

Socialist Organiser

No.32

Jan. 10, 1980

Claimants and strikers 10p

20p

**Labour democracy
Can we clinch it
on January 24?
see p3**

Edwardes, the Tories' hit-man



Metro sackings lead
Tory assault on
union rights

Ford can lead the pay fight

by Stephen Corbishley

AS EDWARDES forced a showdown with the BL Metro workers, the international Ford company gave its answer to its workers' pay claim: 9.5 per cent and no more, and no concession on hours!

At the joint management/union meeting on Friday December 19th, the union negotiators told the company bosses that the Ford workers rejected the offer. The bosses, not batting an eyelid, threatened that if the offer was not accepted then the pay-out date in November would be abandoned and the back pay due would not be paid.

The response of the unions was not to begin a campaign to organise the Ford workers after the mass meetings had rejected the offer, but to go back to their respective union executives and examine the problem.

Todd has already gone on record that the new disciplinary proposal may be negotiated over if the management will make a move on the reduction of hours. This is the one point that the AUEW national leadership has also tried to take up with the Ford bosses.

But the employers are obstinate. And they have two advantages. First, the mass meetings, while they rejected the pay offer, did not give a mandate for strike action to enforce this rejection. Secondly, the cowardly way the T&G and AUEW got the BL Metro workers back to work has shown the real worth of these national union leaders.

Mass meetings are planned for the week after the joint union committee meets on January 9th. These meetings will decide the future of the pay battle for Ford, and thus also strongly influence the pay struggles of millions of other workers, too.

Militants must demand that the national leadership should call for an all-out national strike. And if the leaders will not lead, then the rank and file must.



Sacked shop steward
Jim Denham:

I don't blame the membership for Sunday's vote. They had shown their willingness to fight by coming out before Christmas. But over the holiday all anyone heard about was wheeling and dealing over the precise composition of the inquiry. We had no positive leadership from the T&G, no proposals for strengthening the action from the Works Committee. And we were faced with the AUEW's usual scabbing role.

It wasn't the company's threat to sack everyone on strike, or even lack of money after Christmas, that was decisive on Sunday. It was lack of confidence. They could see that the union officials were not willing to lead a real fight, and they did not feel able to hold out without active backing from the officials and the Works Committee.

Once again, the crying need has been demonstrated for a new leadership in the unions, willing to conduct a serious fight against Edwardes and his blackmail tactics.

At British Leyland's Longbridge plant, BL boss Michael Edwardes is setting the pace for the whole Tory drive to beat down and cripple the trade unions.

Eight workers have been sacked for 'gross industrial misconduct' on the unseen evidence of unnamed witnesses, at a 'trial' with management acting as judge, jury prosecution and executioner. 1500 co-workers struck in protest.

The TGWU made the strike official; Edwardes said he would sack every striker on January 5th.

The union leaders backed down and recommended the strikers to go back to work. Browbeaten and isolated, the strikers agreed — on the basis of 'suspending' the strike while a new inquiry takes place. Now a fight is needed to force the union leaders to re-start the strike unless all eight get their jobs back.

Democratic rights, negotiations, trade unionism itself, are all becoming redundant at Longbridge. It is all rule by decree and Edwardes' big stick.

Consider the recent record. Derek Robinson was sacked for publishing his views on the future of the company, for exercising a basic democratic right. There was an immediate walk-out. Edwardes said he would close down BL and the AUEW leaders caved in.

The imposition of the 5% pay rises with tight strings followed in April last year. Edwardes won once again by threatening shut-down.

The same industrial terrorism was practised last November to impose the 6.8% pay formula. Strike and we throw you all on the scrapheap, Edwardes threatened.

What Edwardes can get away with at Longbridge, he will try tomorrow in other BL plants — and other bosses will then impose it in other companies.

Edwardes CAN be stopped now. He must be stopped now.

If the BL workers and their leadership let Edwardes get away with sacking shop stewards like this, then they are letting the BL bosses cripple trade unionism. But if the unions stand firm, then Edwardes' bluff and bluster can be exposed once and for all.

**More
on BL,
centre
pages**

Benn slams BL

Tony Benn told Socialist Organiser:

"The dictatorial management methods at BL reveal quite clearly that what is at stake is the very role of trade unionism itself.

"Unless strong trade unionism can be restored, the Michael Edwardes pattern of management, 'do what I tell you, or get the sack', will quickly become the pattern throughout British industry".



NO POLITICS, PLEASE

SHORTLY BEFORE Christmas 200 soccer fans left a Chelsea versus Luton match and charged through the streets of Luton. They smashed the windows of Asian shops and ended by storming the local Mosque, shouting insults, invading a section where women were praying and bombarding the building with bottles and stones.

Yet, according to Luton police, there was no racial motive: it was just an example of "hooliganism".

At about the same time, Stephen Thompson was eagerly awaiting his release from Gartree prison, where he had been serving a six year sentence for robbery.

But with just a few days to go he was transferred to Rampton where he will stay indefinitely until the Home Secretary sees fit to order his release.

Of course, the zip-lipped Home Office are saying nothing. They are hiding behind the excuse that they do not comment on individual cases.

Is Steven Thompson "mentally ill" then? After all, his transfer was made under the Mental Health Act 1959. A psychiatrist who has seen him at Rampton doesn't think so; his mother has visited him too and found him "lucid and normal"; and a member of the Black Prisoners Welfare Scheme found him "speaking normally, but very angry at the treatment of the authorities" shortly before his transfer.

Steven Thompson is being held because he is an unbroken opponent of the prison system. And the authorities are using the fact that he is a Rastafarian, that he therefore doesn't accept many of the cultural norms of our twisted society to label him as "mentally ill".

If the tyrants who rule in the Stalinist states of Eastern Europe weren't so busy with Lodz to notice Luton and too absorbed with Gdansk to read about Gartree, they would no doubt recognise the trick.

By describing political opponents as just "mad" or those infected with the poison promoted by the system as just "hooligans" the state tries to hide the fact that it is a political agency. It

tries to appear as a non-political guardian of public order, taking no sides in political argument or class struggle.

The British state has worn this disguise more successfully than most. It has even convinced millions of workers workers that there are no political prisoners in the jails in the North of Ireland! There's no war there either... just "the troubles", just a disturbance of public order...



FEW THINGS can be guaranteed to bring out the ugliness in our society as much as beauty contests. They don't just degrade women: they degrade all of us.

Shortly before Christmas, that guardian of the nation's moral fibre, the Sunday Mirror, revealed that it had managed to pressure Coral Leicester, who control Pontins, who in turn sponsor the Miss Great Britain competition, whose title is 'owned' by Lancaster City Council, to readmit one of the finalists to the competition.

Caren Metcalfe had been barred from the final because she is deaf.

Of course, only the most dignified and humane reasons were given for this decision. "If she won, she would face the nerve-wracking prospect of an interview in front of the cameras", said a Coral executive.

In reality, however, Caren Metcalfe's deafness offended against all the principles of the pin-up business. It threatened to take the whole pathetic affair off its pedestal of perfection; it threatened to defy the cardinal rule of all beauty contests by making the contestant come to life in human form, in a form that demands we respond as humans and not as drooling fools.

For all the busty posing, the flashing smiles and the provocative hip-swinging, beauty competitions are about passivity. They flatter not the female form, but the feelings of millions of men who want to dominate women and who feel that they cannot do that as long as the women are active.

It is the nearest thing to necrophilia: it works as long as the women are technically alive but without any of the qualities of independent life. Caren Metcalfe's offence is that she can't let us see her simply as a 'living doll'.

Police power report calls for INDEFINITE JAILING WITHOUT TRIAL

by Bob Fine

MORE powers for the police, less rights for defendants — that is the recipe of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure.

Their proposals, leaked to the press before official publication next Thursday, mark another step in the state's erosion of democratic rights. Under the slogan of law and order, the state seeks to insulate the police still more firmly from public scrutiny. Under the slogan of 'protecting the public interest', it seeks to set the police yet further above the people.

What does the Commission want?

★ **Extended police powers of arrest.** Until now the police have needed a warrant to arrest anyone on a charge carrying less than a five year sentence. Without a warrant, the police could only summon such defendants to court.

Now, the Commission recommends that the police be granted the power to arrest without a warrant anyone for whom there is 'reasonable suspicion' of having committed an imprisonable offence (or even a fineable offence, where there is a problem of identification).

The Commission contents itself with 'trusting' that these increased powers will be sparingly used and outlines some vague and all-embracing criteria, not backed by sanctions, which the police should follow in making decisions about arrest.

★ **Extended police powers of detention.** Until now no specific rules about detention have been formulated, beyond the norm of habeas corpus, which prohibits undue detention without charge. Now the Commission recommends for 'petty' crimes that defendants must be charged within 24 hours or be released.

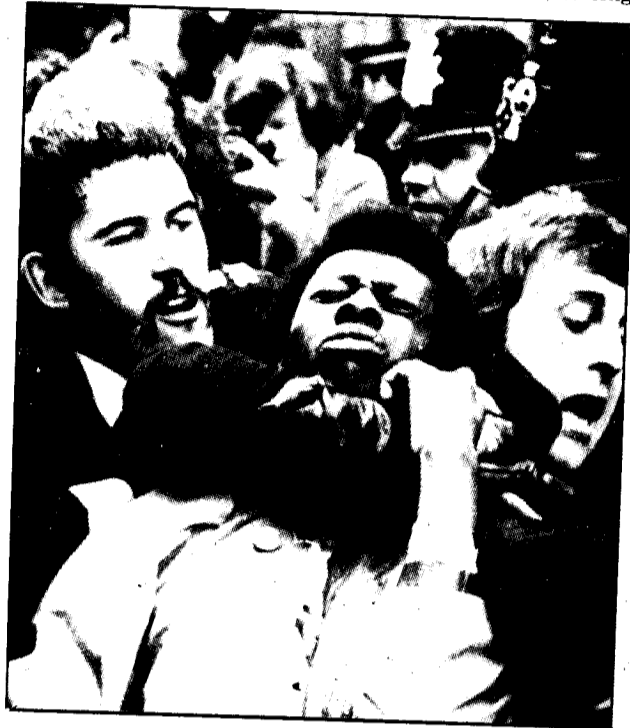
But for 'grave' offences (undefined) this 24 hour detention can be repeated if an

order is granted by a magistrate in a private hearing. The extension can be repeated indefinitely after that (shades of South Africa, in addition to Sir Michael Edwardes).

The suspect's only safeguard is a right of appeal

interviews, the enforcement of which is to be purely a matter of internal police discipline.

Further, evidence gained through procedures that breach this code — like forced confessions — should be admissible in court, so long



after 48 hours. Again, the commission 'trusts' that detention will not normally be imposed beyond two days.

★ **Extended police powers of interrogation.** Until the present, suspects have the right — albeit often flouted or not used — to legal advice when under detention. Now the commission recommends that the police be able to bar access to a lawyer if they believe this might impair their investigations.

The "Judges' Rules", which have guided interrogation procedures in the past, are to be replaced by a hopelessly ill-defined 'code of practice' for the regulation of

as the judge warns the jury that it was obtained in this manner.

★ **Extended police powers of search.** The Commission recommends that the police should be granted unlimited power to enter a suspect's premises after arrest without a warrant. They justify this on the grounds that it merely ratified existing (illegal) police practice. The supposed safeguard is that police write down their reasons for the search, and defendants can challenge these later in the courts.

The result of this commission is not only to increase police powers, but

also their 'right' to police themselves. And this despite the undeniable fact that the police already habitually flout the law on defendants' rights.

From within the Commission, opposition has come from only two dissidents, former T&G general secretary Jack Jones and the Rev. Wilfred Wood, the black Canon of Southwark.

Some opposition outside the Commission is already being organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties. In a discussion with Socialist Organiser, the NCCL's legal officer, Harriet Harman, called the report "a charter for wrongful conviction and one that will further worsen already strained relations between the police and the public".

For us as socialists, our commitment to exposing the undemocratic nature of all police in capitalist society and their role in serving our capitalist overlords, should not cripple us from undertaking, alongside civil libertarians, the urgent and practical struggle against the extension of police powers and for the extension of legal and public accountability.

The recently formed Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice will be holding a meeting on the Royal Commission on Wednesday 25th February, 7pm in the Jubilee Room, House of Commons. One of the speakers will be Diane Hayter JP, general secretary of the Fabian Society and a conformist member of the Royal Commission.

This will be an opportunity for all members of the Labour Party to tell Ms Hayter what we think of the report and of those who put their signature to it, and to help build up the campaign to stop the report ever becoming law.

PHOTO: PETER MARLOW

Stop the PIE trial

by Gerry Byrne

FOUR Executive Committee members of the Paedophile Information Exchange are standing trial at the Old Bailey from January 5th for 'Conspiracy to

Corrupt Public Morals'. There is no maximum sentence for this charge.

They are charged with publishing a contact list for members of PIE, so that paedophiles — adults who are sexually attracted to

children — could get in touch with each other. Allegedly individuals (not those charged) could use the sheet to facilitate illegal and immoral activities.

'Corrupting public morals' is not recognised as a crime — but 'conspiracy to corrupt' is. This is the only remaining common law conspiracy charge under which the penalty for 'conspiracy' is heavier than the act itself.

And, as with all conspiracy charges, the sort of evidence needed to convict is much more loosely defined than for ordinary crimes. Conspiracy charges have been used again and again when the police decide to clamp down but have little firm evidence — in the Angry Brigade trial, in the Shrewsbury 24 prosecution, more recently in the 'Persons Unknown' affair.

The stage is therefore set for a show trial, where what matters is not so much proving that crimes were committed, let alone that any child was harmed, but the creation of an atmosphere of hysteria, sensationalism, and a public cry

for blood.

A 'Campaign against Public Morals' has been set up to defend the four. (There were originally five defendants, but charges against one of them were dropped because he is suffering from terminal cancer and not expected to survive the trial). Unfortunately the pamphlet concentrates less on the trial and more on the Campaign's own views of paedophilia (as potentially a means of children's sexual liberation).

Many in the women's movement, the gay movement, and the Left would argue that unequal power relations make adult-child sexual relations oppressive, not liberating.

But digging up an ancient and arbitrary law in order to prevent paedophiles from communicating with each other is in no way a contribution to protecting children, or to dealing with paedophilia constructively and rationally. Whatever our views on paedophilia, the labour movement must add its weight to the call to stop the trial.

WHERE WE STAND

- ★ Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks!
- ★ No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line; no state interference in our unions!
- ★ No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions!
- ★ Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.
- ★ Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.
- ★ End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35 hour week and an end to overtime.
- ★ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.
- ★ Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.
- ★ Freeze rent and rates.
- ★ Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.
- ★ Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence.
- ★ The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support demands to weaken them as a class: speaking force dissolution of special squads SPG, Special Branch, MI5 etc.
- ★ Free abortion and contraception to demand women's equal rights, work and full equality for women.

- ★ Against attacks on gays by the State; abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stance publicly.
- ★ The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.
- ★ The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.
- ★ It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament, and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.
- ★ The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.
- ★ The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and wading for crumbs from the tables of the market and bosses.
- ★ The only perspective is a class-struggle left wing revolutionary programme and strategy based on a revolutionary class programme. The Socialist Workers' Party and its supporters are the only group to have this perspective.
- ★ The Socialist Campaign for a

by Jon Lansman [secretary of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee]

THERE was much cause for satisfaction when the agenda was published for Labour's special conference on January 24.

The widespread recognition of the importance of Party democracy was shown by the large number of organisations which submitted proposals, in spite of the short time available and the difficulty of considering constitutional amendments.

The Right, in the shape of the Gang of Three and the Campaign for Labour Victory, suffered a decisive defeat on their proposal for a postal ballot of individual members, and will now begin to trickle out of the Party. The new Right — those who will remain — and Roy Hattersley, their champion-designate, also suffered a defeat on their proposal for a postal electoral college.

Two vital provisions for accountability, recorded voting and annual election, have won over four million of the 5.8 million votes already committed. And perhaps the most significant victory of all is that the overwhelming majority of organisations want to give the decisive share of votes in an electoral college at conference to the trade unions and CLPs.

However, the agenda also highlights the weaknesses of our campaign and of the Left in general. Like so many recent 'victories', it is far more a defeat of the Right than a victory for the Left.

It is true that we had very little time in which to campaign. It has been difficult

LABOUR SPECIAL CONFERENCE

How to mandate delegates for Jan. 24th

to clarify the issues and impossible to achieve the level of rank and file participation which we require to win a decisive victory. Much of our 'success' has been thanks to our friends of the NEC. It is therefore unsurprising that the results are inadequate.

For example, the provisions for accountability in the RFMC/CLPD text were generally included, although often in an inferior form, in the model text circulated by the NEC in November. Many organisations accepted the NEC text without discussion,

It is therefore likely that we will have to accept the less-than-adequate wording of the NEC model.

Furthermore, the campaign waged by the Right did make significant inroads into our support.

Ballot

Altogether 105 organisations, almost 30% of all submissions, proposed some form of individual balloting. Although a ballot of individual members will be a non-starter at

ingly. In the first round of the eliminating ballot, there will probably be only six main proposals. Most others will have been withdrawn at the group meetings.

These six will be a ballot of individual members, a postal electoral college, and electoral colleges at conference giving the Parliamentary Labour Party, Constituency Labour Parties, and trade unions respectively voting shares of about (30, 30, 40), (33, 33, 33), (40, 30, 30), and (50, 25, 25).

The first two will not survive the first two rounds, and nor will the electoral college giving 40% to the PLP unless the Right decides to stick to it. Otherwise, the (50, 25, 25) college will become the rallying point of the Right.

Assuming that the Right sticks to (50, 25, 25) and (40, 30, 30) falls, then which of (30, 30, 40) and (33, 33, 33) will emerge in the final round? Unfortunately the Left is not sufficiently strong to determine which of the two will survive, or to dictate the small (but important) print of either, without first considering which of the two is most likely to defeat the Right. Some compromise would be better than defeat.

Although 1.2 million votes are uncommitted, and more are committed to options that will fail, it is certain that the result will be very close. In fact,

it is likely to hang on the 430,000 votes of USDAW, now committed to a college giving 40% to the trade unions with the NEC text. The aim must therefore be to hold USDAW's votes.

Support

USDAW cannot be expected to transfer its votes in line with the Left, or

even to support the RFMC/CLPD text which has the same proportions but with a separate category for Socialist Societies. The best chance may well be in allowing USDAW to move its own proposal with the support of the Left.

This would mean abandoning those RFMC/CLPD provisions which were not included in the NEC model. If that becomes necessary to avoid defeat, it will be vital to persuade those of our supporters committed to (33, 33, 33) to switch their votes to (30, 30, 40), regardless of their respective support in the first round.

If USDAW holds the balance, the compromise should not involve splitting the difference on proportions but rallying support for USDAW!

MOBILISE FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY

Eve of Conference London Rally. Friday January 23rd, 7.30pm, at Central Hall, Westminster.

Chair: Joan Maynard MP. Speakers: Tony Benn MP; Ken Cameron, general secretary designate, FBU; Eric Heffer MP; Ian Mikardo MP; Reg Race MP; Arthur Scargill, NUM (personal capacity)

Admission by ticket, price 50p. These can be obtained in advance by writing to Jon Lansman, c/o 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH, enclosing the money and s.a.e.

Jointly organised by: Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, Tribune Group of MPs.

including some right-wing unions as well as many of our own supporters. This was to our advantage, but when we succeed by default we cannot claim to have won arguments.

conference, these are no grounds for complacency.

After that modest performance, we must now make a realistic assessment of our strength and plan our conference tactics accord-

20p

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LCC: beyond good intentions?

ALTHOUGH nearly 200 Labour Party activists attended the Labour Coordinating Committee AGM on December 14th, they were able to take very little back with them to their constituencies and unions.

A motion put by Peter Hain called for greater involvement of shop floor militants, for building Labour Party workplace branches and encouraging rank and file groupings in the unions, and for re-establishing a militant shop stewards movement.

Activity

It was passed, but it included no specific suggestions as to how to achieve its aims. Then a motion put by SO supporters, calling for the Executive to organise a rank and file labour movement conference within the next four months, drawing in shop-floor militants, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, and other Broad Left and Rank and File groups, was defeated.

A quite clear division appeared between the Executive and the local groups. The executive announced at the beginning of the AGM that they were launching an inquiry into the car industry and BL in particular ... and they wanted to invite Lord Scanlon to chair it, to give it 'weight'.

What useful advice Scanlon could send from the

House of Lords to shop-floor militants in the car industry, or anywhere else, is difficult to imagine. There was strong criticism from the floor by individual LCC members.

The other major debate centred around the Alternative Economic Strategy. SO supporters argued that socialists must base themselves on the independent activity of the working class and not on a strategy of import controls, price controls, and planning agreements. Quoting the example of the Gardeners occupation for jobs, Nik Barstow asked what use the AES would have been to those workers. 'Planning agreements' would simply have meant that they gave up their occupation and sat around in the board room with the bosses to try to get their jobs back.

Sacked

The AGM was not even prepared to organise a discussion on the AES, as suggested in a motion from Stephen Corbishley — despite the fact that there are many contradictory versions of the AES.

However, the meeting did vote unanimously to support the Longbridge workers sacked the week before.

The LCC does have the potential to organise large forces in the labour movement, but it was clear from

Jo Thwaites reports on the two Labour Left conferences in December

the AGM that, until the LCC is prepared to go beyond good intentions and reformist politics, many opportunities of building a militant shop stewards' movement and a fighting Left in the Party will be missed.

CLPD calls for positive discrimination

WITH THE successes of Blackpool behind us, 200 attended the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Annual General Meeting on December 13th.

A large proportion of the Campaign's work had been in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, and this was reflected in the Secretary's report. Some members, mostly from the Scottish Labour Coordinating Committee, argued against continued involvement in the RFMC, saying, 'we can

do it just as well without the ultra-left'.

But this bureaucratic exclusiveness was clearly defeated. The relevant section of the Secretary's report was carried, and there was no attempt to refer it back.

The major changes in policy of the CLPD were the adoption of a resolution from the Women's Action Committee of the CLPD on positive discrimination, in favour of women in the Party, and another resolution on positive discrimination for blacks.

The CLPD will also extend the campaign for democracy into local government. A sub-committee of the executive is to be set up to look at ways of democratising the activities of council Labour Groups, the election of Group leaders, and representation of local trade unions at district and borough level in the Party.

Unfortunately, as time ran out, the resolutions on trade union work were not taken. In a previous discussion, two formulas for increasing the influence of the constituency vote at Labour conference had both been rejected, so it was even more important that the CLPD's work in the unions be discussed. The fight for Labour Party democracy will be won or lost in the unions.

In the Executive elections, two SO supporters were successful, Rachel Lever and John Bloxam (returned as Assistant Secretary).

KICK OUT THE TORIES!

Labour democracy

and the fight for a WORKERS GOVERNMENT

A Socialist Organiser Pamphlet



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Socialist Organiser LISTINGS

LAMBETH Socialist Organiser forum: John O'Mahony on Poland. 7.30pm, Thursday 15th January, Lambeth Town Hall.

CENTRAL LONDON POLYTECHNIC Students' Union. Civil Liberties Society. Tuesday 13th January: Joanna Rollo on the SPG. Thursday 22 January: Chris Beer on 'Police and community in Lambeth'.

Labour Club: Tuesday 20th January. John Tilley MP on Tory housing policy. Thursday 12 February: Reg Race MP on the Alternative Economic Strategy.

All these meetings: 5pm in the Student Common Room, PCL, 32-38 Wells St, London W1.

TOM LITTERICK

Readers will be sad to hear of the death after a heart attack on Monday 5th of Tom Litterick, the former Labour MP for Birmingham Selly Oak.

Tom's outspoken stand against Britain's presence in Ireland earned him the special hostility of Fleet Street, and the campaign of harassment carried out against him by the press severely affected his health.

At the last election, he lost his marginal seat in Parliament. But he remained politically active. Most recently, he was a vigorous supporter of the defence campaign for the Longbridge 8.

by Bas Hardy

WHILE CARTER and Reagan make all the mileage they can out of the US hostages in Iran, they wish to draw a curtain over the murder of four American women in El Salvador.

On December 2nd last year the four women — three nuns and a social worker — were raped, tortured and killed by right-wing terrorists in this Central American republic. The murder victims were marked out because of their sympathy for the popular rebellion against the US-backed Salvadorean regime. They were all on their way to a funeral of six left-wing leaders murdered under similar circumstances.

Torture

Since the start of 1980, more than 9,300 people have been killed by right-wing gangs. These terror groups have usually included members of the police and military, and there can be no doubt that these actions have had the tacit approval of the army top brass, if not the government.

Political assassination, involving torture and mutilation of political opponents, is the response of a very frightened ruling class in El Salvador to the growing strength of the mass movement, led by the

Revolutionary offensive in El Salvador

Revolutionary Democratic Front and its armed wing, the Farabundo Marti Liberation Movement. This movement, which successfully organised a two-day general strike in the capital, San Salvador, last June, is currently beginning a final offensive against the dictatorship.

"The Salvadorean situation should be red hot by the time Reagan takes office", said one rebel leader after reporting the news that 1,500 armed guerrillas had advanced through the north of the country. The Liberation Movement are of the opinion that they will be close to victory by the time Reagan takes office, and clearly see the period before January 20th as crucial.

The ultra-rightists are of a similar opinion. What matters to them now is the ability to hold on until the time when Reagan's administration can boost US military and financial aid to the regime.

Civil war is not new to El Salvador. The Liberation Movement takes its name from Farabundo Marti, a peasant leader murdered in the massacre of 30,000 workers and peasants in the Salvadorean uprising of 1932. Then, as now, the country was ruled by the '14' — big banking and coffee-planting families — who controlled the military and were backed by the US government.

Sinking

El Salvador's history is a cycle of repression — popular rebellion — repression. Yet three things make today's rebellion different. Firstly, the success of the revolution in Nicaragua against the Somoza dictatorship.

Secondly, despite its small geographical size, El Salvador now has probably the largest working

class of all the Central American Republics. It has undergone a considerable industrial transformation in the last twenty years.

Finally, the regime itself is undergoing an weakening through infighting, with rats deserting the sinking ship of state daily. Top army commanders who favour a 'moderate' approach (i.e. one which does not simply rely on mass murder, are leaving the country lest they be assassinated by their 'brother' officers. The old politicians, finding that they can no longer even play a role as civilian puppets for the army, seek a place in the rebel Democratic Front. Even some sons and daughters of the '14 families' have made common cause with the rebels.

There are also large-scale desertions within the ranks of the army. The conscripts are no longer reliable.

A second Nicaragua will probably happen in El Salvador unless Reagan sends in the US Marines. The old order sees this as the only hope for salvation, and the prevailing political climate in the US and internationally places it on the cards. The labour movement in Britain must prepare itself for work in solidarity with the Salvadorean revolution.



STOP THE TORTURE IN TURKEY

by Mary Corbishley

ON DECEMBER 23rd last, Turkish workers in several towns in West Germany, including Hamburg, Berlin, Cologne, Aachen, Duisburg, Ulm and Frankfurt, went on hunger strike.

The hunger strikes have been organised by local Turkish Committees, with the support of German socialists, in protest at the absence of democratic rights in Turkey and the torture of political prisoners.

"Since the military government has overthrown human rights in Turkey, many members of the political opposition, mainly left-wingers, have been arrested and either tortured or killed", said one of the members of the Turkish Committee in Frankfurt, speaking to Socialist Organiser.

In the latest case, five socialist trade unionists were arrested on December 20th. Four of them, Yasin Ketengoglu, Mehmet Ali Yilmaz, Bulent Forta, and Selahattin Karatas, are in prison undergoing torture. The fifth, Behget Dinlerer, died on 21st December, one day after his arrest, following severe

torture.

"The hunger strike will end", the strikers say, "When we get the information that the torture of the four arrested recently has stopped".

The strikers' other demands include:

- Stop all torture in Turkish prisons.
- No military or economic support for the Turkish government by Germany
- The German government should organise an independent inquiry into the Turkish regime.

So far the hunger strikers have the support of three Social Democratic Party MPs, many German socialist groups and Church organisations, and several Turkish groups.

DEFEND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN TURKEY

Public rally, Thursday 29 January, 7.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Jointly organised by the Turkey Solidarity Campaign and the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey.

Racist riot led by 'Communists'

by Alexis Carras

ON DECEMBER 24th 50 men with bulldozers attacked a hostel in the Paris suburb of Vitry-sur-Seine.

The hostel was to house 300 immigrant workers from Mali who had been moved from the municipality of St. Maur.

Was it yet another gruesome attack by fascists and open racists?

No. The rampaging thugs were led by the Mayor of Vitry-sur-Seine, who is a member of..... the Communist Party. Vitry-sur-Seine is a Communist-controlled municipality.

Protesting to the government minister in charge of housing immigrant workers, Mayor Mercieca refused to have any more immigrant workers moved into his municipality.

They already numbered 19% (shock! horror!) of the local population.

"Put them somewhere else", cried Mercieca. "We don't want them here. After all, after a while one must say enough is enough!"

Stalinism long ago gave up revolutionary working class politics. What concerns them now is the maintenance of their cosy relationship to the existing system, their apparatus and their electoral influence.

As to internationalism, well as long as they sing the Internationale once a year, it's alright. In the meantime they can drape themselves in the tricolour

of immortal and sacred France and march solemnly down the Champs Elysees.

The defence of immortal and sacred France has become their cry, above all against foreign powers, foreign multinationals, foreign militarism, foreign imports, even foreign oranges and pears from other EEC countries. The French CP has consistently been more rabidly nationalist on many of these issues than the French ruling class.

From such a narrow nationalist and chauvinist standpoint, the turning of the Party's guns on foreign workers is only a matter of time. The PCF has for several years now vigorously campaigned for tighter immigration controls, for 'humane repatriation' of immigrants, and for immigrants in the CP municipalities to be distributed elsewhere, to get an even spread... Its as if the Labour Party in Brent or Lambeth or Hackney were shouting: keep the blacks out of our borough!

The attack at Vitry-sur-Seine was not a momentary aberration. It was the logical outcome of the profoundly racist politics which the party is practising against four million immigrant workers.

The party's craven defence of French capitalism against any of its competitors now has its most sickening parallel in its championing of the rights of the French national against the foreigner.



The 6 per cent con-trick

£4.60 a week, brings the minimum basic rate up to only £59 a week. Part-time workers, e.g. the mainly female school meals workforce, with no overtime, will get a mere pittance.

They have already borne the brunt of the 50,000 jobs lost last year. Even full-time male workers' earnings, including overtime, are expected to rise from £92 to no more than £99 a week, on average.

It is vital that manual workers fight now for the full union claim, and prepare to take industrial action. They must fight not only to improve wages, but to stop cuts in jobs and services by defeating the Tories' cash limits.

A fighting alliance of public service workers will be needed to defend wages and jobs, and to put real pressure on Labour councils to stand up against the Tory government instead of passing on the cuts and levying massive rate rises.



It still needs a fight to end low pay

Stoke: starting to organise

OVER 100 people crowded into the Stoke South Labour Club on Saturday 13th December for a conference against the cuts and unemployment.

Strike

Delegates came from all sections of the labour movement in the city: trade unions, Trades Councils, Labour Party branches, the Right to Work Campaign, the Communist Party, and others. The resolutions before

the conference condemned the Tories strongly — but said little about fighting back now.

John Taylor of the FBU put his finger on the way the conference was going when he said that we needed to fight the Tories, and that meant not just passing resolutions but taking action. All too often Trade Unions had passed resolutions and then sold their members' jobs.

In the afternoon, Socialist Organiser supporters and delegates from the Right to Work Campaign attempted to move an

emergency resolution calling for an ad hoc committee to be set up to organise action in conjunction with the two-week strike in Lambeth.

Policy

After long procedural wrangles, eventually we got an agreement that if we accepted the motion as being out of order then it would be submitted to the next Trades Council meeting.

There is hope for the future. The organisers said that the conference could not be seen as one-off, and most delegates thought that further conferences should take place at least every three months.

In the meantime a steering committee has been set up, open to all delegating bodies who want to send representatives. The Left must now organise for a clear policy of action through this steering committee.

ARTHUR BOUGH

PHOTO: COLIN CHALMERS

AFTER THE war the Russian bureaucracy used what are known as 'salami tactics' to undermine the existing bourgeois and social democratic parties in the East European countries.

By various forms of coercion and manipulation, they were able to destroy these political parties, suck them dry of any political militancy, or force them into various amalgamations with its satellite Stalinist parties.

Now the bureaucracy is trying to do to the Polish working class what it did to both working class and bourgeoisie in the 1940s.

So far the coercion and threats have failed to defeat the new workers' movement, Solidarnosc, and the increasing militancy of the working class has pushed the union's leadership away from compromises with the bureaucracy that would fatally sap the movement's strength. Yet the danger remains. Many Solidarnosc leaders have the illusion that they can do a 'salami' tactic on the bureaucracy. And the Catholic Church hierarchy has a strong influence on several of Solidarnosc's leaders.

The masses have fought for the right of the Church to have access to the media, but the Church can only maintain its influence over the masses and preserve its power and its cosy arrangement with the bureaucracy if the masses do not go too far in their demands.

For the Church the status quo has to be preserved, for the Polish workers any lasting victory will only come about through the destruction of the bureaucracy and its replacement by the rule of real workers' councils.

Today the situation still hangs in the balance. ALEXIS CARRAS reviews the recent months of workers' struggles in Poland.

IN 1980, the ten year respite which the Polish workers had granted to Gierek in 1970 finally ran out.

The hopes of the early 1970s, the rising living standards, the idea that the bureaucracy could reform itself gradually and lead the country out of its economic impasse by reliance on foreign loans and investments — all proved to be nothing more than a chimera for the vast majority of the Polish working class and peasantry.

How out of touch with the growing anger of the working class the Polish leaders actually were can be gauged by their ill-considered and ill-timed attempt to raise the price of foodstuffs throughout the country in the first days of July.

Price rises had been severely curtailed in the aftermath of the 1970-71, and the subsequent explosions of Ursus and Radom in 1976. But the 1980 price rises — the exercise of the unfettered 'leading role of the Communist Party' in the economic life of the country — were essential for the bureaucracy to begin making even more brutal inroads into the already poor living standards of the Polish workers, in a desperate attempt to meet its repayments to its foreign creditors.

The stormclouds of economic collapse were becoming ominous. But the bureaucrats had overestimated their ability to browbeat and deceive the workers. Strikes erupted.

Wage

In an effort to keep its political grip while enforcing its 'right' to control prices, the bureaucracy was willing to negotiate with the striking workers and agree to wage increases, a practice totally out of keeping with the rest of the Eastern bloc, where such manifestations are normally treated with gunfire and wholesale arrests.

Instead of fleeing from their factories (as on previous occasions) when confronted with the anger of striking workers, the managers and local party officials took the road of conciliation and agreements on wage rises. The highest point of this first wave of struggles was the Lublin general strike of 16-19 July.

From the beginning, a mixture of economic and

embryonic political demands could be seen, as workers demanded not only wage increases but also family allowances equal to those received by the militia. The first signs of panic became visible in the regime's response, coupling negotiations with the threat of military intervention.

Finally, deputy premier Jagielski patched together a deal and a return to work was agreed.

The elation of the regime was undisguised. It thought the worst of the storm had passed.

Despite its massive security and intelligence network, the bureaucracy's lack of contact with the

mass strikes... begins with a pure economic, or at all events, a partial trade-union conflict, and runs through all the stages to the political demonstration...

"But the movement on the whole does not proceed from the economic to the political struggle, nor even the reverse. Every great political mass action, after it has attained its political highest point, breaks up into a mass of economic strikes... Between the two there is the most complete reciprocal action."

Within a month the bureaucracy would be facing not isolated strikes here and there, but a fight for its very survival.

to the mines of Silesia, in the south.

The strike wave in Silesia sent the bureaucracy reeling to the negotiating table to meet the workers' demands, which included everything from wage rises to the release of political prisoners, and other political demands which challenged the suffocating repression imposed by the Polish 'Communist' Party for the last thirty years.

If the movement from then on did not take the shape of a direct and head-on confrontation with the bureaucracy, it was only because the alarm bells now sounding in the USSR

mean the creation of a national organisation which, however much it claimed to be non-political, would be a permanent organised challenge to their legitimacy and their exercise of monopolistic control over society.

The intransigence of the workers forced the bureaucracy to make a temporary concession, hoping that with a gradual return to 'normality', placing innumerable obstacles in the way of the new union and also using the moderating influence of the Catholic Church on the union's top leadership, it could eventually tame, and then crush, this new challenge.

Poland: another salami tactic?

The strike, on October 3rd, was an overwhelming success, and official union membership estimates reached six million. The union's activities were spreading into the countryside.

In mid and late October, Poland was isolated by its neighbours as East Germany and Czechoslovakia closed their borders. (The borders with the USSR are permanently shut, the Moscow bureaucrats not trusting their population to travel even to a 'fraternal socialist country'). Warnings of excesses and dangers poured in from Honecker and Husak. And on October 24 the Warsaw District Court wrote into the statutes a clause about the 'leading role of the Party'.

The Solidarnosc leaders had already stated that nothing more would be allowed than a reference to this shibboleth in the annex to the statutes. A national delegates' conference called a strike alert for 12 November.

Shuttlecock diplomacy between Warsaw and Moscow and a communique on the 'complete identity' of views between the Polish and Russian leaders, warnings and threats and even concessions to Solidarnosc about allowing it access to the media, could not sway the union to call off the proposed strike. Finally the Supreme Court in Warsaw overruled the lower court decision, and approved the union statutes as they stood.

Arrest

The third confrontation, and the most serious to date, was over the arrest of a union printer and a civil servant working in the Prosecutor General's office after the leaking of confidential material dealing with how the secret police should harass political militants.

This last confrontation showed that the regime's attempt to split the union activists from the political opposition and from the struggle for democratic rights were totally unsuccessful. The response was a demand to drastically cut the budget of the secret police and a call for the release of the arrested men and four other political prisoners.

Solidarnosc called an official strike alert on November 27th in Warsaw, but strikes and occupations had already started several days earlier, including at the giant Huta Warszawa steelworks outside the capital. It was only by raising the bloody spectre of military intervention that Walesa, who had flown in from Gdansk, was able to persuade the workers to go back to work.

Bluff

Their bluff called, the Russian and Polish bureaucrats retreated. Moscow clearly wants to go as far as it can with the threat of invasion before any actual invasion — for invasion, almost certainly meeting serious armed resistance, would cost it dear.

But the present coexistence of an independent workers' movement and the bureaucracy is acutely unstable. Either the workers will crush the bureaucracy, or the bureaucracy will weaken and then crush the workers.



Bureaucrats entering talks in the occupied Gdansk shipyard.

realities of working class life was plain. Cushioned by their privileges, their special shops, their villas, cars and full bellies, the bureaucrats had by now lost touch completely, as they foolishly mis-estimated what the Polish workers would accept or be content with.

Very soon the message of another Pole, a great revolutionary from the early years of this century, Rosa Luxemburg, was ringing loudly in the ears of the panic-stricken bureaucrats — the harlequins playing the 'leading role' within Polish society.

"Every one of the great

The strike at the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk on August 14th was the signal for hundreds of thousands of workers to down tools. Docks, engineering plants, textile factories, steel workers, the smallest factories and the most gigantic, stirred with an anger never seen before in modern Polish history. And they organised their own democratically-elected strike committees.

On the Baltic sea-board, over 500 factories came together through elected representatives to form a MKS, Inter-Factory Strike Committee, an example to be followed up and down the country, from the Baltic

and its satellite states signalled caution to the ears of the Polish workers. The last card of the Polish bureaucracy, in case of total impasse and the paralysis of its own means of repression and violence, would be the Russian army.

The fear of invasion led to the continuation of the political struggle not through the further development of workers' councils which would clash directly with the bureaucracy, but through new unions which, it was hoped, could bargain with it.

Free unions was the most bitterly fought of the workers' demands, the bureaucrats realising that it would

Nevertheless, the new union, *Solidarnosc*, whose founding national conference started on 17th September, has in the last four months won several major battles with the bureaucracy.

The campaign of hate whipped up by the new Polish leadership (after the fall of Gierek) in the still very tightly controlled press, and the decision by the Warsaw district court that 10 of the 44 statutes in Solidarnosc's charter were unsuitable (since they made no mention of the leading role of the Party) provoked a one-hour general strike of the union's members.

THE VOTE TO GO BACK

"I came to the meeting determined to vote to stop out. I still think it's going to be a big defeat to go back now. I still think the inquiry is no good and won't win our brothers' reinstatement."

"But the more I've listened to the discussion and especially what the officials have had to say, the more I've come to the conclusion that there's no choice but to cut our losses and just hope that we get some concessions out of the inquiry."

That speaker from the floor of the meeting on Sunday 4th summed up the feelings of many of the strikers.

Faced with a clear directive to scab from AUEW official Bill Jordan and with no leadership whatsoever from the T&G, the strikers voted by a large majority to accept a resolution put by Longbridge convenor Jack Adams, "suspending" the strike while a further inquiry takes place.

The inquiry team will be made up of two members of management, two union officials and a chairman from ACAS. But even

if the inquiry clears the victimised men, the final decision will still rest with the company.

One of the victimised shop stewards, Roy Orchard, says he considers the whole thing a complete waste of time and doubts whether he will bother to take part. In addition, everyone knows that although the strike is technically only suspended, it will be very difficult indeed to reimpose the action.

At the meeting several men pointed out that they had already been told, "You'll be next when the strike collapses", by Longbridge industrial relations chief Bernard Monaghan. And the company's determination to drive home their advantage was demonstrated the next day when the men returned to work.

The first thing they were told was that the production targets at the Metro were being immediately raised from 3,200 to 3,500 per week, and would be raised again to 4,000 by the end of the month — with no extra labour!

THROUGHOUT the fight against the Leyland victimisations, workers in the factory have had the increasingly nasty feeling that not only the national officials but also the Longbridge Works Committee were not prepared to go for an all-out strike on the issue.

The men were sacked at a bosses' kangaroo court at 5pm on Wednesday December 3rd. The Wednesday night shift in the area the men come from (CAB 1) immediately struck and mounted pickets on the gates. The Thursday day shift came in expecting to be called to a meeting and presented with a clear recommendation from the Works Committee. No meeting was called. Stewards had little or no information about what happened and the Works Committee could not be contacted.

A rumour spread that the Works Committee was advising people to "hang fire". The reason why the Works Committee was unobtainable turned out to be that they were closeted with management fixing up a 'compromise' whereby the strike on the night-shift would be called off in exchange for a time extension for the appeals!

Later, Works Committee members said privately that they had "put out the word" to certain leading shop stewards on the day shift that they wanted a strike. But the point is that they didn't come out and

HOW WE FIGHT THE METRO

clearly recommend strike action to the day shift.

With the collapse of the strike on Thursday December 4th the obvious danger was that the issue would go off the boil while the appeals took place. SO supporters in the factory decided that the vital task was to keep the issue alive by flooding the plant with bulletins and organising delegations of stewards to go down to the Works Committee demanding a joint shop stewards meeting that week (in fact no JSSC meeting was called until Wednesday 17th).

With help from SO supporters throughout the Midlands and Socialist Press supporters, we ensured that almost every day a bulletin went into the factory explaining what had happened, exposing the ludicrous nature of the bosses' allegations and pushing for strike action from Monday 15th (the first shift after the end of the appeals). SO supporters played a significant part in ensuring that when the appeals resulted in 8 men (including four shop stewards) remaining sacked on Monday 15th, the strike was immediately reimposed

on both shifts in CAB 1.

But still the Works Committee avoided taking any public position of support for any of the sections in dispute and still they put off calling a JSSC meeting. Finally, the JSSC was called on Wednesday 17th.

It was a very well attended meeting, despite being held at a social club miles from the plant, and the 500 stewards present voted unanimously for a motion

of support for the victimised men and the strikers in CAB1. The stewards decided it would be tactically unwise to attempt to pull out the entire plant so near to Christmas and in advance of any official support from the TGWU.

The JSSC decision was a welcome boost for the CAB1 strikers. Meanwhile all eyes were turning to the T&G national leadership: would they honour their repeated public state-

ments (and give out More important long would it?)

Bert Bevan of the AUEW West District was already in the press and he considered men to be given and that he not supported. Fortunately treachery p

by sacked shop st

The sell-out deal

● IT IS agreed that an authoritative joint management/union team will meet:

- to review the Longbridge disciplinary cases,
- to examine witnesses put forward by either party,
- to consider relevant evidence concerning the events of 21st November 1980 and the specific charges against individuals,
- to commence immediately and come to conclusions as quickly as possible, and certainly no later than the week commencing January 5th, 1981.

The joint team will be assisted in its review of evidence by an officer of ACAS, who will ensure that all relevant evidence is fully and fairly presented. The ACAS officer will act as Chairman of meetings of the joint team reviewing the evidence.

The Chairman, although in general in a non-executive capacity, will if invited by either party express a view of the evidence of a parti-

cular case.

The discussion of the joint review team will be recorded in a verbatim transcript and summarised to assist the parties.

All the evidence then collected will be considered by the management, which will modify its earlier decision if the joint team has established reasonable doubt in respect of the evidence previously available in a particular individual case.

The unions agree to recommend immediately a full return to normal working on January 5th by all striking employees. The company agrees to recall on the same day all employees laid off.

★ This formula was prepared during talks in the week preceding the January 4 mass meeting, but NOT signed by the TGWU. It then formed the basis of the eventual back-to-work recommendation at the mass meeting.

Support from the Labour Party

by Albert Bore, secretary, Selly Oak Labour Party

LEYLAND boss Michael Edwardes has repeatedly threatened Longbridge workers with closure of the works.

His tactics for good labour relations include the removal of activists ('militants') from the plant through management provocation of disputes.

He has fought the shop stewards over the introduction of the Edwardes plan, and caused the Longbridge workers shamefully to accept the sacking of Derek Robinson. The same tactic has been used to impose wage cuts, both last spring and over the current 6.8 per cent award.

It was against this background that Selly Oak Constituency Labour Party organised a meeting on 14th

December in support of the workers sacked following the 'riot' on 21st November. Two of those sacked are Labour Party members in Selly Oak.

The meeting heard one of the sacked stewards describe the events of 21st November, and resolved to set up a defence committee for the sacked men.

At Longbridge the attack on the shopfloor has bludgeoned union organisation. The meeting provided the opportunity for BL workers to discuss the weaknesses of the unions, and how to remedy them, and gave non-BL people an account of the victimisation and what they could do to help the fight-back. Total attendance was over 50, despite the meeting being called at short notice.

Perhaps other CLPs will be encouraged into taking an interest in industrial disputes.

ROVER: BEGINNING TO FIGHT BACK

by an AUEW shop steward, Rover Solihull.

THE ROVER SD1 plant at Solihull has probably suffered even more than Longbridge as a result of the company's attacks on jobs and conditions.

This December, the bosses told us they wanted 180 redundancies — on top of the 1600 jobs we had already lost in 1979.

Most senior stewards were pushing for a policy of voluntary redundancies and 'last in, first out'. But this was defeated by the Shop Stewards' Committee, which voted for industrial action, inclu-

ding occupation of the plant, in defence of jobs.

This policy was put to a mass meeting of the entire workforce and carried by a large majority. However, most of the senior stewards never took the policy seriously.

In fact, they have undermined it by encouraging people to take voluntary redundancy and by pushing the bonus scheme and acceptance of the job-cutting 'efficiency exercise' that went with it.

At the same time, we had foremen sending people home on 75% of wages to keep manning levels down.

They would simply pick out people as 'surplus to headcount' and send them home.

The women on the trim section were particularly hard hit by this. So the situation now is that the policy for industrial action to save jobs still stands on paper, but through voluntary redundancy and workers quitting the bosses have got most of the job cuts they wanted anyway. The stewards need to organise to resist this backsliding.

The stewards have felt weak ever since our strike against the 92-page document was defeated last Easter. It has been worse still

since the 6.8 per cent wage deal was forced through last November.

But people are now saying we can't take much more. We'll have to start fighting back.

I believe that if the whole of Longbridge came out in defence of the Eight, then Rover would respond. Then we could start turning the tide against Edwardes on all the other issues.

Perhaps our major problem is the role of Duffy and the AUEW leadership. They have opened the way for the company's threats and blackmail.

Even though Duffy re-

acted quite threat to labour at never took question of tions, just opposed the itself. That can only comealise the me

AUEW n make more es. We must Executive t

ainst Edw blackmail rally the fighting the could put th those cree Road.

Become a Socialist Organiser Supporter

To make Socialist Organiser a real campaigning paper that can organise the left in the movement, it needs its own organised activist support — and money.

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BOUGHT SACKINGS

Edward Jim Denham

their rule-book) official support? Importantly, how they take to do

son, secretary of Birmingham at Committee telling the local radio that the sacked Eight as charged union would the strike. Benson's provoked a resp-

onse in public from the local T&G official John Barker, who spoke out in support of the 8 and promised official backing from the union.

Barker's statement was soon backed up by T&G Regional Secretary Brian Mathers and the strikers became more hopeful that official backing would be announced before the Christmas break. But in fact when the strikers went home on the 23rd the

strike was still unofficial.

What happened over Christmas was a series of meetings between union officials, the Works Committee, BL executives and ACAS.

Mathers explained to LBC Radio on the 22nd: "We have deferred the question of making it official so that negotiations can continue in a friendly atmosphere, free from threats." So for Mathers the sacking of eight workers was just a fact of life, nothing that should disturb a "friendly atmosphere" between union officials and bosses.

The meetings all centred around the exact form that an inquiry should take. The T&G never raised the obvious idea that status quo should be restored by reinstating the workers before there could be any talk of an inquiry. The sacked workers and the strikers' shop stewards were never consulted on what they would consider acceptable.

At first, the T&G demanded an 'independent' chairman with the power to impose a decision on BL. The company refused this, insisting on their "right to manage". Terry Duffy, as

expected, stuck his oar in to propose a deal that gave the bosses everything they wanted — an inquiry team, chaired by an ACAS officer, with no powers to impose any decision on BL.

Grenville Hawley (T&G National Automotive Officer) seized on this and was ready to sign the deal before being pulled back by Mathers and Longbridge convenor Jack Adams.

But even so it was obvious that the negotiating team were looking for an excuse to call off the strike.

The T&G did in fact make the strike official during the Christmas break. But that went almost unnoticed amid all the talks of 'peace formulas' and 'inquiries'. None of the official 'leaders' said anything about staying out after Christmas and fighting for full reinstatement.

Meanwhile the Company was stepping up its campaign of blackmail, threatening all 1500 strikers with the sack and telling the press that Longbridge and Cowley would have to close down for good if the strike continued.

Each strikers received a letter signed by Longbridge

Operations Director Stan Mullett, telling them that "unless you return to normal working immediately after the holiday you will be considered to have repudiated your contract of employment, which will then be treated as terminated. In these circumstances you will not be entitled to any redundancy pay or payment in lieu of notice."

This kind of blackmail obviously had some effect. But most BL workers have grown heartily sick of these threats churned out with monotonous regularity during each of BL's successive crises. The sacking threat would be used against them sooner or later and they would have been prepared to stand up to the blackmail — if they had seen a good prospect of winning.

Given BL's dependence on the Metro, a firm stand by the TGWU could quickly have exposed Edwardes' bluff.

But with the T&G and the Works Committee ducking a real fight and scratching round for any compromise going and with Duffy telling his members to scab, few workers could see any prospect of winning.

As one of the men said after the Digbeth meeting on Sunday 4th January, "When are we going to get union leaders as militant and as bloody ruthless as Edwardes and his gang? Until we do, we've got no chance at BL". Another worker added, "Unless we get ourselves properly organised soon I can see these sackings becoming an annual event. Every November or December it'll happen. We could call it Robinson Day".

Socialist Organiser EDITORIAL

THE FIGHT IS NOT OVER

Undeniably the fight to reinstate the Longbridge Eight has suffered a serious setback. But it is not over.

The inquiry will not get the Eight reinstated. The AUEW officials involved have been hostile to the Eight throughout. ACAS is generally biased towards the bosses. That gives the bosses an excellent chance of winning the inquiry. And in any case they retain a total right of veto.

But if the TGWU restarts the strike, with full official backing and a pledge to extend it as necessary, then there is an excellent chance of beating Edwardes even now. And the formula that the strike is "suspended" should mean that TGWU officials are pledged to do just that, as soon as the inquiry fails to grant reinstatement within the allotted time.

We should not let the TGWU officials off the hook. Resolutions, messages and telegrams

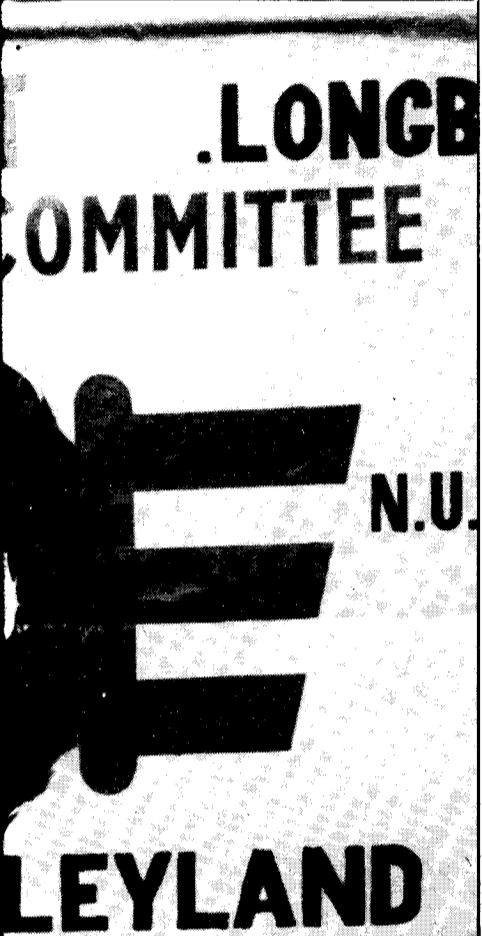
should be sent to Transport House, supporting the original decision to make the strike official and demanding that it is restarted.

No chance must be missed to add weight to the campaign for the Eight. No chance must be missed to impress on the TGWU officials that their members expect and demand strong action from them against victimisations.

No chance must be missed to let the bosses hear the voice of protest against their arrogance. If it comes to that, the campaign must be pursued right through the industrial tribunals.

If we allow the bosses to win an easy victory now, we strengthen their hand for the future.

A defence campaign is being set up, sponsored by Selly Oak Labour Party. Send donations and messages of support c/o Selly Oak Labour Party, Albert Bore (secretary), 10 Greenend Road, Birmingham 13.



It's a frame-up

strongly to the use blackleg Longbridge, he up the basic the victimisation he has never Edwardes plan and of approach fuse and demor- bership. bers need to e of the branch- demand that the kes a stand ag- des and his tics. If we could ranches behind solutions, we fear of God into s in Peckham

BL has sacked 5 workers for allegedly causing damage during a demonstration in the Longbridge factory on November 21st, and three shop stewards for being 'ringleaders'.

But the fact is — and there are 400 witnesses to this — that the stewards played a moderating role during the protest.

One is charged with calling "an unconstitutional meeting". He got up to speak during the protest in order to appeal for calm and warn against doing damage!

and they were with their members during the protest — as any decent shop steward would be.

What about the workers accused of causing damage? No evidence has been offered against them fit to stand up in any court of law outside a police state.

Immediately after the protest the Longbridge management were reassuring the press that there was "no significant damage." "You could not possibly call it a riot."

Obviously the central BL bosses then told the Longbridge management to clamp down — and find a few scapegoats.

The 'riot': the truth

The November 21st protest, on which the BL bosses' accusations are based, was provoked by the BL bosses themselves.

The management had demanded a speed-up in the seat-build section at Longbridge. The seat-builders refused, pointed out that the seat-build areas have been kept deliberately undermanned and suggested the company should instead recruit more workers.

The bosses then brought in seats from outside. The storemen blocked these seats, and both storemen and seat-builders went into dispute.

The next day management laid off every worker on the Metro chain.

For months there had been lay-off after lay-off, without pay, on the slightest excuse. For the workers, this was the last straw.

The stewards proposed going on the gates. But a majority voted for marching to the management offices.

The bosses got a bit of the workers' minds. And now the bosses are trying to get their own back.

What we've done and what we need

FOR THE last month, since the sackings were announced on December 3rd, the campaign for the Longbridge Nine (then Eight) has been central to the activity of Socialist Organiser.

A four-page special broadsheet was rushed out. Longbridge was leafleted almost daily in the week before the strike on December 15th. Meetings were called. Comrades from other areas went to Birmingham to help out.

In collaboration with the other comrades in the Leyland Action Committee, we got 50,000 leaflets printed in preparation for Edwardes' sacking threat on January 5th, and made arrangements for them to be distributed in nearly every major car plant and port across the country.

All this has cost money — a lot of money. And at a time when Socialist Organiser's funds were running

very low anyway.

The effort had to be made — and we have made it. But only at the cost of a severe financial crisis. Socialist Organiser is now running on borrowed money. We need a special effort from our supporters and readers to get back on an even keel.

We are calling for a voluntary levy of £5 a head from all Socialist Organiser supporters. Some supporters — unemployed or very low-paid workers — won't be able to manage £5. We ask them to send what they can — £2, £1, even 50p.

On top of that, we need a drive by Socialist Organiser group treasurers to get supporters' contributions coming in regularly and promptly, to get those contributions increased wherever possible, and to organise a regular flow of extra money through fund-raising. Lambeth SO group has set a good example

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Socialist Organiser NEWS

with £31 from a social over the Christmas holiday — let's have more.

In struggles like the Longbridge victimisation — or, in a different sphere, the Labour Party democracy battle — the work of Socialist Organiser can tip the balance one way or another. And, in times of crisis like the present, the tipping of the balance one way or another in struggles like that can have huge implications.

So let's have a spirit of urgency and dedication among our supporters to match the scale of the struggle. Send contributions to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

PHOTO: ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

THE FIRST TASK OF THE LEFT

**Socialist
Organiser
DEBATE**

VLADIMIR DERER, secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, outlines a perspective for the Left and criticises John O'Mahony's perspective for a Workers' Government (SO 27/28).

THE correctness of the diagnosis that this year Blackpool was not just another Labour Party conference is being gradually confirmed.

The election of Michael Foot by the Parliamentary Labour Party in preference to its favourite son, the defection in all but name of Shirley Williams and David Owen, the acceptance of the wider franchise for the election of the Leader by union leaders previously hostile to the idea, are all indications that the process set in motion in the Ball Room of the Winter Gardens is going on.

We may argue whether Blackpool really amounted to 'half a revolution' as suggested by John O'Mahony (SO, 11 October). But an exact assessment of the degree of change that has occurred is not really all that important. What is important is whether the Left will be able to take advantage of the situation created by that change.

One can therefore only agree with comrade O'Mahony that "if we organise to make these reforms work for the working class, they are the beginning of a situation that has not existed in the three quarters of a century since the trade unions developed a political arm".

Question

The obvious question is, how are we to do this. Comrade O'Mahony claims that "Our central weakness is that the working class movement does not yet have a coherent policy to deal with the enormous crisis of British society. It has a hodge-podge of measures which propose more or less drastic tinkering with the economy and the political system — not its replacement by a radically new system".

What we need, according to comrade O'Mahony, is "the submission of the economy to democratic planning on the basis of social ownership..." and the takeover by the working class of 200 monopolies.

To do this "we need to organise ourselves to take on the existing rulers" and here "the great hole in the leftward-looking renewal of the Labour Party is on the question of the state".

"It is an illusion that the transformation of the labour movement can be done in segmented stages".

The questions comrade O'Mahony raises — reiterates would be a more accurate way of putting it — are of course important, though some of the answers he gives are perhaps not as straightforward as he seems to suggest. Thus the replacement of the present by "a radically new system" is not possible overnight, i.e. without a transitional period such as would inevitably have to be full of "hodge-podge measures". Nor is the failure to take account of the Marxist theory of the state "the great hole in the leftward-looking renewal" or at any rate not in the way comrade O'Mahony poses it when he says, "We must not confuse Parliament with state power".

The state is not a monolith. The bourgeois democratic state, i.e. a state in which the ruling class relies on those who operate the representative democratic institutions to ensure that the latter are used in its interest, is in fact full of contradictions. Under certain circumstances its representative institutions can be used against the interests of the ruling class, and the reassertion of the bourgeois supremacy within the state is by no means automatic.

The main problem on the Left at this stage is not reformist illusions but sectarian illusions and practices. It was not reformist illusions which prevented — during the last forty or so years — the Left from producing a credible alternative to Labour's right wing leadership. It was the Left's preference for a fantasy world inhabited not by real people but lifeless formulae. And it was the Left's steadfast refusal to engage in such political struggles as are possible in the environment we actually live in.

Battles

It is true that comrade O'Mahony wishes to see "the broadest possible alliances for the immediate struggles [around the January conference, the cuts... etc]". But these battles, important though they are, are already going on. What is not going on, and what needs to be started, is the struggle to give the Left political credibility.

Participation in existing struggles is not enough to do so. Nor will tireless repetition of the somewhat abstract recommendation to the working class to break with reformism and to adopt a radical socialist programme achieve it. This approach has been tried for decades and failed

come politically influential. must show its capacity to gain support among the broad masses of the people as well as among the more class conscious elements of the working class. But people can be organised only around such demands as they are already prepar-

out their programme. Clearly the possibility that the ruling class may resort to force in order to safeguard its privileges must always be taken into account, as must the need to prepare appropriate counter-measures. Nevertheless this is not the situa-

tion we are facing at this stage. The problem is not what extra-parliamentary action is appropriate to organise support for a reforming government, it is to get such a government.

And there is, of course, no guarantee, to put it mildly, that the next Labour government will be a reforming one. Given the present level of consciousness among Labour Party members, Labour supporters and Labour voters, there is not a hope that they would be prepared to support the kind of programme of radical social change that comrade O'Mahony advocates. Does this mean that there is no hope for socialism in our time? No.

The problem with the last Labour government was not that it lacked a programme which was sufficiently radical — which of course it did. The trouble was that it

failed to carry out even the programme of the mild social reforms on which it was elected. This failure was not due to the fact that "nothing can be achieved within the system". It was not "The system" which stopped virtuous men and women from carrying out their excellent intentions.

Barbara Castle when discussing the difficulties of getting through some of her social reform schemes put her finger on the real problem: It was not the Civil Service, let alone the police and the army, which prevented her mild reforms from going through. It was her Cabinet colleagues.

The first task of the Left must therefore be to ensure that the next Labour government is composed of men and women ready to honour Labour's election pledges and to ensure that these pledges are as radical as the present level of consciousness of Labour Party members allows.

Labour Party members would respond positively to such aims and would rally around an organisation campaigning on such a platform. If the Left agreed to campaign on a programme of reforms it would be the first step towards winning political credibility and support.

Every Labour Party member realises that the last Labour government went back on its pledges and thus helped the Tories to win the election. They do not want this to happen again. But only the Left can actually initiate a campaign of this type. No one else will. We must engage in such political class struggle as is possible in the present situation. To refuse to do so on grounds of doctrinal purity is to contract out.



"The use of the army and the police against a government enjoying legitimacy by bourgeois standards is not a simple operation"

PHOTO: KAREN GARDINER



"The first task... to ensure the next Labour Government is willing to carry out election pledges..."

The use of the army and even of the police against a government enjoying legitimacy by bourgeois standards is not a simple operation. But, of course, no serious socialist would deny that such dangers do exist.

However, should the reiteration of old truths — particularly when they are presented in a somewhat dated setting — be our first priority? For the whole underlying trend of argument in comrade O'Mahony's 'Viewpoint' is directed against reformist illusions.

These certainly do exist among the broad masses (who do not read SO) and among many Labour Party members (who are just a little less likely to do so). But these illusions do not exist amongst the many socialists who do read SO and who comrade O'Mahony hopes to rally round its platform.

to produce results.

The failure cannot be put down to the new lease of life capitalism seems to have won during the fifties and early sixties, for, after all, prior to 1914, strong socialist parties were built

Ensure

up during a similar period of economic upswing. The possibility of becoming politically influential is not limited to periods of economic decline.

But even if this was so, it would still need to be explained why the Left was not more successful during the late sixties and in the seventies.

The Left's political impotence is in fact not due to any 'objective factors'. It is entirely of the Left's own making.

A socialist group, to be-

ed to support. The programme of the Left, at any given stage, must therefore correspond to the existing level of consciousness of the people to whom we are appealing.

If the great majority believe that improvements in their condition can be achieved through the pursuit of social reforms, it is no good lecturing them about the need for a revolution. Whether social reforms can actually be achieved without radical change in the political structure can only be shown in practice and in any case most people will learn only from their own experience.

Only if those who oppose major social reforms resort to extra-parliamentary resistance will it be possible to convince people that extra-parliamentary means are required to reinforce the powers of reforming governments trying to carry

John O'Mahony
replies to Vladimir
Derer, arguing
that if we don't
fight for socialism
NOW then we
never will

NO serious socialist would counterpose socialism to the fight for reforms. Now, on the contrary, the fight for reforms and against the vicious Tory counter-reforms is especially important, in a situation where the Right of the Labour Party, those who built their plans for mild reforms on a continually expanding full-employment capitalism, are public political bankrupts.

But it would be a self-neutering exercise if the Left were to confine itself to reforms and see this as counterposed for the immediate future to the fight for a new society, for socialism.

That would be to mistake where we are at, what we need to try to do, and what we can realistically attempt to do in the period ahead.

What kind of reform programme would Vladimir Derer put forward now? That is the key question. Would it be limited to what was considered — by an a-priori calculation — to be 'possible' without having to shake or overthrow capitalism? Or would it be drawn up according to the minimum that the working class can settle for if it is to begin to solve the problems loaded onto it by the crisis of capitalism — mass unemployment for example?

Vladimir Derer should think out what even a modest reform like the 35 hour week (which would only go part of the way to answering the workers' needs) implies in today's conditions. Such a reform is inconceivable without mass industrial/political mobilisations of the working class. Even should a Labour government decree it, it would not be implemented unless the labour movement mobilised itself and fought to impose it. Otherwise it would suffer the fate of the 40 hour week decreed by a reforming government in France in 1936: a dead letter within a short time.

Defy

The capitalists would resist, defy the law, evade it, use the courts to obstruct it, or organise lock-outs if necessary. They could probably be defeated only through sweeping nationalisations and replacement of the present managers by people elected by the workers.

We will only win any serious reforms now on the basis of struggles which shake the capitalist system, perhaps to its foundation. That does not mean, as one might conclude from what Vladimir Derer says, that it is all hopeless.

For Vladimir Derer's picture of the situation is too pessimistic and his conception of how the presently reformist workers will be won to fight for socialism is inadequate.

Suppose it is true that only reforms are likely to be accepted as goals by the mass of workers now. How do we get from this to a struggle for a different society?

There have been different answers to this problem, a recurrent one in the history of the labour movement. According to one, the struggle for reforms would be organised by the socialists, who would build up

The fight for socialism NOW OR NEVER

"PEOPLE who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society, they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society... Our programme becomes not the realisation of socialism, but the reform of capitalism, not the suppression of the system of wage labour, but the diminution of exploitation, that is the suppression of the abuses of capitalism instead of the suppression of capitalism itself".

Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform and Revolution*.

trade unions — and a party committed to carry out the socialist transformation of society when it had convinced and organised enough workers.

Their method would be the ballot box, backed by force if (as they expected) the ruling-class state was used to stop them.

This was the Second International before 1914. Essentially it was an apparatus-building, bureaucratic, and propagandist view. It led to a situation where in fact the goal of socialism was forgotten and reform became everything, leading to reconciliation with the national capitalists. The day to day activities came to be everything; the goal came to be nothing.

Against this view there came to be counterposed another one: the 'struggle for reforms should be linked to a struggle for socialism. Reform demands should not be formulated as a minimum programme drafted to be compatible with capitalism and therefore not attached to the goal of socialism, nor even necessarily pointing to it.

Reform demands should be formulated according to the needs of the working class, without regard to whether or not they were compatible with capitalism (that is, with the maintenance of the principles and boundaries within which the capitalists owned industry and controlled the political system).

The name such 'reform' demands are known by in the history of the socialist movement is 'transitional demands'.

The working class would mobilise and be mobilised on its felt needs to gain such demands. Engaged in the struggle for them, it would learn with great strides about the system and about itself. It would choose between achieving its own needs at the expense of capitalism — or abandoning its own needs and confining itself to a 'minimum' reform programme none of which challenged the capitalist system.

In fact, in a situation of capitalist crisis, the minimal approach yields practically no reforms at all. To return to the example above, the 35-hour week is a rather modest demand — in Britain now only an onslaught on capitalism could achieve it throughout industry.

The new approach argued that the working class needed stable organisations, but as a fighting

class it could rouse itself in tremendous industrial mass strike mobilisations, and for political ends too.

In the struggle it could learn in days or weeks more than in decades of slow organisation and propaganda.

Is this idea of a mass transformation of consciousness an irrational appeal to belief in and reliance on miracles? Not at all.

The spontaneous strike of ten million in France in 1968 came a few weeks after the failure of an attempt by the trade union bureaucrats to call a token strike. The defeat of the riot police by the students on their barricades galvanised the workers and gave them a model of victory to which they responded eagerly and with an explosive energy.

The idea is emphatically not that socialists manipulate. We say who and what we are and what our goal is — and we say more than transitional demands. The key idea is that the workers can and do mobilise with limited immediate objectives, but that the struggle unfolds and has a sharp anti-capitalist logic when the fight for satisfaction of even limited, immediate needs brings the workers into clear conflict with capitalism.

Chain

A linked chain of demands can be constructed — beginning, say, from the 35 hour week or the sliding scale of hours and wages, and going on to the struggle for workplace and other workers' committees, to the struggle for workers' control to challenge the employers' untrammelled rule in a factory, to the creation of a workers' militia from (for example) flying pickets — all the way to the overthrow of the political power of the bourgeoisie.

There is no a-priori schematic sequence in the way a struggle will unfold, and no a-priori order in which a sequence of demands will be raised. The logic and intensity of the struggle will determine that.

The role of Marxists in the great working class struggles on which such a view is based is first to learn from the working class. But Marxist theory acts as the codified memory of the class, and Marxists try to bring that 'memory' to the living struggle around them. They try to raise transitional de-

mands appropriate to the given level of working class struggle, according to the logic of each stage in the struggle.

Transitional demands are a bridge between the consciousness of labour movements dominated by the reformist allies of the ruling class, and the consciousness of the need for a radical break with capitalism: *the energy and dynamism is provided by the struggle. The movement grows in consciousness by way of its escalating mobilisations and struggles, and through interaction with the more-or-less stable groups of revolutionary socialists.*

BUT VLADIMIR Derer asserts that "people can be organised only around such demands as they are already prepared to support. The programme of the Left, at any given stage, must therefore correspond to the existing level of consciousness of the people to whom we are appealing".

Obviously people can be organised only around such demands as they are prepared to support. (But ALREADY prepared to support? Where have those



Mass action... the freeing of the dockers, July 1972.

ideas 'already' come from? Can we not help to shape the ideas people support?). The conclusion does not follow that the Left's programme must correspond to the existing level of consciousness. If it did, either you would have no such thing as a stable Left, defined by some difference from the existing level, or you would have a privately-defined manipulative 'Left'. (And where do THEIR ideas come from? How would new people arrive at them?)

Why? • There is not just one level of consciousness, nor are we appealing to a known homogeneous group.

• A given consciousness is not homogeneous: it has many contradictory elements which make rapid changes in consciousness possible under pressure of events.

• The Left must be defined by an overall analysis of society and a basic historical programme for the working class to create a socialist society.

• The tasks of the Left are many, not one task, because the class struggle takes place on a number of fronts (at least on the economic, political and ideological). A central task of a serious Left is to prevent these fronts falling apart into mutually exclusive activities (and therefore organisations) by integrating them into a strategy.

Over-adaptation, chameleoning in one area means repelling the others. The Left is either a force for integrating the different fronts, issues, struggles, campaigns, etc., via a comprehensive programme and organisation which creates specialised groups for specific areas and tasks without dislocating them from the whole, or it is itself a chaos and a force for creating chaos via one-sidedness and mutual repulsion of 'Lefts' with different assessments and focuses.

• It is necessary for the Left to explain (and develop) a socialist overview, goal, and criticism of society, and win people to that; and to educate the people with whom it is active on specific issues to see those issues in that framework.

• The Left organises first as a minority. It does not only relate to the masses. It relates to individuals, groups, etc., and only by first organising them can it acquire the levers to reach, let alone organise, the masses.

• That is why the SO groups are important. While fighting together with people who will struggle only for reforms it is essential to explain about socialism — on the basis of their own experience — and organise in an all-round way.

VLADIMIR DERER says that a socialist system could not arise overnight, that there would be a transitional period. The point however is that today's "hodge-podge of measures" (Alternative Economic Strategy etc.) would not come anywhere near effectively transforming society.

There would indeed have to be a transitional period between capitalism and socialist society — but is there a point at which there is a qualitative breakthrough out of capitalism and towards socialism (with the transitional period beyond it)? Is there a dividing line between the two systems?

There is a dividing-line and a break — at the point where the working class

deprives the capitalist class of the possibility of exploitation, by making industry its own democratically-owned and controlled social property, and by breaking the power of the army and police to make a bloody counter-revolution against the workers.

The state is not a monolith, comrade Derer adds. But does it not have a core of 'armed bodies of men', backed up by the state bureaucracy? Are not both linked directly by a thousand strings of education, wealth, family, and therefore loyalty, to the ruling class, and committed to the defence of the existing system?

If that is agreed, then it can usefully be added that Parliament is part of the state, formally in control of it, and that there are, or can be, contradictions (potentially contradictions which will lead the ruling class to turn on Parliament).

In fact though Parliament itself is directly under the bourgeois influence. For example, Tony Benn has shown from his experience in government how the permanent bureaucracy has something like a parallel steering wheel and drives the vehicle of state often against the will of some or all of those elected to that function.

In reality, not a great deal even in the way of reforms has been pushed through against the serious opposition of the ruling class, and nothing fundamentally against their interests.

"Under certain circumstances", says Vladimir Derer, "its representative institutions can be used against the interests of the ruling class, and the reassertion of bourgeois supremacy within the state is by no means automatic".

Yes, the labour movement has used Parliament, and must use it now. But Parliament has also dominated and even tamed large sections of the labour movement. Surely that is what much of the fight to make the MPs accountable is about: to reverse the historical experience and subordinate Parliament to the priorities and concerns of the working class.

State

The great significance of the decision on re-selection of MPs, and what may be decided on the Party leader, is that it would bring Parliament itself under the direct influence and partly even under the control (if Labour had a majority) of the labour movement.

But what would happen then? Certainly the direct grip and real control of such a Parliament over the 'armed bodies of men' and over the bureaucrats would diminish. If such a parliamentary majority reflected the working-class, and fought the ruling-class interest, then it would be shown that Parliament does not control the state.

If the conflict between Parliament and the state became intense, then parliamentary control would cease to be real; and to the degree that the Labour MPs really fought for the working-class interest, then the conflict would become intense. Either the working class would disarm the ruling-class state, or it would face disaster.

At issue here is not a choice for 'bloody revolution', but the protection of the labour movement from bloodier counter-revolution.

Of course, parliamentary legality would be of



From p9

very great advantage to the working class movement. But the ruling class would probably erode and begin to destroy the power of such a Parliament and Government before they attacked it directly. The bourgeoisie would not need to reassert supremacy within the core of the state. Their real supremacy is a direct system of class links, loyalties, and connections, consolidated by their economic supremacy in society. *It would be fatal to confuse Parliamentary with State power, or to believe in an eternal loyalty of the armed forces to Parliament.*

Comrade Derer is right that only the Left will fight even for reforms. Then who but the Left can be trusted to push them through?

No-one in the leadership of the Parliamentary left has a real record of struggle: on the contrary, they went along, protesting privately no doubt, with Healey and Callaghan. The working class and the labour movement must travel as far as possible with the present leaders who do now contribute to the struggle. But we must be prepared to go on marching without them, and if necessary against them.

We must fight for the maximum direct control by the movement outside Parliament over the MPs, and, if Labour has a majority, over Parliament.

This too leads to the conclusion that the Left must organise itself on a real socialist programme, and fight to add a radical political content to the Labour Party as it renews its structures and procedures. For if we start a serious campaign for reforms in the present situation, it is certain it will escalate way beyond what we start with, 'such struggle as is possible in the present situation'. We need a labour movement politically prepared for that.

To conclude: if it is not now possible, in the present terrible state of our society, to put forward a real socialist programme and an immediate socialist answer, and hope to win the working class for it, then in which conditions will it ever be possible and reasonable to do so?

If it is not right to pose to the militants of the Labour party and trade unions, who are now attempting a thorough transformation of their movement, that they should adopt such politics as their answer to the crisis of British society, then who can socialist politics ever be proposed to, and in which circumstances? If we do not now put forward a programme of reform and transitional demands that answer the immediate situation of the working class and mobilise the working class to fight for them, what is the way out for the working class now?

And if the radical socialists around *Socialist Organiser*, the SCLV, the CLPD, etc. do not elect to do it themselves then who will do it?

To me, the answer seems clear: if not now, never; if not the existing mass-movement militants and ourselves, no-one; if not a fighting reform and transitional programme, then no way.

★ *Space rules out taking up Vladimir Derer's comments on the far left. Perhaps it will be possible to come back to it sometime.*

Socialist Organiser



Sainsbury can be stopped

by Mandy Williams

ALTHOUGH Timothy Sainsbury MP, who came first in the ballot for Private Member's Bills, is reported to be considering abandoning his plans for a 24-week time limit Bill on abortion, it is still possible that he or the second-place winner will introduce a restrictive Bill in the next Parliamentary session.

Sainsbury is reported to be wary of 'wasting' his opportunity for a Bill, and

his other pet subject is indecent displays in shops, as contentious in Parliament as abortion.

The second place in the Private Members' ballot when to Donald Stewart, Scottish National Party MP for the Western Isles, and a strong anti-abortionist. He is under pressure from his constituents and from the SNP to present a Bill concerned with the needs of the Scottish people.

The title of the Bill is to be given on the 14th January, and the earliest date for a second reading is 30th January. Women and sympathisers in their struggle have been writing to both Sainsbury and Stewart putting the case against restricting abortion rights and suggesting that if these gentlemen are concerned about women, there is a huge number of issues which they could usefully take up: maternity and childcare provision; better laws on equal pay and job discrimination; better rape laws; and, for Stewart, extension of the Domestic Violence Act to Scotland.

Meanwhile, an Oxford consultant gynaecologist, Mr Mostyn Embrey, has announced the development of a safe and easily administered abortifacient pessary. The only problem with its use at home is the law, which forbids use of any method without medical supervision and premises. There are still some problems with side-effects of the drug used, prostoglandin.

The recent ruling which

No. 8 December 1980

Monthly paper of the women's campaign LABOUR MOVEMENT FIGHTBACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK 10p

How to fight for our jobs

Support the hunger strikers

Epic

The December issue of *Women's Fightback* carried a full report and discussion of the TUC's Positive Action conference, two pages on health and abortion, a page contributed by the Edinburgh Fightback group, and reports on women in the Labour Party and trade unions. The January issue carries a centre-page on fighting health cuts, a guide to the Tories' Nationality proposals and letters from a woman in Chile, plus letters, debate and news. *Women's Fightback* is 10p monthly, from 41 Ellington Street, London N7

told nurses that it was unlawful to help administer doses of prostoglandin at abortions has been overturned unexpectedly by the Law Lords.

The previous Appeal Court ruling could have stopped a possible 7,000 abortions a year. This is a substantial defeat for the anti-abortion groups which lobbied the Royal College of Nursing so vigorously to seek restriction via the Courts.

There is still time to write to Sainsbury and

Stewart to counter the highly efficient anti-abortion propaganda which we had to fight so hard in the recent campaign against the Corrie Bill.

Tory Health and Social Services chief Patrick Jenkin has decided that there will be no more money for improving maternity services — despite a recent official report that there are 5,000 avoidable baby deaths and 5,000 cases of avoidable handicap every year.

FESTIVAL FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AGAINST THE TORY ATTACKS

FIGHT MAY 9

Details and leaflets from: Festival, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

BRITAIN RENEGES ON HUNGER STRIKE DEAL

by Bruce Robinson

THE BRITISH press crowded with delight when the Republican prison protest and the hunger strike ended in mid-December. But what really happened? Did Thatcher give in? Did the prisoners gain nothing? Was there a deal?

And who has come out of the struggle strengthened, the IRA, British imperialism, the Protestants, or the Haughey government in the Republic?

The claim that the Tories didn't give an inch is certainly a lie. Atkins, the Northern Ireland Secretary, may have made the proposals in his 34-page document applicable to all prisoners, but they clearly contain concessions.

The protest and strike had been aimed at securing five demands that would have been tantamount to admitting that the Republican prisoners were 'political' and not just common criminals.

They wanted to wear their own clothes, to refrain from prison work, associate freely with other political prisoners, organise their own political and recreational activities, and have the right to full remission of sentence.

By blurring the distinction between work and study, the Atkins document goes a long way to meeting most of these demands. The fact that Bobby Sands, the IRA officer commanding in Long Kesh, was allowed to meet the hunger strikers and explain the docu-

ment to the officers in charge of the H-Blocks, is also seen as a breakthrough towards the recognition by the British of the IRA command structure.

According to Bernadette McAiskey (Devlin), clean cells were to be prepared for the prisoners on the 'no wash' protest and they were to be given their own clothing as well as 'civilian-type' clothing. The prison authorities would also turn a blind eye to the wearing of non-prison clothes during work/study hours. The way would then have been open also for the restoration of remission of sentences, which would have meant immediate release for some prisoners.

The document not only blurred over the issue of prison work and prison clothes, but committed the government 'to run a humane and flexible system under the prison rules'. Even a Tory back-bencher said that 'there is precious little difference between what the strikers are seeking and what is on offer'.

But how is the document being applied. *There is growing evidence that the British government is reneging on its agreement with the starving men and women in its jails!*

Relatives of some prisoners have been turned away when bringing civilian clothing to the jails, and prisoners are being told that they will have to wear prison clothing and obey prison regulations before they are moved to clean cells.

The result has been that almost all of the men on the blanket are still on protest. The National H-Block Committee has again urged its supporters to march, and there is even talk of a new hunger strike.

While Thatcher has managed to defuse the immediately explosive situation, and while the Tories have the upper hand in so far as the interpretation of the Atkins document is concerned, the Republican forces managed to mobilise support for the prisoners throughout Ireland. Committees were set up in every town, a number of big demonstrations were held — particularly in Belfast and Dublin — and backing was won from several national trade unions.

But if British imperialism has had to take a step back in its criminalisation policy, Thatcher's recent talks with Haughey will help the 'normalisation/Ulsterisation' prongs of British strategy. With Haughey's stated willingness to step up 'cross-border security', Britain can afford to continue its troop reductions in the North, handing things over to a strengthened para-military police force.

The renewed attention to the Irish question created by the prison protests provides us with a real opportunity to explain the issues within the working class and to win workers to a see the need to withdraw the troops and support the struggle for a united Ireland.

Socialist Organiser IRELAND

Ireland rally planned for Feb. 21

by Bruce Robinson

THE Labour Committee on Ireland is organising a rally on February 21st (the same weekend as the next AGM of the LCI) to highlight the struggles of the prisoners in H-Block and Armagh.

The plan for this rally came out of a special meeting of the LCI on December 13th. The meeting also decided to set up a special

prisoners' sub-committee of the LCI, and an LCI London committee.

The meeting discussed the LCI's submission to the National Executive Committee Working Party on Ireland. The vast majority of those at the AGM insisted that this submission must be based on the policy passed at the LCI's founding conference, without fudging the issues.

IRELAND AND THE BRITISH

A LABOUR CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY BATTERSEA C.L.P. 17th January 1981 11.30 - 5.00 177 Lavender Hill Battersea SW11

Battersea CLP bookshop

Workshops on: IRISH REPUBLICANISM UNIONISM STATUS OF IRISH PRISONERS THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH ARMY IN IRELAND and THE MEDIA AND IRELAND.

Speakers include: JOCK STALLARD, MP ALF DUBS, MP GEOFF BELL MIKE BIGGS (Ex-Army Captain) and CHARTER 80.

by Steve Akers

'WE WILL not be blackmailed. Longworth stays open'. This is the New Year's message from staff at a 50-bed geriatric hospital near Longworth in Oxfordshire.

They are working in to keep open the top floor of their hospital, the cutting of which is the first step to complete closure.

A 24-hour picket has been maintained since the work-in vote on December 2nd. A support committee has organised trade unionists, relatives, Labour Party members, and villagers behind the work-in.

Oxfordshire Area Health Authority's plans for Longworth are part of a bigger cuts package. Longworth, Burford, and Cowley Road hospitals are meant to close. Others are threatened.

Supposedly these cuts will be made good by new hospitals at Whitney and the massive John Radcliff Phase 2 in Oxford. But, as the workers at Longworth point out, the Department of Health and Social Security says Oxfordshire is 200-plus geriatric beds short now.

Furthermore, Littlemore psychiatric hospital has stopped permanent admissions of the elderly confused, putting an increased burden on existing services. The idea behind Whitney was to extend the service, providing much-needed local facilities, not just for geriatrics.

There is a crying need for both Longworth and Whitney hospitals to operate at full capacity. In addition, the workers at Longworth need to defend their jobs.

Longworth hospital occupied to stop closure

The Area Health Authority says it does not have the money to open Whitney and John Radcliffe 2 without cutting existing services. The occupation committee rejects this and says that John Radcliffe 2 and Whitney are needed in addition to the present drastically inadequate geriatric services, not instead of them.

The CoHSE workers at Longworth are determined to oppose closure. This is despite the lack of past trade union involvement for most of the 80 staff. Most are women with family commitments, and are widely scattered in surrounding villages. They have limited contact with each other because of the short and varied shifts they work.

The work-in is the result of a two-year campaign to prevent closure, and shows what determination and a strong lead can do.

Tragically, no such lead was given by the T&GWU at MG Abingdon, just down the road from Longworth. An occupation to save jobs there would have had great support. Instead, it closed without a whimper.

All attempts to end or weaken the occupation have been firmly rejected. First, CoHSE officials, two days after the work-in began, advised suspension of the occupation — suppos-

edly to show 'good faith' to the Area Health Authority after a promise by them not to have patients moved for five weeks and to consult CoHSE before doing so.

The Occupation Committee, realising how diffi-

cult it would be to start an occupation again, unani- mously rejected this. Now the AHA, under its chair- woman, Lady McCarthy, a Gang of Three supporter on Oxford City Labour Party, has resorted to blackmail.

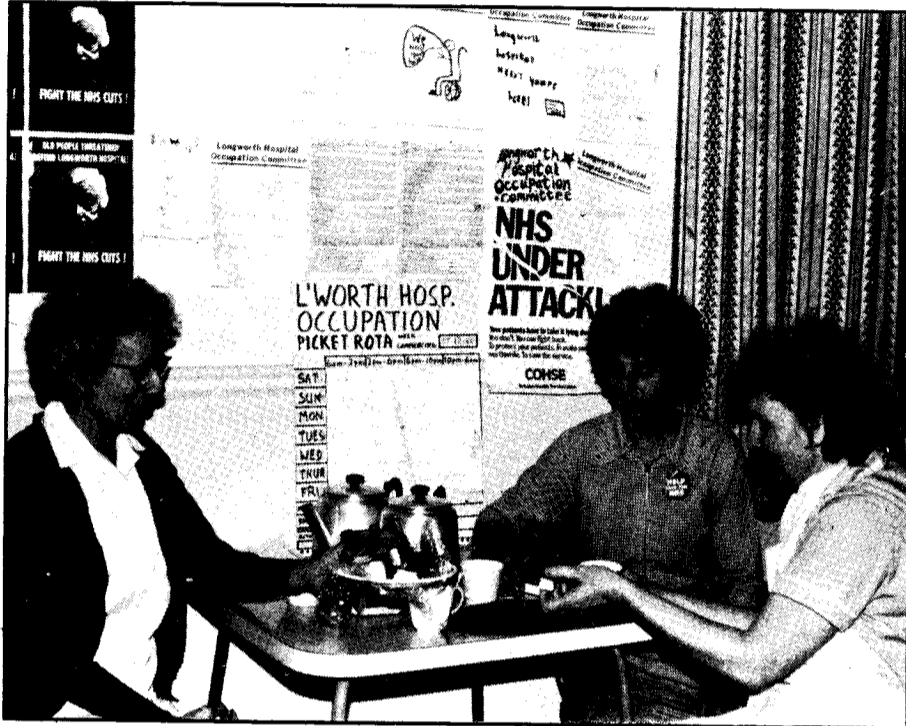
McCarthy has stated that

Whitney hospital will not open until the occupation ends.

Longworth staff were disgusted at this, as funds for opening Whitney were secured from the Regional Health Authority months ago!

McCarthy is also pre-

Call for strike action against eviction



venting the chairperson of the support committee from joining Oxford Labour Party. Her role has to be exposed nationally in the Party, and pressure should be put on Oxford City GMC by sending variants of this resolution, with a covering letter, to Brian Keen, Agent, Oxford Labour Party, Transport House, Cowley Rd, Oxford.

'This ward/party joins you in your support of the Longworth Hospital occupation. It is alarmed that a member of your GMC, Lady McCarthy, in her capacity as chairperson of Oxfordshire AHA, has stated her determination to close the hospital. We urge you to put maximum pressure on her to stop any attempts to interfere in the occupation and close the hospital'.

The main fight now is to get the health service unions to take strike action if Longworth is raided. This was missing at past defeated occupations against closure. Longworth, the first work-in since St. Benedict's, must not meet the same fate.

Speakers should be invited from the occupation committee, and resolutions from CoHSE branches should demand that their NEC supports the occupation (it took them three weeks to make it official!) and prepares for national strike action if the hospital is raided.

Meanwhile the occupation and pickets urgently need financial assistance and moral support. Send donations, speaking invitations, and messages of support, to: The Occupation Committee, c/o 13 Bow Bank, Longworth, Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

COVENTRY LABOUR

A vote to fight the cuts

by Dave Spencer

THE December meeting of the Coventry City Labour Party showed once again the deepening crisis in the Labour Party, with a clear split between right and left. The closeness of the division was particularly shown when a resolution for no rent increases was won on the casting vote of the chairperson, Cllr. John Hughes.

This year's AGM in May was challenged by the right wing when the Left won most of the positions on the EC. When the AGM was reconvened five months later, the Left kept a narrow majority, with over 150 delegates present.

The viciousness of the right wing councillors who control the 39-strong Labour Group could be seen when they expelled 10 rebel councillors who voted against the Group's decision to raise the price of school meals. The Labour Party's NEC have recently ordered the Group to allow the ten councillors back in, thus vindicating the rebels' stand.

The Dec. resolution for no cuts and no rent or rate increases will go forward to a local labour movement conference planned for February 7th. The snag is of course that the Labour Group, with the Council officers, is already implementing its own policy of a standstill budget with a planned 50% increase in rates.

The scene is then set for a showdown on February 7th. The Party resolution is not enough in itself. It

must be used as a basis for winning support and membership from the working class.

It is here where the ideas of the Labour democracy campaign can be used locally. In Coventry the ten rebel councillors showed a lead by voting against the raising of school meal prices. They did this because three local Branches had thrown out then standing right-wing councillors and had organised on a Left programme for the last local elections.

This need to be repeated throughout the city, as well as trade union delegations being built up. Otherwise the excellent resolution will be left empty and meaningless.

- BASINGSTOKE.** Alasdair Jamison, 75 Freemantle Close.
- BIRMINGHAM.** Doug Mackay, 69 Hubert Road, Birmingham 29.
- BRISTOL.** Ian Hollingworth, 29 Muller Ave, Bristol 7.
- BURY/ROCHDALE.** Barry Haslam, 136 Malvern St West, Rochdale.
- CARDIFF.** Martin Barclay, 21 Dogo St, Canton.
- CAMBRIDGE** Will Adams, 12 Metcalfe Rd.
- CHELMSFORD.** Roger Welch, 103 Mildmay Rd.
- COVENTRY.** Dave Spencer, 17 Winifred Ave, Earlsdon.
- DURHAM.** Jane Ashworth, 18 Mowbray St.
- EDINBURGH.** Joe Baxter, 4 Glengyle Terrace.

Journalists occupy to save jobs

by Jonathan Hammond

FOLLOWING in the wake of Gardners, the 65-strong NUJ group chapel at the publishing division of the British Printing Corporation has been occupying a floor of the Corporation's offices in the City of London since December 8, as part of a struggle against redundancies.

The group chapel consists of four different chapels — Macdonald-Futura, Macdonald-Phoebus, Queen Anne Press, Caxton Publications — and has been in dispute with the management since October, when the management first announced its plans for redundancies at Macdonald-Futura, to include several chapel officers.

After the disputes procedure had been exhausted, the management dis-

missed all the NUJ members on November 21. In the meantime, a fresh dispute had arisen at Macdonald-Phoebus, whose management announced its intention to implement further redundancies, on which talks had just begun with the chapel.

For 2½ weeks, the chapel reported for work as usual, a situation accepted by management and individual managers who took work given them by chapel members.

However, on the morning of Monday, December 8, chapel members found the doors to their offices locked. They congregated in the lobby of Holywell house — the main BPC locatiuon in the City — and decided to start the occupation on the 6th floor which contained, among other

things, a kitchen.

Chapel members have been occupying round the clock ever since, incarcerating themselves for 5½ days over Christmas, complete with turkey and other seasonal trimmings. This attracted the attention of the media, which featured the occupation on both BBC TV News and ITN.

The importance of this occupation cannot be over-estimated. As well as being part of the overall struggle against redundancies and closures that is starting to happen, the struggle is of crucial importance to workers in the book publishing industry, which has been particularly hard hit by the recession.

Ron Whiting, the management's chief spokesperson, claims the dispute is about 'manage-

ment's right to manage, even if it makes wrong decisions'. A lot of book publishing managements are waiting to see if BPC's strong-arm tactics succeed. But the chapel is resisting strongly, remains united against management's refusal to budge, and is confident of victory.

Adwest Strike appeals for help

MANY READERS of this paper will have followed the events of the Adwest dispute in Reading — where 60 workers were sacked for defending a worker victimised during a struggle for a decent wage rise and greater democratic rights in the factory. Our sacked convenor, Danny Broderick, was arrested on July 2nd for standing alone in the gateway during a Mass Picket.

At the Mass Picket of 14th July, 26 more people were arrested for defending the right to picket.

Unfortunately, in the face of overwhelming odds, we have not been able to achieve our demands — but our work is not over. We urgently need money, for bills arising out of our campaign and for costs incurred in fighting the court cases.

We ask all our supporters to help us out once again. If you can make a donation, please write to D. Broderick, 46 Berkeley Ave, Reading, Berkshire. All donations will be acknowledged.

SO contact addresses

- GLASGOW.** John Wilde: (041-) 339 3679.
- HUMBERSIDE.** Julia Garwollnska, 26 Albany St, Hull.
- LEEDS.** Glyn Whiteford, 21 Stafford Chase, Hunslet Grange, Leeds 10.
- LEICESTER.** Mark Hall, 38 Portland St.
- LEIGH:** Steve Hall, 194a Elliott St, Tyldesley, Manchester 29.
- MANCHESTER:** Pete Keenlyside, 142 Gretney Walk, Moss Side.
- LIVERPOOL.** Bas Hardy, 76 Ferndale Rd.
- NEWPORT.** Michael Thomas, 125 Brynglas Ave, Newport, Gwent.
- NORTHAMPTON.** Ross Catlin, 81 Byron St.

- NOTTINGHAM.** Peter Radcliff, Flat 1, 8 Vickers Street.
- SHEFFIELD.** Ros Makin, 10 Burns Rd, Sheffield 6.
- STOKE.** Arthur Bough, 23 Russell Rd, Sandyford.
- SUNDERLAND.** Steve Leharne, 18 Elstree Sq, Carley Hill, Southwick, Sunderland.
- WELWYN.** Chris Brynd, 12 Whitethorne, Welwyn Garden City 1.
- WIRRAL.** Lol Duffy, 3 St James Court, Victoria Rd, New Brighton, Merseyside LONDON
- FULHAM:** Jonathan Hammond, 19b Parsons Green, London SW6.
- HACKNEY.** Nigel Richards (01-) 802 4747.

- HARINGEY.** Mick O' Sullivan, 28a West Green Rd, London N15.
 - ISLINGTON.** Pete Kenway, 39 Wakelln House, Sebbon St, London N1.
 - LAMBETH:** c/o Norwood Labour Party, 264 Rosendale Rd, London SE24.
 - NEWHAM/LEYTONSTONE.** Mike Foley, 103 Chestnut Ave, London E7.
 - NORTH WEST LONDON.** Mick Woods, 10 St Michaels Ave, Wembley.
 - SOUTH-EAST LONDON.** Bob Sugden, 99a Granby Rd, London SE9.
 - SOUTH-WEST LONDON.** Gerry Byrne, 11 Farlington Place, SW15.
 - TOWER HAMLETS.** c/o 5 Stamford Hill, N16.
- * All other are as, contact: 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

Socialist Organiser

by Andrew Hornung

AS EXPECTED Heseltine has taken his hatchet to government support for council spending. The settlement announced just before Christmas means a big cut in services and a big rise in rates... unless the Tories are stopped.

"On the best present estimates", claims the Economist, "householders will pay between 15% and 20% more in rates next year", and for this they will get a 3% drop in the volume of services.

The cost of Heseltine

The hardest-hit will be the inner city areas, the core of Labour support, while the rural counties in general will be the winners. In some of these inner city areas rate rises will be huge. Taken together with increased heating charges and the government's recommended £3.25 jump

in council house rents, this amounts to a massive attack on working class living standards.

Heseltine's figures are also based on the assumption that councils will fight off any public sector pay claims, in particular, that they will force the teachers to settle for a trifling 4%. Higher pay rises — or any price inflation over 11% — are supposed to be covered by more cuts and more rate rises.

The Tories' aim is to cut services — in some cases making openings for private businesses to take the

place of council services — to hack hundreds of thousands out of the public sector workforce and, soon, to penalise councils trying to protect services and jobs by raising rates.

The new block grant system discriminates against the inner city areas, the main working class centres, and it goes hand in hand with an attempt to eliminate the limited independence of local authorities.



by Cheung Siu Ming

THE RECALL national cuts conference sponsored by the Lambeth labour movement is now definitely planned for January 17th in Central Hall, Westminster.

In Lambeth itself, NALGO are continuing their industrial action to block council house sales, and the dustmen and the Direct Labour workforce have decided on a one-week strike starting on February 2nd.

They will be supported by the Trades Council, the NUT and other council workers organising a week of action, with leafletting and petitioning, workplace meetings and other activities. And February 4th is the date fixed for a demonstration and national day of action. Activists in other areas are agitating for strikes, or failing that, deputations on that day, for a strong united protest against Heseltine's cuts.

But what comes after the week of action? Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight has just pushed through a

CUTS DAY OF ACTION SET FOR FEB. 4

20p supplementary rate rise, and at present the leadership of the main council unions see no alternative to this rate rise policy.

In the Labour group only four members voted against the supplementary rate rise. 13 wanted the rate rise to go ahead as well as a recruitment freeze to start now, and the rest were in favour of the rate rise but wanted to wait until after the week of action at the beginning of February before looking at "more wide-scale saving than can be achieved by a recruitment freeze", said Derek Prentice — the Deputy Leader.

But many activists are realising that this is no way to win against the Tories.

The 20p supplementary rate rise means £50 or so

But Lambeth goes for rates rises

more will be demanded from the average tenant or householder in Lambeth — or nearly £4 a week over the next three months. It has been levied in order to make good the Council's £11.6 million deficit.

The District Auditor told the council in December that it must balance its books by the end of the financial year (31st March). He has refused to allow the council to carry the deficit into next year by a bank

loan. Since even big cuts now won't cover the deficit, the council had the choice of the supplementary rate or direct defiance.

In the coming months, Lambeth tenants will also face a 25% rise in heating charges. In April there will be the Heseltine-imposed £3.25 rent increase as well as another rate rise of at least 50%. Unless the council changes its course, there will soon also be big cuts in jobs and services.

For example, rate rises cannot save hundreds of jobs in direct labour now at risk because of the moratorium on housing and Heseltine's Local Government Bill.

Lambeth Council has gone directly against the major commitments decided at the original national cuts

conference on November 1st. And by doing that it has given a green light for the sell-outs of more right-wing councils and undermined the position of councils like Greenwich which recently bowed to isolation and lifted its ban on council house sales.

The recall conference needs to put pressure on all Labour councils, the TUC and the Labour Party NEC to defy the Tories — council house sales, rent rises, rate rises, cuts — all should be opposed. The recall conference should give a rallying call to unions Labour Parties and local communities to plan mass action, such as rent and rate strikes and occupations to follow the week of action and the February 4th demonstration.

March against the cuts.

Wednesday 4 February, 1.30pm, Clapham Common, London.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CRISIS CONFERENCE Central Hall, Westminster, January 17th 1981, 10.30 to 4.30pm.

3 delegates per Regional/District council or controlling Labour group; 2 delegates per union branch or CLP (where CLPs are not represented, delegates from wards will be accepted); 1 delegate per minority Labour group, trades council or shop stewards' committee.

For credentials write to: Organising Committee, Local Government in Crisis Conference, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2.

by Martin Barclay

Steelworkers organise against McGregor plan

A 'NO' vote by steelworkers is vital in the current ballot, with British Steel trying to blackmail workers into approving a six-month wage freeze and the loss of 22,000 jobs.

The ballot forms are due for return by January 16th. The Steel Industry Management Association and the national craft committee have accepted the wage freeze, but the main steelworkers' union, ISTC, is campaigning for a 'no' vote.

BSC chief Ian McGregor's methods of trying to by-pass the unions and black-jack the workers are obviously borrowed from Michael Edwards of BL — down to the fact that the 22,000-job-loss 'corporate plan' to be voted on has never been revealed in detail to anyone on the union side!

McGregor has also picked up a few tips from BL in his dealings with individual plants. Llanwern Steel Action Group secretary Wyndham Conniff told *Socialist Organiser* that a letter has recently come through the pay packets at Llanwern.

"If we are prepared to work together to make the plant successful, I will guarantee a 7 per cent wage increase in July. However, if viability is not reached, I will have to consider further job losses but

will still not pay the 7 per cent".

And Wyndham Conniff reckons McGregor is preparing the way for a complete shutdown at Llanwern.

"Manning levels at Llanwern", he said, "will be brought down to 4,600, while the production target will probably end up around two million tons a year. This target just can't be achieved, and in six months' time they will turn round and tell us, 'You can't do it, so the plant's not viable'".

John Foley, the local ISTC full-timer, regards these cuts as a tremendous victory on the grounds that BSC did not actually close one of the big South Wales plants!

Of course, the warnings of 'civil disobedience', coming even from such 'respectable' sources as the House of Commons Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, must have influenced BSC's decision — but all the signs are that the closure has merely been put off.

Velindre Tinplate Works in West Wales is a further

casualty of the McGregor axe. The Works Committee there have rejected plans for over 1,000 redundancies on the grounds that the plant is already 'economically viable'. But rather than mobilising the workforce, they have concentrated on getting an injunction in the courts to force BSC to release documents to prove the viability of the plant.

Meeting on the weekend of 3/4 January, stewards from the TGWU, the major union in these tinplate plants, agreed to press for a plan including an even distribution of work between the three plants, fewer redundancies — and giving up even the 7 per cent delayed wage rise offered by BSC.

The Llanwern and Port Talbot Action Groups are standing out against such isolationist, defeatist attitudes, by calling for the rejection of all job losses wherever they occur. An Action Group has just been formed at Trostre, and contacts have been made with militants in Velindre who are thinking along the same

lines. There are even links with Scottish steelworkers.

As Wyndham

Conniff put it,

"If we are going to save any part of the steel industry, we need united action. That united action will be needed more than ever if McGregor's axe is to be blunted".

TIME AND time again in the past, the fightback for jobs in steel has been crippled by divisions between plants.

In the present crisis, it is vital that a united programme of action is fought for in the steel unions.

Workers must demand the opening of the books of BSC at every level. The bosses must be forced to reveal full details of their plans, their financial juggling, and their relations with the banks and the state.

Work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay must be the main demand against all

redundancies. The unions should draw up a workers' plan for reorganising steel production to enforce this demand.

Full nationalisation of the whole steel industry, including the more profitable sections now in private ownership, will be necessary in this struggle.

Cuts in real wages are not an alternative to job cuts, but just another facet of the bosses' attack. They should be resisted equally, with the demand for all wage agreements to include automatic monthly cost-of-living increases, in line with a workers' price index.

Seamen call for all-out strike

SINCE THE rejection of the employers' 10.5% offer, seamen in Britain have been taking industrial action. Two ships in Cardiff and four in Swansea have already been laid up for six days.

One of the ships in Cardiff got away after Merchant Navy Officers Association members moved it to a loading berth and scabs sailed it. The Cardiff branch of the NUS has called for the blacking of all Weston company ships.

In the ferry ports the workers have been taking lightning action, disrupting services for 24 or 48 hours. In Liverpool, seafarers occupied a P&O ferry and called for all-out action against P&O after the comp-

any closed down its operation from Liverpool to Belfast.

Up until now, only one ferry port has voted against striking (Holyhead). The rest, like Southampton, Fishguard and Liverpool, have all called for industrial action.

Despite the rank and file support for industrial action, the NUS leadership are still dragging their feet, refusing to give a lead and recommend all-out action against the shipowners. Deep sea (foreign-going) seamen get much less than the ferry or coastal workers from the employers' offer, but they have no vote on the union policy.

But the NUS leaders cannot be allowed to back

down against the shipowners' threats. They have already lost the Cunard dispute. Another defeat will open the floodgates for more job cuts.

A ballot of the members with a recommendation for industrial action from the union executive is the only way the full claim can be won.

GEOFF WILLIAMS

29 people were arrested at a 1000-strong anti-Thatcher picket in Cardiff on Saturday December 13th. A defence committee has been set up by the Cardiff Trades Council, 8 Piercefield Place, Roath, Cardiff. Please send donations and messages of support.