or the present Immigration laws - which can provide layers outside the organised left with a perspective for struggle.

It is in the process of working together around concrete issues and carrying on a serious debate on major programmatic questions that the basis for a possible regroupment will be opened up. Such a regroupment will emerge out of a unity forged at the level of both theory and practice. This is the perspective of the LSA.

## Debate

It is in this spirit that the LSA has published its current Perspectives Document. Such a document does not aim at a detailed 'conjunctural' analysis. Its aim is to draw up a balance sheet of the dynamic of the class struggle over the past decade or so and to project, on the basis of that analysis, a programme of action for socialists in the period ahead.

Such a document, accepted by the LSA at its last conference, is offered as the basis for a serious discussion. The LSA welcomes both individuals and groups who would like to 'contribute' to that discussion & will print all contributions in the forthcoming issue of Socialist Action. We believe that such a debate - taking up the most urgent issues facing the left - is the most fruitful way today of beginning to overcome the fragmentation that exists.

Such an approach lacks the 'gimmicks' and 'get rich quick' solutions of the IMG. The LSA is convinced, however, that the building of a serious revolutionary party cannot be achieved by these methods but only by agreement on a concrete programme rooted in the method of Trotsky's Transitional Programme.

23.7.1977.

# SOCIALISTS & THE TASKS AHEAD.

The current international situation - emerging over the past decade or so - has been characterised by two major developments which increasingly set the framework for future events.

THE FIRST is the dramatic shift in the balance of class forces against US Imperialism revealed by its historic defeat in Vietnam. This shift demonstrated the new limits imposed on US military might as it finds itself increasingly 'hobbled' not only by the nuclear power of the USSR but by the absence of semi-colonial allies with popular support, the drain on its resources entailed in propping up dictatorial regimes, and growing political opposition at home.

The new weakness of Imperialism revealed in Vietnam has set the limited role it has been forced to play in later developments such as those in, for example, Angola or Southern Africa.

The policy of 'detente' was born out of this relative weakening of US Imperialism as it sought, through economic aid, to buy the support of the Soviet bureaucracy in helping it uphold the status quo around the world. Detente holds self-evident dangers, particularly in Western Europe where the Communist Parties are cynically attempting to head off social unrest by participation in popular front governments.

Such a development, while capable of leading to major defeats in the absence of an alternative revolutionary leadership, finds it ever more difficult however to hold back the rise of world revolution as it breaks forth in a series of explosions from the Middle East through Angola to Spain or Portugal.

THE SECOND is the slowing down and ending of the post-war expansionist boom as many of the motor forces of that boom - reconstruction of Japanese & West European industry, mechanisation, automation and computerisation of whole branches of industry - have begun to exhaust themselves.

The spate of recessions in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies (West Germany 1966-7; Italy and

Japan 1971-2) have gradually merged into a synchronised recession in which there has been a major slowdown in growth in all capitalist countries. Moreover, the attempts to reduce the crisis of over-production by inflation-led booms are not only inadequate but result merely in 'stagflation': i.e. inflation running concurrently with economic stagnation.

This general slowdown in growth means that not only does Imperialism face the decades ahead substantially weaker (after Vietnam) but with growing internal friction as rival powers jockey one with another for a more favourable position in the trade war opening up. This can be seen most clearly in the tendency toward a) the increasing use of floating exchange rates to make goods more competitive - thus precipitating an international monetary crisis; and b) the growing use of protectionist measures.

An important aspect of increased competition is that it is not limited to antagonism between US Imperialism and its rivals in Western Europe but opens up deep friction among the European powers putting pay, once and for all, to the illusion that the EEC could establish a state structure as a counterweight to US Imperialism & an effective challenge to its hegemony. This has been shown not only in the EEC's inability to create a common monetary policy but in the trend for the 'weaker' members - such as Britain and Italy - to resort to protectionist measures.

These two factors have created disarray and a loss of confidence in world capitalist circles as they face the decades ahead with no clear-cut strategy and growing friction among themselves. The confident expectations of 'rolling back Communism' of the cold-war era have disappeared. They now see the world as careering towards a new 'epoch of scarcity'; they philosophically calculate the possibility that 'democracy' cannot be maintained much longer if inflation and social unrest continue.

## I. Crisis of Perspective

This generalised crisis of confidence is reflected nowhere more strongly than in British ruling class circles. The press accurately reflect the pessimistic forecasts circulating among the ruling class as it debates the 'impasse of the economy' or, more generally, the 'profound crisis in which Europe is at present aimlessly drifting'.

Such pessimism is no mere psychological quirk. It stems from the impact of this growing inter-imperialist rivalry - heralded in 1971 by the US government's decision to hoist up oil prices and devalue the dollar - on a system already deep in the throes of Imperialist decline.

The general slowdown in growth, precipitating ever-fiercer international competition, not only aggravates the problems of the British economy

manifest, over a decade ago, in low rates of growth and productivity, a rising balance of payments deficit and escalating inflation. More important still, it helps undermine the potential of the ruling class to resolve these problems by deepening the strains and tensions of all established social relations through which the ruling class traditionally maintains its hegemony.

In many ways, the stability of the United Kingdom - its parliamentary system and traditions of compromise - was dependent upon the economic prosperity created by its role as a major Imperialist power. The erosion of this prosperity in the post war years - and the attempts by the ruling class to 'resolve' it partly by entry into the EEC - have created deep fissures in the social fabric and

sparked off a crisis in all social relations.

Such a crisis has manifested itself in all areas of life as, under the strain of Britain's long-term decline, different strata of the population have been increasingly drawn into challenging the oppression directed against their class, race, sex, or nation. All the problems created in the rise of Britain as a major colonial power come forward, in an uneven way, and seek 'resolution' through these varied forms of the class struggle. Two main forms stand out:



Troops arrest Civil Rights' Leader

1) the resurgence of nationalist feeling in the 'United Kingdom' which found its first - and most explosive - expression in the mass Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland in the late sixties. Such feeling, inter-relating with and feeding the growth of nationalist currents in Scotland and Wales, pose a direct threat to the unity of the bourgeois state and - particularly in the case of Northern Ireland - 'parliamentary democracy'.

2) the growth and combativity of the labour movement which, having suffered no major defeat since the last war, has repulsed all attempts by the ruling class to solve the problems of the economy at the expense of its living standards and democratic rights. This was revealed most dramatically in the 'trial of strength' provoked by the Tory government in 1974 with the miners which led to its removal from office and which plunged it into an internal crisis from which it has not, as yet, fully recovered.

It has been the inter-action of these two factors primarily which, undermining key institutions of class rule, has prevented the ruling class from imposing its 'solution' on the crisis and which makes capitalist Britain a particularly 'vulnerable' victim of the trade war opening up.

## A) Historic Decline

Such 'vulnerability' is not, of course, new. It is firmly rooted in the long-term decline of Britain as an Imperialist power which reached a climax in the early sixties when decisive sectors of the ruling class decided to abandon the 'siren' of Empire and turn toward the protected markets of the EEC.

This decision, historically changing the course of British capitalism, was by no means a voluntary one. It was forced on the ruling class by the new world situation emerging in the post-war period

in which its colonial mastery - already, deeply on the wane - was virtually whittled away by the new global weight of US Imperialism & the resurgence of colonial struggles for national liberation from India to Kenya.

The loss of Britain's colonial mastery had far-reaching implications. It was upon the 'benefits' extracted from the Empire - through the export of capital, monopoly trading relations and access to raw materials at minimal cost - that had stood Britain's economic strength and political stability for over half a century.

The dismantling of the Empire in the decades following the war meant its abrupt fall from a major world power into a 'third-rate' one forced to collaborate - and compete - more as an equal with other capitalist powers. This erosion of British 'insularity', registered in its growing identification with US foreign policy and integration into NATO, reached a major new stage in the decision to enter the EEC.

Entry into the EEC meant that the ruling class were prepared to sacrifice the last vestiges of Empire for a bigger 'home market' protected by tariff walls and the possibility for the inter-penetration of capital creating truly European firms capable of competing with their international rivals in the USA or Japan.

In its attempts to compete as an equal with rival capitalist powers however - particularly in the light of entry into the EEC - Britain suffered from certain inherent weaknesses which had accumulated during its period of colonial sway. Continued reliance upon the Empire as a source of super-profits had, primarily, resulted in a steady erosion of British industry's competitive power as its productivity level, compared with that of its main international rivals, had sharply declined.

More precisely, the long-term drain of capital overseas had saddled British industry with obsolete and outmoded techniques which had resulted in a growing productivity gap opening up between it and other capitalist powers that made its situation on the world market ever more untenable.

This trend, though long-term, was dramatically accelerated in the post-war years when countries such as Japan or West Germany, profiting from the reconstruction of their 'war-torn' economies were able to employ the most efficient forms of production and technology. It can be seen most clearly in investment patterns which are a primary source of labour productivity. Between 1960 and 1972, for example, whereas Britain's share of the GNP invested in manufacturing averaged a mere 16-18%, that of West Germany averaged 23-27% and that of Japan 30-35%.

Such a disparity meant that, increasingly unable to compete with its technologically advanced rivals, and bereft of the 'reserves' accumulated during its former colonial sway, Britain's share of the world market was eroded at an ever-faster pace. In terms of manufacturing goods - an area in which Britain once held world hegemony - its share of the world market plummeted, between 1950 and 1965, from 35% to a mere 10%.

A major pre-requisite for benefitting from entry into the EEC was, in this sense, the ability of the ruling class to effect a major rationalisation of British industry (suffering from the debauchery of an Imperialist past) at a particularly rapid tempo. Such a rationalisation was seen as vital not only in allowing industry to take advantage of the extended market of the EEC - over 300 million strong - but in 'facing up' to increased competition from European firms after entry.

## B) Ruling Class Strategy

Such a 'restructuring' process was not possible, however, through economic adjustments alone. It was deeply 'enmeshed' with the problem of the strength and combativity of the labour movement whose living standards - gained in the post-war years - stood as a major obstacle to ruling class plans. It was only by driving down these living standards that it was possible to raise the rate of profit sufficiently to finance such a 'modernisation' process.

The strategic aim of the ruling class - from as early as Wilson's 'white-hot technological revolution' in 1964 - has been precisely to raise the rate of profit by a combination of:

a) depressing wage levels (either through compulsory or voluntary wage deals extending up to the Social Contract);

b) promoting 'productivity deals' and 'mergers' (creating, in the process, growing structural unemployment);

c) slowly eroding the social services (from the elimination of 'free school milk' under the first Wilson government to the slashing cuts recently proposed by Callaghan) in order to divert funds into private enterprise to accelerate the rationalisation process.

Pursuing this assault on the living standards & job prospects of working people - particularly in declining industries - has brought the ruling class, through successive governments, into head-on conflict with the unions as the basic organisations defending working class interests. The attempt to drive down living standards makes the strategy of the ruling class increasingly incompatible with the continued independence of such organisations.

The 'integrationist' or 'confrontationist' tactics employed by various governments over the past decades are not - in this sense - counterposed. They are merely different sides of the same coin dependent, of course, on the 'balance' of class forces at any specific time. Whether by attempts to legally curb the right to strike (as in the Industrial Relations Act) or by attempts to involve the union bureaucracy in policing its own membership (as in the Social Contract), eroding such independence has become a central concern.

Such a trend confirms Trotsky's prognosis that "there is one common feature in the development, or more correctly degeneration, of modern trade union organisations throughout the world; it is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power".

The attack upon the autonomy of the unions has been the central thrust in a general erosion of democratic rights as the ruling class has sought to strengthen the authority of its traditional organisations (notably the state) in the battles opened up by its long-term offensive.

Playing on the 'ideological' weaknesses of the labour movement, it has been complemented by the passing of ever-more racist Immigration controls, the use of the crisis in Northern Ireland to undermine 'free speech' (as in the Prevention of Terrorism Act) & assaults on women's rights won under the 1967 Abortion Act.

## C) Obstacles to Ruling Class Strategy

Despite the slow erosion of living standards & democratic rights over the past decades, the offensive launched by the ruling class against the labour movement has not led to the shift in the

balance of class forces necessary to gain acceptance of its aims.

The inability of successive governments - most notably the Heath government - to impose their solution on the developing crisis has meant that a virtual stalemate situation has arisen that has taken the form of a near-paralysis in regard to long-term economic planning. The truth of this can be seen most graphically from the fact that the tasks of the present Wilson/Callaghan government are almost identical to those of the Wilson government... ten years ago.

The inability of the ruling class to 'impose' a solution, despite the use of varying tactics, is not accidental. It has its roots in the balance of class forces which has emerged during Britain's long-term decline which, for two inter-related reasons, are historically unfavourable for the ruling class.

### 1. The Nationalist Upsurge

Of all the major capitalist powers, Great Britain was the most modelled and conditioned - in terms of its inner social structure - by its role as a foremost Imperialist power. The erosion of this role has torn deep rents in the social fabric as not only the relations between classes but those between the constituent nations that make up the 'United Kingdom' have been inflamed. This has shown itself in a dramatic upsurge of nationalist feeling which - as in the case of Northern Ireland - can assume explosive dimensions.

The roots of this new upsurge, which has created a major dilemma for the ruling class, are complex. They lie in the fact that Britain's long term decline is not reflected uniformly in the United Kingdom but 'exacerbates' and 'deepens' regional inequalities of development which coincide with historically-defined 'national groups'. Such a decline has fallen particularly sharply, over the past decades, on Northern Ireland and Scotland - which were, ironically enough, the backbone of Britain's earlier industrial prowess - creating disproportionately greater urban poverty, unemployment and heavy migration to the more 'affluent' South.

Such localised economic deprivation, playing on a long-felt sense of social or political discrimination, can re-awaken a nationalist consciousness as those nations (long since thought assimilated into the 'Union') begin to re-assert their rights. This can be seen most forcefully in N. Ireland in the growth of the Civil Rights Movement of the late 'sixties' where a combination of economic deprivation and political repression was mediated particularly sharply through the statelet of 'Ulster'.

The entry of the Catholic minority into struggle for democratic rights brought it inevitably into a head-on conflict with the Stormont regime - & its British backers - convincing ever-wider layers that such a struggle could only be won by the creation of a United Ireland free of British rule.

The importance of the Irish freedom fight was not only that it rekindled, in a new and unexpected way, the age-old struggle of the Irish people for self-determination but that it began to feed and inter-relate with new nationalist currents in Wales and Scotland. It was, in this sense, the first indication that Britain's long-term decline was sparking off an internal 'disintegration' as those national minorities (long since considered 'integrated') began to challenge the oppression they suffer.

Undoubtedly the form these struggles have assumed in both Wales and Scotland is radically different from that in Northern Ireland, being primarily limited to a parliamentary opposition which, as in the case of the meteoric rise of the SNP, has made deep inroads into the two-party system. The reasons for this 'difference' are historical, being conditioned by their particular relation to the new Imperialist power established as a product of 'Union' and their evolution within that framework ever since.

While these struggles may take on different forms - and proceed at different rates - they create a major dilemma for the ruling class not least because the high proletarian composition of these national minorities constantly poses the threat of the fight for democratic rights being integrated into that for socialist revolution.

Such a dilemma can already be seen as the logic of the national struggle a) begins to undermine the unity of the bourgeois state as a product of 'Union'; b) erodes, particularly in the case of N. Ireland, the ability of the ruling class to rule through parliamentary democracy; and c) creates a 'fragmentation' within the ranks of the ruling class as different sectors, manoeuvring among themselves for more advantageous positions, split and divide. The latter can be seen most clearly within the 'ranks' of the Tory Party - unique among all the European bourgeois parties in its ability to unify the sectoral interests of the ruling class - as it has seen the split - off by the Ulster Unionists and the drain of support to the SNP.

Such a weakening of the bourgeois state and its institutions has meant that, over the past decade, the ruling class has been forced to launch an offensive against the working class with increasingly 'inadequate instruments' and with growing lack of internal cohesion. The long-term decline of Britain has begun to erode those very institutions the ruling class needs to 'bolster' in its attempt to alter the balance of class forces in its favour.

## 2. Working Class Strength

The inability of the ruling class to ramhome its offensive resides not only in its internal crisis but in the strength and combativity of the organised labour movement which has suffered no serious defeat since the early 'thirties. While able to marginally erode living standards, the ruling class has proved itself incapable of inflicting any major set-back on a movement which has grown in both size and confidence since the last war.

This was dramatically revealed in the defeat of the Heath government in 1974 under the impact of the miners' strike. Heath was returned to power in a situation where the previous Wilson government - in spite of its links with the trade union bureaucracy - had shown itself unable to impose wage controls and legal sanctions against the unions.

Beginning with the seamens' strike of 1966, Wilson's policies had resulted merely in the unleashing of ever-wider confrontations which culminated, in 1968, with the 150,000 strong rally against In Place of Strife which forced Castle to retreat. Such a process, creating deepening strains within the reformist apparatus, meant that the value of the Wilson government was, in ruling class eyes, soon exhausted.

The main thrust of the Heath government was,

mainly through new 'legal curbs' on the unions combined, later, with pay restraint, to confront and check this growing militancy within the labour movement. Holding the unions in check, and defeating them in a decisive 'trial of strength', was seen as vital in implementing severe cuts in the standard of living made all the more 'necessary' by the opening of international recession.

In this approach, the Heath government severely miscalculated. The undefeated strength of the class, expressed in the growth of trade unionism in the previous decades and shift 'left' in major unions such as the T&GWU and AUEW leading to the election of a Scanlon or Jones meant that workers were not prepared to 'tolerate' legal curbs on their right to strike. The fact that they were not prepared to accept them from a Labour government (which had been forced to 'retreat') meant that they were even less willing to accept them from the Tories. This mood could be judged at the time the Industrial Relations Act was introduced when the AUEW called two consecutive mobilisations numbering 1,500,000 each time.



Miners reject Heath's 'pay code'.

After the law had been put on the statute books, confrontations reached unprecedented proportions threatening - as in the first miners' strike or the movement to 'free the five' dockers imprisoned in Pentonville under the Act - to erupt at any stage into a general strike. The mass actions involved in the miners' strike at Saltley or the 'snowballing' effect of the 'free the five' campaign indicated the growing awareness of the class of the need to concentrate its efforts against the ruling class at the governmental level.

This growth in combativity of the class, as it began to move from the 'local' fragmented militancy of the early sixties into wide-scale confrontations with the government, was reflected in strike statistics. For 1970, these figures stood at 1,793,000. In 1971, they dropped to 1,171,000 only to rise again in 1972 and 1973 to 1,772,000 and 1,513,000 respectively.

It was this rise in militancy - and political awareness - which prepared the ground for the major defeat of the government in the second miners' strike of 1974 which not only drove a bus through its incomes policy but which also 'toppled' it from power.

The conflict with the miners was an obvious attempt by the government to defeat a key sector of labour in which all the resources of the capitalist state were brought to bear on a 'Who Rules' basis. The defeat of the government in that conflict - despite abortive attempts to use the ballot



box to whip up middle-class support against the strike - sharply revealed the powerlessness of the ruling class in a clear 'trial of strength'.

Such a defeat represented not only a set-back for Heath who was soon to be 'ousted' from the leadership of the Tory Party. It represented a set-back for the entire strategy of the ruling class who were forced, yet again, to rely upon a Labour government to 'contain' the situation while they sought to resolve the internal crisis that burst forth within their own 'ranks' as a result of the miners' victory.

It has been these two factors - the structural crisis of the ruling class provoked by the nationalist upsurge and the strength of the organised working class - which has presented the major obstacle to the former in its attempts to shift the 'balance' of class forces in its favour. It accounts for the growing pessimism in ruling class ranks as they face the coming period.

Inability to achieve this task over the past decade means that the long-term problems facing the British economy have been aggravated and deepened by the sharper competition for increasingly saturated world markets. Despite the pol-

icies of successive governments, investment has continued to decline resulting in a growing productivity gap between British capitalism and its main international rivals. Between 1970 and 1973, for example, Britain's rate of productivity was a mere 3.1% compared with 3.4% for France & 5.4% for West Germany and Japan.

Declining productivity leads not only to 'stagnation' as British industry finds it ever more difficult to 'survive' both in world markets and the protected markets of the EEC (which has become a liability rather than the benefit hoped for). It also indirectly fuels inflation since successive governments have been forced to protect 'ailing' firms by the injection of massive credit facilities.

Between the same period (1970 and 1973), government 'hand-outs' to private industry soared from a mere £21 millions to just over £8, 800 billions. This trend, combined with the rise in the price of raw materials & arms expenditure, has pushed inflation up to an annual rate of 18%.

The twin evils of inflation and stagnation, while international trends, are reflected particularly sharply in Britain due to the inability of the ruling class to solve the problems endemic to its long-term historical decline.

## II. Labour & The Social Contract

It is important that the return of the Wilson/Callaghan government in 1974, on a minority basis, be understood within this general context. While remaining the sole force capable of containing the situation, its return was not an integral part of ruling class strategy but due to the grave political crisis opening up within its own ranks as a result of the miners' victory and growing nationalist pressures.

### A) Tory Party Crisis

The 1974 election saw a significant 'shift' by layers of the Tories' middle-class base to the Liberals - who picked up a record five million votes - due to their inability to 'control' the unions. This desertion, combined with the dramatic loss of traditionally Tory votes to the SNP in Scotland, meant that the Tory Party was rapidly becoming an 'inadequate instrument' through which the ruling class could implement its policies.

The weakening of the Tories under the combined weight of the labour/nationalist upsurge was to precipitate an internal 'power struggle' in their ranks in which the Heath leadership was soon ousted. Its replacement by the 'Thatcher-Joseph' team was clearly opposed by every major sector of big business who felt its crude market approach - reflecting its petty-bourgeois base - and its more overtly right-wing ideological stance was a liability, at that stage, to its central orientation.

The growing crisis in Tory ranks meant that the ruling class had no other option but to rely on a Labour government to 'contain' the situation while trying, in the interim, to regroup their lost support and 'hammer out' an alternative strategy in preparation for the return of a Tory government or, possibly, a government of 'national unity' (suitably bolstered by the Monarchy).

It is noticeable that, despite the set-backs their strategy has received, no significant sector of the ruling class has yet seen fit to look for an alternative solution outside the framework of 'parliamentary democracy'. Ultra-right groups such as the National Front, while potentially dangerous as they pick up a fringe of disillusioned middle and working class voters, remains a negligible force.

Their main thrust - playing on chauvinist and racist prejudices - attracts no serious sector of big business since it cuts directly across their present orientation of a) integration into the EEC; b) attempts to influence national liberation movements in the 'Third World' (e.g. Zimbabwe) in order to protect their massive investments; and c) attempts to defuse the national pressures building up in the United Kingdom.

This is not to deny, of course, that the ruling class - through its successive governments - has not attempted to play on the ideological weaknesses of the labour movement to gain advantages it will increasingly use, in the coming period, to divide and weaken. Passing ever more racist immigration curbs - suitably prepared by campaigns in the mass media - is a case in point. Playing on ideological weaknesses to erode democratic rights (a general tendency of capitalism in decay) is intended at this stage, however, to strengthen its traditional organisations.

While they have been largely successful in regaining much of the support lost to the Liberals in the last election - as recent by-elections tend to indicate - they have not yet resolved the differences over 'devolution' to 'incomes policy' which separate the Thatcher-Heath wings of the party and hammered out a united strategy. This can be seen most clearly from the fact that they have not yet seriously challenged the Labour government - despite its minority status - and precipitated an early general election. Almost all sections of the ruling class breathed a sigh of relief when the 'Lib-Lab' pact was signed

earlier this year.

Such a situation is not, of course, static. It can change swiftly depending on the tempo with which a) they can unify their own ranks around a common programme; and b) the Labour government loses its ability to impose the Social Contract on a growingly restive labour movement.

## B) The Labour Government

While being forced to rely upon a Labour government to 'control' the present situation, the ruling class are only too aware that it is unable to meet their needs. Brought to power on the defeat of the Tories, it cannot attack the working class directly - to inflict severe defeats - but is forced to rely upon the 'connivance' of the trade union bureaucracy to hold its members in check. As a government resting on an apparatus which is also the leadership of the labour movement, it cannot go beyond attempts to 'contain' the situation.

This is shown most clearly by the fact that the cornerstone of the Social Contract was based on an agreement between the government and TUC which openly rejected governmental interference in union affairs and substituted for it a voluntary incomes policy. Wilson, within a short period of time in office, was forced to repeal the Tories Industrial Relations Act and to legally 'extend' the closed shop.

The limitations imposed on the Wilson/Callaghan government by the fact that it was returned to office on the backs of powerful class mobilisations should not, of course, detract from the 'invaluable' interim role it has been able to play for the ruling class. The Social Contract, based on the cynical collaboration of the TUC in imposing wage restraint, has allowed it to:

a) offset the worst effects of the international recession that emerged in the mid 'seventies by deepening the assault on living standards. Trading off the traditional loyalty of the unions - and threatening all opposition with the return of a 'hard-line' Tory government - Callaghan has been able to erode real wages, under Phase I and II, by over 8%; to escalate the jobless total to a post-war 'high' of 1.5 million (not including the shadow half a million women not 'officially' registered); and make slashing attacks on the social services.

b) stem the tide of labour militancy that reached major proportions against Heath by substituting for his 'confrontationist' tactics attempts to integrate the union bureaucracy into policing its own members. Such attempts have reached ever more dangerous limits as the TUC, not content with 'vetting' wage claims, has gone so far as to volunteer its own services in selling the major 'rationalisation' schemes afoot to its own members under the guise of 'industrial democracy': e.g. the Bullock Report.

c) grant the ruling class a 'breathing space' in which to regroup its lost support and resolve its internal crisis in preparation for the possible return of a Tory - or 'coalition' - government on the basis of the disillusion spread by Labour's own pro - capitalist policies. The large - scale abstention of Labour supporters in recent by-elections, combined with the steady drift of Scottish workers to the SLP or SNP, represents a clear warning.

The Labour leaders have clearly, in this sense, played an indispensable role as the 'labour' 'tenants of capital'. The extent of this role



Jack Jones' support for Social Contract comes under fire.

can be gauged by the fact that, at a time of intense internal weakness for the ruling class, they have been transformed into the main 'strike-breakers' against the struggles of their own members. The attitude of the TUC towards the seamen's threatened strike in late 1976 - hinting at disaffiliating them if they pursued their claim - or towards the stoppage of the Leyland toolmen earlier this year is proof enough.

While such a role has undoubtedly provoked deep disillusion among wide layers of traditionally Labour supporters - and given the Tories time to resolve their internal differences - it would be a serious mistake to confuse this disillusion with a decisive 'set-back' or 'defeat' of the labour movement. That would be to misjudge the dynamic of the situation opened up by the return of the Labour government in 1974.

It is true that, compared with the response to the Heath pay code, there has been a dramatic downturn in industrial action against the effects of the Social Contract. The 14,750,000 days lost in strike action in 1974 had, by 1976, been whittled down to a mere 3,000,000. Such a downturn in industrial militancy does not so much reflect, however, an unwillingness to struggle as a serious confusion as to the political perspective of such a struggle.

The fact that the entire leadership of the labour movement, from the 'right' through to the erstwhile 'left' represented by Scanlon or Jones, has rallied to the Social Contract has seriously disoriented the rank-and-file as they have tried to grapple with the problem: how to defend living standards and job prospects without, at the same time, precipitating the 'downfall' of the Labour government and allowing the Tories back in.

The relative quiescence of the labour movement over the past decade does not, in this sense, represent a 'defeat'. It represents a growing aware-

ness that industrial militancy, by itself, cannot solve the problems of unemployment or declining living standards but must be situated within a clear political alternative to the policies of the Callaghan government. This helps explain the type of struggle that has built up over the past years which has increasingly revolved around 'broader' political issues (such as the anti-cuts demonstration in late 1976) and which has increasingly been linked with political opposition in the Labour Party.

One of the important aspects of this awareness is precisely that it has begun to find embryonic expression in the crisis opening up in the Labour Party at every level - between the NEC and the government, between sections of the PLP & the government and even, on occasions, within the cabinet itself. Such conflicts, leading on issues like 'cuts' or 'racism' to the NEC sponsoring mass action against the government's programme, are not accidental. They reflect the initial pressure of the class on 'its' party as it empirically seeks to hammer out an alternative strategy at the political level.

As frustration with the Social Contract grows in the period ahead and ever-wider layers of the class begin to challenge it - a process reflected in the mass opposition developing in the unions against Phase III - the crisis in the Labour Party will be increased and accelerated. The problem of bourgeois hegemony will increasingly, in this way, be reflected in strains and tensions within the reformist apparatus as it becomes prey to contending class pressures.

If this process has not proceeded at a faster pace, the main responsibility for it lies with the 'lefts' - both in Parliament and the unions - who have consistently refused to mobilise the labour movement around a clear alternative to the government's pro-capitalist policies. While reacting to the pressures building up in the unions, and among other layers, figures such as Benn to the Tribunites attempt to 'integrate' it into the reformist machine by blunting its biting edge, confusing and diverting it around policies which offer no serious solution to the growing crisis.

## C) Perspectives Ahead

While the Labour government has given the Tories time to 'resolve' their internal dilemma, it has not been able - by its very nature as a government returned to power on a mass class

upsurge - to qualitatively change the balance of class forces necessary for a capitalist 'solution' to Britain's deepening economic problems. The stalemate situation remains unsolved.



Day of Action march on May 26th, 1976.

The most it has been able to do is to 'contain' the unstable situation set off by Heath's confrontational tactics at the expense of precipitating a growing crisis within its own ranks as ever-wider layers are drawn into questioning the pro-capitalist policies it has been pursuing.

The tasks the Heath government set itself have not, in this sense, been 'resolved' despite the temporary success of the Social Contract. The period ahead will give rise to deep social instability as the ruling class finds itself 'forced' to pursue these tasks - at the expense of a labour movement increasingly challenging its traditional leadership - by the long-term trends of:

- a) attacking living standards (holding down real wages, whittling away working conditions, promoting unemployment by 'rationalisation' schemes, and slashing the social services);
- b) eroding democratic rights (introducing compulsory or 'voluntary' wage restraint, attacking the independence of the unions, opposing the democratic rights of oppressed national minorities, and eroding the gains won by women and other social strata);
- c) seeking to increase divisions among workers (through the use of racism or sexism, for example, to prevent a united working class 'response' to the offensive launched against them).

## III. The Radicalisation Process

The 'explosive' situations that have emerged, in the past period, around the Tories' attempts to 'confront' the miners and 'imprison' the five dockers in 1972 (under the Industrial Relations Act) are not unique. They are indicative of an instability that has permeated all areas of life as ever-wider layers have been drawn into a struggle to extend their rights - national, sexual, racial - against capitalist oppression.

Such a radicalisation - born out of a refraction in Britain of international trends - has necessarily proceeded in a complex and uneven way. The very fact that it began originally outside the labour movement (which remained relatively quiescent until the late sixties) has caused many on the left to view it as a 'diversion', as 'peripheral' to

the 'real struggle' or as bound to die away as the fight against unemployment or wage restraint gathers momentum.

These views are erroneous. They do not grasp the fact that the present crisis is not merely an economic but profoundly social one which has eroded the stability of all social relations. Such an economist mistake is incapable of grasping:

- a) that the struggle of these strata - of women, Blacks or other oppressed national minorities - is, potentially, anti-capitalist and can create large allies for the working class in the period ahead;
- b) that the rights pioneered by these strata will increasingly inter-relate with the radicalisation within the labour movement since a not insignif-

icant proportion of the latter is made up, for example, of women or Blacks;

c) that such struggles, increasingly finding an echo within the labour movement, can be central in overcoming the racist, chauvinist and sexist divisions in the class on which the ruling class will increasingly play, in the coming years, to weaken and divide.

Such views are essentially based on an inability to grasp that capitalism is not a mere system of economic exploitation but has inbuilt into it a whole complex of oppression characteristic of the capitalist era and those inherited from previous historical eras which capitalism perpetuates, extends and intensifies (e.g. oppression of women as a sex).

The ability to boldly move out, support - and pioneer - the struggles of such strata around the demands corresponding to their specific oppression is an acid test for socialists.

## A) National Oppression

The upsurge in national consciousness over the past decades in Britain is by no means unique. It is part of an international trend which has seen a rise against national oppression from the Basques in Spain to the Bretons in France. The attempts at greater capitalist economic concentration within the EEC exacerbates regional inequalities that tend to reflect historical political inequalities.

Although such movements may, initially, reflect the illusions and parochial interests of local capitalism, their unusually high degree of proletarian composition renders such struggles for democratic rights potentially explosive.

### 1. Ireland

The spark that ignited the struggle in Northern Ireland can be traced back to Britain's decision to enter the EEC. 'De-structuring' the sectarian 'Ulster' state - created by Britain in 1921 - was seen as important in adopting a new relationship with Southern Ireland prior to entry. Westminster was not, in this sense, unsympathetic initially to the Civil Rights Movement that grew up in the late sixties.

The Civil Rights Movement, inspired by similar struggles against the 'Jim Crow' system in the USA, rapidly got out of hand however. The fight to gain minimal reforms inevitably brought the Catholic minority - who were its most 'ardent' champions - into head-on conflict with Stormont which was incapable of granting even the most meagre reform without undermining the very basis of its sectarian existence.

It soon became clear to ever-wider layers of the Catholic community that the fight to win these rights could not be achieved within 'Ulster' - created and propped up by the armed might of British Imperialism - but only in opposition to it. It was in this way that the fight for democratic rights merged into a continuation of the 700-year long fight by the Irish people to determine their own future aborted, temporarily, in 1921 when the 'men of property' in the South agreed to the Treaty of Partition.

Thousands of young fighters in the ghetto areas learned - from bitter experience - that the fight for elementary rights was inseparable from the struggle to achieve an Ireland free from British domination. In pursuing this fight, they have employed the most revolutionary tactics: mass demonstrations in defiance of state power; armed self defence, and mass non-cooperation.

The logic of the struggle that emerged out of the Civil Rights marches had, for Westminster, even more 'dangerous' implications. Not only did it threaten the precarious stability of Northern Ireland but - as it found increasing echoes in the South - the stability of the neo-colonial regime there which has proved itself incapable of satisfying the national aspirations of the Irish people. The logic of such a struggle pointed, in this way, to a United Ireland through anti-capitalist measures.

It has been the potentially 'explosive' nature of this struggle which has prompted the continued presence of British troops on the streets of a Derry or Belfast. The main function of the troops, whatever tactical differences may arise between the British government and its Loyalist 'allies', has been to prop up the bigoted 'Ulster' state by crushing the nationalist revolt.

Successive governments have attempted to achieve this aim by various tactics. 'Concessions' to the oppressed minority to isolate the IRA and woo it to the myth of 'power sharing' have alternated with the most brutally repressive methods such as internment, harassment of the ghettos & cold-blooded massacres as on Bloody Sunday.



Bloody Sunday: British troops open fire on peaceful demonstration.

Such tactics can produce downturns in the struggle as over recent years when lacking an adequate leadership with a mass action perspective, the Catholic ghettos have in part become demoralised under constant repression and have enabled the government to temporarily 'contain' the situation. The recent launching of the 'Peace Movement' was born out of this downturn as Imperialism eagerly utilised it for its own reactionary ends.

While obtaining downturns, however, such methods are incapable of solving the 'problem' of N. Ireland since it is the very state Britain created over fifty years ago - and which it continues to prop up today by force of arms - which continually fuels the nationalist revolt. While knowing its inevitable ebbs and flows, there is no lasting solution to the struggle launched by the oppressed minority within a neo-colonial framework.

The continuation of this struggle over the past decade has created an acute political 'dilemma' for the British ruling class. It undermines its credibility as it is forced to abandon the facade

of parliamentary democracy in favour of naked repression; it heightens the need to cut back on democratic rights at home (as in the Prevention of Terrorism Act) thus bringing it into conflict with masses in Britain; it creates divisions within its ranks as to the tactic to pursue - shown in the split of the Ulster Unionists from the Tory Party - and it remains a major threat to social stability which can, at any time, link up with struggles within Britain.

In this sense, the crisis in N. Ireland has ever more become a factor in the ongoing class struggle in Britain. A defeat of the oppressed minority in their fight for democratic rights would give greater confidence to the ruling class in its ability to ram home its offensive against the labour movement and, conversely, a victory for the minority would seriously weaken and undermine the ruling class.

While not subjectively conscious of the implications of the struggle in the Six Counties - after decades of 'anti-Irish' propaganda - supporting that struggle is objectively in the interests of the British labour movement. Defending the democratic rights of the Irish people - by calling for the immediate withdrawal of all British troops - would help weaken British Imperialism not only in N. Ireland but in Britain where it would help change the balance of class forces in the interests of working people.

No doubt mobilising such defence will have to confront an ingrained anti-Irish chauvinism that has found a deep 'echo' in the labour movement. This fight cannot, however, be avoided or skirted round. Marx pointed out long ago that a nation that oppresses another can never itself be free. This is as true now as when it was written. If the British labour movement cannot be won to defending the democratic rights of its allies against the brutal oppression of its 'own' government, it will be increasingly disarmed in the fight to defend its own democratic rights in the period ahead.

## 2. Scotland

The nationalist upsurge in Scotland - as well as Wales - has not revealed itself over the past decade in such a radically explosive way as that of the oppressed minority in the Six Counties. It has largely been confined to a parliamentary opposition which - as in the debate over 'devolution' - has adopted more constitutional methods of struggle.

The roots of the difference are historical since England was much more able, through a high degree of industrialisation, to rely upon economic forces to integrate the Scottish people incorporated in the Union of 1707. The expansion of English capitalism into Scotland (and Wales) did not, as in the case of its colonial oppression of Ireland, stunt the economy. It helped to radically restructure it as a pre-condition for Imperialist expansion (creating, in the process, a large urban working class intimately linked with the development of the working class in both England and Wales).

Allowing the Scottish people to 'share' in the spoils of Empire was much more 'efficient' as a means of integration into the United Kingdom than the brutally repressive methods perpetrated on the Irish people. Scotland was, in this way, allowed to retain specifically Scottish institutions of social life and civil society (e.g. Church, law, education and, later, civil administration).

While economic benefits and a politically flexible attitude allowed England to subdue any mass sense of national feeling for a whole period, it has been an entirely different matter since these benefits have begun to 'dry up' as Britain has lost its colonial mastery and hegemony of the world market. This long-term decline has found a particularly sharp reflection in Scotland which, in the post-war years, was rapidly becoming an 'industrial desert'.

The slump of key industries under foreign competition and technological developments - particularly ship-building, mining & steel production - has resulted in a disproportionately high jobless total, urban poverty and growing migration.

It is, in this sense, the new 'relation' of Scotland to England - within the decline of Britain as an Imperialist power - which lies at the root of the present nationalist upsurge. It also helps condition the form of this upsurge which has not revolved around cultural or language grievances as in Wales but around the need for greater 'autonomy' to offset economic decline. The SNP has made its main thrust the ability of Scotland - controlling the assets of North Sea Oil through a National Assembly - to curb economic deprivation.

The growth of this nationalist upsurge - making the SNP the single biggest party in Scotland - adds to the dilemma facing the ruling class. Not only does it threaten its 'control' over North Sea Oil seen as vital; in the period ahead, to remedying Britain's balance of payments deficit. It also - similar to the upsurge in Northern Ireland - weakens and fragments ruling class institutions (the state and Tory Party) and hinders its ability to work out a united strategy over the coming years.

More important, the 'dynamic' of the struggle threatens increasingly to get out of hand as the overwhelmingly proletarian nature of Scotland can root the struggle for self-determination with in a socialist perspective.

This is not to say, of course, that such nationalist feeling cannot be 'used' by bourgeois (or petty-bourgeois) formations for their own ends. Such is the case with the SNP whose finance-capital leadership merely seeks to obtain for itself a more 'favourable' position vis-a-vis the other sections of the British ruling class at a time of growing economic crisis.

While nationalist feeling can be channelled behind bourgeois formations - directly opposed to the interests of working people - it would be a serious mistake to downplay the objective validity of those feelings which have allowed the SNP to make serious inroads not only into the Tory but Labour Party as well whose electoral support has been eroded and which has undergone a serious structural crisis (resulting in the formation of the SLP).

The only reason the SNP has been able to trap such large-scale support is due to the inability of the labour movement to pioneer the nationalist aspirations of the Scottish people within a clear class-struggle perspective. The Labour Party - in England and Scotland - has not only alienated large layers of Scottish workers through its refusal to fight the government's pro-capitalist policies but also through its thinly-disguised hostility to their national aspirations (as shown in the 'scuttling' of the Devolution Bill). It was only under mass pressure that they finally supported the idea of a National Assembly.

Such 'hostility' to growing nationalist feeling,

which has also been evident among wide sectors of the 'marxist' left, can only convince the mass of working people in Scotland that socialism has no answer to their sense of national discrimination and thereby push them behind the banners of the SNP which can pose as the sole force fighting for their democratic rights.

Far from showing 'opposition' to the nationalist aspirations of the Scottish people, the key task of socialists is:

a) to encourage, in Scotland, workers to grasp that these aspirations will not be realised by supporting the anti-working class policies of the SNP but only by fighting for them to be taken up in a clear class struggle perspective within the labour movement;

b) to defend, in England, the right of the Scottish people to whatever form of self-determination they so choose against the chauvinist attitude prevailing in the labour movement. It is only by the English labour movement showing, in practice, that it respects the rights of the Scottish people that the ground will be laid for a united anti-capitalist struggle.

Undoubtedly, the resurgence of nationalism in the United Kingdom has shown itself in varying ways, not least being the case of the Welsh Nationalist Party (Plaid Cymru) which, while relatively weak, has gathered support around the justified feeling of ethnic-linguistic exclusion.

Spearheaded by militant Welsh nationalist youth, the fight against Westminster's chauvinist policy of restricting the use of the Welsh language has brought ever-wider layers into opposition to a capitalism increasingly unable to satisfy the most meagre demand of oppressed layers of the population.

While varied in both form and tempo of development, the new nationalist upsurge adds a major explosive ingredient to the gathering class struggle which will result in sharp conflicts with a bourgeois order ever more hostile to democratic rights. The task of socialists, far from standing 'aloof' or seeing such developments as merely a 'diversion' from their economist blueprint, is to vigorously support and champion them within a socialist perspective.

## B) Black Power

During the late 'fifties and early 'sixties, the ruling class - mainly through a Tory government - scoured the 'colonies' encouraging thousands of West Indians, Pakistanis and Indians to emigrate to this country to help fill the 'labour shortage' created, particularly in the service industries, during the post-war boom years.

The layer of Black immigrants who entered Britain during that period have not only been super-exploited as a ready source of cheap labour. The super-exploitation in itself reflects their pariah status as an oppressed minority discriminated against in all aspects of life on account of a deeply embedded racist bias.

Consigned to low-paid, dead-end jobs, this layer has been forced to bear the brunt of Britain's precipitate decline more sharply than any other sector. The perspectives offered them are growing racist oppression mirrored in both attacks on their democratic rights (as under the 1971 Immigration Act) and on their living standards (as they face soaring unemployment for the youth, worsening education facilities & ghetto housing). Moreover, the growth in racist attitudes foster-

ed by the Tory Party - and ultra-right groups such as the National Front - means that they are confronted with harassment and persecution that will deepen in the period ahead as the ruling class looks for 'scapegoats' to create divisions within the working class to divert its attention from the real cause of unemployment and declining living standards.



Such racist developments will not find, however, a 'passive' victim. Growing alienation from white racist society - combined with identification with the rise in national liberation movements in the 'Third World' - has given rise to a Black Nationalist consciousness that has become a permanent feature of the radicalisation process.

This growing sense of dignity and defiance has been revealed, over the years, in support among the Black community for struggles such as those against the Smith regime in Zimbabwe or the Vorster regime in South Africa; mobilisations against police victimisation and harassment as in the Mangrove trial; militant trade union actions as at Imperial Tyewriters and - most recently - the mass retaliation against the anti-immigrant campaign whipped up in the mass media in 1976.

The latter development was particularly important since it showed that, even more than in the past, the Black community was not prepared to passively tolerate the racist backlash the press, in combination with the 'right' of the Tory Party, was seeking to inflame. Key to this increasingly militant mood have been younger Blacks who - not willing to accept the racist bias of a society which condemns them because of the colour of their skin to dole queues, slum housing and police persecution - organised defence committees and launched mass actions against racist Immigration laws.

While knowing ebbs and flows, such struggles will grow in the period ahead as the Black community is subjected to both economic deprivation and greater harassment. Challenging head-on the racism inbuilt into the very nature of the system, these struggles have a directly anti-capitalist thrust and can lead ever-wider layers of Blacks to see their main enemy as class society itself.

Far from 'splitting' the labour movement, as the ultra-lefts of the WRP to the reformists maintain, the development of Black Nationalist consciousness is a major step forward. Supporting unconditionally the struggles of Blacks against their specific oppression – and defending their right to organise separately both inside and outside the labour movement – is a key task for socialists.

At the same time as supporting such struggles, however, socialists are also confronted with the need to break down racist prejudice within the labour movement which the ruling class will increasingly use, in the period ahead, to confuse and divide. This cannot be done, as tendencies from the WRP to 'Militant' suggest, by calling on Blacks to lay aside their struggle against racism and 'unite' with white workers at the 'economic' level. This is merely pandering to the racist prejudices embedded in the labour movement which are the prime cause of 'divisions'.

It can only be done by winning support within that movement against the oppression Blacks face which is, potentially, a 'threat' to all workers. The unity of the working class can only be achieved by the most 'privileged' layers being willing to champion the demands of the most oppressed & exploited.

A welcome sign in this direction was the resolution passed at last year's Labour Party Conference calling for the immediate repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act and the demonstration sponsored by the NEC which mobilised over 20,000 against the racist witch-hunt built up in the mass media last year.

## C) Women's Liberation

The Women's Liberation Movement arose in the late sixties mainly out of the general questioning of social and 'moral' attitudes provoked by the youth radicalisation. Such a movement was not limited to Britain but was part of a world-wide revolt by young women against the oppression they suffer, as a sex, in class society.

The rise of the women's movement within the advanced capitalist countries – from the USA to Italy where, in 1975, mass action on the issue of divorce brought down the government – is by no means accidental. It stems from the deepening contradictions felt by women today between their new awakened horizons and the reactionary social role imposed on them through the medium of the family unit. It is out of this contradiction – in the broadest sense – that the present dynamic can be situated.

Since the last war, the economic needs of most advanced capitalist countries have drawn women increasingly into the labour force. In Britain today, for example, they represent 40% of the labour movement and the biggest single element contributing to the growth in trade unionism. Paradoxically, however, it has been this rapid influx into the labour force – inter-reacting with the social and moral questioning of the late 'sixties' – which has brought out, before ever-wider layers of women, their specific oppression as a sex:

\* While being drawn into the labour movement, they are denied equal opportunities with men because their primary role is still seen as getting married and raising a family;

\* While performing work often similar to that of a man, they are denied equal pay – despite the passing of the Equal Pay Act – since their wage is seen merely as supplementary to that of the 'main' breadwinner;

\* While expected to enter the labour force, they are equally expected to bear the main burden of servicing the family unit as well;

\* While aware that society is capable of providing child-care facilities and safe birth control devices which would leave them free to participate more fully in social life, they are often denied access to them because their main 'function' is seen as bearing and rearing children.

Over the past decade, these contradictions have manifested themselves most sharply among young, professional women who represent the radicalised layer making up the women's movement. The demands this layer has pioneered however – free abortion on demand – a woman's right to choose, free child-care facilities, equal pay and opportunities – are capable of drawing thousands of women into struggle since all women suffer a similar oppression as a sex.

This has not only been seen in the development of the National Abortion Campaign (drawing, at its peak, 25,000 onto the streets), but in numerous isolated struggles of women over the years such as those of London buswomen to go driving or those of the Trico workers for equal pay.



There can be no doubt that the rise of the women's movement, insinuating its influence into all areas of society, has created a serious problem for the ruling class. While making 'concessions' to absorb or head it off (as in the Sex Discrimination Act), they are fully aware that the dynamic of these struggles can present a growing threat to the stability of class society.

The demands thrown up by the women's movement, challenging women's second-class role as a breeder of children economically dependent on the man, are a deepening threat to the stability of the family unit. In threatening the family, however, they implicitly threaten a major prop of class society through which the ruling class obtains many of its benefits.

The family provides them not only with a mechanism for passing on private property. It also provides them with a) a means of instilling authoritarian attitudes into each new generation; b) of abnegating responsibility for the care of old, young and sick which is imposed on the individual

breadwinner; c) of retaining a cheap source of labour (women) who can be drawn into the economy at times of expansion and removed at times of recession; d) of 'splitting' working people on sex lines since women, cut off and economically dependent on the man, are less likely to identify with his struggles at work.

The growth of the women's movement, challenging women's subordinate role as mediated by the family, can in this sense promote struggles that have a clear anti-capitalist logic. Ever-wider layers, fighting for rights seen as important to them, can begin to understand through experience that the roots of their oppression lie in class society itself and can only be uprooted with the destruction of class rule.

Fear of this thrust explains the mass campaign launched from Tory 'back-benchers' to Church dignitaries against the limited rights won by women under the 1967 Abortion Act. Such a campaign represents, beneath the 'emotionally' deceiving propaganda about 'protecting life', a major effort to re-establish the stability of the family which is seen as particularly important at a time of social unrest.

Identifying with & helping to build a mass women's movement - capable of drawing ever-wider layers into struggle for their rights - is a key task for socialists. The fact that such a movement does not yet exist, that it is fragmented and politically confused, is mainly due to a default in leadership by the marxist left which has consistently shown an economist and sectarian attitude.

At the same time as helping to build such a movement - particularly, at this stage, around the issue of defending abortion rights - socialists are also confronted with the task of 'breaking down' sexist prejudice within the broader labour movement which can be played on (like race prejudice) to divide and weaken working people.

The only way the government has been able to get away with its offensive against jobs and living standards is because this offensive tends to fall heaviest upon women who are not considered 'integral' to the labour movement. Unemployment affects women at twice the rate of men; 'wage restraint' reduces women's chances of getting equal pay; social service cut-backs pull women out of the labour force as child-care facilities are eroded etc.

Building a mass women's movement - and carrying the demands of that movement into the labour force - is key in ensuring that the working class is united in its response to government attacks & that the most oppressed are not allowed to 'go to the wall' in the interests of the more privileged

layers. One of the most positive signs in this direction has been the willingness of both TUC and Labour Party conferences to come out for free abortion on request and against any attempt to whittle away those rights won under the 1967 Act.

## D) Student Movement

Students have, over the past decade, been to the fore of almost all social struggles. The main force in support of the Vietnamese revolution in the middle 'sixties; they played a vital role in building the Civil Rights movement in N. Ireland; in promoting the women's movement and have been active - as during the 1974 miners' strike - in supporting and identifying with the struggles of the labour movement.

The roots of this radicalisation can be traced to the changed social role of students in the post-war years. Since the war, the student population has expanded dramatically in almost every major capitalist country. Such an expansion, reflected in Britain in a rise from a mere 39,000 in 1939 to a projected 405,000 in 1980, has been dictated by an increasingly technological industry requiring a much more highly-skilled workforce.

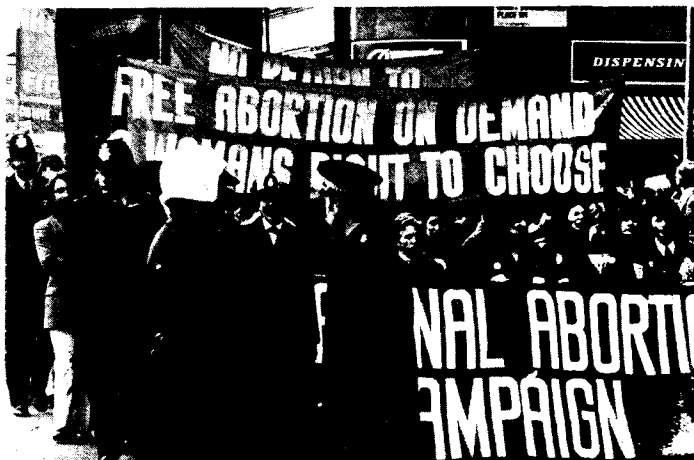
Though conditioned by social background, the majority of students are no longer destined, as in the pre-war years, to become a 'managerial elite' but a highly skilled component of the labour movement; i.e. teachers, engineers & technicians. This fact - coupled with the intellectual stimuli & relative freedom of student life - means that they can be radicalised by and respond in large numbers to major developments in the class struggle.

The subordination of education to the needs of industry had already promoted, by the late 'sixties, a deepening alienation of the student body from the university structure and course content as well as from the wider social values that university was seen to represent. This alienation was reflected in both specifically student action - e.g. the 'files' issue in 1970 - and attempts to link up their struggles with broader social forces challenging class society.

In the late 'sixties, at a time when the labour movement was relatively passive, the focal point of this alienation was the colonial struggles in Vietnam and N. Ireland where students were the backbone of the rising solidarity movements. As the labour movement has increasingly swung into action over the past decade - and as students have begun to share 'common' problems with it such as 'cut-backs' and inflation-ridden grants - they have increasingly identified with its rhythm of struggle.

Such identification has not eliminated the need for specific student action such as, for example, the fight over student union autonomy against the Heath government in 1972 or, more recently, the 'grants campaign' of 1974-5. What it does mean is that, increasingly recognising the common interests shared by students and workers in the fight against social expenditure cuts and unemployment, there has been a growing identity in struggle as on the November 1976 demonstration against the cuts where students were heavily represented.

The radicalisation over the past decade or so indicates that the campuses have become permanent centres of dissatisfaction and protest. This is not, of course, to deny that there cannot be temporary lulls in activity as has happened over the past few years. Such 'downturns' should not



Mass action essential to win women's rights



be mistaken, however, either with a basic shift to the 'right' (mirrored in the growth of Tory societies) or a long phase of political apathy. That would be to misunderstand the fact that the causes of the student upsurge are rooted in objective factors, which will continue in the period ahead, and are not mere protests of a moral nature.

The reasons for the temporary downturn over the past few years are a combination of a) the relative passivity of the labour movement with which students increasingly identify; and b) the policies of the 'broad left' leadership of NUS which has curbed student action to the needs of sections of the labour bureaucracy.

Such a downturn is, however, a temporary phenomenon. Potentially the factors that created the radicalisation of the late sixties not only remain but will be increasingly aggravated by the economic recession. They are thus capable of drawing ever-wider layers of students into struggle, against the 'restraining' influence of their leadership, to defend grants, college facilities and jobs. The mass strike and 'sit-in' by student teachers in 1976 is an indication of the trends for the future.

Faced with such a perspective, the 'red university' strategy proposed by marxists becomes ever more valid. Such a strategy rejects the narrow limits 'imposed' on student struggles by groups such as the Communist Party which try to isolate them from broader social issues. It also rejects the position of groups such as the SWP which ignore the struggles of students as students and see them merely as adjuncts of workers' struggles.

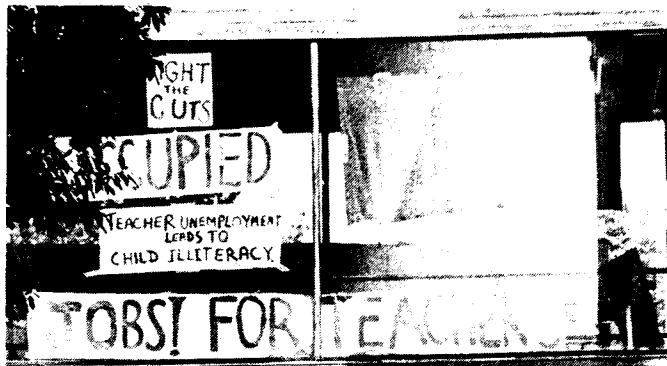
The 'red university' strategy means mobilising students to occupy their universities to build



Students protest cuts in education

actions in support of student demands and to link their struggles with 'broader' social struggles. The occupation of colleges by student teachers to protest unemployment or that by the Colchester students in 1972 - placing college facilities at the disposal of the striking miners - are concrete examples of its use.

The radicalisation process in Britain, over the past decade or so, has been both uneven and complex. Different sectors of the population have come into struggle in an often unpredictable way, giving vent to their pent-up grievances flowing from capitalist oppression and discrimination directed against their race, sex, nation or generation. The very diversity of the struggles that have opened up is a clear indication of the depth



Student teachers occupy colleges to protest unemployment.

of the social crisis at present wracking British society.

While these layers are capable of 'launching' mass struggles in defence of their rights, however, and winning notable concessions, they are all limited by their own lack of social 'weight'. Their struggles, in this sense, increasingly pose the need of winning allies in a broad anti-capitalist offensive, mainly in the working class.

Unfortunately, at this stage, the class-collaborationist policies of the trade union and Labour Party leaders offer no solutions to these layers and - in many cases - alienate them. The labour bureaucracy not only weighs down upon the workers' movement but equally on its potential allies since it prevents that movement throwing its full weight into the struggles against, for example, racism or sexism.

While this has, on occasion, begun to be broken down - as in the Labour Party's support for abortion rights or, more recently, its anti-racist campaign - there exists at present no major current in the labour movement actively fighting for a programme that can show these diverse layers a long-term perspective for their struggles.

The fact that the labour movement has, so far, refused to pioneer and champion the demands of its potential allies explains why there are constant down-turns in the struggles of such layers, why they can become ideologically confused and prey to anti-socialist solutions. This is particularly true of the women's movement which, over the years, has seen tendencies toward 'counter-institutions', 'self-help' or 'separatist currents' as a substitute for mass action campaigns.

The objective limitations that weigh upon these sectors in no way mars their importance or the necessity for continued independent action. Nor does it downplay the fact that the 'issues' they have pioneered will be a constant - and central - factor in the continuing radicalisation process. What it does do is to explain the ebbs and flows in their development until they can begin to see a strategic solution to their problems in alliance with the 'decisive' social weight of the labour movement.

# IV. The Labour Movement

Despite the long-term assault launched against its living standards and democratic rights, over the past decade, the labour movement has undergone no serious defeat. Its ability to repulse the assault by successive governments - leading, in 1974, to the miners' strike which toppled Heath from office - lies in its reserves of combativity and strength accumulated in the post-war years, which stem from:

a) its dramatic increase in size due primarily to the influx of women into the labour movement - reaching 2.6 million in 1971 - and growing unionisation of white-collar workers as in the case of NALGO, CPSA or the NUT;

b) its consolidation and strengthening of union organisation within this numerical expansion as mirrored in the rise of shop stewards (from an estimated 175,000 in the early 'sixties to well over 300,000 in 1975).

While it has been this increased strength which has allowed the labour movement to defend its standard of living through mass 'confrontations' with various governments - from the time of the 1966 seamen's strike onwards - it has been this same strength which has set the political limitations on the radicalisation that has occurred over the past decade.

## A) Generalising Consciousness

The post-war boom - facilitated - by the role of the Atlee government - had an important, if temporary, impact on the labour movement. The creation of the 'welfare state', full employment & the ability to improve living standards through shop-floor militancy led to its partial 'fragmentation' and 'de-politicisation' clearly reflected in the strengthening of the right-wing in the unions and the Labour Party.

The importance of this trend - allowing Labour MPs such as Jay to evolve schemes for 'ending' trade union participation in the party - was that it created the framework within which the labour movement began to react, in the middle sixties, to the assault on its living standards and democratic rights spear-headed by the 1964 Wilson government.

The fact that, for a considerable period, the movement had 'retreated' back from politics into localised, industrial militancy meant that, when confronted with a generalised offensive, workers turned in the first instance not to the lefts in the Labour Party but to the trade unions in defence of gains won. It was figures such as Scanlon and Jones, under mass pressure from their members, who symbolised the growing opposition to ruling class strategy represented by Wilson's In Place of Strife to Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

The confining of these struggles to defensive industrial action mediated through the unions set the political limitations on the process that opened up as ever-wider layers of the class - beginning with the 1966 seamen's strike - were drawn into the fight against wage restraint and attempts to impose a legal straightjacket on the unions.

This is not, of course, to downplay the importance of the escalating confrontations that opened up under the Wilson government and reached a climax - about a decade later - in the miners'

strike that brought the Tories down. This process was of major significance in that it:

a) brought ever-wider layers, including more 'conservative' sectors such as postmen or newly unionised layers such as teachers, into class-struggle actions against the government;

b) forced these layers to move beyond the atomised consciousness of the boom period into recognising the need to create a more united class response to the ruling class offensive - a trend seen most clearly in the 1972 campaign to 'free the five' or the 1974 miners' strike that threatened to overflow into 'general strikes';

c) blocked, through the strength and combativity of the labour movement, the ability of the ruling class to change the balance of forces in its favour by inflicting a serious defeat upon sectors of the labour movement.

While reflecting the combativity and strength of the labour movement, however, such a process also revealed its political weakness. While willing to 'down tools' in their thousands, while willing to initiate mass actions capable of bringing down a Tory government, the mass ranks of the labour movement were unable to translate this militancy into a political programme fought for in the Labour Party against the pro-capitalist policies of its own leaders.

This is why, on the eve of defeating the Heath government in a major 'trial of strength' - over 10 million trade unionists voted for the return of the same Labour government which had played such a treacherous role during its previous period of office. Disillusion with the Labour bureaucrats was by no means the same as a break from the politics these figures represented - the politics of reformism - which continued to tie them to the Labour Party.

It is important to stress this point since many sections of the marxist left 'mistook' the growth of industrial militancy - finding no reflection initially in the Labour Party - as an indication that layers of the labour movement were rapidly 'bypassing' the Labour Party and breaking free of its reformist stranglehold. Such an analysis was radically wrong. The fact that the labour movement was restricted to defensive struggles, unable to translate them into a political challenge to Wilson, meant that far from breaking free of the reformist stranglehold, they were as deeply held as ever.



If anything, the growth of ever-wider confrontations in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies marked the initial response of the class as it began to move beyond the 'fragmented' militancy of the early boom years and generalise upon its consciousness. While ready to defend past gains by militant action, while confident and strong after decades of rising living standards and full employment, they had no political alternative to that of the reformist leaders.

## **B) Labour Party Crisis**

This explains not only why over 10 million workers were ready to return Wilson to office in 1974 but also why - after defeating the Tories in a major 'trial of strength' - they have temporarily been willing to 'accept' the Social Contract imposed on them by the Labour leaders which has seriously eroded living standards.

The 'acceptance' of the Social Contract, measured in the dramatic downturn in strike action over the past few years compared to that against Heath's pay code, does not signify a 'retreat' by the class. The Labour government, returned to office on the basis of a powerful class mobilisation, is incapable of achieving this aim. The Social Contract was itself a voluntary agreement between the government and TUC born out of the disaster of attempting to compel the unions to abide by wage restraint.

What it does signify is that, while undefeated and combative, the movement has found itself politically disarmed in the face of the pro-capitalist policies of its leaders. While wishing to defend living standards and job prospects, they have not yet elaborated a political alternative to the government's strategy which would give that struggle a perspective and, at the same time, keep out a possible return of the Tories.

The downturn in industrial action over the past few years has, in this sense, been increasingly paralleled by a 'molecular' movement within the class as it has sought to hammer out a perspective for the problems facing it no longer at a sectoral but at a national level. Since the vast majority of the labour movement retain allegiance to the party which they built, this attempt to evolve a new political strategy has increasingly been registered in the Labour Party since there exists no other arena in which the class can, at this stage, politically express itself.

Such a process, while slow and erratic, has precipitated a growing crisis within the Labour Party as the discontent of ever-wider layers in the unions has come into head-on conflict with the pro-capitalist policies of the government. Deepening strains and tensions have emerged as the party finds itself the scene of opposing class forces - those of the workers' movement & those of the ruling class - mediated, at this stage, in different wings of the labour bureaucracy.

Such a crisis was reflected, most symbolically, in the resignation of Harold Wilson as leader of the party in 1976. Whatever the personal reason for Wilson's abrupt departure, his decision coincided with the growing impossibility of 'holding together' the broad coalition in the Labour Party. This was shown even more sharply in the election that followed when the combined votes for Foot and Benn represented a major swing to the 'left' against the 'right' symbolised by Jenkins who had to throw in the towel after the first ballot.

The polarisation within the party revealed by Wilson's resignation has deepened over the past

period as the class pressures on the party have increased. The swing 'left' by the party rank-and-file (under mass pressure from outside) has forced the government to secure its 'base' on ever - more overtly bourgeois forces. Growing opposition at party conferences has not only led to shriller calls from the 'right' for a coalition government - or even to desertions, as in the case of Mayhew, to the Liberals - but to the alliance cemented in 1977 between Callaghan and Steel of the 'Lib-Lab' pact.

This growing crisis, although only at an embryonic stage, is not of course unique. It represents the age-old contradiction embedded in the Labour Party as to whether it is a party reflecting the 'national' (i.e. ruling class) interest or that of the labour movement which gave it birth. The frictions building up over the past years between the party and government - reflecting the working out of this contradiction - have seen two forms:

### **1. Policies**

The first has been the growing opposition to the government's pro-capitalist policies reflected, in a confused and distorted form, in the positions of the Tribunites who dominate the Labour Party NEC and who have a substantial base within the Parliamentary Labour Party. The first example of this political 'cleavage' was revealed in the decision of the NEC to run a major campaign on the question of entry into the EEC against that of the government. Despite the chauvinist nature of such a campaign, it marked a major 'watershed' in the relations between the party and the government as the former began to reflect the growing discontent with the Wilson/Callaghan leadership.

Opposition on the issue of the EEC was soon to be followed by similar opposition to the government's unemployment policies or cuts in social expenditure which prompted the Tribune MPs - bolstered by conference feeling - to abstain on them in the House of Commons. The important aspect of this opposition is that, despite the weak and 'cowardly' role played by the Tribunites, the struggle against the government within the party has increasingly mirrored and inter-related with that of wide layers outside.

The opposition at party conference to the government's proposed cuts, for example, was rooted in the mass discontent of major unions which led, in 1976, to a mass 60,000 strong demonstration co-sponsored by the Labour Party NEC. In the same way, opposition to anti-abortion moves, to racist immigration curbs and to anti-union moves (as at Grunwick) has been rooted in the mass pressure building up among the class and its allies which has seen the Labour Party drawn increasingly into supporting mass anti-government action in the streets: e.g. the anti-racist rally in 1976, the NAC march in 1977 and the mass picketing outside Grunwick more recently still.

The situation in which growing opposition in the party not only reflects but, in turn, helps to promote mass action outside presents a major problem for the government and its right-wing base in the party.

### **2. Democracy**

The attempt by the class to make 'its' party respond to pressure has not only brought it into a head-on conflict with the government's policies however, but also with its undemocratic practic-

es which allow it to blandly ignore conference decisions.

The struggle for alternative policies, however confused and distorted they may initially be, has been accompanied in this sense by a struggle to 'democratise' the party revealed in numerous ways: the attempt by various branches to 'depose' MPs who refuse to abide by the Manifesto (as at Newham); the demand by figures such as Scargill that union-sponsored MPs should support union interests; the call at last year's conference that all MPs should be open to mandatory re-selection or that one, issued at the time of Wilson's resignation, that the leader of the party should be elected by conference as a whole and not merely by the PLP.

Such developments, which will grow in the period ahead, reflect the initial attempts by the class to create a democratic mechanism for the implementation of policies in their interests. The reaction such moves have triggered in the government - particularly the witch-hunting attack on Trotskyist 'infiltration' pioneered by both Wilson and Shirley Williams - shows just how serious they are considered to be.



Benn & Callaghan: two sides of the same reformist coin.

The only reason the 'right' have not resorted to the 'guillotine' to silence their critics is due to the major swing left in the mainstream of the party which would not allow them to get away with any 'blood-letting'. The Labour Party NEC decided to 'shelve' Underhill's witch-hunting report into the activities of 'Trotskyist infiltration'.

Such tensions, while only at an 'embryonic' stage, will deepen in the period ahead as opposition to the government's pro-capitalist policies finds ever-deeper reflection in the Labour Party. Such a trend - far from being a 'diversion' as groups such as the SWP maintain - is a major step forward since it is only by translating such discontent into a political challenge to the Labour right-wing that a serious opposition can be built which can begin to break out of the 'reformist stranglehold' around the neck of the class.

Breaking out of this 'stranglehold' cannot be achieved by ignoring the Labour Party or hoping that growing waves of militancy will 'by-pass' it. It can only be achieved by transforming this militancy into a political programme fought for within the party against the right-wing which can begin to offer ever-wider layers a clear alternative to the pro-capitalist policies of the Callaghan government.

## C) Dangers of Centrism

While the Labour Party has swung to the 'left' over the past period, under growing discontent, such discontent has been politically 'hegemonised' to date by the Labour 'lefts' from Benn to the Tribunites whose origins can be traced back to the Bevanites in the late 'fifties.

While opposing government policies at conferences, and occasionally abstaining in Parliament, these figures have consistently refused to mobilise the labour movement, and its allies, around clear class-struggle policies in a challenge to the government. This was revealed most recently in their virtual silence on the government's decision to form the 'Lib-Lab' pact on a programme hostile to the interests of the labour movement.

No doubt, under mass pressure, these figures have been forced to support mass actions by the class (and its allies) such as the 60,000 strong anti-cuts demonstration in late 1976. Their main role, however, has been to channel this pressure within the confines of parliamentary democracy, providing them with a 'base' with which to manoeuvre with the right-wing. This is particularly true in the case of Benn whose continuation within the cabinet both justifies, from the 'left', support for the existing leadership and gives him increased authority - and flexibility - within that leadership.

In this sense, the Tribunites and Benn have acted as a major curb on the rise of a clear class-struggle tendency within the Labour Party. Not only have they tried to direct the mass discontent building up in the unions into 'safe' channels but they have sought to blunt its biting edge around policies which are in no way a solution to the real problems facing working people.

Despite the radical image they have received, particularly Benn with his populist appeal, their position on 'workers' democracy' is merely a smokescreen to smuggle in major rationalisation schemes by encouraging unions to identify with the profitability of private enterprise. Their support for increased loans to private firms is not a means of extending public ownership but of using vast reserves of public expenditure - as at Chrysler - to bail out lame ducks at the expense of jobs and working conditions.

Their call for 'import controls' or to 'leave the EEC' are equally reactionary in the sense that they counterpose the viability of British capitalism 'going it alone' to the socialist position of calling for a 'United Socialist States of Europe'.

The latter demands are not only inadequate, however, but dangerous in that they foster a narrow 'nationalist' spirit by suggesting that the cause of the present crisis is not capitalism itself but 'foreign workers' or 'immigrants'. This narrow nationalism has also been revealed in their hostility to the fight for democratic rights in N. Ireland or Scotland (where it was the left which 'scuttled' the Devolution Bill).

Such an attitude, instead of uniting the workforce in a clear anti-capitalist perspective, can create dangerous divisions within it and help develop a climate in which the ultra-right will find it ever more easy to spread their racist and chauvinist poison.

The fact that Benn and the Tribunites have received a more radical image than their policies deserve should not obscure the fact, however, that they represent, in however confused and dis-

torted a form, the political evolution of growing numbers in the labour movement hesitatingly seeking an alternative to Callaghan.

This is an important point. The fact that there does not exist in Britain a revolutionary party capable of politically centralising the struggles that will develop means that the Labour 'lefts' can increasingly pose as a political focus for thousands in the coming years.

The development of 'left reformist' or 'centrist' currents in the Labour Party is not inevitable, of course. Lacking any alternative political perspective, due to the weakness of the revolution-

## V. Tasks & Perspectives

The past period has opened up tremendous possibilities for the building of a revolutionary party. The radicalisation among wide layers of the population in the middle 'sixties has been given a central thrust, more recently, by the growing politicisation of the labour movement reflected in a serious crisis within the Labour Party and challenge to its pro-capitalist leaders.

Moreover, the ability of the Stalinists to take advantage of this situation has been seriously reduced by the deepening tensions within their own ranks provoked by the contradictions facing them as a world movement. Attempts to 'disassociate' themselves from the worst crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy - while retaining their links with the Soviet Union - has created a deep 'cleavage' in the Communist Party which undermines and weakens its credibility before wide layers.

The 'opportunities' for Trotskyism have never appeared so favourable. The key 'reason' why such opportunities have not been taken advantage of is due to the fragmentation and confusion of those forces which lay claim to a Trotskyist heritage. The causes of this fragmentation are, of course, complex. They stem basically from the discontinuity of the Trotskyist movement created by the degeneration of the SLL (now the WRP) in the early 'sixties.

Such a degeneration created a vacuum filled by the emergence and growth of new groups, divorced from the traditions of the Trotskyist movement and unable to grasp its method of approach, that were incapable of understanding and relating to the complex and uneven development of the class struggle over the past few decades or so.

It has been the inability of these groups to relate to the complex nature of the radicalisation in Britain on the basis of a clear methodology that has provoked inner convulsions in their ranks, leading to split-offs, expulsions and growing disillusion. This has been revealed not only in the narrow 'economism' of such groups as the WSL or SWP which have been unable to grasp the significance of the women's liberation movement, Black Power or growing nationalist sentiment in Scotland or Wales.

It has also been revealed in the inability of such groups - and others such as the IMG or ICL - to integrate these new developments into an overall strategy of struggle within the Labour movement against its reformist leaders. Groups such as the IMG, for example, have swung in the space of a few years from ultra-left abstention on the Labour Party to almost 'uncritical' support for left-reformists such as Benn (in the 1976 leadership battle).

Solving this fragmentation - which objectively

any left and strength of reformist illusions within the workers' movement, such a perspective seems the most likely. The strategy of the Communist Party, seeking alliances with the Labour 'lefts' whom it has been wooing for decades, adds to the likelihood of such a variant.

The main danger facing the labour movement, in this sense, is not that of a 'defeat' for the class in a major confrontation. It is the hegemony of its growing discontent by left reformist or centrist currents which can both politically confuse it and channel its combativity into 'safe paths' within the confines of parliamentary democracy.

holds back the creation of a mass revolutionary party by alienating broad layers on the left seeking an alternative to Stalinism & reformism - is an urgent task. While sectarian attitudes born out of organisational fetishism are to be avoided, it cannot be solved by 'proclamations' in favour of unity such as that recently launched by the IMG around its paper 'Socialist Challenge'.



James P. Cannon, founder of the American Trotskyist movement.

Such an attitude - which ignores or downplays the programmatic basis on which such unity must be forged - merely repeats the mistakes of the past and harbours the splits of the future. It represents a short-cut tactic to the difficult problems of party-building.

The only way such fragmentation will be overcome in the period opening up is by adopting a perspective that combines:

a) engaging in a serious political debate with all forces on the left to clarify points of agreement and disagreement;

b) creating as much unity as possible among the left on those issues where agreement is possible - such as Ireland, abortion or racist Immigration laws - which can provide wide layers with a real perspective of struggle.

It is in the process of working together around concrete issues and carrying on a serious debate

around major programmatic questions that the basis will be laid for possible regroupments in the future. Such a regroupment will emerge out of a unity forged at both the level of theory and practice.

The key task before the LSA remains, in this sense, the elaboration of a clear programme of action which will allow us - in the period ahead - both to a) begin to enter into serious debate with the other tendencies on the left; and b) begin, as we develop, to create the maximum unity in action around given aspects of this programme with other sectors of the marxist left.

In elaborating such a programme, several underlying points have to be born in mind in relation to the method of such a programme - the transitional method.

1) We begin from the objective contradictions of the capitalist system and the direction in which these are moving. On that basis, we derive our demands and we formulate them in terms which are, as much as possible, understandable to the masses at their given level of consciousness.

2) We do not begin by demanding that the masses understand what the 'system' is or that they reject any aspect of it. Instead we chart a course, raise demands & propose actions aimed at shifting the burden of the inequities and breakdowns of capitalism from the shoulders of working people onto the employers & their government where they belong.

3) We champion the progressive demands and support the struggles of all sectors of the oppressed regardless of the origin or level of these actions.

4) We recognise the deep divisions within the British working class created by Imperialism & class society, and we press for revolutionary unity based on support for the demands of the most oppressed. We press the working class to give clear and concrete answers to the problems faced by its allies. We unconditionally reject all ideas that the oppressed should 'wait' for the labour movement to support them before 'entering' into their own struggles.

5) We raise demands that challenge the 'rights' of capitalist private property and the prerogative claimed by the government to control the lives of working people and the wealth they create. We do not stop with the necessary struggle to defend and extend democratic rights. We carry the fight for democracy into the organisation of the economy and the process for making decisions over the standard of living of the working class.

6) Our method is one of class - struggle action leading to deeper and clearer class consciousness. We promote the use of proletarian methods of struggle where the workers and their allies can make their weight count advantageously in direct mass actions in the streets & in the work places. In this perspective, united-front, single issue campaigns are central.

7) We recognise that, while willing to struggle around demands seen as vital to them, the working class (and its allies) have deep illusions still in the ability of the Labour Party to champion its rights. Breaking down these illusions cannot be achieved by ignoring the Labour Party but only by placing such demands on the Labour leaders - from inside and outside the party - in order to allow ever-wider layers to go through a concrete experience of the limitations of that party and begin, in the process, to forge a revolutionary party.

## A) Ireland

The central task of socialists in Britain, over the past decade or so, has been to come to the aid of the Irish freedom struggle. Such aid is not only important in giving the oppressed minority, economically weak and numerically small, new courage and a new perspective. It is also important in relation to the British class struggle since unless the labour movement can be won to defending the democratic rights of its allies, it will be increasingly unable in the period ahead to defend its own democratic rights.

The most effective way of aiding the Irish freedom struggle is by mobilising ever-wider layers of the British people in mass action to force the British government to retreat and limit its room



British troops in action in N. Ireland

for manoeuvre. Building such mass action should be around the right of the Irish people to determine their own future. This principle - fought for independently of the stage of the struggle in N. Ireland - is concretely crystallised in the demand 'Troops Out Now!'. Other slogans such as 'Free all Irish Political Prisoners!' fall within the general framework of this principle.

Such a position should be fought for against the positions advocated by both the Communist Party and the Labour 'lefts' of a 'phased withdrawal of troops' from N. Ireland. Such an argument makes a major concession to the 'right' of British Imperialism to be in Ireland & cuts across the principle of self-determination. The only 'right' that socialists should concede to Imperialism is the 'right' to get out now.

Despite the weakness and failings of the present Troops Out Movement, socialists should support such a movement, attempting in the process to cut across its internal faction fights and give it an outward - going mass action perspective. They must fight for the right of all forces - whatever their positions on other issues or even on the nature of the struggle in N. Ireland - to exist in such a movement provided they agree on the principle of self-determination.

At the same time as helping to build such a movement, the LSA has the duty - through the pages of Socialist Action - to continually analyse the developments in the struggle in N. Ireland from a marxist standpoint.

## B) Scotland

The growth of Scottish nationalism among ever-wider layers of the Scottish people places a similar, if not so urgent, responsibility on the shoulders of socialists in England. Despite the different form the nationalist upsurge has taken in Scotland, it represents an embryonic struggle for the democratic right of self-determination.

Supporting such a right has to be pioneered against wide layers of the marxist left (up to and including the Labour 'lefts') who claim that such a development, undermining the unity of the British working class, is reactionary in character. Such an argument is false to the core.

The 'unity' the left refer to is an imaginary one since large layers of Scottish workers feel that they suffer a distinct national 'discrimination'. The only way to achieve such a 'unity' is not by being antagonistic to their national aspirations - which can only succeed in pushing them behind the banners of the SNP and creating a growing disunity - but by showing them in practice that socialists in England support their democratic rights and are prepared to fight for them.

The attitude of the 'left' towards the rise of Scottish nationalism - similar, in this respect, to their attitude towards the Irish freedom struggle - is born out of adaptation to the chauvinist traditions within the English labour movement. Far from criticising Scottish workers for adapting to nationalist pressures, they should be fighting these pressures within the English labour movement by pioneering the right of the Scottish people to self-determination.

The concretisation of this right must be geared, at any given stage, to the feelings within the Scottish people. While taking up this issue in a general way, the LSA should also continually analyse, within the pages of *Socialist Action*, developments in Scotland from a marxist point of view.

## C) Women's Liberation Movement

Trotskyists are duty-bound to support all struggles of the oppressed for their liberation. This means that the LSA gives full support to the Women's Liberation Movement, is active in building it and attempts to give it a 'direction' around demands that have the potential of bringing millions of women into struggle for their rights.

The initial component of a programme for women's liberation has already emerged within the women's movement itself: 'free abortion on demand - a woman's right to choose; equal pay for equal work; equal job and educational opportunities; 124-hour child-care facilities'.

The struggle for women's liberation - around such demands - has a revolutionary dynamic because of the nature of women's oppression and the potential for mobilising masses of women in struggle against the ruling class and its government. Such a struggle can not only draw thousands into action as potential allies of the labour movement but can, at the same time, undercut the ability of the ruling class to 'use' women as a conservative or reactionary force in the growing class battles that will open up.

While intervening in, and building, the women's liberation movement, socialists must sensitively try and combat the many confused and incorrect positions that have developed, over the years,



mainly due to the default in marxist leadership. These stretch from 'economist' errors (seeing only the struggles of women in the workforce as important) to 'counter-institution' positions or, more recently, 'separatist' currents.

Socialists have to counterpose to these orientations that of building mass action campaigns on concrete aspects of women's oppression that can draw ever-wider layers of women into struggle. At the present stage, this means actively supporting and promoting the National Abortion Campaign (which the LSA helped to 'found') as a mass single-issue campaign to fight against continued attempts by the right-wing to erode those rights won under the 1967 Act. The thrust of such a campaign should be to defend the rights won under the 1967 Act as a basis for extending them to a woman's right to choose.

At the same time as intervening as the best supporters of NAC, we should (as socialists) fight to win women activists to a marxist analysis of the roots of women's oppression.

## D) Black Liberation

The LSA must solidarise itself with Black Nationalist and anti-racist struggles taking place such as that - in late 1976 - which burst forth against the 'witch-hunt' whipped up in the Tory press over 'immigration'. In supporting such struggles, we must defend the right of Blacks to organise along whatever lines they so choose in and outside the labour movement.

Where possible, socialists should involve themselves in and help build defence organisations for victimised Blacks - particularly under the 1971 Immigration Act - and find out more about existing defence groups and militant organisations of the Black Community.

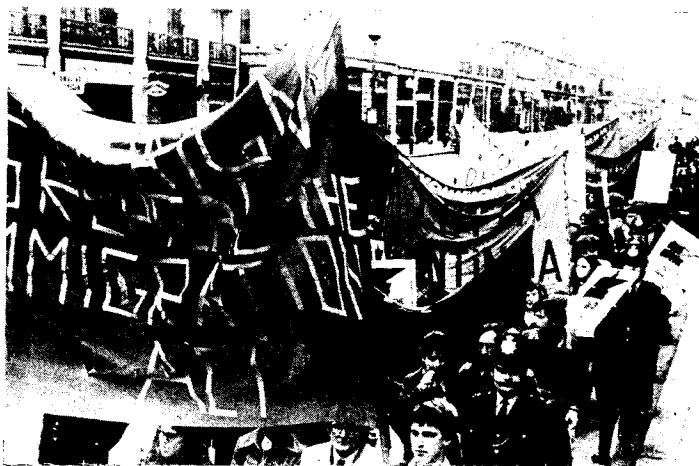
Both through our press and public meetings, we should explain the oppression of Blacks as Blacks; the character of their struggle as an independent form of the class struggle; the explosive nature this gives to their struggle as workers & the vanguard role their struggles will play against reaction. An important part of this process will be to make available - to Black militants as well as white - the marxist analysis of Black Nationalism made by the SWP (USA). This would

help explain the complex racial-national character of the struggle of the immigrant and British born population.

In addition to identifying with the struggles of Blacks, the LSA has a duty to combat racism within the broader labour movement. This struggle can concretely be mounted by:

a) supporting and helping to build mass action campaigns against the racist governments in Zimbabwe and South Africa and the complicity of the British government in 'maintaining' them - through massive investments. 'End all military and economic aid for Apartheid'.

b) supporting and helping to build a mass action campaign against the present racist immigration laws which prevent Blacks entering the country on the basis of colour and reduce those who do get through 'immigration controls' to second-class citizenship. 'Repeal the 1971 Immigration Act'.



CRIA demonstration in April last year

## E) Student Movement

The National Union of Students (NUS) has become the main arena for the discussion of contending political programmes for advancing student struggles and relating them to those among broader social layers. Our long-term task within the student movement is to try and create - along with other tendencies - a class-struggle left wing within the NUS on a programme offering solutions to the problems facing students as students and linking them with broader social struggles underway. Key points of any such programme should be:

a) In face of cut-backs in social expenditure, socialists have to fight for a 'sliding scale of educational expenditure' to ensure no worsening of standards. In face of the erosion of student grants, under inflationary trends, socialists have to fight equally for a 'cost of living clause' in-built into all grants. Since immigrant & women students are particularly hard-hit by the twin evils of inflation and government cut-backs, such layers have to be particularly protected by a series of complementary demands.

b) At the same time as raising demands relating to students as students, socialists have to pioneer within the NUS attempts to get the union to both sponsor and support the mass campaigns against present anti-abortion moves, racist laws, the oppression of the Irish people and the general attack upon living standards & job opportunities by the government.

The struggle to achieve any of these demands should be posed within the 'red university' strategy. Whether attempting to oppose closures of college creche facilities or attempting to mobilise mass support for a strike, the aim should be the occupation of the college thereby turning it into an ideological and organisational centre for anti-capitalist struggle. Such a perspective will involve a fight against both the opportunist and the ultra-left trends in the student movement.

## F) The Labour Movement

The permanent threat of large-scale unemployment and rampant inflation are symptoms of decaying capitalism. 'Productivity deals', factory mergers and closures, laws restricting the independence of trade unions, and incomes policies are all weapons of the ruling class that workers have to confront more and more. Massive defensive struggles will have to be waged in the labour movement in the period ahead to win decent living standards, working conditions & the right to a job.

Faced with such a perspective, the key task of socialists in the labour movement is to develop a strategy to combat the problems workers face by 'binding' the movement together in united action. In order to prevent attempts by the employers to 'split' the workers' movement, socialists should pioneer inside the unions support for the doubly-oppressed layers such as women or Blacks. Any attempt to build a class-struggle opposition that does not include such issues - e.g. support for women's abortion rights or repeal of the racist Immigration Act - represents a clear attempt to avoid political questions and an 'accommodation' to the backward ideas of layers of workers.

At the same time, demands must be raised that relate specifically to the problems of workers, demands stemming from attempts to defend living standards and democratic rights. The two main evils facing workers at present - and which will deepen in the period ahead - are inflation & unemployment.

Socialists should demand an end to any form of incomes policy (such as the Social Contract) and attempt to introduce the idea of a 'sliding scale of wages' (i.e. wage rises automatically tied to increases in the cost of living). Such a demand should not preclude struggles for higher wages but is essential in preventing the inevitable demoralisation of workers struggling time after time merely to stand still.

To combat unemployment, socialists should fight for a 'sliding scale of hours' (i.e. sharing the given amount of work, through a reduction in hours, among the existing work-force) with no loss of pay. Such a demand can be popularised in the call for a 35-hour week. Since unemployment is already wide-spread, socialists should fight to get the unions to unify both the employed and unemployed in a major campaign to end cut-backs in social expenditure and for a massive 'Public Works Programme'.

These demands will become central in the period ahead. Their importance lies in the fact that they can unite the whole labour movement around a common struggle, not allowing weaker unions to fall by the wayside, through lack of industrial power, thus creating divisions. At the same time, they show that workers, who bear no responsibility for the crisis, should not be made to suffer for it.





Mass demonstration in Coventry against redundancies

In struggling in factories, mines and depots to maintain jobs and wage levels, workers will ever more come into conflict with employers unwilling or unable to 'concede' their demands. In such struggles, the call 'Open the Books' or 'No Business Secrets' assumes its full importance. If employers cannot guarantee full employment or decent living standards, let them 'open' their books to representatives of the labour movement for investigation.

If, as may happen, individual employers prove they cannot satisfy the demands of the workers, then the call should be made for 'Nationalisation under Workers' Control'. If employers cannot run their enterprises efficiently, they should be taken over by the workers and - within the framework of a national plan - be run in the interests of people and not profit. Where industries go bankrupt or close down, a similar demand should be made.

Such demands - extending 'workers control' over the factories, mines or depots - should be counter - posed to the 'integrationist' plans at present being discussed by both employers and trade union leaders. Schemes such as the Bull-ock Report - with proposals to integrate trade union representatives onto boards of directors - are not a class-struggle solution to the problems facing workers but a form of class-collaboration.

Far from extending workers' control over the enterprise, their main aim is to make the workforce identify with the profitability of individual firms thus getting it to a) co-operate in the major 'nationalisation' schemes afoot which will create large-scale redundancies and cut-backs in working conditions; and b) compete with workers in 'rival' firms thus atomising the labour movement instead of uniting it in anti-capitalist action.

Such demands are not, of course, the sole demands socialists should raise and struggle for in the labour movement. Socialists should be to the forefront of all struggles over pay and working conditions, however 'small' or 'localised'. The above demands, however, are a framework in which struggles should be increasingly placed as more and more workers become aware that the problems they face are general ones requiring general solutions.

It is in fighting for such demands, first on a local and progressively a national level, that workers will gradually realise that the struggle to defend decent living standards and full employment can only be achieved by a socialist solution.

In fighting for these demands, workers will increasingly come into conflict not only with the ruling class and its institutions but with the bureaucracy dominating the labour movement which often refuses to champion the interests of its members and which collaborates in 'productivity deals', unemployment and voluntary pay freezes as in the Social Contract.

One of the major errors made by large layers of the 'left' is not only that they have no strategic solution to the problems facing the labour movement but that they have no perspective of struggle for removing the present mis-leadership. The rank-and-file movement of groups like the SWP divert struggles against the labour bureaucracy 'outside' the unions. The task is not, however, to separate militants in artificial bodies from the mass of members - who still follow the existing leaders - but to channel growing discontent into a struggle to kick out the labour bureaucrats.

The central task of socialists in the unions is, in this sense, building a class-struggle left wing tendency around a clear set of demands to challenge and struggle against the present mis-leadership. Such a struggle against the class-collaborationist methods of the bureaucracy will also, in turn, throw up demands against their anti-democratic practices in an attempt to create a true spirit of workers' democracy: e.g. demands for the 'recall of all officials' or 'salaries of union officials no higher than that of the average worker'.

The aim of such a struggle for a clear class struggle programme and for a democratic structure is to transform the unions into organisations which will pioneer the interests of working people.

## G) The Labour Party

While moving into struggle around demands in their interests, socialists are aware that the labour movement and its allies still retain deep illusions in the ability of the Labour Party to champion their rights and will increasingly look towards it as an instrument for social change. This process has already opened up, in the past few years, as the struggles of almost all layers of the population have begun to find a confused & distorted echo in the party against the government's policies.

In order to ensure that such a process - which will deepen in the period ahead - is not hegemonised by the reformist leaders of a 'left' or 'right' variety, it is important that socialists intervene in that process with a clear understanding of what the Labour Party represents in the consciousness of working people.

The fact that the Labour Party was created by the unions - and still retains the allegiance of the vast majority - means that socialists stand unconditionally for a victory of Labour over the Tories. The struggles of working people with Labour in power are posed more favourably in two ways:

1) First, because of the organic links with the unions, it is limited to the extent to which it can erode the past gains of the class;

2) Second, it allows working people to go through a concrete experience of their reformist leaders (free of the 'left' talk that occurs when they are in opposition).

Support for the Labour Party as a step forward towards independent political activity is by no means the same, however, as support for the political programme which is a tool in the hands of the class enemy. While identifying with the mass base of the Labour Party, socialists counterpose to the programme of its leaders one based on the real needs of working people and their allies.



Conference decisions must be binding on trade union and Labour Party leaders.

It is by supporting Labour and, at the same time, demanding that it implement a programme in the interests of working people that ever-wider layers will come into conflict with the reformist leaders and see the need for an alternative. This long-term orientation is summed up in the call 'Labour to Power on a Socialist Programme!'

It has been argued by certain tendencies that such an orientation creates illusions in the possibility of the reformist leaders actually being able to implement 'socialist measures'. Such an 'argument' misses the point. The majority of working people already have such 'illusions'; already believe that (perhaps with a change of leadership, substituting a Benn for Callaghan), the party can be 'pressurised' into implementing

demands in their interests. The growing importance of the Labour 'lefts', over the past few years, is an embryonic example of this process at work.

The aim of such an orientation, taking the present level of consciousness of the labour movement as its starting point, is to show increased layers, through concrete experience, that the Labour bureaucrats (of the 'right' or the 'left') are incapable of implementing their demands. The way to do this is not by ignoring the Labour Party or sectarianly 'denouncing' it from the sidelines. It is by calling on its leaders - who claim to represent working people - to implement demands in their interests.

It is only on the concrete experience of the inability of the Callaghans - or Benns - to respond to their needs that ever-wider layers will begin to see the need for a socialist alternative. This will not take place overnight but will, undoubtedly, be the result of a long process both inside and outside the Labour Party. In the long term, the building of a mass revolutionary party is unthinkable without a major struggle inside the Labour Party against the reformist leaders that will educate growing numbers in the need for a different kind of party. There is no substitute for such a struggle.

Intervening in and developing such a process is, from a marxist viewpoint, dependent on two inter-related approaches:

### 1. Mass Action

The attempt to take growing layers through a concrete experience with the reformist leaders is not a propaganda exercise (as in the case of Militant) but has its roots in the living struggles themselves on the streets and in the factories. It is only by participating in and building these struggles around clear anti-capitalist demands, and directing them towards the Labour Party, that increasing layers will be confronted on the basis of struggle with the limitations of the reformist leaders.

Such struggles include not only those in defence of the democratic rights & living standards of the labour movement that will be increasingly threatened in the coming years. They also include those pioneered by women for 'abortion rights', those of Black people against racist immigration laws or anti-imperialist struggles such as that launched by TOM to withdraw the troops from Ireland.

Directing all these movements towards the Labour Party, which allows the apparently fragmented and disconnected struggles to find a 'focal' point, does not signify subordination to electoralism. On the contrary, it is by encouraging at all times independent mass action, and demanding that the Labour leaders implement demands stemming from such action, that ever-wider layers will begin to see through the limitations of reformism.

### 2. Class-Struggle Left-Wing

The growth of mass struggles, in the period ahead, will increasingly find a reflection in the Labour Party. The crisis that has opened up will be both deepened and accelerated as ever-wider layers look towards it as an arena for hammering out a political alternative to the Labour government and turning it into a force for social change.

Such a development should be consciously participated in by socialists as part of directing the growing struggles into a clear programmatic opp-

osition to the policies of the labour leaders.

Entry into the Labour Party is not, in this sense, a 'raid'. It is a long-term, non-split perspective aimed at pioneering the struggles growing outside the party - those of the unions, of the women's movement or the Black Community - inside the party and ensuring they are not headed off by the 'right' or 'left' reformists.

The aim of such an intervention should be to create a class-struggle left-wing in the party on a clear programme of demands reflecting those pioneered by the masses on the streets and in the factories. Such a left-wing should also take up demands for the democratisation of the party as an integral part of building a real opposition to the right-wing: 'For a Labour government to carry out Party conference decisions!'; 'For the recall of any MP who fails to carry out these policies!'; 'For an end to all witch-hunts - Freedom for all political groupings!'

Such a tendency should be willing to co-operate with all forces in the Labour Party, whatever their general political 'colouring', around any given concrete aspect of such a programme. While adopting a non-sectarian stance, however, its aim should be - by pioneering the demands of the class and its allies in the party - to allow the

latter to test out the various leaderships 'offering' themselves from the 'right' through to the 'left'.

It is through the inter-relation of mass action outside the party and a current reflecting this action programmatically inside the party that the hegemony of the Labour leaders can be successfully broken down and a concrete 'alternative' posed before the entire labour movement and its allies.

Such a long-term perspective is not entered into in the belief that the Labour Party can be 'won' to socialist policies or can be 'democratised'. Such a perspective would be utopian. It is entered into to show growing numbers of working people and their allies that, while the Labour Party is a step forward, it is not sufficient to fulfill their needs. Thousands, if not millions, will discover this not by being lectured at.

They will begin to discover it in the active course of trying to make 'their' party act in their interests. It is out of this struggle, out of the splits and re-alignments that will take place as part of this struggle, that a new form of party will be forged: a revolutionary party.

---

# **SOCIALIST ACTION**

## **Fund Drive**

To ensure the widest possible circulation and to keep the journal at its low cost of 25p, SOCIALIST ACTION urgently needs more funds and more subscribers.

**YOU CAN HELP BY:** sending a donation (however small) as soon as possible;  
pledging a regular amount on a monthly basis;  
taking out a subscription to Socialist Action.

**Target £350 per issue**

**For further reading and details of discussion forums see page 28.**

### **NEXT ISSUE :**

**Labour & Democracy**

**Women & Socialism**

**The Bullock Report**

**Crisis in South Africa**

**Spain the Powder Keg**

**LSA & the F.I.**

**Subscribe to SOCIALIST ACTION**

**Name: ----- Domestic £1-00 pa**

**Address: ----- Overseas £2-00 pa**

-----

( Please make all postal orders or cheques payable to SOCIALIST ACTION )  
56, Auckland Road, London, SE19.

# LSA PAMPLETS

## **What We Stand For**

An analysis of the current radicalisation & a strategy for taking it - in all its diverse forms - forward. **10 p**

## **The Labour Party — Which Way ?**

A marxist evaluation of the Labour Party and the problem it has posed, historically, before the 'left'. **30 p**

## **Revolutionary Dynamics of Womens' Liberation**

A marxist evaluation of the roots of women's oppression and the struggle for liberation that has grown up, world-wide, over the past decade. **25 p**

## **Abortion - A Woman's Right**

The key nature of abortion rights, in the struggle by women for their liberation, and defence of the mass action perspective in winning them. **15 p**

## **The EEC - Does it matter ?**

An analysis of the EEC and the ongoing debate it has provoked within the labour movement. **10 p**

## **Discussion Forums**

The LSA holds regular weekly discussion forums on the problems facing the labour, women's and Black movements together with the liberation struggles taking place internationally. If you are interested in attending these forums or would like to know more about the LSA then please write to: LSA, 58, Auckland Road, London, SE 19.

**LSA**