

Socialist Action

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For a Class Struggle Left Wing in the Labour Movement

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All out April 5:

NO NATIONALITY ACT!

By **MIKE RODNEY** (North London CARL)

THE Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL) has called for a national demonstration in London on April 5 to defeat the racist Nationality Bill.

Unless mass opposition is mobilised, this bill could become law by June. This would mean not only tighter controls on Black immigration, but also the loss of basic civil rights for Black people already resident in Britain.

The bill provides three classes of people. Only one – “British citizenship” – gives rights to settle in this country. Many thousands of Black Commonwealth citizens would become effectively stateless while Black settlers will be unable to acquire citizen rights.

Even Blacks already in Britain could be denied voting rights and jobs in the civil service.

A groundswell of activity against the bill has been growing.

Local campaigns are springing up throughout the country. South London, Bristol and Birmingham CARL groups which had been leading the way are now being joined by CARLs in Bradford, Swindon, Southall and North London.

An upsurge has also taken place among the Black community.

In an attempt to conceal the racist nature of the government proposals, and to pacify Black people, Whitelaw has announced plans for an “enquiry” into “extremist and racist organisations”.

The timing of this move is no accident. In a scheme designed to offset the anger among Black organisations about government legislation, Whitelaw is planning to set up special police investigation units into racism.

While some Black leaders have welcomed the news, many Black people will see this as a sick joke.

Continued on Page 3.



100,000 Black people marched for their rights in Washington, USA, on January 15. Similar mass demonstrations, uniting the labour movement and Black community, are needed in Britain.

75,000 DEMAND 'MAGGIE OUT!'

By **TIM ROBINSON** (Lambeth CLP)

“Fantastic – it’s the biggest demonstration Scotland’s seen since the General Strike.” That’s how Helen Riddell, Scottish Labour Party Secretary, described the anti-jobless rally in Glasgow on February 21.

Organised by the Scottish Labour Party and TUC, almost 100,000 braved the bitter cold to protest Tory policy. They came not only from Scotland, which – like other areas of the North-East – has borne the brunt of Thatcher’s jobless drive.

They were joined by thousands more who had travelled there by special bus or coach from all areas of the country. One of the largest contingents – one of 4,000 from Liverpool – hired two

trains and 50 coaches for the day.

One of the aims of Thatcher’s jobless drive has been to demoralise workers into accepting wage cuts and speed-ups. If so, this strategy hasn’t worked.

The 100,000 who turned up on February 21 were not demoralised. They were angry – and determined.

As the contingents of car-workers, firefighters and engineers marched through the streets of Glasgow, “Sack Thatcher not workers” and “Jobs not bombs” were the slogans that rang out.

The mood of the marchers was expressed by a young nurse (from Glasgow Royal Infirmary) who said: “We’re in secure jobs, but we feel as strongly about it as everyone else – we’re

Continued on Page 2.

THOUSANDS PROTEST RACIST VIOLENCE

By **JANET ALSOP**

Over 5000 people, mainly Black youth, turned out in Lewisham, on March 2, to protest growing racist violence.

Supported by anti-racist activists in the labour movement, the march made its way through Lewisham to the obvious support of the immigrant community.

The mood of the marchers was summed up in the slogans that echoed up and down the route. “End Racist Violence”, “For Freedom” and “This is Black Peoples’ Day” were the main slogans chanted by

Black youth, many of whom had obviously taken the day off school.

The march followed a series of meetings and protests over the firebombing of a party in New Cross on January 18. Thirteen Black teenagers were killed and over two dozen more hospitalised.

The firebombing and police inaction have outraged the Black community. As New Cross Massacre Action Committee chairperson John La Rose told the February 27 *Time Out*:

“Did you see the reaction in Dublin when they had the fire in the

disco there? They had a day of mourning, the prime minister spoke, it was all on the front pages. The Queen even sent a message of sympathy. Compare that to what happened here – right in the heart of London.”

If it had been a white party, of course, most of the local Black community would have been harassed by now, and a frame-up probably organised as well. But when 13 Black people are killed, the cops can’t come up with anything.

A meeting of local Black people

Continued on Page 3.

... Glasgow shows way forward

Continued from Page 1. marching for the others".

It was this sense of unity — this sense that the Tories' jobless drive is of concern to all workers — that best summed up the feeling of the marchers and their determination to do something about it.

It was reflected in the speeches at the end of the rally. Michael Foot, in particular, spoke of the "rising fury" over the jobless total which is now reaching a post-war peak.

He called on the labour movement to unite against the Tory butchers. "Rise like lions," he told the marchers, "We are many but they are few."



Glasgow march showed growing militancy of working people.

RESPONSE

The Labour leader's passionate speech clearly found a response among the marchers, who are seeing jobs disappear at the rate of

12,000 a week.

While passionate, however, Foot failed to spell out exactly what

steps could be taken to curtail the mounting dole queues.

While backing the miners' strike

— as the best way to defend jobs — his main thrust seemed to be to wait for the election of a Labour government which could begin to reverse the process.

ACTION

But workers cannot wait that long. In Linwood (Glasgow) over 5,000 jobs are threatened with the axe this month.

Whole areas of the country are faced with similar close-downs and redundancies which are turning them into industrial wastelands. Young and old alike face a bleak future living off social security payments.

Waiting will not solve the problems of these workers. What the marchers in Glasgow wanted was action today to stop the Tory government in its tracks.

The regional rallies called by the labour leaders — of which Glasgow

was the second — can play a major role in this process.

35-HOUR WEEK

Such mass action around the demands passed at the last Labour Conference — for the 35-hour week and an extension of public services — can become the rallying cry of ever-wider layers of the labour movement.

They can give real backing to workers facing redundancies and councils fighting the cuts. They can give them confidence to take on the bosses — as at Gardners — by showing them that they are not alone in the struggle but have the support of millions up and down the country.

Most important, they can unite the labour movement in the face of the Tory offensive and lay the basis for an early return to a Labour government committed to defending workers' interests.

Socialist Action forum discusses

A fighting strategy against unemployment

By DAVE BELL (Hackney CLP)

WITH the jobless total now the worst it has been since the 1930s, last month's Socialist Action public forum on unemployment took on some of the key questions in the class struggle today.

What are the causes of unemployment? Is there a way that workers can stop the escalation of redundancies taking place?

Liz Easton (Tottenham CLP) showed that unemployment is not just an unhappy accident. Just as Thatcher advised Reagan recently that the only way to cure inflation is to put up with unemployment, capitalists and their governments have no solution to the problem except by attacking worker's living standards.

True, Britain has one of the worst-hit economies at present. This is largely due to its outmoded machinery. But unemployment throughout the West is rising

sharply and, as a recent report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development predicted, is due to reach 21 million by 1984.

SACRIFICES

Attempts to win sacrifices out of workers is not new. Both Tory and Labour governments have attempted to squeeze living standards.

Heath in the early 1970s applied a wage freeze until the miners kicked him out. Mandated by his party to promote free collective bargaining, Wilson brought in a "voluntary prices and incomes policy".

Callaghan's Social Contract and 5% pay norm lost Labour the last election.

SOLUTIONS

Does the Labour Party as yet offer any solutions to bring back jobs and boost

pay?

The "Alternative Economic Strategy" (AES) put forward as the radical alternative by the TUC and the Labour Party NEC sets out to reflate the economy.

Tim Robinson of Socialist Action explained that such a policy was the basis of the Wilson government in 1974. Backed by Tony Benn, the AES suggests that economic problems can be solved within the framework of capitalism.

IMPORT CONTROLS?

How? By propping it up with import controls, financial aid to flagging industries and a "prices and incomes policy".

As Robinson explained, import controls would lead to a trade war. They would encourage British workers to ally themselves with the bosses against foreign workers.

As socialists, shouldn't we be trying to destroy the massive monopolies which control our lives? Clearly Benn sees his task as providing artificial respiration for them so they may resolve to exploit workers again!

Socialist Action takes a totally different view. A capitalist crisis always results in the bosses mounting a full-scale attack on workers. They try to divide workers nationally and internationally.

STRATEGY

The only strategy to fight this offensive must be to mount a mass movement which can unite all workers.

Demands for the 35-hour week and for work sharing with no loss of pay offer workers a genuine solution to job shortages.

We should call upon the bosses to *Open the Books!* Bosses who maintain that

they cannot afford to provide jobs must have their accounts scrutinised by the workers.

Such companies who fail to satisfy workers' needs should be nationalised. The public sector should be expanded to provide services and to create jobs.

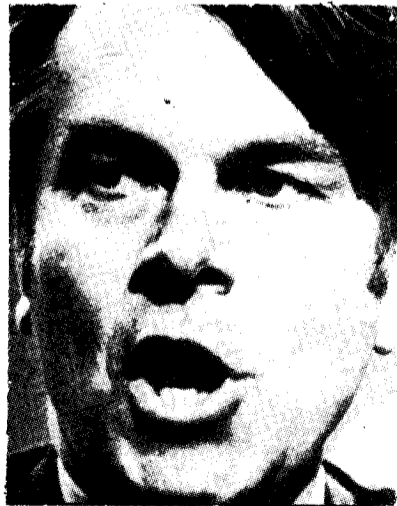
RACIST

In discussion, it was pointed out how racist laws such as the Nationality Bill are used to divide workers along racist lines.

One speaker argued that blaming unemployment on foreign competition is not a far cry from blaming foreign (Black) workers for the dole queues.

Attempts have also been made to divide women from men by mounting an ideological assault on working women, suggesting they should return to the domestic household.

Right-wing splits from Labour



Shirley Williams and David Owen led split from Labour Party.

By BOB SWART (Streatham CLP)

THE "gang of twelve" has finally split. On March 2, Shirley Williams and her cronies announced that they were renouncing the Labour whip and sitting in Parliament as "Social Democrats".

So concerned with democracy are they that they are not even going to re-submit themselves for election. So much for the thousands of Labour voters who put them into office in the first place and who, with consummate hypocrisy, they claim to represent.

But how have the Labour leaders reacted to their desertion? Have they denounced their attempts to split the

Labour vote?

On the contrary, comments on their leaving seem more tinged with regret than hostility. This is, of course, no accident. While many MPs are not willing to join Williams and her allies in the "wilderness", they share the same hostility as them to the step forward in democracy achieved at the last party conference.

The clearest sign of this was last month when, under an initiative from Roy Hattersley, a new grouping was set up. Backed by over 100 MPs from Neil Kinnock to Denis Healey, the "La-

Continued on Page 5.

Building Socialist Action

By TIM ROBINSON (SA Organiser)

LAST Christmas *Socialist Action* announced plans to move full steam ahead to build the struggle against the Tories.

Thanks to our readers and supporters, stage one of that expansion has been achieved and last month *Socialist Action* moved into its new Centre in South London. A larger and better equipped Centre represents a big step forward for *Socialist Action*, since it provides us with a much more solid base on which to move ahead and complete stage two of our expansion — a fortnightly *Socialist Action*.

Having already moved into the new offices and production rooms, we hope to be able, in the near future, to fully equip a photographic room as well as a reference library.

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

A new Centre will result not only in a more frequent production of the paper. Just as important, it will enable us to improve the quality of *Socialist Action*. As well as providing far wider reporting of issues and events in the class struggle, we hope to bring our readers greater in-depth coverage and analysis of the main battle-fronts being waged against the Tories. Specifically, we shall be focussing more deeply on the union front to provide our readers in the unions and CLPs with a sharper tool in the fight for class struggle policies.

All this means *more cash*. It means

that we have to ask all our readers and supporters, who have already given generously, to dig a little bit deeper into their pockets to provide us with the resources to carry on

building *Socialist Action*.

Please send all donations (cheques/postal orders to "Socialist Action") to: SA Fund Drive, PO Box 65, London SW16 1NN.

Last month's fund-drive brought in £843 towards our target figure of £10,000 by the coming Easter. That means that the total collected so far is £4,203. Already *Socialist Action* has made use of these extra resources. Your contributions have made it possible for us to purchase a typesetter. This will ease pressure on production and enable us to maintain the paper on a regular monthly basis.

Particular thanks this month are due to the Stoke-on-Trent supporters of *Socialist Action* who contributed £100 towards the fund-drive, and to DB (North London) who gave £50 and LW (South London), £100.

While we are almost halfway to the target figure, however, it is clear that we will need an all-out effort in the remaining months if we are to reach the total needed to bring out *Socialist Action* more frequently.

For this reason, we once again urge all supporters and readers to dig deeply into their pockets and give generously. *Socialist Action* — unlike the bourgeois press — can't rely on advertising revenues to cover the cost of inflation. It is only by relying on your generosity that we can keep ahead of costs. Please complete the form below and send today.

To: *Socialist Action*, PO Box 65, London SW16 1NN.

Name.....

Address.....

I enclose the sum of £.....as a contribution to your Fund Drive.

Labour anti-missiles conference

By TERRY VINEY (Ravensbourne CLP)

1980 was the year CND jumped out of the history books and became Britain's fastest growing campaign. By Christmas, CND had emerged out of nothing to a membership of 20,000.

Government intentions to import US-controlled Cruise missiles and to spend £7 billion on Trident led to protest on a massive scale. Last October, 80,000 people demonstrated against nuclear missiles. Included in that demonstration was a large percentage of Labour activists and many young people.

The campaign swept swiftly into the heart of the Labour Party. At its annual conference in the autumn a clear majority voted for unilateral nuclear disarmament. Unlike the right-wing Gaitskill in the early 1960s, Bill Rogers and his gang have been incapable of swinging the party back in the opposite direction.



Labour movement is decisive for winning anti-missile fight.

MILITARISM

And no wonder. The US arms build-up is taking place on an unprecedented scale. Brushing aside the SALT II agreements — which have not even been ratified by the US Senate — Reagan, like Carter, is drastically increasing military spending. Clearly Reagan does not feel bound by his electoral platform to make cuts in defence.

This strategy is explained away by inventing a "missile gap" which supposedly leaves the Soviet Union at an advantage. Such an argument shows the West "defenceless" against a Soviet juggernaut ploughing through Afghanistan on its way to America's oil supply in the Middle East.

As usual, that is a lie. Eisenhower lied in 1956 about a "bomber gap".

In 1960 Kennedy lied about a "missile gap".

Not only is Russia incapable of sweeping through Europe or the Middle East. Right now even Eastern European countries like Poland are too hot to handle. Reagan chooses to impose a nuclear policy by fear.

Increasing numbers of people are seeing Britain as part of a "Euro-

pean theatre" in which the US can play out — and hope to win — its nuclear war. By having the largest number of nuclear warheads per head of population, Britain is the number one target in such a play-off.

In any case, at a time of cuts in living standards and jobs, an arms expansionist policy is suicidal for working people. At a time when three-quarters of all current social spending cuts will go in housing, one Trident will cost 4,000 houses. For workers, it just doesn't add up.

STRATEGY

Allowing the warmongers themselves to sit round a table and plot out our future is not likely to get us very far. After 15 years of detente, the world's arsenal of nuclear weapons can destroy us more times over than ever before. What is needed is a clear strategy which brings these madmen to account.

The Labour Movement Conference Against the Missiles — to be held in Manchester this month — is an excellent start. Not only is it a chance to build for the necessary two-thirds majority at Labour Party Conference to get unilateralism written into the election manifesto. The Labour Party delegates can begin a drive to win local councils to the policy of a

nuclear-free zone as has already been adopted in Manchester and Stoke.

Meanwhile, union delegates can begin to develop support for CND among the ranks of the union movement. Such a task is essential. Without the muscle of industrial trade unions CND will be incapable of stopping Cruise missiles from getting into Britain. Once won to unilateralism, trade unionists can boycott work on missiles or stop their entry into the country.

Stoke CND

By MIKE HOPKINS (Stoke-on-Trent CLP)

STOKE CND is an excellent example of the campaign's strength. Starting 7 months ago, the branch has swelled from 7 to 300 members. Recently it had to split into 14 local branches.

Support comes from individual union members — ASTMS donated £100 — and CLP affiliations. The council has declared Stoke a "Nuclear-free Zone".

Activities include a monthly newsletter, visiting speakers, getting signatures and building for national mobilisations. Developing CND through the labour movement is seen as a key objective.

Labour anti-racists to meet ...New Cross killings protest

By TONY ROBERTS (Streatham CLP)

SINCE coming to power, the Tories have dramatically stepped up their attacks on the rights of Black people. Fishing raids on factories and the increased number of deportations are cases in point.

Most serious of all is their proposed Nationality Bill. If passed, this will give the police the green light to increase their attacks on the Black community and cut across the ability of the labour movement to organise a united response to the Tories.

BACK-DOWN

Unfortunately, the Labour leaders — far from fighting the Tory racist offensive — have backed down before it. Over the years, they have been only too willing to implement racist laws like the 1971 Immigration Act.

Figures like Callaghan have actually competed with the Tories in bringing in ever harsher curbs to keep Black people out, and turn the few who do get in into second-class citizens.

FIGHT-BACK

It is to change this situation that — last December — a meeting of Labour Party anti-racists was called. Bringing together a large number of party activists, its aim was to struggle to involve the party in a campaign against the Tory proposals.

The meeting passed a motion com-

demning the Tory attacks and pledging to mobilise support in the labour movement against the Tories. As the statement pointed out:

"...if the Labour Party cannot defend the most disadvantaged sections of working people, it will not be able to defend any working people from the Tories' attacks on our democratic rights and living conditions.

"Racist sentiments would continue to be fostered and wreck the ability of the labour movement to organise the strongest possible fight-back against attacks on working people."

RALLY

The meeting elected a committee — made up of activists from a number of CLPs — with the task of organising support for the proposed mass CARL demonstration on April 5.

Aside from calling on LP branches to invite speakers and pass resolutions against the proposed Tory Bill, it also called on them to organise public meetings to whip up local support. North Finchley CLP, for example, is doing just this.

Most important, in order to gain the widest support for the demonstration, it is planning to hold a mass one-day LP conference on March 29. All LP members are invited to attend. For details, contact Jane Ansell, c/o Lansbury Hse, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5.

Continued from page 1.

after the fire set up a fact-finding commission. Its preliminary report pointed out that a person leaving the party had seen a man throw something, then heard the sound of breaking glass. The man then sped off in a white Austin Princess car, as the whole front of the house went up in a blaze.

That the firebombing was a deliberate racist attack is also backed up by the racist hate letters received by the families of the victims. A series of letters gloats over the deaths.

The fire also comes in the midst of a growing campaign of violence against Black people. A parliamentary group of Labour and Tory MPs has reported a big increase in racist attacks over the past months.

In some areas, such as parts of East London, it is literally unsafe for Black people to walk the streets. Attacks on Black homes have also been organised by local racists.

TORY GREEN LIGHT

The racists have gotten the green light from the Tory government. Its talk of being "swamped" by an "alien culture", comments from MPs like Jill Knight that Black parties are a problem, the fishing raids, the deportations, cop harassment of Black youth and now the Nationality Bill, all encourage violent attacks by racist thugs.

The labour movement must respond



On March 2 protest against racist violence, police inaction and official silence. The protesters held placards with the faces and names of the 13 Black youth who were killed in New Cross. The next step in the fight against racist attacks is the CARL demonstration against the Nationality Bill on April 5.

to these attacks by co-operating in the defence of the Black community and by giving the strongest possible support to

mass anti-racist actions such as the April 5 national demonstration against the Nationality Bill.

...No Nationality Act!

Continued from page 1.

Wasn't it the police who raided factories and workplaces in search of "illegal immigrants"?

Haven't the police used the "Sus" laws and immigration laws to harass the Black community?

An inquiry into racism in the police force might be less distasteful.

BUILD APRIL 5

The heroic struggle waged by Anwar Ditta and Nasira Begum and the march and rally of 500 Filipinos deprived of their rights by the immigration laws must be built on.

For the labour movement, the stakes are just as high as for the Black commu-

nity. By blaming unemployment on Black people, for instance, workers can be divided in their fight for a job.

The Black communities must be given backing from the broad ranks of the labour movement. The call for support for the April 5 demonstration must be taken up in every trade union and Labour Party branch.

It is no use complaining that such a struggle is a waste of time because the parliamentary opposition is in the minority.

It is precisely because the parliamentary fight cannot be relied upon that a mass struggle on the streets is vital.

**ALL OUT APRIL 5!
NO TO THE NATIONALITY
BILL!**

Assemble Speakers Corner,
Hyde Park 1.00pm. March
2.00pm to Trafalgar Square.

Called by the Campaign
Against Racist Laws — a coalition of major Black, labour
movement, civil liberties and
left organisations. For further
information, contact CARL,
Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell
Grove, London SE 5.

North London CARL

LAST January, at the National CARL Conference in Birmingham, (reported in last month's *Socialist Action*), a call went out for local CARL groups to be set up around the country.

Answering that call, a new branch has been formed in North London.

It held its first public meeting on March 4. About fifty people turned up to hear John Plummer and Sue Shutter from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Liz Atkins from the Labour Party Race Action Group and Mike Rodney of the CARL mobilising committee.

A mood against the Nationality Bill has been growing rapidly in the area. In February a meeting called by Haringey

labour activists to oppose the Bill attracted over 100 Black, Labour Party and trade union supporters.

The Haringey meeting and other activities in the area have shown the need for a united campaign specifically to defeat that Nationality Bill and to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act.

The task of local CARLs is to ensure that the fight to repeal all racist laws is carried into the grass-roots of the labour movement. This will make it even harder for the labour leaders to go back on the pledges they are now making.

Already a positive response is coming from organisations in North London for the launching of the CARL branch.

Karolyn Kerry

ON February 5 Karolyn Kerry, a veteran leading member of the American Socialist Workers Party, died of an unexpected heart attack in San Diego, California. She was 70 years old.

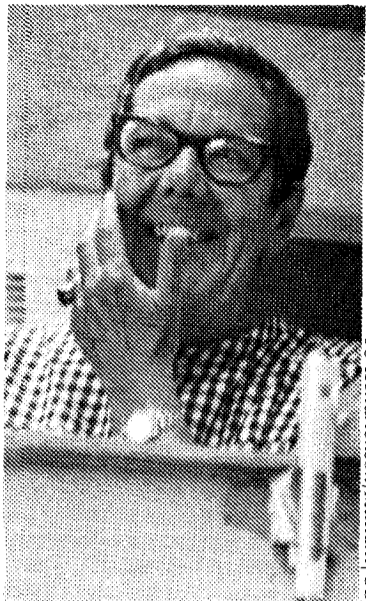
Coming from a poor Southern background, Kerry was deeply affected by the depression and joined the Trotskyist movement in 1934.

In those days the movement was subject to Stalinist goon attacks and Kerry, an enthusiastic seller of the Trotskyist press, would take an umbrella to defend herself selling on the waterfront or outside union meetings.

She was involved in a series of union organising drives in California: unionising waitresses in San Francisco, building support for maritime and ship-building workers and initiating a women's auxiliary to help fight the bosses, being involved in the agricultural workers' struggles and organising fish cannery workers.

During World War II, when many party leaders were jailed, Kerry and her husband Tom began full-time work for the party in New York. Through the difficult years of the Cold War and witch-hunt they were part of the unshakable core of the Trotskyist movement.

Karolyn Kerry subsequently managed SWP election campaigns, organised promotion for the Trotskyist Pathfinder Press and was business



Karolyn Kerry in 1974

manager for the SWP weekly paper *Militant*.

Over the last 20 years she drew particular inspiration from the rise of the Black struggle, the Cuban revolution and the women's liberation movement which she was active in.

Socialist Action extends its most comradely sympathy to the family and friends of Karolyn Kerry and to the SWP in the loss of this meticulous and determined battler for humanity's free, socialist future.

What We Stand For

Socialist Action sees as its central aim building, within the labour movement, a class-struggle left-wing fighting for socialist policies against those which lost Labour the last election and disillusioned thousands of Labour supporters.

Such a left-wing should support not only policies in the interests of working people but also their allies among the youth, Blacks, women and oppressed national minorities. It is only by showing that Labour champions the rights of all the oppressed and exploited that a really united offensive can be organised against the Tories (and their right-wing allies in the labour movement).

Socialist Action believes that a fighting left-wing should be built around the following demands:

- * Hands off the unions! No curbs on the right to strike or picket!
- * For the 35-hour week! End unemployment by work-sharing (with no loss of pay) and introduce a mass public works programme for those already on the dole.
- * Oppose all wage curbs. For wage increases to be tied to the cost of living to offset inflation.
- * Open the books of all companies claiming inability to pay a decent living wage or threatening redundancies. Nationalise those that put profit before people.
- * Tax the rich not the poor. No cuts in social services – for social spending to be tied to increases in the cost of living.
- * For women's rights. For the right of all women to abortion on demand, free nurseries, equal pay and opportunity. Support NAC.
- * Fight racism. Repeal all racist immigration laws. Defend the right of Black people to organise as they see fit in the community and labour movement.
- * For the right of all oppressed nations to determine their own future – Get the troops out of Ireland now!
- * End the war drive! For unilateral nuclear disarmament.
- * For a safe environment. End nuclear reactors and base an energy policy on coal. Explore alternative energy resources.

Socialist Action supporters, while fighting for the above demands, seek the widest possible unity of all forces in the labour movement around concrete issues. They also seek to encourage the widest democracy in the labour movement to allow all currents to argue for their point of view and for decisions to be mandatory on Labour leaders.

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No cuts — no rate

By JANE ANSELL (Finchley CLP)

ONE of the first acts of the Tories when they took power nearly two years ago was to give huge tax concessions to the rich. Because of their higher earnings, the wealthy took to the bank up to £100 extra per week.

Tory strategists ever since have set out to get working people to pay for those increases. One direct result of these tax cuts is Heseltine's slashing of the rate support grant.

This grant – traditionally worth nearly half of all local spending – is passed on from central government to the local authorities. This has always left local councils free to determine how the money should be spent.

But not only has the grant been savagely cut, so that there is £158 million less paid out than three years ago. It is now based on an estimate of what local authorities' services cost.

It is also coupled with the demand that a greater proportion of it must be used to prop up the forces of "law and order" – presumably to control the anger expressed by workers as they get to see what is happening to their jobs and services.

Nor are Labour councils expected to find any dodges. Those councils which have avoided making cuts face an impossible situation.

Last Christmas Heseltine revealed his vicious plans to punish councils that don't play ball. "High spenders" who avoid making the proposed cutbacks of 5.6 percent face further drastic reductions in the grant.

The full meaning of these actions is seen clearly by the move to drain the poorer urban areas of money and to divert a greater proportion of the grant to better-off rural areas.

WHAT IT MEANS

The effects of these moves are disastrous. While Tory boroughs like Wandsworth have a field day in slashing services, many Labour councils such as Islington have followed suit. In short, they are pass-

ing on the Tory cuts to working people.

This means that:

* housing takes up 75 percent of all spending cuts. There is a stop to the small building programme that had been taking place.

* services to old people are threatened. Domiciliary services have already been stopped in some areas.

* the young are to have less nurseries than ever before and school budgeting is tightening.

* services to the handicapped are at risk.

* and all this means that at a time of 2½ million out of work, thousands more jobs will disappear.

In two Midlands councils alone, 900 jobs seem likely to be axed.

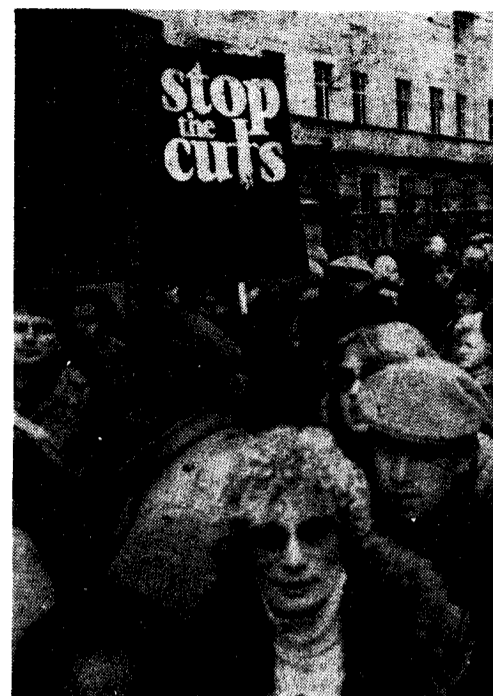
Is it surprising that *Shelter*, the campaign for the homeless, predicts council house waiting lists stretching over 21 years?

As *Shelter's* Neil McIntosh says "We are already well on our way to the shortage of half a million predicted by the Select Committee on the Environment. . . these shameful statistics will mean an effective end to millions of people's hopes for a decent home."

CAMDEN

The London Borough of Camden at first sought to challenge the cuts. According to the district auditor, Camden Council awarded its National Union of Public Employees manual workers an increase "so excessive as to be unreasonable in law". The increase actually raised wages to £60 per week.

Under threat of High Court action, which could lead each councillor to paying £60,000, the councillors have backed down. They have announced a package of spending cuts amounting to £13 million. Rents



Wandsworth workers protest cuts

are to go up by £3.50 per week.

Some councils have resorted to other methods of paying for the cuts. The London Borough of Lambeth has opted to prevent cuts by imposing rate increases.

Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth council, argues that the better-off business people will have to shoulder the increased burden of higher rates. As they own or live in bigger premises, they will be paying a higher rate. This is said to pass the buck back to the better off.

Advocates of this line of argument will also say that unless rates go up, local authorities will go bankrupt. This would open the path to government commissioners being sent in to "sort out the situation".

What is actually being said to workers is "Hold on. It's going to be a bit tough right now, but just vote us in next time and something will get done."

Right now, many traditional

Tories gain from Lab

By JAMIE McLAUGHLIN (EEPTU)

LIKE many other Labour councils faced with the Tory cuts, Lambeth decided that the only way to avoid axing services was to raise the rates.

Over the past two years, the rates have been raised three times – the latest by a massive 20p in the pound.

Attempts to maintain jobs and services by making working class tenants and rate payers pay through the nose, however, has boomeranged back in their face.

PROTEST

Only last month, a major 3000-strong demonstration against the council's rate increases took place. Organised by the Tories, it drew its support not only from small shopkeepers but also from the council estates where the idea of a rate and rent strike is gathering force.

The workers backing the anti-Knight rally were not Tories. They were working people who, at a time of inflation, are hard-pushed to fork out the extra £6-8 a week Knight is demanding of them.

They were protesting the attempt to make them pay for the services

which the Tories are cutting.

CRIMINAL

The fact that the Tories have been able to move in and exploit this discontent is a clear condemnation of the council's policies.

Trying to bail out one sector of workers by making others pay through the nose has only succeeded in splitting the working people of Lambeth.

It has played into the hands of Heseltine and the local Tories who are saying the only way forward is to ensure cuts are made and workers thrown on the dole.

FIGHT?

By floating the idea that rate increases are the answer, however, Knight has also turned council workers against rate-payers.

He has made it appear that the only way the services can be maintained and their jobs protected is by soaking other workers.

This is why so few workers turned out on the "week of action" called for by Lambeth council. Only two unions out the four – the T&GWU and the NALGO – stopped work. Why, indeed, bother to



Only by opposing all cuts – including rate rises – can Labour defend working people

protest if the problem can be solved locally by squeezing tenants and rate-payers?

UNITY?

The net result of Knight's policies are, in this sense, a disaster. He has succeeded in pitting the working

Rate increases



Labour supporters in Lambeth don't want to take that chance. Faced with a supplementary rate increase of £4 a week and a mammoth 49.4 percent increase in April, Labour supporters are becoming easy prey to the Tories.

A startling example of this was shown last month. In an area with a high percentage of Blacks and manual workers, a demonstration called by the pro-Tory Lambeth Ratepayers Association was so large that 300 went to an overflow meeting outside the Town Hall.

At a time when the racist Nationality Bill is passing through Parliament, many Black people were attracted to a Tory demonstration wearing badges such as "Ted Knight Out".

The point is, it is not just the affluent businesses who are under attack from rate rises. Ordinary working people are having to pay huge increases with less capacity to

do so.

If tax concessions for the rich led to cuts in the Rate Support Grant, it is workers, through their rates and rents, who are being asked to pay up. The Tory attacks on workers' living standards are being carried out by Labour councillors.

FIGHTBACK

Putting the rates up doesn't challenge the basic assumption that working people must shoulder the burden of the crisis. Socialists argue, however, that workers should not be made to pay for a crisis not of their making.

You cannot fight the cuts and threatened redundancies by making Peter pay Paul. Asking council tenants to prop up council workers is self-defeating.

A council which defends its services without rate rises can clearly show who is making the cuts. If commissioners try to take over, they are clearly seen as Tory commissioners implementing Tory cuts for a Tory government.

Winning local tenants and trade unionists to mass action against the commissioners would unite workers against the real enemy, on clear class lines.

In the long term, the only sure way to defend our services is to kick out the Tories. This cannot happen so long as workers are confused by their own party leaders.

Labour and trade union leaders have to build a struggle against the Tory cuts without raising the rates. Until workers and tenants are won to such a struggle, there is no long-term solution.

Heseltine's cuts coupled with Labour rate rises can actually lead to demoralisation among Labour ranks and allow Tories the opportunity to pretend that — with workers — they are fighting a common enemy.

Our confusion

people in Lambeth against each other and alienating the Labour council from both.

WARNING

Warnings that this would be the result have been voiced in the Lambeth Labour Party for over a year now. They were raised even more forcefully at the recent Crisis in Local Government Conference which called on all Labour councils to adopt a no-cuts/no rate increase position.

It was argued there that, if Labour wanted to retain the confidence of working people, it would have to stand up to the Tories in a head-on fight and not make one sector of workers the scapegoat for another.

ACTION?

If Lambeth had adopted that position, the situation would be different today. It would have been able to unite both tenants and local government unions in a common fight against the Tories.

It could have explained to them that they both have a common interest in fighting the Tory plans and it could have — at the same

time — drawn local shopkeepers in behind them.

If the Tories at Westminster had sent in the commissioners, it could have developed a mass campaign against them and sought to draw in workers in other areas hit by the cuts too.

FIGHTBACK

The fact that Labour has squandered its chances, however, should not be a source of pessimism. On the contrary, it should show growing numbers — who were previously unsure of the need to take on the Tories — that this was the only way forward.

Activists in the local unions, tenant associations and Labour Party should be fighting fiercely now for the no cuts/no rate increases position.

They should be arguing that the Labour council should reverse its disastrous policies, turn around and fight the Tories. A call for the resignation of councillors who refuse to adopt this stance — and the election of those that will — should be a central part of such a campaign.

Polish workers press ahead with struggle

By STEVE RANDELL (Lambeth CLP)

THE Polish bureaucrats are finding it ever more difficult to suppress the demands of workers and peasants for democratic rights and control over the economy.

No sooner do they patch up an agreement with striking workers in one part of the country than strikes break out elsewhere.

On February 6, for example, an eleven-day strike occurred in Bielsko-Biala, a textile manufacturing plant in southern Poland. Over 200,000 workers struck in protest against the corruption of the local governor.

PARASITES

The governor, his aides, the chief of police and other officials were accused in a 150-page long report.

The charges included: taking over government property for their own use; constructing summer villas instead of building houses for workers; allocating cars to the secret police instead of to doctors; and giving out coupons for the purchase of cars as favours and bribes.

As Lech Walesa, a central leader of Solidarity, put it: "The officials whose resignation we are demanding did not look after the workers' interests. They weren't public servants at all, but social parasites."

SUPPORT

Hardly had that strike been won when — on February 9 — a further 300,000 struck in the region around Jelania Gore. Protesting corruption of the bureaucrats who rule the country, an estimated 450 factories were brought to a standstill.

The strikers — backed by Solidarity — demanded the dismissal of Stanislaw Ciosek, who had been the local CP boss for five years. They also called for the conversion of an Interior Ministry sanatorium into a public hospital.

Similar struggles have burst out in Walbrzych, in the heart of the Silesian coal-mining region, and in the south-eastern city of Rzesnow.

ANARCHY?

Although the government has been forced to give way on many issues — dismissing, for example, the governor of Bielsko-Biala — it is fighting a desperate rearguard action.



Discussion at Lenin Shipyards last August

Threatening the use of Soviet troops if Solidarity goes "too far", they have denounced its leaders as "instigators" out to challenge the socialist basis of society. As CP leader Stanislaw Kania recently put it:

"We cannot ignore, let alone accept, the fact that, under the direction not of the workers but of instigators, Solidarity is being steered in the direction of political opposition."

This line has been echoed by Moscow, which has accused Solidarity of creating "chaos and anarchy".

CHALLENGE

Such accusations are, of course, nothing more than Stalinist double-talk. Kania knows only too well that Solidarity is not out to challenge the socialist basis of society.

It is merely saying that the country's economic and social problems should be freely discussed and decided upon democratically. It is merely trying to transform Poland into a real workers' democracy.

The bureaucrats understand only too well, however, that such a struggle challenges head-on their repressive rule and the privileges they gain from their monopoly over the political and economic decision-making.

WORSE

What has worried them still more is the fact that Solidarity's bold stance has

drawn wider layers of the population into fighting their repressive rule. Already, Rural Solidarity — representing over 350,000 farmers — has demanded recognition.

Polish students have been drawn into a month-long sit-in to demand the right to form a union and to have a say in the country's education policy.

Moreover, this upsurge has even begun to penetrate the ranks of the Communist Party itself. More and more rank-and-file CP members are identifying with the demands of Solidarity. At a recent Executive Committee meeting, a document was submitted calling for "the broad masses' right to free expression" to be "guaranteed in law and in fact".

MANOEUVRES

While the Stalinist leaders may twist and turn, they are finding it ever more difficult to deal with this growing opposition.

Their bureaucratic manoeuvres — backed up with threats of Soviet intervention — are not likely to curb the aspirations of the Polish workers, which have grown as they have seen the power they can wield.

As Solidarity enters into ever more struggles for democratic rights, more and more workers will realise that the only way to achieve socialist democracy is to sweep away the parasitic caste which masquerades as socialist.

Reagan helps Stalinists

By JAMIE McLAUGHLIN (EEPTU)

ONLY last month, the Reagan administration announced its decision to advance a \$50 million loan to the Polish government.

But why, it might be asked, are they backing a regime which they have spent so much time attacking for its lack of "democracy"?

The answer was given only recently in the *Guardian* with cynical frankness: "The crucial issue for Poland now is stability. That means, on the official side, clear indications that the government intends to govern — something which has not been done with any degree of conviction for the past six months."

.. LABOUR PARTY

Continued from Page 2.

bour Solidarity Committee" declared as its aim reversing the special conference vote.

The grouping has won support from the right-wing union leaders of the AUEW and POEU who feel that the step forward in democracy could begin to undermine their own bureaucratic grip.

RALLIES

The new grouping is busy holding rallies up and down the country to win support for their position. Naturally enough, such a campaign has won the uncritical backing of the Tory press.

The fact that the right wing have been forced into such a campaign, however, is not a sign of their strength.

On the contrary, it is a sign of their growing isolation in the party as they find themselves increasingly out of

touch with the aspirations and needs of rank-and-file workers.

They know only too well that — while they hypocritically pretend to back the fight by Polish workers for democracy — it would, if successful, be a major threat to them.

It could provide an inspiring example to workers in the West who are also fighting attacks on their living standards and democratic rights. It would show them that the labour movement — united and firm — can repel these attacks

and solve the economic problems in the interests of the vast majority.

Worse still, it would give the lie to their claim that socialism must, inevitably, end up with the repressive-type rule that exists at present in Eastern Europe.

It would show that workers can take over the country and run it democratically in the interests of all. At a time when they are faced with growing militancy in the West — because of austerity programmes — such a message is doubly dangerous.

That is why the so-called champions of democracy are pouring money hand over fist into Poland to back up the bureaucratic regime that exists there.

from figures who, in the past, never complained when it supported their positions.

It is also a lie. When they attack the union vote, they are attacking the right of working people — who founded the party — to determine what its policies and who its leader should be.

They want those rights reserved for a few unrepresentative MPs working in collusion with unelected bankers, civil servants and industrialists.

If the Labour Party is to fight off the challenge from the right — and extend the gains in democracy — it will have to rely more and more upon its working class support up and down the country.

It will only grow and develop if it shows these layers that it is prepared to fight for their interests. It is by building opposition to the jobless total, fighting the cuts and pioneering women's and Black rights that it will gain the backing of rank and file trade unionists whose support is vital.

CAMPAIGN

This is why, though not joining their chums in the "gang of twelve", they have decided to launch their campaign against the special conference decisions.

They have maintained, of course, that the election of the leader by the union bloc vote is undemocratic. Such a claim is not only hypocritical coming

H-Block: new hunger strike



Hunger strikers won mass support last year.

By SABINA ROBERTS (Streatham CLP)

ON March 1, the H-Block prisoners launched their second hunger-strike. The decision to protest their inhuman treatment at the hands of the British government came after the latter reneged on the deal it made last December.

On December 19 — three months after the strike began — Tory minister Humphrey Atkins conceded most of the prisoners' demands. It was agreed to treat them, in all respects, as political prisoners and not common criminals subject to constant degradation and harassment. Clearly, the Tory back-down was

the result of the mass movement building up in both the North and South of Ireland where, on December 6, over 40,000 marched on the British Embassy to protest the prisoners' treatment.

RENEGED

According to Bernadette McAliskey — leader of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee — clean cells were to be prepared for the prisoners and they were to be allowed to wear their own (civilian) clothes.

Having defused the mass movement, however, the Tories are now clearly going back on the deal they were forced to make. The first signs of this was when relatives bringing civilian clothes to the prison were turned away.

Since then, prisoners have been told that they will have to abide by "prison regulations" before they are allowed to wear their own clothes or be moved to clean cells.

REPLY

It is in response to this treacherous action that on February 5 the prisoners decided to re-launch their hunger strike.

Plans are also afoot to re-launch the mass movement that was so key

to winning the original demands. The Sein Fein newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, has called for the re-setting up of H-Block committees throughout Ireland and internationally.

They see this as central in exposing the Tory government's treachery and winning wide support for the

prisoners, whose sole crime has been fighting to rid their country of foreign oppression.

Such a call has to be answered. Building mass support will not only be key in Ireland but also in Britain in the months ahead if the prisoners' demand for human rights is to be won.

Prisoners' statement

"ON December 18 and 19, 1980, the hunger strikers in the H-Blocks and Armagh prison were ended. When this happened we were expecting that within a few days all protests would begin to be de-escalated and that the first hurdle, the blanketmen receiving their own clothes, could be got over in the sequence described by Atkins in his December 19 statement.

"Obstacle after obstacle was placed in our way, but we felt morally bound to explore every avenue before giving in to exasperation and anger. The pettiness of the British administration was well demonstrated on January 23 when the prison governor, acting under orders, refused a number of men their own clothes.

"The twenty men had taken part in successful wing-shifts from dirty to clean cells and had begun stopping out, then washed and shaved and had their hair cut before applying

for their own clothes.

"It is a fact that ordinary prisoners in conforming blocks are generally wearing their own clothes unchallenged, and we were angered that the Brits were more intent on humiliating us than on settling the prison crisis. . .

"We, the blanket men and women prisoners of Armagh, have had enough of British deceit and of broken promises. Hunger strikes, to the death if necessary, will begin, commencing March 1, 1981, the fifth anniversary of the withdrawal of political status in the H-Blocks and Armagh jail.

"We are demanding to be treated as political prisoners, which everyone recognises we are. We call on all those who supported us during the last hunger strike to again rally to our cause, and we call upon those who sat on the fence to now see the intransigence of the British and the justice of our cause".

McAliskey: 'I live for the mass movement'

By GERRY FOLEY

BERNADETTE and Michael McAliskey are recovering rapidly from the wounds inflicted on them on January 16 by would-be assassins.

The McAliskays' spirit is undaunted. Bernadette was particularly angered by a report in the February 1 issue of the Dublin *Sunday Tribune* that she was going to discuss her political future on February 2 at her first meeting with Michael after the shooting.

The implication was that she was thinking of leaving politics.

MOVEMENT

But, she told me, she had never considered that for a minute. "I live for the mass movement", she declared. "It's when you're just sitting back doing nothing that you start having personal problems and getting scared.

"When you're involved in a mass movement, when it's going forward, when you feel you're accomplishing something,

all your personal problems and fears fade away."

PRICE

Like all leaders of the oppressed and exploited, Bernadette faces particular dangers. The enemy tries to impede the struggle of the masses by striking down its foremost leaders.

But the British government knew it would have to pay a terrible price if Bernadette were allowed to die. That fact is shown by the solicitude the authorities have shown for her in hospital, despite the brutality and callousness with which they generally behave towards the Irish people.

Bernadette also owes her life to her own fighting spirit. She never stopped fighting. She did not trust the British doctors, and only stopped struggling against the insertion of respiratory tubes when a surgeon from the Gaelic-speaking area of Donegal explained the procedure to her in her own language.

the language of the Irish people's struggle for national liberation.

"He knew that I would see he was a friend if he spoke in Irish" she said.

STRUGGLE

Bernadette's mind is occupied now with the question of how to carry forward the struggle against repression. In particular, she is thinking about how to use the up-coming local elections in the North and the general election expected in the South to extend the movement against imperialist repression.

Bernadette also recognises that international support will be decisive in the next phase of the struggle against British repression. She is appealing for the formation of broad action committees everywhere to mobilise the maximum support for the human rights of the Irish people.

(Abridged version of an article that first appeared in *Intercontinental Press*, February 16 1981).



Michael and Bernadette McAliskey.

Abortion conference

By LIZ EASTON (Tottenham CLP)

LATE in 1979, in the fight against the Corrie Bill, the TUC made labour movement history by calling the first ever national trade union demonstration in support of women's abortion rights. Thousands of trade unionists came out onto the streets in defence of the principle of women's control over their own bodies.

Despite Government support for the Bill and the vociferous anti-abortion lobby, the combined strength of the trade union movement and the campaign launched by the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) made sure the Bill was soundly defeated.

There have so far been seven attempts to restrict the already inadequate 1967 Abortion Act. Every attempt has met with failure; but in the same period no new abortion rights have been won.

EROSION

In fact, many of the gains of the 1967 Act have been eroded. There is no overall policy for the provision of abortion facilities throughout the NHS, and now spending cuts are aggravating the difficulties women face in getting abortions in their own locality.

In addition, there is the constant

threat that there may at any time be a fresh attempt to restrict the abortion laws.

It is not enough to defend the '67 Act; the pro-choice lobby must begin formulating demands to extend the provision already in existence.

In this connection, the NAC/LARC Trade Union Liaison Committee is holding a Labour Movement Conference on Abortion and Positive Legislation on March 14, 1981.

The key objective for the Conference is to plan the mobilisation of the labour and trade union movement to extend abortion rights. The aim is to win support for making this extension a part of the Labour Party's manifesto.

The Conference marks a turning point in the abortion campaign. While the TUC and the Labour Party have passed paper resolutions in support of a women's right to choose, the Conference must be the first step in calling on them to put their industrial and political muscle into action.

Faced with strong and united opposition, future attempts to restrict women's access to free, safe abortion facilities will be consigned to the dustbin, along with the White, Benyon and Corrie Bills of earlier years.



Fighting attacks on right to abortion. Labour movement conference can help win freely available abortion.

Birmingham brewery workers fight sackings

By GEORGE HOLD (Peckham CLP)

EIGHT hundred workers face the sack at Aston, Birmingham, with the announcement that Allied Breweries Ltd plan to close their Ansell's brewery.

Coming at a time of ever-growing dole queues, this represents a direct attempt by management to undermine trade union organisation.

Not only does Ansell's have the best organised workforce in the Allied group. The decision follows a month-long strike against short-term lay-offs, redundancies and speed-ups.

Management have breached all agreements with unions and have forced many workers to lose up to £40 per week.

PAYOUTS

The employers blame workers for the closure. They moan that "the brewery has suffered industrial conflict over many years", and that the workers' attitude has caused a loss of profitability.

This is nonsense. It has not stopped the brewery passing £500 to Tory party funds this year. Nor did it stop more than £60,000 being passed over to Tory front organisations, such as British United Industrialists and Industrial

Councils.

Workers ridicule management's crocodile tears. The decision to close the plant came only after the attempted use of scabs from the employment exchanges failed to halt the strikers' resistance.

Arguing that "we will not grovel and we won't leave the picket line until our union says so", workers are standing firm.

BACKING

Backing the actions of the brewery workers must come from wider sections of the labour movement, however. Threatened engineers at Gardners in Manchester have already shown how a united struggle can beat back the present offensive on jobs launched by employers and their Tory government.

It took a seven-week occupation at Gardners to break the threat to make 590 redundancies.

The broadening support from other sections of the labour movement — as, for example, shipbuilders and engineers in Manchester — helped the Gardners workers to force management to cave in and offer a £20 per week increase.

Socialists and the Labour Party

Below, Dave McLeod reviews a pamphlet which has become essential reading for all socialists. Written six years ago, it is more meaningful than ever today. The Limehouse plotting, the battle for democracy and accountability, is all predicted in this important analysis of the Labour Party.

The Labour Party – Which Way? A League for Socialist Action Pamphlet, 1975.

The Labour Party has caused great confusion on the left in Britain. The result has been either to enter the party and soften your politics or stay outside and denounce it from the sidelines.

Some people seem to think the Labour Party can actually implement socialism – through Parliament – while others believe it's really just another capitalist party. It is partly because of these confusions that no socialist group has been able to really grow among working people and challenge the pro-capitalist leaders of the Labour movement.

This pamphlet, however, is firmly based in the method which revolutionary leaders like Lenin and Trotsky used to analyse the party and help revolutionary socialists understand it. It looks at the de-

velopment of the Labour Party, its origins and its class base.

UNDERSTANDING

The break of the unions with the Liberals, it explains, showed an increase in workers' political understanding: that we need our own party to fight for our interests against the Tories and the Liberals, the parties of the ruling rich.

Thus Labour is quite different from, for instance, the Democratic Party in the USA, a straight ruling class outfit with workers' support, but which workers did not found nor have any control over.

The Labour Party, however, has another side. Its leadership, like that of the unions on which it is based, is committed to the capitalist system. They want to make capitalism more "humane".

But capitalism rests entirely on



Socialists should seek to turn Labour Party into a fighting party.

the exploitation and oppression of working people. Thus the Labour leaders who defend capitalism, which also guarantees them a cushy lifestyle, inevitably attack workers interests.

Whenever policy in our interests

is adopted by the party as a whole, these leaders just ignore it.

DEMOCRACY

This makes the issue of rank-and-file control over the party and unions so important. It's why

Williams and her cohorts – including those sticking with Labour – are so opposed to democratic control of the movement.

This pamphlet explains all these things with almost uncanny foresight precisely because it applies the Marxist approach.

It lays out the strategy flowing from these conclusions: socialists work in the ranks of the party to involve all levels of the party in campaigning for demands which defend and advance workers' interests, for Black rights, for women's rights, for solidarity with people in struggle in Ireland, in Central America and other countries.

CONSCIOUSNESS

This will not only assist those struggles, but will also raise the political consciousness of the ranks of the workers and show them the unwillingness of today's "leaders" to champion all struggles for freedom and equality.

It is out of these developments that masses of workers will be drawn to a revolutionary perspective and organisation.

The class nature of the Soviet Union

By GARY ERLISKER

IN a recent attack on those fighting for democracy in the Labour Party, railways union leader Sid Weighell conjured up images of work in salt mines for anyone disagreeing with Tony Benn.

Weighell was using the capitalists' lie that socialism equals totalitarianism, and playing on the lack of democratic rights in the Soviet Union, to smear left-wingers in the labour movement.

But what does the repressive regime in the USSR really show about that country? What kind of societies exist in countries like the Soviet Union?

To answer this it is necessary to go back to the Russian Revolution of 1917. In this historic event ordinary working people took power in their own hands, sweeping aside the ruling class exploiters and tyrants and their stooges – like today's "gang of three" – in the workers' movement. They began to build a society of freedom and equality.



Bolshevik demonstration in 1917. Workers won big gains through revolution.

HISTORIC GAINS

Workers began to run the factories and the state through elected councils (soviets). Oppressed nationalities were granted the right to decide their own futures. Abortion was legalised and special measures taken to put women and men on an equal basis. The anti-homosexual laws were repealed.

It is important to remember how deep and how historic these gains were, as the ruling class – which is against all these rights – tries to submerge the gains beneath layer after layer of lies.

However, the revolution did not take place in the most favourable circumstances for the working class and its Bolshevik leadership.

Russia was an extremely backward country, which meant there were vast objective difficulties to overcome. It was also devastated by the world war, with millions of workers losing their lives, production falling and many factories being destroyed. This situation was worsened by the civil war launched by the dispossessed rulers and their allies. Fourteen foreign armies contributed to the

destruction. Famine also stalked the land.

This meant there were few resources for carrying out the ambitious and liberating programmes of the Bolsheviks.

CRUSHED

At the same time the crucial factor of revolutions in more industrially developed countries – which would be able to aid reconstruction in Russia – were crushed by the capitalists. Leading socialists like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered, along with

many workers, by the forerunners of Williams, Rodgers and Owen in Germany.

In reaction to all these defeats a layer of people in the Bolshevik Party gave up the revolutionary perspective. They became more interested in assuring themselves and their families scarce goods and services, at the expense of everyone else.

This layer, led by Stalin, developed into a hardened bureaucratic caste. It grew as Stalin opened up the gates of the party to hordes of self-seekers, many of whom had opposed the revolution.

Because of the decimation of the working class and its growing passivity, Stalin's opponents were defeated. Lenin, who had begun the fight, had already died in 1924. Trotsky, who carried it on, was expelled from the USSR and murdered by a Stalinist agent in Mexico in 1940.

As the USSR developed, the bureaucrats appropriated more privileges. In order to do so, they had to crush democratic rights.

COLLECTIVE PROPERTY

Many of the gains of the October revolution were turned back. But the collective property relations established by the Bolsheviks remained. To have overturned these would have required a massive counter-revolution.

Private ownership of the means of mass production does not exist and so production is not based on enriching the few at the expense of the many. Thus the USSR is not any kind of capitalist

state: it's a workers state. In the long run, the workers are the ruling class.

Because of these facts, education, health and social services in these countries are far superior to those in capitalist countries. Moreover, their current aims include expanding government social welfare rather than "rolling back the frontiers of the state" like the British government. Also, unemployment and inflation are very low.

But as the Soviet rulers did push the working class out of political power, the country is best described as a *degenerate workers state*. What is required is a political revolution in which workers take political power in line with their basic economic power.

EXAMPLE

Poland – which was deformed by Stalinism from the beginning – is an instructive example. For instance, the demands of the workers there are, from the outset, far more advanced than any demands raised by unions here seeking to defend their interests.

This is because the nature of Poland as a workers state means the workers' struggle begins on a higher level. They are not still at the stage of fighting to limit their exploitation at the hands of the bosses. They've already abolished that.

Their basic demands are aimed at ending bureaucratic rule, for full political rights and for, as their leader Lech Walesa put it, "control over economic decisions at every level".

Australian socialists hold conference

Recently, the Socialist Workers Party, Australian section of the Fourth International, held their two-yearly national conference in Sydney. Len Wagstaff was invited to the conference.

The 8th National Conference of the SWP(Australia) was lively, interesting and well-organised. It was regarded as a big success by all those who participated.

With six days of activities scheduled between 9 am and midnight, the agenda was able to cover all the main features of the political situation and the party's role in the next period.

As well as all the usual discussion of

the international and Australian political situation, the party's political programme, youth activity, building the party's weekly paper *Direct Action*, industrial and labour party work, and building the party, there was a special item devoted to the unfolding revolution in the Caribbean and Central America.

JOBS FOR WOMEN

Another special item evaluated the party's recent campaign for Jobs For Women in Wollongong, a town where the sole major employer is a steelworks. The campaign forced the steelworks to take on 150 women. This success was partly due to the overwhelming support of the existing (male) workforce, contrary to prior claims by the union bureaucracy that the men would see the campaign as a threat to 'their' jobs.

Several films were shown, including *El Salvador – Revolution or Death*, and there was a hilarious Cabaret – a tradition at SWP conferences. International greetings were given by the SWP(USA) and the SAL (New Zealand section of the Fourth International).

Real face of ruling class 'democracy'

By RALPH WOOD (NUPE)

ASSASSINATED by a car bomb attack two years ago, Airey Neave was portrayed by the press at the time as a harmless politician killed by mindless terrorists.

In fact, Neave was one of Thatcher's closest allies. He was a staunch right-winger who planned covert methods to suppress the labour movement.

In a sensational interview with the *New Statesman*, MI6 electronics expert Lee Tracey has exposed the ex-MP for plotting Chile-style tactics to stop Tony Benn leading a Labour government.

RESISTANCE

Neave feared that Callaghan might retire early and leave a clear path for

Benn to take over as leader of the Labour Party. Just before the last General Election, he discussed with security service agents plans for an "army of resistance" in case of a Labour victory.

One of the agents he contacted was Tracey. According to Tracey – an experienced intelligence operative – the contact was made through a world intelligence network.

Neave asked Tracey to join a team of agents who would "make sure Benn was stopped". Tracey – whose past statements have always turned out to be reliable – was quite clear that these plans included the possible use of violence.

SILENT

Not surprisingly, the bourgeois media have kept silent. Even on BBC television's *Panorama* in which Tracey was allowed to speak out, the programme was shown only after severe intervention and cutting.

Despite the fact that Benn refused to believe the story, the *New Statesman* published it because "we know the source and the circumstances better than Mr Benn does".

It is of course no surprise that Benn is unable to accept that the state would use anything other than democratic means by which to remove him or any government which sets out to represent workers' interests.

Those who argue that socialism can be attained through Parliamentary reform ignore, for instance, the Pinochet-led coup which overthrew Allende's democratically elected government in Chile.

But for the workers' movement as a whole the lesson must be learned. Any attempt to remove the powerful families who sponge off the labour of others will meet bloody resistance.

MASS MOBILISATION

That is why *Socialist Action* argues that the defence of a workers' government or of any gains for working people can come only through the mass mobilisation of workers themselves.

Winning elections is a fine objective. But this should never replace the winning of workers to mass struggle and defence of their own interests.

Socialist Action

El Salvador:

Masses fight repression



El Salvadoran people need support of workers everywhere.

By BRIGID MULRENNAN

THE freedom fighters in El Salvador have made important gains in their battle against the brutal US-backed junta which rules the country.

On January 10 the mass organisations, the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) and the popular army known as the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), launched a general offensive.

Since then, the FMLN has taken effective control of one-quarter of the country and holds many key roads and rail bridges, including the main highway into El Salvador from Guatemala and Honduras.

The news of the rebels' successes was confirmed by *Washington Post* correspondent Christopher Dickey in a January 17 dispatch: "With the war erupting in city slums and villages, around military garrisons and in the sugar cane fields, the guerrillas have proven

they can mount co-ordinated actions virtually anywhere in this overcrowded Central American country and operate almost freely in the rural areas."

STRIKE SUCCESSFUL

A three-day general strike called for January 13 by the FDR showed the overwhelming support for the popular forces.

In the industrial areas of the capital San Salvador, it was 70 percent effective. More than 40 of El Salvador's largest factories were paralysed. Bank workers also joined the strike, as did many others from government departments.

Prior to the strike starting, much of the capital's transportation had already shut down because the bus owners' association announced its support for the FDR.

In the three largest cities outside San Salvador — Santa Ana, San Miguel and La Union — industrial

activity was reported to have been totally at a standstill by January 13. Agricultural workers also went on strike in massive numbers with many joining the FMLN armed forces.

Another aspect of the offensive has been defections from the junta. On January 11, Lt. Colonel Bruno Navarette of the government's National Guard announced his defection to the FMLN. On the same day, an entire unit of the army went over to the FMLN.

On January 29, two top economic officials — Nelson Romero, the general manager of the National Coffee Institute and Carlos Federico Paredes, the government's vice-minister of planning — declared their support for the revolutionary forces.

REPRESSION

In the face of this popular upsurge the junta has stepped up its violence and repression. The clandestine radio of the FMLN, Radio Liberacion, reported on January 16 that more than 30 trade union leaders had been arrested in the preceding days.

The Salvadoran Air Force was reported to be indiscriminately bombing the civilian populations of the towns held by the FMLN, and it has already begun to use incendiary bombs, similar in effect to the napalm used in Vietnam.

On January 16, the Legal Aid office of the San Salvador Catholic Archdiocese said that government forces had raided church-operated refugee centres in San Salvador, capturing peasants who had fled militarised zones in the countryside.

Accurate information on the situation in El Salvador has been

especially difficult to obtain because of the repression by the regime against journalists. All radio stations in the country have been forced to join a single government-controlled network. Journalists were ordered on January 13 not to travel outside the capital without official permission.

Right-wing thugs were reportedly circulating lists of journalists they had condemned to death and making threatening phone calls to hotels where foreign reporters were housed.

The drive to intimidate the press and tighten censorship is necessary for the success of the junta's efforts to present the image that El Salvador is "calm", that the government forces are in "total control", and that the revolutionary offensive is a "total failure".

But nothing could be further from the truth. The offensive is continuing, and the overwhelming support that the FDR and the FMLN have shows that the junta only survives with the massive military aid that the US government pours in. There is little doubt that Reagan would like to back up this aid by sending in troops. What is preventing him is the deep anti-war sentiment among American working people.

While increasing aid to the El Salvador junta, the US State Department has taken the opportunity to suspend a \$75 million loan to neighbouring Nicaragua, which is in the process of building a just and free society following a mass revolution there in 1979.

The reason given for the suspension was that five boats carrying 100 Nicaraguans landed on a beach in El Salvador on January 14 to fight against the dictatorship. The

Nicaraguan government has denied this "categorically and absolutely" and not one scrap of evidence has been produced to back up this claim.

The general offensive launched by the FMLN on January 10 marked the opening of an all-out civil war — a war the revolutionary forces believe they can win if the people of El Salvador are left alone to determine their own future.

SOLIDARITY

To help them do that, the people of El Salvador need the support of an international solidarity campaign which can play a part in stopping US intervention and preventing El Salvador from becoming the Vietnam of Central America.

The people of that country know what they are up against and are determined to win. As one FDR representative recently explained:

"The Salvadoran people have been fighting for 50 years and we understand very well that the final phase of the revolution can last a few days, or a few weeks or even a few years. But we also know that in the end the Salvadoran people will win."

From the New Zealand socialist bi-weekly Socialist Action, 20.2.1981.

**SOCIALIST ACTION
PUBLIC FORUM**
**The Struggle for Freedom in
El Salvador**
Wed. March 18, 8.00
Camden Labour Rooms
8, Camden Rd. NW1.
**Speakers: El Salvador Solidarity
Campaign and Socialist Action.**

Miners deal major blow to Thatcher

By JASON HILL

"The government has been stopped in its tracks." That was how Ivor England, secretary of the South Wales Mardy Lodge, described the outcome of the miners' strike last month.

Within days of announcing that 50 pits would have to close, the Thatcher government was making a humiliating U-turn as it faced the angry response of the backbone of Britain's labour movement.

It pledged that the pits wouldn't be closed and agreed to pour up to £500 million into the mining industry. Cabinet member John Biffen admitted on radio that they were frightened of taking the miners on.

MISCALCULATED

Clearly, the government's earlier decision to back the Coal Board's decision to close 50 'non-viable' pits was a major miscalculation.

They no doubt thought that with unemployment at nearly three million — and having notched up a series of victories as at British Leyland — the miners would be reluctant to make a stand.

If so, they were sorely mistaken. Within hours of the pit closures being announced, over 24,000 South Wales miners downed tools for an all-out stoppage.

The call for similar action spread to other areas such as Scotland, South Yorkshire and the Kent coalfields where plans were already being laid to picket the power stations in defiance of the Tory Employment Bill.

It soon became clear that even attempts by right-wing union leaders such as Gormley to restrain action until a national ballot was held were falling on deaf ears. Incensed at the attack on jobs, miners nationally were responding with direct action.

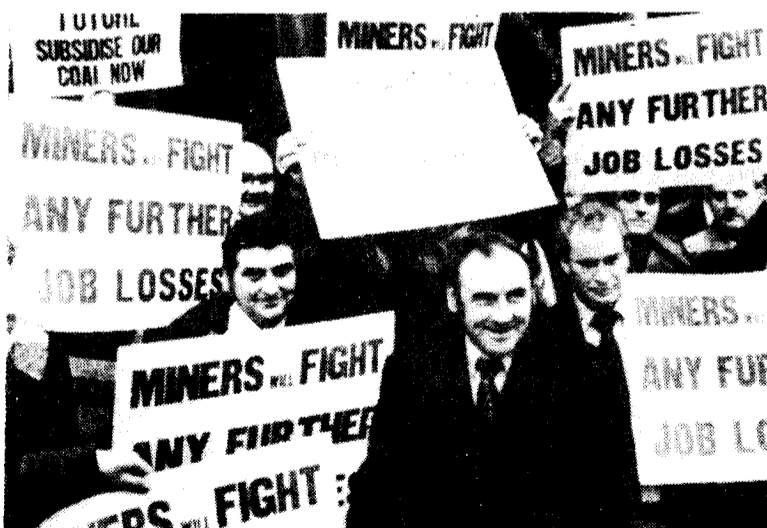
Moreover, support for the miners was beginning to escalate among other sectors of the labour movement who saw them as the spearhead of the fightback against the Tories. Both the steel and railway-workers had agreed to back them in any large-scale dispute.

FUTURE

The explosion among rank-and-file miners was undoubtedly due to, in part, the government's run-down of the pits over the past few years.

Over 6,000 workers have been lost in one year alone through 'natural wastage' and lack of investment means that many pits were destined to die.

It was not only for their own jobs, however, that they struck.



Miners' determination forced Thatcher to back off.

They were aware that their fight was a fight for all workers faced with the Tories' offensive. As Kent miners explained "unless we show an interest in the unemployed, we'll be joining them".

It was this understanding of the miners' that frightened the Tory government. They began to see the spectre of the Heath government looming up before them.

What they feared above all was the possibility of the miners' strike escalating into a head-on collision with ever-wider sectors of the labour movement which could

lead to their defeat.

This is why, within days of throwing down the gauntlet to the miners, they beat such a fast retreat. Union leaders were invited to emergency talks in which the government capitulated on virtually every point.

VICTORY

What the miners' victory shows is not only that the British labour movement is not demoralised by the Tory offensive. It is also a vital lesson on how to combat that offensive which has led to over 3 million

unemployed.

It exposes more clearly than ever before the weak-kneed attitude of the union bureaucrats whose sole answer to date has been to launch a few protest actions combined with pleas to be admitted to Number 10 to talk to Mrs Thatcher.

It is not talk that will defeat the Tories. It is force — the force of the labour movement. The miners' strike was the clearest example that, faced with a determined section of labour, the Tories dare not take them on.

EXAMPLE

The impact of the miners' victory has already been widespread. It was reflected on the mass Glasgow demonstration, on February 21, when over 75,000 protested the Tory jobless strategy.

It has also been felt among other groups of workers, such as the gas, electricity and water workers, who have all lodged claims above the government's 6%.

Such action will give renewed confidence to the rank and file nationally and give a real boost to the attempt to make the Labour leaders lead a determined struggle to remove this government once and for all.