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and the
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Edwardes

Derek Robinson, chairman of the British Leyland Combine Shop Stewards Committee, and convenor of the giant Longbridge works, has been set up for a solid lead sell-out.

Within 24 hours of his being sacked last November 32,000 workers were on strike in his defence.

Yet the following day the AUEW's right wing Executive Council met and postponed a decision on official support—preferring to wait and see whether the unofficial action crumbled under the weight of the immediate press witch-hunt.

A week later, and only a few hours after the TGWU had declared their official backing for the strike, the AUEW leaders ordered their members back to work—and ordered an official union inquiry.

"Irresponsibility"

Three months were then allowed to drift by, with repeated postponements of the announcement of the inquiry's findings.

Then, on Wednesday February 6 the inquiry announced that Derek Robinson was unfairly dismissed.

But the same inquiry also found him guilty of "irresponsibility" in his capacity as convenor, and of being in breach of union rules on several counts.

Thus while formally calling for a strike in his defence, the AUEW leaders handed Edwardes all the ammunition he needed to finish off Robinson and defeat the action.

Had Duffy and the AUEW leaders really wanted a strike to defend Robinson they would have called it simultaneously with the publication of the inquiry's findings.

As soon as it was known that the demand was for his reinstatement there was a surge of support on the shop floor in Longbridge.

But the next day things began, not surprisingly, to change rapidly. The *Daily Mirror* reported Duffy saying that the EC could not compel members to strike; and the anti-communist campaign in the mass media swung into top gear.

Quick to capitalise

Management were quick to capitalise on the material handed to them by the AUEW based entirely around six quotations from the inquiry report, which, they stress, describes: "The serious failings and lack of responsibility shown by Mr. D. Robinson in relation to his duties as our AUEW Convenor at Longbridge."

The company letter points out that "Despite these criticisms, the AUEW report asks for reinstatement of Mr Robinson."

Meanwhile, management-inspired petitions were circulating in Longbridge, and letters—

ROBINSON BETRAYED!



Backslapping was only prelude to betrayal: but still Robinson will not criticise AUEW leaders

Strike now to stop the sabotage!

some apparently even on company-headed notepaper!—were sent to the Birmingham West District Committee, which met on Friday night.

Pointing to an "unprecedented management campaign", the DC decided to call off Monday's strike. Instead, a meeting of Longbridge AUEW stewards has been called for Wednesday 13 February—to be followed by a further meeting of the DC.

Thus at a point when time is a crucial weapon in the hands of the employers, the strike has effectively been postponed for another week—while the press has had full rein to sow disillusion and demoralisation among militants, and to whip up an anti-communist hysteria amongst backward sections of Longbridge workers.

Yet the retreat was apparently proposed by Robinson's fellow Communist Party members on the District Committee:

and it was warmly endorsed by the Communist Party's daily paper, the *Morning Star*, which reported on Saturday that:

"A special meeting of the AUEW West Birmingham district committee last night refused to be rushed into a Longbridge strike..."

This cynical deception is simply the latest symptom of a consistent cover-up by the Communist Party, and by Derek Robinson himself, of the role of the AUEW bureaucracy in this struggle.

Inevitable

From the very outset, despite all the evidence to the contrary, Robinson has insisted that official strike action in his support was inevitable.

Time and again he has avoided the slightest criticism of Duffy's handling of the struggle—despite the fact that over 300

AUEW branches passed resolutions attacking Duffy's action, and over 200 passed a censure motion calling for a ballot of the union's membership on the sacking of the entire Executive Council.

Squashed

Attempts at the Birmingham rally in Robinson's support to mobilise large forces for a mass lobby of the AUEW EC were squashed by the CP chairman, Len Brindle.

Indeed the entire three months since Robinson was sacked has seen not one initiative by the Communist Party to mobilise workers to bring pressure to bear on the AUEW leaders.

Now Robinson is reaping the bitter fruits of his own political misleadership. But of course it is not simply a question of him as an individual.

Robinson's victimisation has

profound implications for all BL workers—and for the working class as a whole.

If the Duffy mafia succeed in this knife job they will open up convenors and militants to victimisation throughout the labour movement—at a time when the employers are driven onto the offensive and the Tories are plotting still further legal moves to crack the strength of the unions.

The demand must be raised at every level within the AUEW for immediate strike action by the entire membership in BL to fight for Robinson's reinstatement. The TGWU is already pledged to give official support.

All-out strike

Conditions for such an action could well be dramatically improved by the expected ballot rejection of Edwardes' insulting 5%-with-strings pay offer.

All unions must be forced to call all-out strike action to press the original £24 claim, and to demand Robinson's unconditional reinstatement as a basis for any return to work.

Italian CP votes for internment

The Italian government has just introduced new, even more draconian, "anti-terrorism" laws.

Up to now it has been possible to hold suspects for four years before they were brought to trial.

The new law, voted for in the Chamber of Deputies by 446 votes to 79, extends these powers—giving the state the right to hold suspects for 12 years!

This is of course a form of internment.

"Scoundrels"

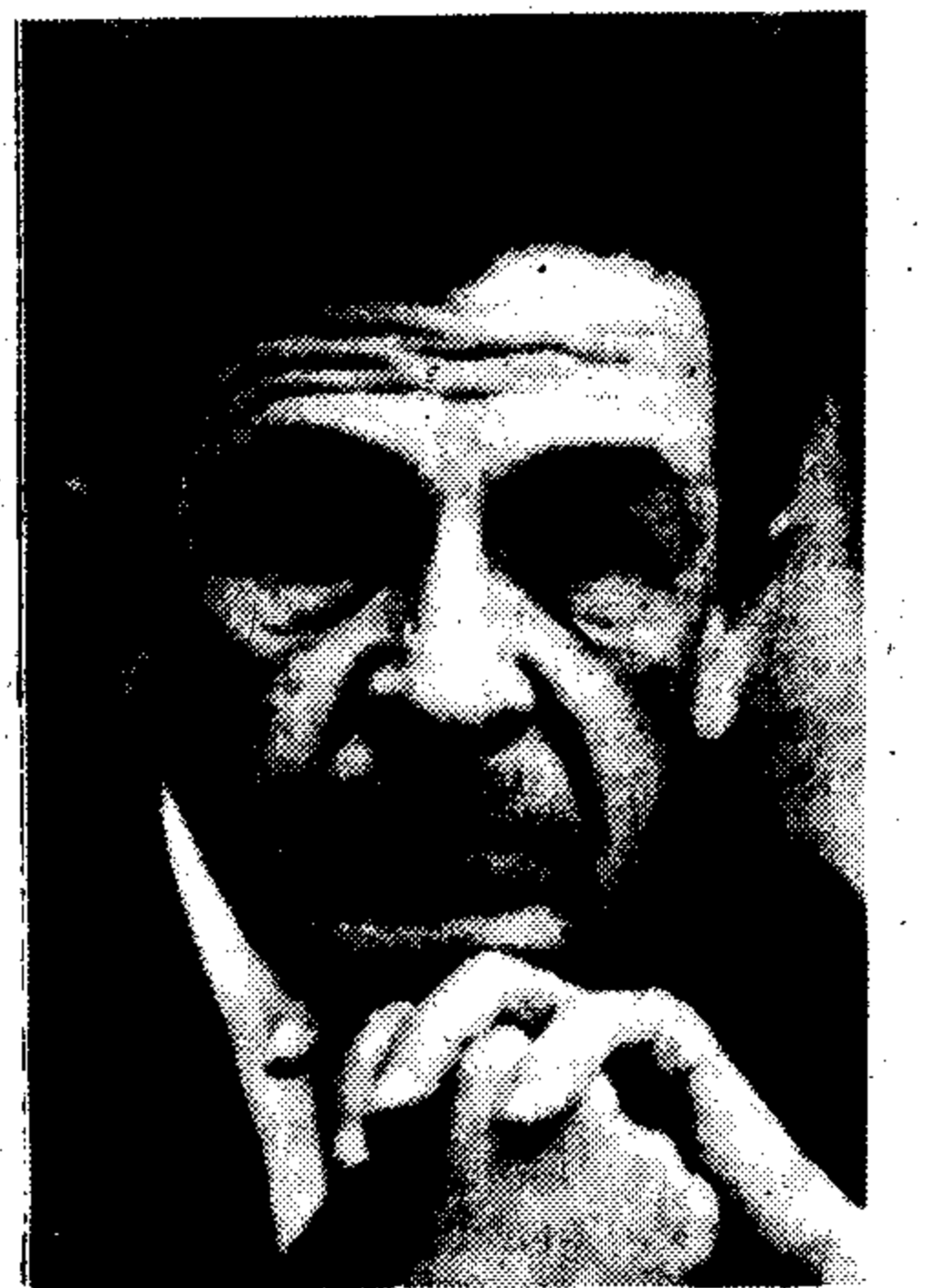
The Italian Communist Party—in the forefront of the so-called "Eurocommunist" parties voted in favour of the change.

Indeed when the Radical Party tried to filibuster the legislation, CP Parliamentary deputies chanted "scoundrels, scoundrels" at them.

This same Communist Party only recently condemned the Soviet Union's treatment of dissident Andrei Sakharov, arguing that they are defending "human rights".

Such condemnation of the Stalinist repression against Sakharov has nothing to do with the criticisms made by Trotskyists.

The Italian CP has become more and more an echo of imperialism at home and abroad.



CP leader Berlinguer

The treachery of the Italian CP creates the kind of political conditions in which fascism can develop. This is because they allow a capitalist party, like the Radical Party, to appear as the defenders of democratic rights at the same time as the CP themselves support the introduction of internment—a measure which at a later point will be used against their own members.

These confusionist, class collaborationist policies of the CP—echoing the disastrous Stalinist policies of the 1930s Popular Front, which brought the defeat of the Spanish working class—offer no independent policy to the Italian working class, but perpetuate the existing bourgeois coalition government, while sowing frustration and demoralisation in the labour movement.



INTERNATIONAL US BOSSES SEARCH FOR POLITICAL ANSWERS

The defeat of both former front-runners—Kennedy and Reagan—in the recent Iowa primary elections, and the growing likelihood that for the first time ever a Kennedy may be squeezed out of a Presidential candidacy, are an indication of the political confusion that now wracks the US capitalist class.

While Carter has been

impressing his imperialist rivals with his stern cold war pronouncements and his thumping \$15 billion increase in military spending, he has succeeded in establishing a reactionary base at home upon which he hopes to rebuild his hitherto shattered electoral popularity.

Grain embargo

But all this is not without cost. The much publicised grain embargo on the USSR will have

a severe impact on prices and thus the economic plight of thousands of small US farmers. Carter's restrictions on industrial trade with the USSR will have an impact on jobs and on the profits of corporations reluctant to see themselves squeezed out of lucrative contracts with the Stalinist bureaucracy in which profits are actually guaranteed.

The new missile systems designed to put the Soviet Union once more on the defensive are to cost in excess of \$33 billion and desecrate thousands of square miles of desert and farming land.

And his preparations to restore the draft will alienate and radicalise whole layers of youth and students.

Reforms cancelled

The allocation of such resources to "defence" also mean the cancellation of virtually all of Carter's promised social reform measures—even in the run-up to the election.

And so grave is the economic crisis that in the first weeks of the year the predictions of the US budget deficit were rising at the giddy pace of \$1 billion per week and currently stand at around \$40 billion.

The OFCD predicts that the US economy will actually decline by 2% in 1980 with all that means in terms of lost jobs and collapsing industries.

One indication of this was last week's announcement by

the Chrysler Corporation of an all-time record trading loss of \$1.1 billion in the last year.

This has prompted renewed speculation as to whether the Carter administration's plan to bail out the ailing car firm will ever reach fruition: its management predicts further catastrophic losses of \$500 billion next year, and there are now hundreds of creditors all over the USA who could at any point trigger its collapse by simply calling in outstanding payments.

For US bankers the actual collapse of Chrysler is an increasingly favourable proposition. The auctioned-off assets of the firm would realise upwards of \$200 million to be divided amongst existing creditors—whereas if Carter's plan is implemented the federal government would become the first and effectively sole creditor to be paid off in the event of the Corporation's eventual demise.

With even Ford reporting US car and truck sales down by 23%, the problems of overproduction in a depressed market suggest that a whole range of vested interests may well combine even now to sink Chrysler in the hopes of restoring the profitability of the surviving US car giants.

Workers

In any event those suffering by each turn of Carter's policies are the American working class, whose leaders remain tied to the bourgeois politicians of the Democratic and Republican Parties.

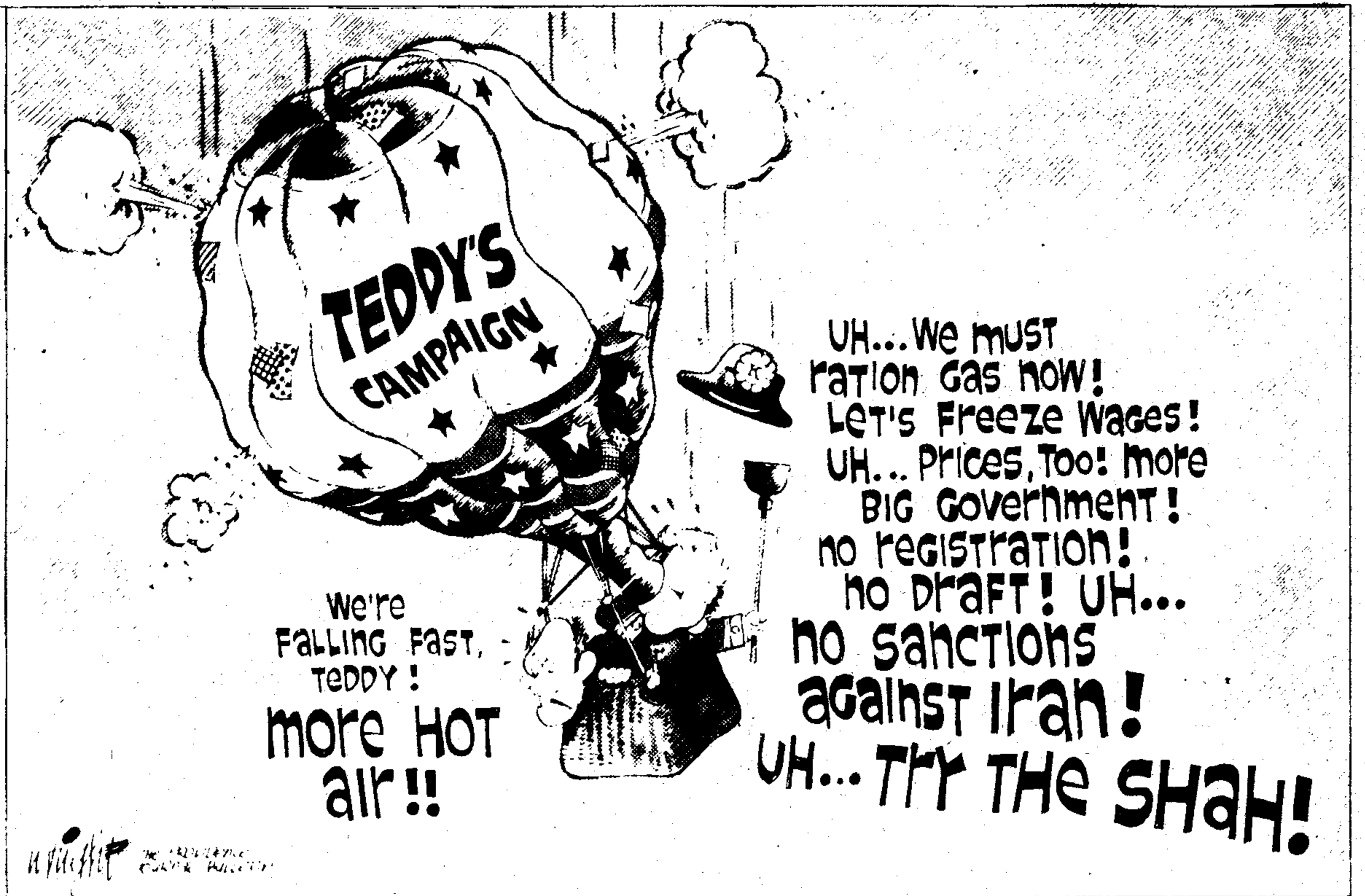
Some had looked to Kennedy as a more supposedly "pro-labour" candidate, and one

better able to stir some semblance of enthusiasm from alienated US workers—whose massive abstention in elections has grown year by year.

But now the patriotic hue and cry whipped up in the aftermath of Afghanistan seems to have pulled support behind Carter.

At the same time Carter's reactionary sabre-rattling has stolen the thunder of ageing Republican hard-liner Ronald Reagan; he was firmly defeated in Iowa by the more "moderate" reactionary George Bush.

But one thing is certain: none of these leaders has anything to offer the working class. To defend their class interests, US workers need above all to break their mass organisations from the twin bourgeois parties and fight for the building of a Labour Party on a programme of socialist policies.



Wright—Providence Journal Bulletin

Zimbabwe

From back page

apparatus and 'law and order'—without which they couldn't govern even if they were to win.

Imperialism, through Governor Soames is taking steps to meet the threat of the growth of a working class alternative to the politics of petty bourgeois reformism.

This action has involved giving greater support to the vicious activities of the army and the auxiliaries, and taking repressive measures against ZANU and ZAPU—particularly in those areas where centralised bureaucratic control from Mugabe and Nkomo has been unable to enforce adherence to the terms of the Lancaster House settlement.

The bulk of this repression will fall on ZANU(PF), whose leadership has been weakened by years of in-fighting between the various petty bourgeois reformist factions.

The greater autonomy of the ZANU military cadres is the price paid by Mugabe for their support in his battle for leadership with Sithole between 1974-77.

Even with the full support of President Machel of Mozambique, Mugabe has been unable to eliminate all opposition within ZANU, largely because those most militant were inside Zimbabwe in armed combat with the Smith regime.



Reagan



Nkomo

With the frequent use of the jails and police of Zambian President Kaunda, Nkomo was able to assume a greater centralised control, but he too failed to suppress all the militants.

Whatever the eventual make-up of the neo-colonial government, one thing is certain—it is only by taking up the struggle for their own independent organisation and demands, that Zimbabwean workers will be able to defend their interests against whoever administers the capitalist state.

The way forward for workers is clear—their strength which forces the repressive state to seek compromise must now be directed to forcing those left-talking leaders who claim to be delivering them from imperialist repression, to withdraw from a sell-out, the sole objective of which is to stabilise the capitalist state.

Tory switch on Chile

The Tory government's enthusiasm for restoring full diplomatic relations with the bloodstained Chilean dictatorship ran into a problem last week.

A protest delegation from the Chile Solidarity Campaign met Foreign Office Minister Nicholas Ridley—only to hear him question whether the Chilean regime had actually carried out the torture of Dr Sheila Cassidy which, in 1975, had led to the withdrawal of the British ambassador.

As Shadow spokesman Peter Shore led a chorus of angry protest, the Foreign Office was forced to issue a further statement only 24 hours later declaring that it does believe Dr Cassidy's account of her torture at the hands of the junta.

But the new ambassador will nevertheless take up his post in Santiago as the liaison officer between the Tories and the savage Pinochet regime.

The British labour movement must renew the struggle for practical action in solidarity with the Chilean working class.

Further boost for Bani-Sadr

When Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr goes to visit the *mosta-zafin*, the 'dispossessed' of south Tehran, he does not go alone.

With the newly elected president of the 'Islamic Republic' go armed officers of the army and police.

They are there not so much to guard against attack, but to symbolise in a concrete form the authority which Bani-Sadr is seeking to bring firmly within his ambitious grasp.

No other Iranian leader since the fall of the Shah has had the audacity to display such an escort, a living reminder of the brutal force employed against his subjects by the 'King of Kings'.

But Bani-Sadr does not look for his support or protection to the Islamic militia of the Pasderan. He seeks precisely to *disarm* them, and replace their power with reconstructed forces of repression, controlled directly by the central state authority. It is this certain knowledge



Bani-Sadr

which has thrown the political forces within Iran into a new pattern of rivalries and alliances, with Bani-Sadr's driving motives as the dynamic centre.

Consolidate base

The first victories in this new phase of the power struggle have been won by the president to consolidate the base of his election triumph.

The Imam himself has installed Bani-Sadr in his position, despite insistent intrigues. But Khomeini has gone further to disarm the coalescing opposition front of reactionary Islamic bigots with the Stalinist Tudeh Party.

Chairman

Last week he also conferred on Bani-Sadr the chairmanship of the 'Revolutionary Council' and full executive powers, with the right to assemble a new government.

This heavy blow came after the Council members had opposed unanimously (barring, of course, Bani-Sadr himself) the giving of such powers before next month's assembly elections.

Bani-Sadr's election has also brought a gathering threat to the 'Islamic students' in occupation of the US embassy.

The president has intensified the campaign to isolate the occupation by direct attacks on

'parallel centres' and 'governments within governments'.

His position has now been boosted by Khomeini's recent statement on Afghanistan.

Until then, the 'Islamic students' had been able to capitalise on Khomeini's fulminations against US imperialism, and the contrast between this barrage and the comparative reticence of his attacks on the other 'super-power', the USSR.

But last week, Khomeini publicly echoed Bani-Sadr's statements by declaring 'complete support to our oppressed Afghan brothers' and condemning 'the occupation of their country by foreign forces.'

This turn has been greeted with silence by the embassy occupation, where it can scarcely have been welcomed. Nor have the Stalinists of the Tudeh party yet responded to this blow.

While the Maoist paper *Randjbar* has hailed Bani-Sadr as a 'champion of the struggle against the social-imperialism of the USSR' with the Chinese

bureaucracy warmly congratulating him on his election and offering economic aid, the Soviet bureaucracy has been far less enthusiastic.

The Tudeh Party still maintains its full support for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and calls on Bani-Sadr to renounce his 'irrational positions' and return to the 'anti-imperialist line of the Imam' (i.e. Khomeini).

This blatantly counter-revolutionary stance of total confidence in Khomeini is reflected by the 'Islamic students', particularly in their recent petition to the Imam, filled with mourning for his illness, prayers for his recovery and praise for his leadership.

The 'Guide of the Revolution' may have been touched, but was not visibly softened by this homage.

Khomeini's 'anti-imperialist line' is now being used to tow Bani-Sadr's bandwagon to a position where the new president, the 'spiritual son' of the Imam, can dominate with all the repressive apparatus of a modern nation-state.



INTERNATIONAL

Top leaders purged in Vietnam Stalinist crisis

The replacement of three prominent ministers last week is only the tip of a vast iceberg of political and economic problems for the Vietnamese Stalinist bureaucracy.

The most prominent of the removed ministers is General Vo Nguyen Giap, who leaves the Ministry of Defence after 30 years in the job.

The two other septuagenarian Stalinists to be pensioned off are Le Thanh Nghi, who has been in charge of economic planning, and Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh.

No reason

No official reason has yet been given for these three sackings. But there can be little doubt that they are connected with the disastrous state of the Vietnamese economy, now suffering the problems resulting from last year's invasion and the continued military occupation of Kampuchea.

They must also be linked with the massive purge which has been taking place in the Vietnamese CP.

This purge has been largely directed against "pro-Maoist" elements.

The CP, it is officially announced, "has launched a campaign of education of its members to help them distinguish between true and false Marxism and criticise and overcome the venomous influence of Maoism".

The result has been a fall in membership of the Party from about 1½ million (at the time of the Fourth Congress in late 1976) to only just over one million, according to a report in the party newspaper *Nhan Dan* last December.



Vietnamese masses in Ho Chi Minh City

Given that the intervening three years was one of rapid recruitment, especially in the army, the figures imply that in the course of the purges at least half a million and perhaps as many as one million members have been expelled from or have left the Party.

There is no reason to suppose that the three sacked ministers are "pro-Maoist". But several leading veteran Party leaders have been purged.

Most dramatically, Hoang Van Hoan was deposed last summer as Vice-premier—only to defect to Peking and give public press conferences

denouncing the Hanoi regime!

It is inconceivable that all the purged party members represent one organised pro-Peking faction.

They almost certainly represent diverse currents opposed to the bureaucratic Hanoi regime, accentuated by the economic failures and resistance to the invasion of Kampuchea.

The two things are closely connected, since the growing economic hardships in Vietnam partly result from the heavy demands of maintaining a massive army of occupation of 200,000 in Kampuchea (relative to the popula-

tion of the occupied country it is one of the largest occupying armies in history).

Numerous reports from Vietnam in recent months attest to an extreme shortage of food and other consumer goods which the bureaucracy has been promising to supply ever since the victory against American imperialism in 1975.

In fact the economic conditions of the masses have got worse since then.

This is not only due to expansion into Kampuchea, but also because of the impact of the elimination of private retail trade in 1978; a price structure

and goods famine which offers peasants no material incentive to market their produce; and finally because of widespread corruption in which the bureaucracy receives numerous material privileges.

In relation to the last point, the official ratio of the salaries of a top bureaucrat to the lowest paid is only 3 to 1.

But it has been estimated that, with all the bureaucrats' perks taken into account, the real difference is more in the region of six or even ten to one.

Embarrassed by failures and corruption, the top bureaucracy has been forced to open

the pages of *Nhan Dan* to a tidal wave of critical letters.

As is the custom with top Stalinist bureaucrats in these only too common circumstances an effort has been made to devolve the blame onto lower levels of the administration (Castro did the same in Cuba only last month).

Special shops for bureaucrats are to be abolished, the controlled prices made "more realistic" (i.e. raised) and much more reliance placed on the free market, especially in food.

At the same time, however, a new hierarchy of official salaries is to be introduced, considerably widening the present nominal differentials.

These measures may reduce the gap between the official and black market price of food (at present the black market price is four times the official price).

They may also bring a bit more food onto the market.

But they cannot get around the more fundamental problems reflected in the fact that the country's production of rice last year amounted to 15 million tons when the much publicised plan, outlined in 1976 required 21 million tons.

Aside from the natural disasters (drought and floods) which affected this failure, a vast influence came from chronic production problems in the co-operatives in the north, and from policy vacillations and the failure of the government to win the confidence of the small and middle peasants of the South.

It is also reported that many of those induced to leave Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) after the war and go to new agricultural settlements are beginning to return in disillusion to the cities.

A favourite complaint of the Hanoi bureaucracy at present is directed against what it calls "manifestations of negativism" within the masses.

Events show clearly, however, how once again a Stalinist bureaucracy is attempting to blame workers and peasants for its own criminal acts of sabotage against socialism.

The way to socialism in Vietnam can only be opened up by a struggle to depose the Stalinist bureaucracy and install a Soviet government under the leadership of a revolutionary Trotskyist party which incorporates the vanguard of the Vietnamese working class.

Only then can the heroic sacrifices made by Vietnamese workers and peasants in the struggle against imperialism come finally to fruition.

GANDHI GETS GOING

The Indira Gandhi government has lost no time in showing the direction in which it is headed.

One of the first victims was Mr. N.K. Singh, deputy inspector-general of the Central Bureau of Investigation. He was seized in a dawn raid at his home and taken into custody.

Singh was the officer responsible for investigating the charges against Gandhi's son Sanjay—charges which led him to receive a 2-year prison sentence, against which he is still appealing.

Singh was forcibly taken by armed police to another state—supposedly for "questioning". He was eventually released on bail.

Such pre-dawn raids were a common occurrence under the dictatorial "Emergency Powers" of Gandhi's last term of office.

If they act in this way against senior police officers who cross the Gandhi family, what chance is there for workers who refuse to accept attacks on their jobs, wages and basic rights?

Guatemalan peasants in desperate struggle

The occupation of the Spanish embassy in Guatemala City a fortnight ago, which resulted in the killing of 40 people by the police, was an act of sheer desperation.

The peasants who took over the building came from the northern province of Quiché which has been particularly badly hit by the repression of the dictatorship of Gen. Lucas Garcia in recent years.

Quiché is in an area known as the Northern Transverse Strip (NTS) which has been given a special free trade status by the military in order to lure in oil and mineral companies and pump capital into the ailing economy.

Capitalists operating in the NTS pay very low taxes, receive special concessions and have virtual carte blanche to do what they will with the local population, for which troops have been placed at their disposal.

Thus, such companies as Sir James Goldsmith's Basic Resources, registered in Luxembourg, plough through villages and forcibly buy lands at rock bottom prices in order to lay pipe lines.

Where there is resistance the army is sent in.

In 1978 over a hundred peasants were slaughtered in the town of Panzos, in Alta Verapaz, after refusing to yield their lands.

Reports from San Miguel de Uspantán, in Quiché, give details

of a score of peasant leaders being held in a dry well by the army.

Northern Guatemala is suffering all the violence inherent in untempered imperialist expansion.

The cost to the workers and peasants has been extraordinarily high: between eight and ten bodies are discovered daily; over 20,000 died at the hands of the military between 1966 and 1976 and more than 20,000 were killed in the 18 months up to the end of 1979.

The level of class violence has been more constant than in any other region of Latin America.

Corruption

After years of corruption and expropriation the military has become a major sector of the capitalist class in its own right and has responded, to fluctuations in the relations of production—both between capital and labour and between rival sections of capital in competition—in the only way it knows—coercion.

Hence the 'reformist' sector of the bourgeoisie has suffered physical and political attacks to the degree that it no longer operates as a coherent force, leaving the State Department little choice for an alternative to the present crowd of butchers.

Guatemala is crucially important to the imperialists. It is the only real defence against the tide of insurgency in Central

America.

The Guatemalan bourgeoisie has long been the hegemonic force in the area and the army is the only one capable of resisting a mass uprising.

In 1972 the Guatemalans intervened in El Salvador to suppress a Christian Democratic coup; and in 1978 they went to the aid of Somoza, salvaging the National Guard from defeat in the first phase of the civil war.

Now they are the only real guarantors for the weak and disorientated Honduran dictatorship of Gen. Policarpo Paz, and Guatemalan troops are known to be massing inside Honduras and on the northern frontier of El Salvador to invade should the Salvadorean masses launch a full-scale rebellion.

In Guatemala itself opposition to the dictatorship has been growing appreciably.

The two main union federations (comprising over 160 industrial unions and 150 peasant organisations) have formed the Democratic Front against Repression (DFR), the programme of which is simply to defend basic bourgeois democratic rights.

In view of the failure of any bourgeois reformist party to survive the repression the DFR has taken on an almost unsought political importance and will clearly play an important role in the now familiar popular frontist alliances springing up in Central America.

In the countryside the increasingly militant Committee

for Peasant Unity (CUC) is drawing substantial support through its call for harvest-time strikes and its tacit backing for the guerrillas.

The leading guerrilla force is the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) which has undertaken over seventy occupations of villages and several well-publicised kidnappings of leading political figures, as well as the execution of the general commanding the death squads.

The EGP is now conducting combined operations with two other groups—the Revolutionary Organisation of the People in Arms (OPRA) and the Armed Forces of Rebellion (FAR) which find support from dissident sectors of the Christian Democrats and Stalinists.

Guatemala is perhaps exceptional in Central America in the preponderance of the peasant masses, which are increasingly determining the form of the struggle.

Backward force

Compared even with the peasantry of Honduras the Guatemalan rural masses have long been an extremely backward force, characterised by their attachment to feudal forms of production and political passivity.

Now, as they become mobilised and challenge the dictatorship they must be won to a revolutionary programme behind the proletariat or they will become mere cannon-



Lucas Garcia

fodder for reformists, seeking nothing more than a moderated form of imperialist exploitation.

The Guatemalan generals are looking anxiously for full US support and are said to be praying for a Republican victory in the elections.

But everybody recognises that the imperialist strategy is changing rapidly after Afghanistan, and that the State Department is faced with little choice other than buoying up the dictatorship or suffering the consequences of civil war such as that now approaching in El Salvador.

SDLP desperate to get in on "power sharing"

The ill-starred Atkins talks on the political future of the occupied six counties of Ireland received rather doubtful assistance last week from the petty bourgeois Catholic careerists of the SDLP.

They tabled a position paper stressing the need for any constitutional changes to embody the concept of "power sharing" at the highest level.

Majority—i.e. Protestant rule has not worked at local level, and therefore could not work at the highest level, they argue.

But in those areas where the SDLP works in "partnership" with the Loyalist parties—Derry,

Down, Newry and Mourne—the areas have flourished!

Paisley

The SDLP's wheedling attempts to squeeze in on the act, and secure top-level places for the Catholic middle class in any devolved government, follows on the statement the previous week by Ian Paisley, who insisted that any Cabinet would need to consist of Unionists.

Indeed Paisley, as the strongest of the Loyalist politicians at present engaged in haggling with Atkins, is strongly attracted to the Atkins "Model A", which would consist in a one-chamber assembly with law-making and administration powers.



Atkins

These powers would not—at least at first—include responsibility for defence, foreign affairs, management of the economy or law and order.

But they would mark the first step towards the restoration of a government along the lines of the Stormont regime.

And Atkins proposals for the representation of the views of the Catholic minority are so vague as to leave the Loyalists

a free hand to do as they please.

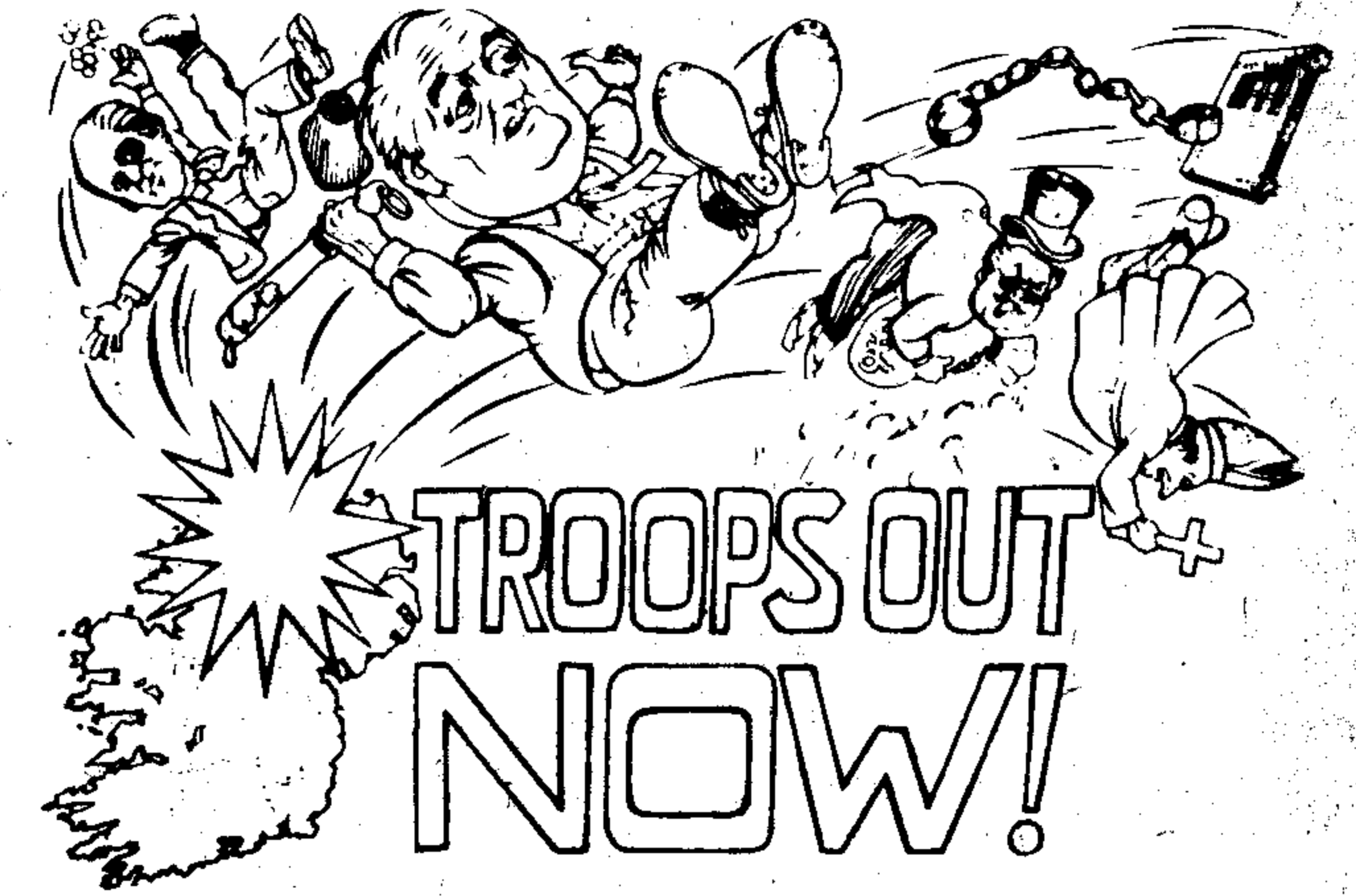
But the squeals from the SDLP indicate that—while prepared to lean over backwards to secure a pro-imperialist solution—they do not believe they can sell a deal which makes no gesture towards some form of "power sharing".

No concessions

Paisley on the other hand, would find it hard to persuade his hard-line followers to accept anything which smacks too strongly of concessions to the Catholics.

Even if some squalid deal were to emerge from these sporadic talks, it seems certain that the rise in the struggle for national liberation that has brought new strength and confidence to the republican movement will continue to develop.

The only way forward to establish the democratic rights of the Catholic majority and the Protestant minority in Ireland as a whole or resolve the crushing material problems faced by



IRELAND

workers throughout Ireland is through the struggle for an Irish workers republic.

The main obstacles to such a struggle are the British army of occupation in the six counties, and the bourgeois Haughey government in the South.

The Irish working class has

shown itself prepared to fight for its rights: it is vital that the British workers movement is mobilised to fight for the immediate withdrawal of British troops to enable the Irish people to determine their own political future.

Leicester cuts fight

The signs are that the one-day strike action on 27 February called by the NUT against Leicestershire's £6 million cuts in education spending will receive substantial support from other public sector unions.

This emerged following a highly successful delegate conference on the fight against the cuts called by Leicester Trades Council last weekend which attracted 45 delegates and ten observers from labour movement bodies.

Resolutions were taken by branches of NUPE, NALGO, AUEW, the Labour Party and the National Union of Students.

A motion from the Inland Revenue Staff Federation called for a policy of a total ban on overtime. And the local Women's Group tabled a resolution stressing the particular threat posed to women by the cuts in social service spending.

From the platform Labour MP Jim Marshall spoke on the problems of leadership now posed in the Labour Party.

Jo Richardson MP concentrated on the need to fight the Corrie anti-abortion law.

And NUPE National Officer Roger Poole peddled the union's limp policy of calling on Labour councillors to resign rather than implement the cuts.

But the conference went on to adopt a fighting 9-point programme to fight the cuts, including:

*Resistance to all public service cuts.

*Demanding councillors refuse to implement the cuts and refuse to raise rates or rents—instead adopting a policy of overspending.

*Declining labour movement support for labour councils that confront the Tories—including strike action where necessary.

*A policy of occupation to prevent closure of public services, backed up by supporting strike action.

*Fighting for strike action to stop cutbacks and redundancies, and to defend manning levels.

*The demand for public service spending to be protected against inflation by a sliding scale of spending.

*Calling for the accounts of public sector authorities to be opened to elected workers committees to reveal the profits made by private contractors and the banks.

*The establishment of a delegate action committee to co-ordinate the fight, drawing together delegates from the Trades Council cuts sub-committee, the three Labour Party GMCs, trade union branches, tenants' associations, women's groups and student unions.

Covering up on nurseries

If you don't like the law—or, worse, discover you've been breaking it for the last 36 years off and on—well, change it!

Thus thought Norman St.

John Stevas, Leader of the House this week in Parliament when he attempted to quickly slip in an amendment to the 1944 Education Act which would make nursery provision definitely a discretionary power

of local councils, rather than—as at present—apparently obligatory.

This move is a direct result of the legal embarrassment the Tory County Council in Oxfordshire is facing as it plans to close down its entire state nursery education service and replace it with some—as yet unannounced—playscheme service costing them £4 per child and parents many times more.

Urged on by the right wing-led Campaign for Nursery Education, the local bureaucracy of the NUT has pledged to take the Council to court for breaking the 1944 Education Act. And the Attorney General, Michael Havers, has confirmed that under existing law the plans may be illegal.

This amendment states that nursery closures must be approved by the Secretary of State for Education, Mark Carlisle.

Avoiding action

But, anxious to cling to any method other than mobilising teachers and parents in direct action, the right wing in the NUT and the CNE claim that Mark Carlisle has stated his desire for nursery education to remain at its present level and therefore will not allow Oxfordshire council to go ahead with closures.

Teachers and parents must not be diverted into more appeals procedures and letter writing extravaganzas.

The task ahead is to build a united campaign against all the cuts, involving all trade unionists and parents who work in and use the services under the Tory axe.

This campaign is being launched by the Oxfordshire Campaign Against the Cuts which is holding a conference on March 8 in West Oxford Community Centre (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) which will discuss policies necessary to fight the cuts.

No illusions

The consequent move by the Tory leadership has not surprised the Oxford Save Our Nurseries Campaign, who have no illusions in the policy of persuading Important People in Key Positions—which has been consistently peddled by the CNE leaders.

Nor do they see the second amendment put by St. John Stevas as offering any promise of reprieve for the nurseries.

to put their views. He pointed out that from the point they had first developed Spartacist positions they had circulated three major documents and been allocated speaking time at every national meeting of the movement—including two special conferences.

No agreement

Their right to argue their positions within the WSL had only been challenged when it became clear that they had no political agreement with our movement, and 100% agreement with the IST—which is pledged to smash the WSL.

Alan Thornett pointed out that the LF expulsion had been unanimously endorsed by a special conference.

One former LF member, who had broken with the Faction in order to remain in the WSL, told the meeting that for all the talk now of "bureaucratic expulsion", the Faction had argued that the WSL leadership was "soft" for not expelling them earlier!

The leaders of the LF had been meeting the IST, and acting virtually as members of it, since August last year, she added. This was not only kept secret from the WSL, but also from some members of the Faction itself.

The meeting, which failed to attract more than a handful of non-Spartacists, was an expensive failure which will presumably mark the end of the LF's fraudulent pretence of "independence". Its five members must soon formally announce their membership of the IST.

Spartas stage expensive failure

The so-called "Leninist Faction"—five people expelled from the Workers Socialist League in January for breaches of the Constitution arising from their political support for the International Spartacist Tendency—held a public meeting in London last Friday.

Not surprisingly it turned out to be a Spartacist jamboree. Despite the fact that the meeting was an attempt to capitalise on the LF's claim to be independent of the IST, the Spartacists provided not only the vast majority of the audience—including heavies flown in from as far afield as San Francisco—but also dominated the affair organisationally.

They took photographs, and tape recordings and hovered, poised to descend on anyone from the floor of the meeting who wished to exceed the allotted four minutes' speaking time.

Two familiar and lengthy Spartacist presentations were offered by LF speakers Mark South and Di Parkin—each claiming that they had been "bureaucratically expelled" from the WSL.

A WSL member was then given "extended" speaking time—8 minutes—to reply.

Even in this amount of time Tony Richardson of the WSL was able to nail the lie that the LF had been expelled after being allowed only 20 minutes



Oxford Nursery campaigners picketing Carlisle last year

Selective strike gets brush off

Bureaucrats in the National Union of Teachers have come up with yet another form of "limited action" in "selective areas" to defeat the Tories' education cuts.

After the axing of 285 jobs in Avon and 90 in Trafford at Christmas, teachers have at last been called out in some schools to strike on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the last two weeks.

This scheme, argue the NUT leaders, hits the Authority two ways: a) by taking action in the schools and b) making the Council pay teachers' wages for four days out of seven in the week!

In Trafford in Manchester the Council appear to have conceded ten jobs and a review of the education service coupled with an extra £1.5 million on next year's budget.

In Avon, the savage cuts (by natural wastage) meant that new timetables had to be drawn up in many schools which NUT members are refusing to operate.

Here the Council do not even plan to discuss the situation, in spite of the teachers' strike action, until February 15, and the Chairman of the Education Committee Norman Reece is attempting to witch-hunt militant teachers by promising parents they can move their children away from schools regarded as "centres of agitation".

As further attacks on the education service emerge daily—along with news of massive school meal and transport charges—the leadership of NUT and NUPE must be under further pressure to call the only serious action that can be taken to defend jobs and services—all out indefinite strike action.

It's agreed—you foot the bill!

NUPE and Labour Party leaders are apparently agreed on one point in the struggle on local authority spending cuts: whatever happens, the working class must shoulder the cost!

NUPE's Executive Council has tabled a policy statement to the Labour Party's NEC that proposes:

- 1) Labour councils should refuse to make cuts.
- 2) That instead they should increase the rates.
- 3) If this provokes a confrontation with the Tory government, the whole Labour council should resign in order to fight a by-election which would—if they were reelected—give them a "mandate" for their rate-rising policies.

All this is hedged about with radical anti-Tory rhetoric. But of course at best it offers Labour councillors carte blanche to raise rates sky high—£2 per week in Lambeth—thus penalising workers and driving whole sections of the middle class into a white lather of reactionary frenzy.

More likely, any Labour council foolhardy enough to fight a by-election on a platform of imposing astronomic rate increases would be thrown ignominiously from office by angry voters—leaving the ex-councillors as passive spectators with "clean" consciences to sit back and watch the Tories carry through the cuts.

The Labour Party's Home Policy Committee has yet to pronounce on this half-witted scheme; but it has been eagerly endorsed by Lambeth Council leader, 'left' winger Ted Knight.

Meanwhile the Party's present line of policy as spelt out by right wing Shadow Environment Secretary Roy Hattersley is—if possible—even more toothless.

He told Labour's local government conference last week that councils that took Tory minister Heseltine to court would receive the support "of Labour's front bench"—for all that is worth!

And Hattersley was at pains to stress that councils should not break the law in what he saw as moves to "delay" carrying out Tory cuts.

What of course is lacking from all of these policies is any conception of mobilising the organised strength of the working class in the struggle against the Tory cuts.

Conniving

NUPE, whose officials are conniving at cuts throughout the public sector, prefers to put the onus on handfuls of middle-headed Labour councillors in each town rather than show the strength of its 700,000 members and involve other public sector unions in the fight to stop the cuts.

Indeed Alan Fisher at the local government conference did issue an appeal to NALGO and the NUT. But it was not for a joint programme of strikes and occupations to stop the cuts or to defend Labour councils that defy the Tories and deliberately overspend their budgets: it was simply a call for them to affiliate to the Labour Party!

Stark choice

With the Tories hell-bent on their attacks on the working class, and equipped with a hefty Parliamentary majority handed to them by five treacherous years of Labour government cuts and wage controls, workers in local authorities and the health service face a stark choice.

They can follow their exist-



PHOTO: Mark Rubner, IFL

Knight (pointing) on Lambeth cuts demo

ing Labour and trade union leaders down the slippery path of retreat and betrayal, endorsing Hattersley's hopes of a Labour government in 1984.

Or they must take up the

fight for a new revolutionary leadership in the labour movement which will fight for the mobilisation of general strike action to bring down the Tories and clear out the Labour traitors.

Wise words

Former Coventry MP Audrey Wise has pointed out that the Labour Party cannot defeat the Tories outside until it defeats those inside its ranks.

Labour Weekly reports her telling a meeting called by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the Labour Coordinating Committee that:

"Prentice has found his right place. But an awful lot of MPs signed a letter to the Newham

North East party saying what a splendid Member of Parliament they had."

As the Labour right wing now flexes its muscles for a confrontation with socialists within the Party, now is the time for Wise and others who talk of the danger from Tories in the leadership to take serious steps to drive them out.

They would receive the enthusiastic backing of thousands of Labour Party members should they undertake this long overdue task.

Prentice off the leash

Having finally abandoned the irksome pretence of any concern for or links with the labour movement, runaway right wing Labourite Reg Prentice is now a leading light in the Tory attacks on children, the unemployed, the sick, the old, the disabled and strikers' families.

Every week now brings a new announcement of ways in which the Tory cutbacks will hit the weakest and most oppressed sections of the working class—from the refusal to raise child benefits to the refusal to increase pensions in line with Labour government policy, to the end of the subsidies on heating costs for old people.

But it was Prentice who last year proudly told a conference of a major charity for the blind that the disabled must bear their fair share of the Tory cuts.

And it was Prentice who ten days ago fuelled the Tory rabble rousing over the £1 million in social security benefits paid out to the families of steel strikers—implying that the Tories might speed up their plans for laws to force unions to pay strike pay in official disputes.

In this Prentice is moving further and faster than Thatcher herself, who has recognised that the initial plan—to "assume" that strikers are receiving £10 per week in strike pay, and thus deduct this from social security pay-outs—could wind up penalising non-union members, and creating all manner of complications.

Harassment

But, however frustrating this may be for him, Prentice is now able to unleash his full hostility to the working class in a new series of measures designed to harass and intimidate the unemployed and those on social security.

Under the guise of a crackdown on "scroungers", Prentice is establishing a new Gestapo of fraud officers, and unemployment review officers—whose job will be to press-gang unemployed workers into low-wage, non-union jobs at social security rates of pay.

In one, unnamed, city, every unemployed worker will be subjected to a special investigation!

Officers will also be taken on to track down deserting husbands.

Special investigators will each be given a £50,000 a year

target for savings as a result of their "investigations".

New courses will be run to persuade and train Social Security staff to resist claims and intimidate claimants. Booklets will be produced to press forward this campaign. The overall target is a £50 million saving in SS payments.

All in all the first year of Tory government will see an additional 1,000 fraud investigators snooping, creeping and spying on working class families forced into poverty by the inability of the capitalist system to provide adequate jobs, living standards, child care and social services.

Driven out

And as supremo, directing their sordid operations, is the former Labour Minister Reg Prentice, whose tooth and nail battle to stay in the Labour Party was endorsed to the very last by over 180 Labour MPs, including Michael Foot and other Tribunites.

Some Labourites are now understandably anxious to stress the fact that Prentice was finally driven out of the Party rather than the fact that this took place only despite the frantic efforts of the Party bureaucracy—backed up by trade union bureaucrats like Clive Jenkins who spearheaded the victimisation and effective expulsion from ASTMS of anti-Prentice campaigner Tony Kelly.

But there are still elements in the Party leadership that retain more than a slight affection for the old renegade.

The *Observer's* parliamentary correspondent Adam Raphael reports this week that:

"In one of the lighter moments last week Reg Prentice and Stan Orme swapped anecdotes in Committee on the Social Security Bill, recalling their old days as comrades during the 1975 IMF crisis."

And of course while Tribunites Orme can still find a friendly word for "Reg", Prentice has the envious respect of his fellow crypto-Tories that linger on within Labour's leading ranks.

Should the Callaghan inquiry and its promised witch-hunt of Militant and other socialists in Labour's rank and file fail to produce the necessary reassertion of the authority of the right wing, we can expect the other Prentices to move more openly—if not all the way to the Tory front bench, at least firmly out of the ranks of the labour movement.

Reverse Tory cuts? 'No' insists Kinnock



Facing both ways—Kinnock

The witch-hunting atmosphere in the Labour Party and the crackdown on shadow ministers by the Callaghan leadership have had their impact on tub-thumping Tribunitary education spokesman Neil Kinnock.

His well-rehearsed show of spontaneous anger and demagogic delivery of anti-Tory truisms won a fullsome standing ovation at last year's Party conference.

But last week Kinnock's adamant refusal to promise that a Labour government would implement a full and immediate restoration of Tory education cuts aroused an angry response at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Kinnock—a committed reformist who has consistently argued with a view to waiting for the next General Election in 1984—declared that to make such a promise would be "hopelessly dishonest", because it was impossible to forecast the impact of Tory policies on the economy in the next four years!

He told the *Guardian* afterwards that:

"I am not interested in offering unconvincing half truths to the British people or the labour movement.

"If they want a shadow spokesman who will tell them that the moon is made of green cheese and that it is there for the slicing as soon as we get elected to office, they had better look for somebody else."

The immediate cause of these Callaghan-style arguments was the discussion on whether

the next Labour government should be committed to repeal the Tory provisions allowing councils to charge what they like for bus travel and school meals.

Even some Tory MPs from rural areas have been forced to oppose the bus travel proposals which will add pounds per week to the cost of living of families outside the main towns.

Kinnock's stand represents an abrupt abandonment of earlier high flown 'left' rhetoric in which he promised that Labour would instantly abolish the Tories' 'assisted places' scheme to send children to private schools.

Scandalised

He once even scandalised the press by calling for the nationalisation without compensation of industries "hived off" by the Thatcher government.

But in now seeking to ingratiate himself with the Callaghan gang and distance himself from Labour's left, Kinnock is assisted by his occasional 'left' gestures.

One Labourite pointed out to the *Daily Telegraph* after the PLP meeting that there might well have been moves by angry left wingers to oust Kinnock as Shadow Education spokesman.

But they held back because he had only recently been threatened with the sack by Callaghan—for voting with the Tribune Group against the British nuclear arms programme!

With a nod to the 'left' and a curtsy to the right, Neil Kinnock is desperately clambering his way towards a career of reformist treachery.



Prentice



Nazi troops march through Paris, 1940



Hitler at a giant Nazi rally

MAKERS OF MODERN

MARXISM

A new
occasional
series

3. Walter Benjamin

It is only recently that Walter Benjamin has been retrieved from the obscurity of history and restored to his true status, as perhaps the most brilliant and original Marxist cultural critic of the twentieth century.

Born in Berlin in 1892, the son of a wealthy Jewish family, Benjamin was active in the radical literary movements of pre-war Germany, and wrote a pioneering doctoral thesis on German baroque tragedy.

So pioneering was it that his examiners, unable to understand a word of it, failed him his degree, thus depriving him of an academic career.

Precarious

Instead, Benjamin lived a precarious existence in Berlin and Frankfurt as a critic and translator; he was introduced to Marxism by the philosopher Ernst Bloch, and became a close friend of the playwright Bertolt Brecht.

He fled to Paris in 1933 when the Nazis came to power, and lived there until 1940, working on a massive study of Paris which has

become known as the 'Arcades project'.

When France fell to the Nazis, he fled to the Spanish frontier, where he committed suicide on being told that he was to be handed over to the Gestapo.

Tragic

The tragic career of Benjamin is in some way a sign of his tragic times.

His life was marked by exile, material deprivation and a frustrating inability to get his work published. (Theodor Adorno, his German/Marxist colleague, refused to publish one of his most important works).

His writing is shot through with suffering and melancholy, composed of odd fragments and brief, brilliant passages. It is marked often by a profound obscurity, as Benjamin struggles tortuously with some of the most intractable problems of culture, history and politics.

Disdaining any facile clarity, Benjamin writes as though every sentence has been painfully wrenched from his deepest meditations.

He is acutely self-conscious of his Jewishness—of belonging to a cultural tradition which has been

hounded, ridiculed, misunderstood.

His writing has much of the enigmatic, riddling quality of the Jewish tradition of sacred writings, demanding a severe labour of reading from his audience.

Greatly preoccupied with the importance of tradition (Benjamin recalls Trotsky's insistence in *Literature and Revolution* that 'we Marxists have always lived in tradition'), he is at the same time a notably idiosyncratic writer, whose insights are notoriously difficult to categorise.

What importance, then, has an obscure, idiosyncratic cultural critic to present-day Marxism?

Break-up

One answer is that if Benjamin was one of the most traditionalist of thinkers, he was also one of the most astoundingly 'modern'. Benjamin lived through a period which saw the explosive break-up of traditional cultural forms.

Futurism, Expressionism, Surrealism: these and allied movements scandalously overturn middle class shibboleths of 'realism', 'beauty' and 'tradition' in art, unleashing new produc-

tive forces, and the drives of the unconscious itself, to challenge the settled conventions in which the bourgeoisie finds itself securely reflected back to itself.

Materialism

But such movements are not thereby necessarily revolutionary in a socialist sense; and Benjamin's aim was to create a revolutionary aesthetics by harnessing them to historical materialism.

In his pioneering essay 'The Author as Producer', he notes that the question which Marxist critics have traditionally posed to a work of art is: What is its position with regard to the productive relations of its time?

Benjamin himself, however, wants to pose a new question: What is the work of art's position *within* the productive relations of its time? What he means by this is that all culture depends upon certain forces and relations of production; and the task of the revolutionary artist is to develop new 'forces of cultural production' and new social relations between artists and audiences.

Gramophone records, for example, are overtaking that

form of production known as the concert hall and making it obsolete; film and photography are deeply changing traditional modes of perception, traditional techniques and relations of cultural production.

Paintings in an art-gallery have what Benjamin calls an 'aura' of uniqueness, distance and permanence about them; but the mechanical reproduction of paintings tends to destroy that alienating aura and allow the viewer to encounter the work in his own particular time and place.

Whereas the portrait keeps its privileged distance, the film-camera penetrates, brings its object closer and so tends to 'de-mystify' it.

And whereas traditional painting allows you restful, reverent contemplation, film is constantly modifying your perceptions, constantly producing a 'shock' effect.

Brecht

Traditional drama rigidly divides stage from audience, framing the play as a commodity to be passively consumed; but the political drama of writers like Bertolt Brecht, of whom Benjamin was the first great champion

From the 1920s to the tributions to Marxist the thinkers indifferent or im revolutionary heritage of T From George Lukacs Antonio Gramsci to Jean- to Herbert Marcuse, a po Marxist' theory has been o to receive full critical as themselves.

How are the Stalinist these writers to be weighed contributions to Marxist th

In this series, Terry Eag of the theorists named abo a full evaluation of their w

overturns these social relations, strips off the theatrical illusion and forces audiences into active, critical relationship to what they see.

There seems no doubt that Benjamin's cultural theories are marred by a certain 'technologism'—a belief that technical developments will in themselves lead to changed social relations in the cultural field.

Few would now claim that a Hollywood close-up was exactly demystifying, or that Benjamin's optimism about, say, the newspaper—that it broke down traditional literary divisions and turned readers into participants—has been triumphantly borne out by the *Sun*.

But if Benjamin's optimism needs heavily qualifying it still contrasts healthily with the patrician pessimism with which many 'Marxist' critics have greeted modern cultural developments.

For Georg Lukacs and his Stalinist progeny, 'modernism' in art is merely bourgeois decadence: art is a matter of 'timeless' value rather than changing material production.

They begin, as Brecht remarked, from the 'good old things'—from the established culture of the past—



Walter Benjamin

'Block' - a look at art in society

By Ernie Stubbins

Art journals come and go with the ebb and flow of artistic movements.

Efforts by artists and other petty bourgeois intellectuals to involve themselves in the living struggles of the working class are not new. On the contrary, post war art history is littered by the wreckage of such attempts.

'Block' is one of the latest of these attempts. Describing itself as 'a journal devoted to the theory, analysis and criticism of art, design and the mass media', it fills a gap in British artistic life.

Serious

It gives the impression in its first issue of being a generally serious attempt to deal with the problems faced by the artist who seeks to relate art directly to a role in society.

Socialist Press readers will find stimulating reading in 'Block', despite the fact that the authors do not yet (?) have any clear political line as a group.

All of them can be said to have a definitely left position on a range of questions, although often this is focussed almost entirely on matters of art theory which require considerable study.

One of the most interesting and accessible articles is by Tony Rickaby on 'The Artists' International', a grouping in Britain created in the early 1930s, influenced by the Communist Party.

Rickaby's account brings out many of the problems of the relationship between the intellectuals and the CP in the 30s, and some more general aspects.

The extraordinary willingness of a whole generation of intellectuals to follow the CP loyally through its political somersaults between the wars is vividly depicted.

Relationship

It is not until this depressing picture is clear that today's reader can understand the full significance of Trotsky's efforts to build different forms of political relationship with leading artists such as Rivera and Breton.

The picture is fleshed out by

a short biographical article on James Boswell, one of the founders of the AI and a CP member. Illustrations from Boswell's work confirm the impression of the enormous talents which fell under the influence of Stalinism and were doomed never to achieve their full potential.

Pioneering

The case of Anthony Blunt is another tragic example; very few of the commentators on his case mention his pioneering efforts to introduce Marxist art criticism to Britain.

Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson present an interesting piece on theory and practice, focussing on their work in East London with trades councils and the Bethnal Green Hospital campaign.

There are many artists prepared to involve themselves with community struggles, but few of them are able to subject their experience to theoretical examination in the way that Dunn and Leeson are.

'Block' also reproduces the works excluded by the Arts Council from the exhibition 'Lives' last summer.

Conrad Atkinson's print was designed to be included with a presentation set for the Queen Mother, prepared by teachers at the Slade School.

Thalidomide

It depicts the Distillers Company range of products purchased by the Royal family, and prominently displayed among them a package of the deforming drug thalidomide which Distillers sold.

The accompanying text by Atkinson documents the rising profits of Distillers and their refusal to compensate many of the damaged children.

The other work saved from censorship by 'Block' is a series of drawings by Tony Rickaby called 'Facades'. Again the work succeeds through the contradiction of a bland image with the savage reality revealed by the text.

Rickaby presents drawings of the facades of the numerous right wing bodies that infest London, and describes the activities of the organisations in an attached text.

itself can become the basis of a 'revolutionary' form of perception.

The artistic technique of 'montage'—the connecting of dissimilar images to shock an audience into new recognition—is one example of this, in the films of Eisenstein, the theatre of Brecht, or the anti-fascist 'photo-montage' of the German designer John Heartfield.

It would be a mistake to think that Benjamin is no more than a 'cultural' critic.

His meditations on the relationship between 'tradition' and 'modernity' are relevant not only to art but to the whole matter of what Marxism means by history.

Orthodox

The 'orthodox' idea of history which Benjamin confronted was the crude evolutionism of German social democracy—history as a conveyor-belt moving smoothly onwards to deliver socialism at some indefinite point in the future.

Against this, Benjamin opposed a revolutionary concept of history—although one deeply entwined with his Jewish mystical heritage.

The revolutionary working class, he wrote, is nourished not by dreams of liberated grandchildren, but by memories of enslaved ancestors; and the problem of history was thus the problem of how to bring the past to bear on the present, in a moment of revolutionary shock and crisis.

What must be cultivated, he claimed, was revolutionary 'nostalgia'—but not nostalgia in the sense of a sentimental ritualising of the dead.

It must be an active nostalgia: a ceaseless re-appropriation of the revolutionary past, which would blast through the 'empty time' of the present and fill it with new meaning.

Remembrance

Benjamin found an image for this in the Jewish tradition of 'remembrance'—that perpetual renewal of the past, through tradition, which in Jewish belief brings forward the time of the Messianic coming.

The religious idealism of Benjamin's philosophy of history must obviously be

submitted to a materialist critique.

But his dialectical uniting of tradition and modernity, idealist as it is, is nevertheless powerfully suggestive. Tradition must be preserved; but it can be preserved only by violence and struggle.

Impact

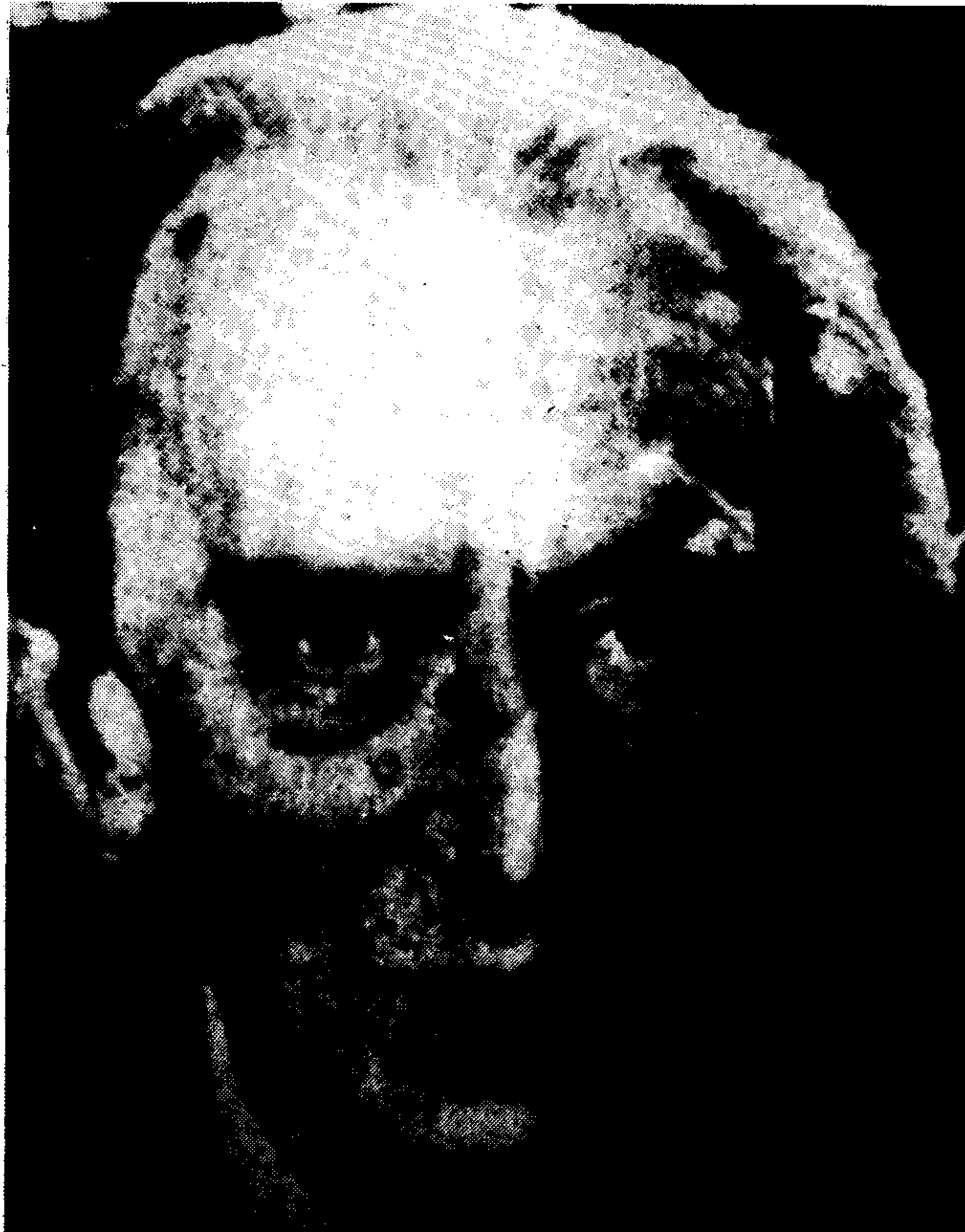
In every age, Benjamin writes, the tradition must be wrested free from the conformity which threatens to overwhelm it; and this can be done only by submitting it to the 'deadly impact of new thoughts'.

The revolutionary class must vigilantly preserve the whole of its history, as the traditional story-teller preserves the consciousness of his society, or as the individual collector 'rescues' items of the past which others may discard (Benjamin was himself an obsessional collector).

But it will only be on the other side of revolution that the class will be able to 'receive the fullness of its past', rewrite its own history and so tell its own story.

Unity

Benjamin was as conscious of how easily the



Lukacs

RN

present day, major controversy have been made by unabashedly opposed to the Trotskyism.

to Louis Althusser, Paul Sartre, Karl Korsch, a powerful body of 'Western' developed, which has yet assessment by Trotskyists

revisionist politics of against their theoretical

ton examines the work as an introduction to

and seek to perpetuate this into a 'socialist' future: whereas the revolutionary, in art as in every other sphere, must begin from the 'bad new things'—from the actual forces and relations of a disintegrating capitalism.

This was Benjamin's achievement: that he saw in the very fragmentation of advanced capitalist society the seeds of a revolutionary culture.

Baudelaire

In his breath-taking study of the French poet Charles Baudelaire, Benjamin finds behind Baudelaire's poetry the very rhythms of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism.

It is a typically urban experience of 'shock' and disconnected sensations, where experience is no longer something to be absorbed and ritually savoured (as it is, for example, in the later French writer Proust), but becomes a flood of conflicting stimuli with which consciousness must actively grapple.

Industrial capitalism, Benjamin recognises, has deeply altered our very sense-perceptions; but this

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A supreme test for Captain middle America

By Jeff Harris

"Captain America" is probably part of the staple reading diet of all *Socialist Press* readers. But just in case it isn't, it may be worth commenting on the storyline of a recent series of issues.

In this latest titanic adventure the good Captain America succeeded in smashing a fascist gang known as the National Force and scuppering their plans for taking over New York as a launch-pad for world domination.

No small achievement, and one which will have been avidly followed by the comic book's international audience of over five million readers.

Captain America is the lantern-jawed superhero who year after year tirelessly fights to preserve the liberty and wholesome integrity of white anglo-saxon middle America.

Royal blue tights

Dressed in royal blue tights and tunic that appear to have been sprayed onto his perfectly muscled frame, Captain America's image is completed by a striped belt with a white star and by a stars-and-stripes shield which can be used for anything from a deadly weapon to a parachute.

He also wears a blue mask with a large 'A' on the forehead and rather fetching little white dove-wings over the ears.

By the way, in case you're wondering, the 'A' does not stand for anarchy—the Captain is

most definitely an agent of the bourgeois state.

Essentially he acts as the ultimate lawman, dealing with villains too big for the police and army, and sorting out corruption in the FBI and CIA as well as taking on the super-baddies.

Experiment

Captain America was created in 1941 in a secret laboratory experiment which transformed a puny US soldier into a fighting machine who practically destroyed the Axis powers

without breaking sweat.

Since then, with varying degrees of commercial success, he has faithfully reflected and fought for the values and deepest fears of the American middle classes.

In the McCarthyite era he preached a loud campaign against communism and left a trail of devastated spies and "fifth columnists" in his righteous wake.

Hulk

In the late sixties the Marvel comic-book menagerie (including such warm and wonderful heroes as Spiderman, the Silver Surfer, the Incredible Hulk, Thor, the Fantastic Four, Doctor Strange and Sergeant Nick Fury) was eagerly taken up by the radical youth and student movement.

Marvel's editorial board saw where the money lay and adapted their heroes to take up increasingly liberal positions.

In one "Captain America" series it was stunningly revealed that the old McCarthyite right-wing Captain had in fact been an imposter!

The true Captain emerged to give his alter ego a sound beating and began to take on crooked cops and politicians as well as Mafia-like criminals and various bizarre lunatics bent on world domination.

Wide eyes

Through it all the Captain has had to grit his perfect white teeth and jut out his square jaw at the inevitable personal anguish that besets a super-hero.

No sooner has he found a pretty girl with wide eyes and big breasts than he is forced to abandon his dream of semi-detached normality.

All visions of raising a brood of little super-heroes, karate-chopping their way through nursery, have to be subordinated to the selfless task of eradicating evil.

Which brings us to the National Force. We first become aware of them when they organise a rally in Central Park.

Their leader, the Grand Director, dresses in all-white as do his followers. Initially the

NO! I WILL NOT STAND IDLY BY AND SEE THIS GREAT NATION PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS!

THE TIME IS NOW! LIGHT THE PYRE!



audience of black and white workers and youth is violently hostile—"You want hate... you got it!" yells one.

The Grand Director tries some standard fascist rhetoric ("A white America is a strong America!") but gets pelted for his pains.

So he sets fire to a huge cross which in turn lets off a secret mind-gas, turning the Park into an instant race riot.

Unfortunately one of the infected whites turns out to be Sharon Carter, a blond Aryan temptress who Captain America has his beady, sex-starved eyes on.

She turns into one of the National Force's most zealous "converts".

The next episode opens with her leading an armed fascist attack on Harlem.

At the climactic moment only Captain America stands between them and a vengeful

squad of black gangsters spear-heading the defence of their territory.

The Captain breaks a few heads on both sides and leaves the area under martial law imposed by the National Guard.

The conventional forces of the state are compromised this time however, as Captain America discovers when he goes to see the Chief of Police.

He tells the Chief that "This National Force isn't something new—they're Nazis by a different name! They've got to be stopped!"

Powerless

The Chief draws sagely on his pipe and says, "I know how these hate organisations work. They prey upon the Jews, the blacks, the old, the sick... anyone they can set up as scape-goats for the ills in our society! They gain the support of the gullible, the hateful and the fearful..."

But he is powerless to act, word has come from somewhere "upstairs" to lay off the National Force.

It emerges that the shadowy figure behind the fascists and their Grand Director is a bloated maniac named as Dr. Faustus.

At this point the ironies become almost too bewildering to contemplate! It turns out that Faustus was a psychiatrist in a mental hospital—the mental hospital to which the imposter Captain America had been charitably committed by the right wing Nixon government!

Faustus had perfected his mind-control gas and had resurrected the McCarthyite Captain America in the guise of the Nazi Grand Director.

Swastika

In one mind-boggling sequence the Grand Director broadcasts on TV dressed as Captain America, his famous shield emblazoned with a huge swastika—"I represent Americans everywhere! Loyal, right-thinking Americans... the blacks, are bleeding us to death and picking their teeth with our bones!"

Needless to say this unsporting behaviour gets its just

rewards when the real Captain America gets within zapping distance.

The whole grisly affair reaches a climax on board a giant airship hovering above New York. Faustus and his Nazis are planning to envelop the city with mind-gas.

Capitalist democracy hangs by a slender thread as the battle rages, but finally the airship crashes into the sea right next to... (wait for it)... the Statue of Liberty! (Wild applause, hysterical cheering and fainting.)

The Captain himself rescues Faustus from drowning so that he can be brought to trial, but there is still the torment of personal anguish—Sharon has burnt herself to a crisp in order to die for her fascist ideals.

However in the words of the final frame, "there is no change in his resolute gaze. The danger to freedom has abated... but never shall it end."

Cliche

In comic books the cliche is an art-form all on its own!

The serious point is that "Captain America" embodies many of the contradictions and glaring ironies that underlie most forms of popular culture.

A deeply racist symbol is seen opposing racism; the only blacks in the story are criminals; and the ideology of the National Force is only Captain America's value system taken to its logical conclusion.

And even this leaves out the entrenched sexism purveyed by Marvel and the other pulp comic companies.

In the final analysis the whole superhero and super-heroine syndrome which is so popular is an important image of bourgeois individuality.

All the individual has to do is retreat into the symbolic closet or phone-box and shed real life identity in order to emerge as a souped-up embodiment of bourgeois norms and values.

Mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent only needs to whip off his spectacles to become Superman, aggressive champion of law and order and the American Way. There is no

truth in the rumour that he is about to join the NUJ and carry out a principled fight against the bureaucracy, he wouldn't sell many comics that way!

Neo Nazis

Or, in the words of the "Captain America" editors:

"We got the idea for the National Force from accounts of neo-Nazi marches in the Mid-West over the past year.

Unfortunately it seems that the late seventies are not much different from the early years of the decade, or the thirties for that matter...

All of this is not to say, however, that the Captain will be espousing any specific political values other than the primal ones of freedom and liberty.

This magazine is not now, nor shall it become, a soap-box for social change. That's not what we're here for."

Reconstruct the Fourth International!

No. 1 Nov. 1979

INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN 60p

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME IN TODAY'S CLASS STRUGGLE

Founding document of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

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AFGHANISTAN AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The Counter-revolutionary Politics of the Bureaucracy.

The Kremlin bureaucracy and the Communist Party of France seek to present the intervention of Soviet troops in Afghanistan as an act of proletarian internationalism which assists the struggle of the Asian masses against imperialism. It is nothing of the kind.

What the bureaucracy defends before anything else are its own interests, which are fundamentally opposed to those of the international proletariat.

In Afghanistan, in Central Asia, the bureaucracy has acted in just the same way it has operated throughout the rest of the world.

It has never fought for the proletariat to take the leadership of the struggle of the oppressed masses by its political independence and a programme of struggle directed against imperialism as much as against the national bourgeoisie.

On the contrary, the politics of the bureaucracy subordinate the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, and so form a barrier to a consistent struggle against imperialism and for the genuine full realisation of democratic tasks.

In Iran, the Kremlin bureaucracy and the Tudeh Party entrust Khomeini with the leadership of the mass movement against imperialism—a leadership which in practice represses the working class and its organisations—and condemns the struggle of the oppressed nations (Azerbaijanis, Kurds) in the name of the 'national anti-imperialist unity'.

In India, Moscow is seeking to make the corrupt regime of Indira Gandhi an ally of its international policies. To that end, the Stalinists are diverting the struggles of the masses away from confrontation with the Indian bourgeoisie.

These are the same policies which led to terrible catastrophes for the workers and peasants of China in 1927 and Indonesia in 1965.

In Afghanistan, Amin's regime puts itself forward as the embodiment of an 'anti-feudal' stage. Above all else, it feared the independent mobilisation of the masses and the struggle by the proletariat (however weak in numbers) to take control of foreign trade, credit, key industries. Yet it is only such policies which can enable the success of a democratic agrarian revolution to break the resistance of the major landowners.

By refusing to put these policies into practice, Amin's regime became more and more isolated, and lost the support of the masses against the reactionary guerrillas organised by the major landowners, the religious leaders, the moneylenders and the opium dealers who all benefited from the increasing imperialist aid.

The overthrow of Amin's regime threatened to open the way to the division of Afghanistan, and a deepening of the movement of oppressed nationalities which could put at risk the stability of the Soviet bureaucracy itself.

Imperialism would inevitably have sought to exploit this situation—as much against the Iranian revolution as to increase its pressure on the Soviet Union. (It is worth remembering that imperialism tried to exploit the national feelings of the masses to make the 'independent' republic of Georgia a base for aggression against the young Russian workers' state).

It is this situation which led the bureaucracy to rid itself of

We reprint on this page the text of a leaflet distributed at a 2,000-strong public meeting on Afghanistan recently held in Paris by the Parity Commission. The Parity Commission is a grouping comprising the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (led by the French OCI), the Bolshevik Faction and the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency. It declares its aim as convening an open conference of Trotskyists with a view to the reconstruction of the split and divided Fourth International.

The leaflet which was well received by those attending the meeting, was co-signed by the Workers Socialist League (Britain), the Bolshevik Workers League (Chile) and the Bolshevik Leninist Group (Italy), and argued the politics of the newly-formed Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.



Stalinist tank in Kabul

'Amin and send in its troops. At the same time it hastened to reaffirm its devotion to the politics of 'detente' and 'peaceful coexistence'.

Karmal has spoken more than once of how he does not intend to establish socialism, and has called for a 'holy war' in the name of Allah against the enemies of Afghanistan' affirming the necessity of 'respecting the sacred principles of Islam' (see *Socialist Press* 181).

But today the Soviet Union is not just the prop and main influence on the local state power. The Red Army has virtually established itself as the state power.

The bureaucracy will have enormous difficulties in stabilising an 'independent' regime. In these conditions, unless the bureaucracy retreats before the pressure from imperialism, it will not be able to establish itself securely in Afghanistan except by the expropriation of capital and the major landowners.

Defence of the Soviet Union.
The perspective of a social overturn in Afghanistan, a fresh attack on private property, unleashed the hysteria of the bourgeoisie across the world.

With the support of the social democracy the Italian CP and nationalists of every stripe, the bourgeoisie has tried to rouse public opinion internationally in the name of the principle of non-interference and the right of peoples to self-determination. All this, with the aim of imposing measures of retaliation against the Soviet Union.

Its relative weakness after the defeat in Vietnam and the fall of the Shah, has for the moment prevented imperialism from resorting to a direct military intervention. But there can be no doubt that the absence of a revolutionary mobilisation of the international proletariat would assist imperialism in the search for a way out of its crisis by launching an offensive against the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states.

The policies of the bureaucracy are opposed to such a mobilisation. That is why the struggle to overturn the bureaucracy is an integral part of the

struggle to defend the Soviet Union.

Trotskyists must reaffirm the necessity of this defence, and declare themselves clearly against the retaliatory measures touted by imperialism.

They must condemn the intervention of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, because it is inseparable from the total political position of the bureaucracy. But they must also be aware that a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan would not only give no forward impetus to the revolution in Afghanistan, but would also give a major boost to the policies of imperialism.

That must not mean a position of tailing the bureaucracy. Trotskyists must have a programme which defends the independence of the Afghan masses against the bureaucracy, against the nationalists and against imperialism; a programme which carries the struggle into the heart of the Red Army itself.

*Immediate expropriation of the banks, key industries, transport and the major landholdings under the control of committees elected by the poor peasants and the workers! For a workers and peasants government!

*Arm the masses against the landowners and the reactionary gangs!

*For a democratic agrarian revolution! Redistribute all the land among the poor peasants. Credit facilities and equipment for the peasants!

*For internationalist policies! Only the proletariat of the developed countries can help the masses of Afghanistan and Asia to emerge from backward development!

*The Right of self-determination for the Tajiks, Uzbekis, Patchouns, Baluchis, Turkmenis.

*For a socialist federation of central Asia.

*Freedom of worship. For the separation of Islam from the state!

*For a programme of agitation amongst the ranks of the Red Army.

*For the soldiers of the Red Army to play their part in the expropriations alongside the Afghan masses. Right of assembly for the soldiers. For the election of officers. Down

with bureaucratic privileges!

Many soldiers come from regions of the Soviet Union bordering on Afghanistan and subjected to national oppression: against the Great-Russian chauvinism of the Stalinist bureaucracy! Against national oppression. For independent soviet republics! For political revolution!

The Organisations claiming to be Trotskyist, and Afghanistan.

1) The SWP and the IST.
For the US Socialist Workers Party the forward movement of the world revolution "weakens the bureaucracy, increases the pressure upon it and undermines its efforts towards detente with imperialism."

From this situation, the bureaucracy is led (according to the SWP) to adopt quasi-revolutionary politics. So, according to *Intercontinental Press*:

"The size and rapidity of the Soviet move into Afghanistan could do much to help break the back of the rightist insurgency and further weaken imperialism's position."

"The major Soviet and Afghan offensive to defeat the rightist bands is an aid to the oppressed in their battles against imperialist domination, not only in Afghanistan, but also in neighbouring Iran and throughout the entire region and the colonial * and semi-colonial world." (IP, 14/1/80).

The SWP here exposes its lack of understanding of the fundamentally counter-revolutionary character of the Kremlin's politics, and its inability to formulate an independent programme which means a Trotskyist programme.

It tends to turn the military might of the USSR into a substitute for the struggle of the world proletariat, and so takes up again the old Pabloite conception by which 'the revolutionary (ferveur) directed by the masses against imperialism joins as a supplementary force the material and technical forces which are fighting this imperialism' and "the overwhelming majority" of these forces "is led or influenced by the Soviet bureaucracy" (M. Pablo, *Quatrieme Internationale*, Feb/March 1951).

The position of the International Spartacist Tendency differs from that of the SWP only by showing a still stronger Stalinophile cretinism. The article in *Workers Vanguard* of 11 January can be summed up in one sentence: "Backward people of the East, the (Kremlin) bureaucracy brings you civilisation".

2) The Parity Committee.

If we are to believe *Informations Ouvrieres* 930 [paper of the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste] the USA is leaving the USSR "a free hand to try and re-establish order if it can", in Afghanistan.

The declaration of the Parity Commission characterises Taraki's agrarian reform—which "begins by a partial remission of peasant debt, then goes on to a division of the large estates and middle sized properties into six hectare plots"—as an "attempt at reform of the type which Stolypin tried to effect in the Tsarist empire."

The declaration goes on to assert that:

"the movement which allows the rebellion to develop against the central authority... is part of the wider mobilisation of the masses throughout the region".

How do the actions of the imperialists allow the USSR a free hand?

Where has the Parity Committee seen that Stolypin had in mind the expropriation and redistribution of the land?

Does the Parity Committee mean that the guerrillas organised by the landowners are part of the revolutionary movement of the masses?

In fact the Parity Committee is forced to distort reality in order not to call into question this schema by which imperialism and the bureaucracy are cooperating in a 'holy alliance' to maintain bourgeois order throughout the world. And so the intervention in Afghanistan must be an expression of that 'cooperation'.

What is counter-revolutionary in the politics of the bureaucracy is its struggle against every form of genuine independence of the working class.

That does not mean that its politics and its interests can be identified with those of imperialism if only because of the basic fact that the domination of the bureaucracy rests on the workers' state, and that "The contradiction which exists between world imperialism and the Soviet Union is infinitely more profound than the antagonisms which pit the various imperialists one against another". (L. Trotsky).

The leaflet for the Parity Committee's meeting declares:

"There are those who claim that the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan to support and aid the movement of the Afghan workers and peasants against imperialism and reaction."

"If that is so, let the Kremlin leaders order their troops to hand over their arms to the workers and peasants of Afghanistan: they will know what to do with them."

"In those places where imperialism has been chased

out, where it has suffered defeats—in, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua—there has been no intervention by the troops of the Soviet Union."

There you have what takes the place of a programme for Afghanistan for the Parity Committee.

That the soldiers of the Red Army should hand over their arms. And then what? Should they stand back and fold their arms? The Parity Committee does not tell us this in its declaration, any more than it calls clearly for troops out.

In fact, the logic of the Parity Committee's position is to make this call (as the Morenist LSR in Italy actually does), but the OCI leadership does not dare to put it in this form, given the campaign of the imperialists.

On the other hand, it implies that the absence of a military intervention by the Soviet Union contributed to the victory of the masses in Vietnam, China, Cuba, etc.!

For Trotsky, however, "it would have been a betrayal not to help the workers and peasants of Georgia by armed force". ('Between Imperialism and Revolution').

3) The United Secretariat.

The United Secretariat finds itself once again the victim of confusion, torn between diametrically-opposed positions, ranging from the tail-ending of the bureaucracy (SWP) to positions which express an adaptation to 'democratic' public opinion.

After Nicaragua, the current situation arising from the events in Afghanistan has cruelly exposed the absence of a unified, democratic-centralist International, based on Trotskyist principles.

The TILC

The principal organisations which claim to be Trotskyist are resting on seriously mistaken positions.

To resolve this crisis (opened up in 1951 by the predominance of Pabloism within the Fourth International), it is necessary to regroup the consistently Trotskyist organisations and militants in a democratic-centralist international fraction, fighting to drive out all forms of revisionism from within the Fourth International and the organisations which adhere to it. It is with this perspective that the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (For the Reconstruction of the Fourth International) has been formed, grouping together the following organisations: Workers Socialist League (WSL) of Britain; Bolshevik Workers League (LOB) of Chile; Bolshevik Leninist Group (GBL) of Italy; Trotskyist Workers League (TAF) of Denmark; Socialist League (Democratic Centralist) (SL(DC)) of the United States of America.

At its first conference, the Liaison Committee adopted a declaration of intent, a document on 'The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle', and a programmatic document of nine points.

After political agreement has been reached on strategic principles and fundamental attacks, the Liaison Committee intends to form itself into a democratic-centralist International Fraction.

The Trotskyist International Liaison Committee has asked the organisers of this evening's meeting for the opportunity to speak. The Parity Committee has replied in the negative, using the pretext of the small size of the groups and organisations which form the Liaison Committee.

The LCR, on the other hand has been invited to speak.

It is true that the LCR is a consistent organisation, but then its revisionism is also very consistent. Is this an example of how the Parity Committee puts into practice its orientation towards an 'Open Conference'—open to all the organisations claiming to be Trotskyist, 'without bans or organisational preconditions'?

*For a genuinely open conference!

*For the reconstruction of the Fourth International!



Fords battle lines drawn

The strike at Ford's Langley, where line workers on the Phase II section walked out demanding reinstatement of a sacked colleague, ended with a return-to-work on last Thursday's dayshift, one week after the dispute had begun.

The basis for a return to work was a guarantee by management that the issue would be raised at a national level within a week of ending the action.

Certainly the struggle cannot be termed a victory—since the worker remains without his job, and it will be difficult to resume action once the national meeting has confirmed this.

However, the significance of the dispute lay in drawing the battle lines rather than in

resolving them. The initial period of high morale among strikers and passive support from the convenors and officials, ended when management raised the stakes by manning the lines with non-unionised new-starters—which in cooperation with the scabs of the section, allowed some production to take place.

Strike breakers

Militant stewards inside the plant, immediately pushed the convenors to declare whether they would take action, or whether they would allow non-unionised labour to break strikes.

Under threat of independent action from other sections, the convenors called a mass meeting and got virtually unanimous support for strike action if the new-starters weren't removed.

The militancy of the meeting scared both management and the union bureaucracy.

The new starters were off the line within the hour, and the management-union 'participation' body—the JWC—was immediately convened. At the meeting management agreed to the national meeting and on that basis alone, the JWC—without consulting the strikers—sent out unsigned telegrams reading: 'Dispute ended—return to work'.

PHOTO: Ian Mackintosh, IFL



Demonstration during the low pay struggle

CAMDEN NUPE PAY DIVERSION

Readers of *Socialist Press* will remember the headlines heralding the massive pay rise gained by Camden NUPE workers last February.

After an all-out strike the local Labour-led council had conceded a 35 hour week, and the demand for a £60 minimum wage by means of a special Camden supplement which made up the difference between the existing basic combined with the national rise and the £60.

Despite the fact that this supplement was only to be conceded to 1700 non-bonus workers (with bonus workers only receiving the nationally-agreed rise) it was still a major victory which fully vindicated the decision for all-out strike action and showed a way forward for the public sector workers begrudgingly following the leadership's disastrous selective strike action tactic.

There are now rumours circulating that far from defending this gain in the standard of living for the majority of its

workforce, the council are now preparing to 'absorb' this year's 13% award into the supplement.

The implications of this word 'absorb' are that rather than the £75 minimum wage demanded by Camden NUPE, the council intends merely to consolidate a large portion of last year's rise into the basic rate—thus leaving 1700 of the lowest paid workers with little or no rise in pay this year.

Left talkers

This act of treachery coming from a council that boasts some of the most prominent 'left talkers' in London (such as councillors Ken Livingstone and Phil Turner) is the other side of their refusal to mobilise the working class in challenging the Tories' right to impose cuts.

Despite their 'no cuts' position, proudly boasted at every opportunity, they have turned to a backdoor implementation of Thatcher's cuts through rate rises.

Their refusal to concede the full £75 demanded by Camden NUPE is the first overt cut they

are making, but it is only the first of many if they are allowed to pursue their line of avoiding a fight with the Tories.

The response by the local NUPE branch to this plan was an emergency stewards meeting on Monday 21 January to discuss how the workforce was to fight such betrayal.

The necessary course was clear: an immediate mass meeting should be convened to unite the whole workforce in preparation if necessary for strike action to defend the hard won gains in their living standards.

But sooner than give such a lead the NUPE Branch Secretary (a leading IMG member) argued for a mass meeting consisting only of supplement workers, to be held on February 11—the day of the key Labour group meeting.

Such a policy isolates the supplement workers from the strongest sections of the Camden workforce, and heads away from the necessary united fight.

John Power, ex-Trotskyist and for the past three years chief witch-hunter of the left in Oxford, last Friday handed his position as president of the Oxford Trades Council over to the Stalinists of the Communist Party.

He announced his intention to withdraw from nomination only minutes before the vote was taken at the Trades Council AGM last Friday.

This left two contenders—UPW delegate Gerry Casey and long-time Stalinist AUEW delegate Mick Soanes.

The entire CP/right wing alliance which has existed on the Oxford Trades Council since it was reorganised by the TUC in 1976, then swung behind the Stalinists.

Disputed

This gave Soanes an identical vote to that of right wing secretary Pat Ward of NUPE—who was challenged by NUJ delegate Peter McIntyre.

The vote however which was counted by the Stalinists and the right wing was hotly disputed.

It was first announced to be 51 to 52, then twice recounted and changed eventually to 52 to 54.

Many delegates protested that the vote had been miscounted, and others claimed that right wingers had been brought into the meeting at the last minute, and had never been elected as delegates by their branch.

Scab

After the vote for officers the Stalinists, supported a motion from the right wing that the doors of the Trades Council be opened to Peter Sturges, the scurrilous anti-union Industrial Reporter from the local *Oxford Mail*—a leading member of the scab Institute of Journalists.

Leading Stalinist Tony Gallagher, who had just been voted in as treasurer explained that this was necessary in order to 'moderate' the left wing in future meetings of the Trades Council.

This move—vigorously opposed by NUJ delegates—was narrowly defeated.

JOIN THE WSL!

With workers by the thousand taking to the streets to oppose Tory policies there is plainly no lack of militancy in the organised working class.

Yet the existing trade union bureaucrats and Labour leaders—whether right or 'left'—have no perspective to offer those workers prepared to fight in defence of jobs, living standards, social services and democratic rights.

These can only be defended through policies which start from the independent interests of the working class, which, as an international class, has nothing to gain and everything to lose from attempts to restore the profitability of their 'own' employing class.

In a period where the contradictions of the anarchic capitalist system force the wholesale closure and destruction of the productive forces of society, only a socialist planned economy on a world scale offers a way forward.

To achieve such a perspective a leadership is needed which, in today's struggles fights

to advance workers beyond trade union militancy, protest politics and illusions that capitalism can be abolished through parliament.

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist movement fighting day in and day out to build such a principled leadership in the working class in Britain.

Internationally, we are affiliated to the newly-formed Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, which fights for the reconstruction of the Fourth International and the building of revolutionary parties in every country to lead the struggle against imperialism and against the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

We invite all readers of *Socialist Press* to seek more details of the WSL and its work, and to join us in the struggle for socialism.

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Coventry teachers act

Over 600 teachers in Coventry attended a meeting called by the NUT Executive to discuss action over the proposed 330 redundancies in the teaching force.

Opposition to this first major round of cutbacks was resolute and the meeting voted overwhelmingly in favour of a half-day strike on Monday 11 February when teachers will participate in a mass anti-cuts lobby of the city's Labour council.

The NAS has also supported this call to action by the NUT and will join in the protest on Monday when the city schools will be paralysed.

Solidarity

Already parents at some seventy schools have expressed solidarity with the teachers as the implications of these cuts become clear: worsening teacher/pupil ratios, lowering of educational standards and subject losses from curricula.

However, at a time when militant and organised opposition is necessary, the NUT leadership, which has clearly been forced to adopt some kind

of positive stand on the cuts following the example of Avon and Trafford NUT who face similar cutbacks, has issued a directive to its members, reminding them that teachers are a professional force and should therefore stage a "silent and dignified protest".

Teachers should not equip themselves with banners, slogans, chants and literature, argue the NUT bureaucrats.

At the same time, the leadership has staged a ballot on further forms of action; the ballot form surpasses by far the complexities of any tax form, thus seeking to ensure a divided response from the membership.

Teachers must counteract this obvious manoeuvre by organising local school meetings to mount a united call for all-out strike action.

A conscious campaign must be waged for the formation of action committees involving parents, students and school workers, along with ancillary workers and other public sector unions, to provide conditions for indefinite strike action.

It is only through the united and firm action of the labour movement that local councillors can be forced to rescind their decision.

Sirs still ready to auction jobs

So Bill Sirs, under the watchful eye of a huge negotiating team which BSC management likened to "four rugby teams", has rejected the 13% pay offer. But what kind of settlement are the ISTC leaders looking for?

Are they really prepared to take a stand against the insistence by both BSC and the Tory government that the steel industry must be made "viable" at the expense of steelworkers?

It is increasingly clear that they are not. Sirs, for instance, now claims that he was "misled". He was apparently under the impression that a 4% payment, to be paid subject to local productivity deals, would be paid at once, and thus part of a 13% offer.



Villiers

But Sirs has never challenged the fact that the bulk of the initial offer—some 7%—is conditioned on prior ISTC agreement to new "efficiency" measures and manning reductions.

Nor has he dwelt on the fact that the other 2%—the initial "pay offer"—is only in fact the outcome of consolidating existing pay supplements into basic rates.

No increase

Effectively steel workers have still not been offered any pay increase at all—except through selling jobs and working conditions!

But the ISTC's own draft agreement drawn up for negotiations (revealed in outline by this week's *Observer*) contains wholesale concessions to BSC management's call to cut overtime and absenteeism, and to impose "international manning standards".

And it starts from BSC's own premise that "significant pay rises will be financed through improved performance".

Sufficient price

The fact is that Bill Sirs and a cornered ISTC bureaucracy have been forced into a strike by the mood of their rank and file—and have from the beginning sought not to defend jobs and working conditions but to sell both, provided only that a sufficiently high price can be obtained.

Hence Sirs' gleeful predictions of an impending settlement last week and his crestfallen indignation at the repetition of the old 13% offer on Friday afternoon.

Having experienced the humiliation of shelling out £10,000 in rail fares and hotel bills for the privilege of being exposed as an idiot in front of a 70-strong rank and file negotiating team, he cannot now afford to call—at least for a few weeks—for acceptance of the



Sirs

offer swallowed by the craft union leaders.

Badges

Even as Sirs affixes badges saying "20%—no strings" to his plush lapels, steel workers must beware. Given the slightest leeway, he will be auctioning off their jobs and hard won working conditions.

The struggle to extend the strike to other sections of workers—strengthened by last week's decisions by drivers in the West Midlands and by the TGWU Northern Region for lorries not to cross steelworkers' picket lines—must press ahead.

Steelworkers participating in the February 18 protest against the cuts in Yorkshire must take up the fight for Yorkshire miners and other unions to join in the struggle for *General Strike* action to defeat the steel closures and bring down the reactionary Tory government that now threatens the whole working class.

- *20% without strings!
- *Defend all jobs!
- *Demand the TUC call a General Strike!
- *Bring down the Tories!

Water Workers 'no'

WATER workers in the GMWU have voted to throw out a 19.2% pay offer, and to take strike action in two weeks time.

If this stand is followed by NUPE and TGWU workers the strike could mount a major challenge to the Tory "cash limits" policy in the public sector—and offer further incentive to other public sector workers to join in the struggle to defend living standards against runaway inflation.

WORKERS SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Public meeting
The fight against the Cuts
7.30 p.m.
Thursday 21 February
Lyndhurst Hall
Warden Rd.
London NW5
(Tube: Kentish Town)

JAGS REVOLT AT BL GRADINGS

Leyland management's attempts to impose the new grading structure at Jaguar, Browns Lane, led to a mass revolt last week.

The new BL gradings changed the situation significantly from that which existed under the previous Jaguar agreement.

For example fitters, finishers and trimmers on Grade 1 under the previous scheme suddenly found themselves reassessed as "track assemblers", and placed on grade 3.

By last Monday when a JSSC meeting recommended a complete overtime ban, non co-operation in all areas and any other sanctions that individual sections saw fit to take, most sections were already implementing the first two and Re-fit had been on strike since the previous Friday.

By Tuesday management tactics showed clearly that they were provoking a confrontation. Different measures were taken in relation to different sections.

The Trim shop were taken off the clock for applying sanctions; and internal transport were on strike because of disciplinary threats against one worker over the application of sanctions.

At the same time a dispute at the Jaguar plant in Radford led to a shortage of axles.

All the assembly tracks were laid off on Tuesday morning due to a combination of axle shortages, the internal transport strike, and the fact that sanctions were beginning to bite.

Effectively there was a total shutdown—on both day and night shifts.

Only those placed on grade 1 were still working.

A JSSC held on Wednesday decided to call a mass meeting for Friday, at which it would recommend that those still working should stop and that it should be formally recorded that everyone was on strike against the new grading and for a return to the original Jaguar grading structure with the offer to discuss anomalies with the company.

The strike would last until management agreed to meaningful negotiations.

By Friday morning, when a further JSSC was to be held immediately before the mass meeting, union officials had intervened.

It was now recommended that there should be a return to work in order to go through procedure at a works conference

to be held on Monday or Tuesday with union officials in attendance.

The TGWU officials had argued that it was necessary to complete procedure, (despite the fact that the grading has been imposed by management and they are therefore free to act without the use of procedure), give the necessary five days notice, and then there would be no trouble making the strike official.

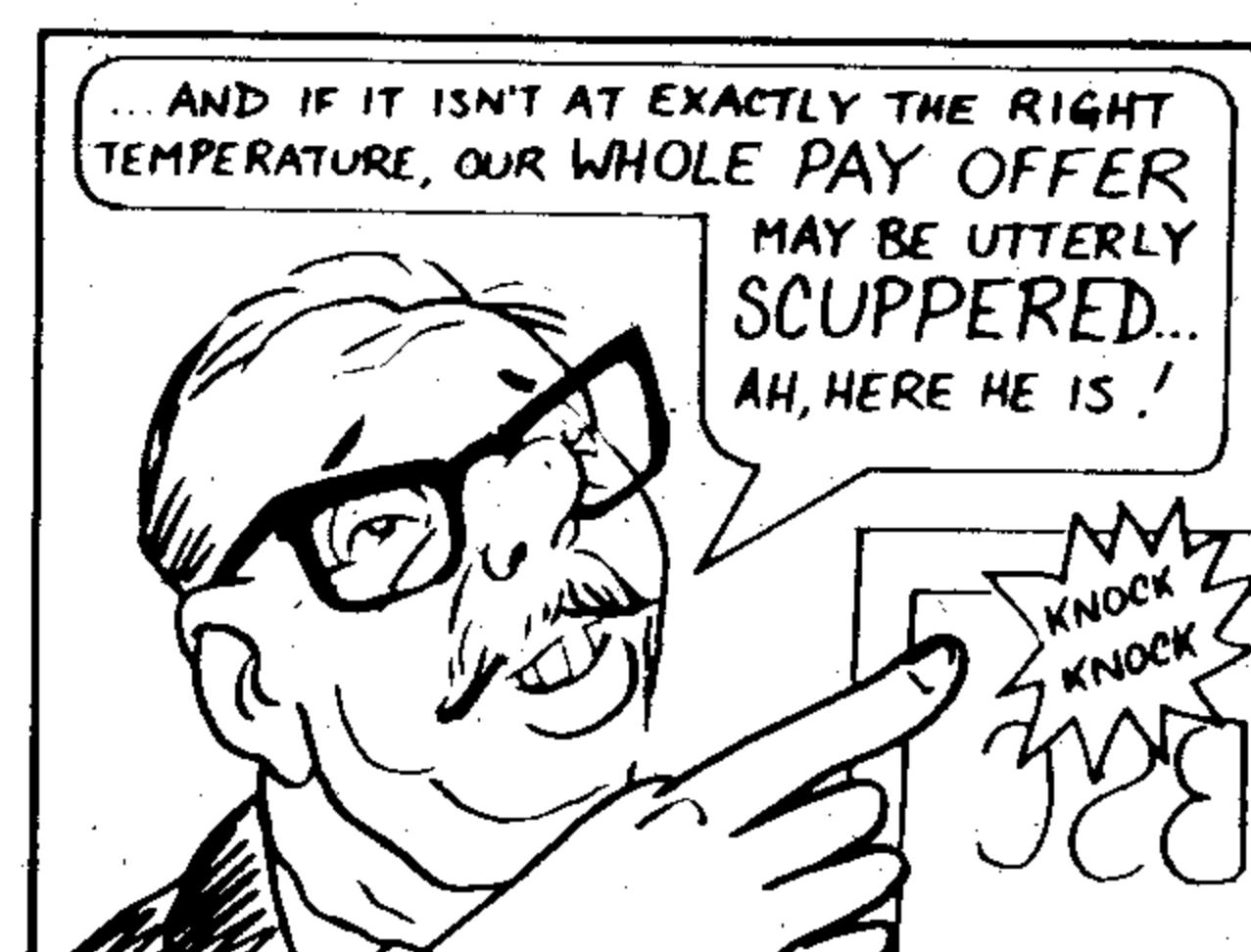
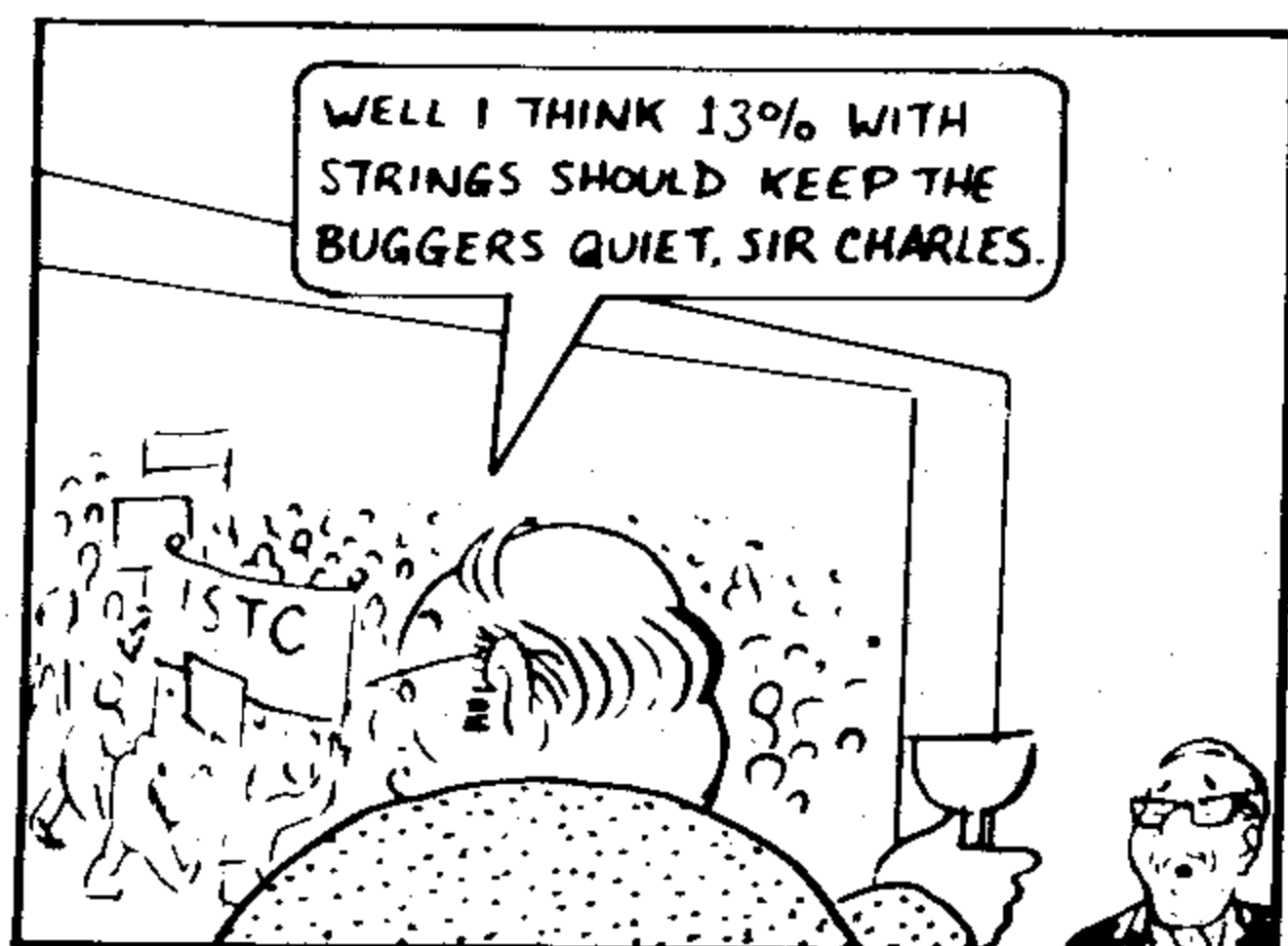
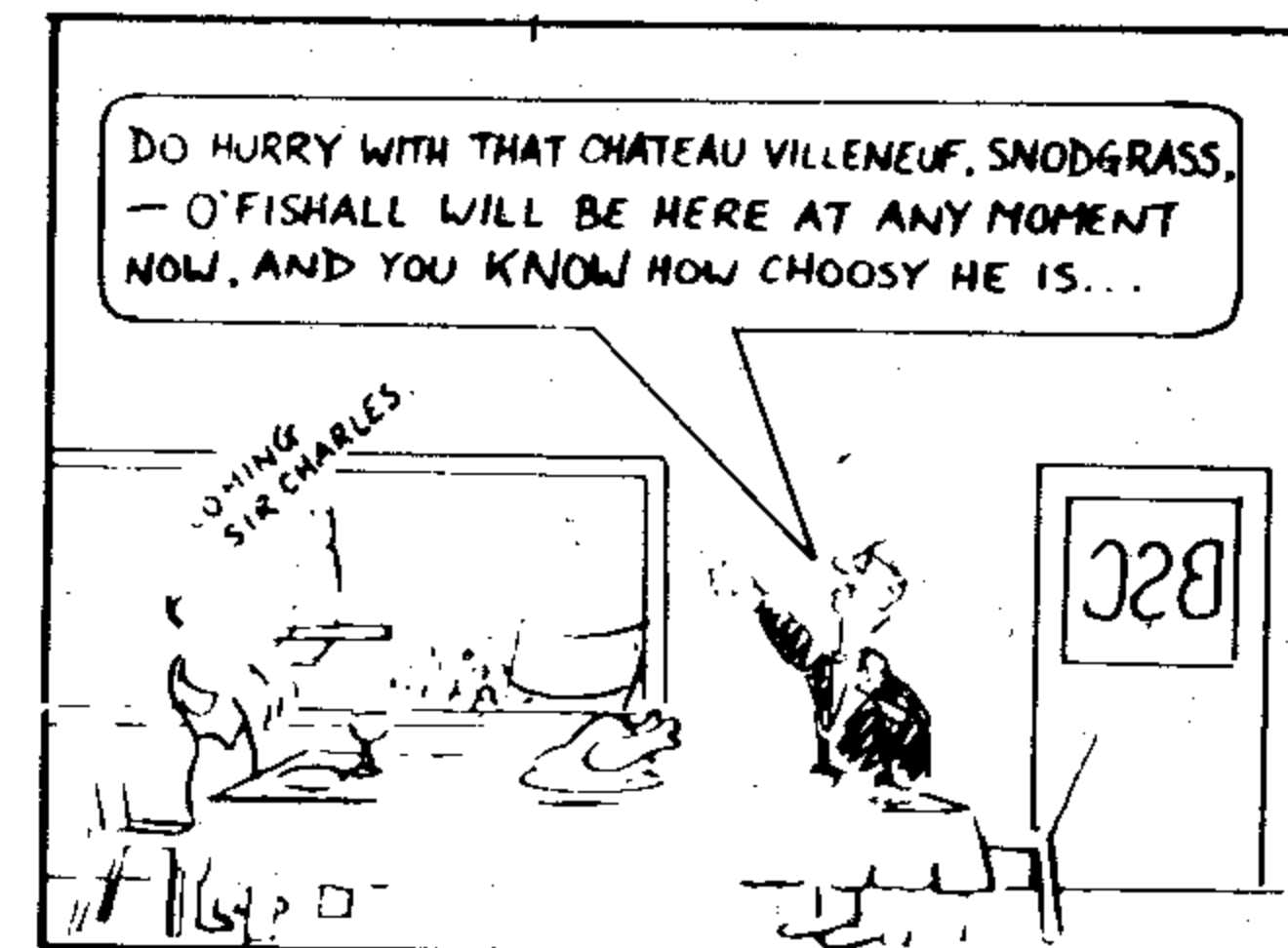
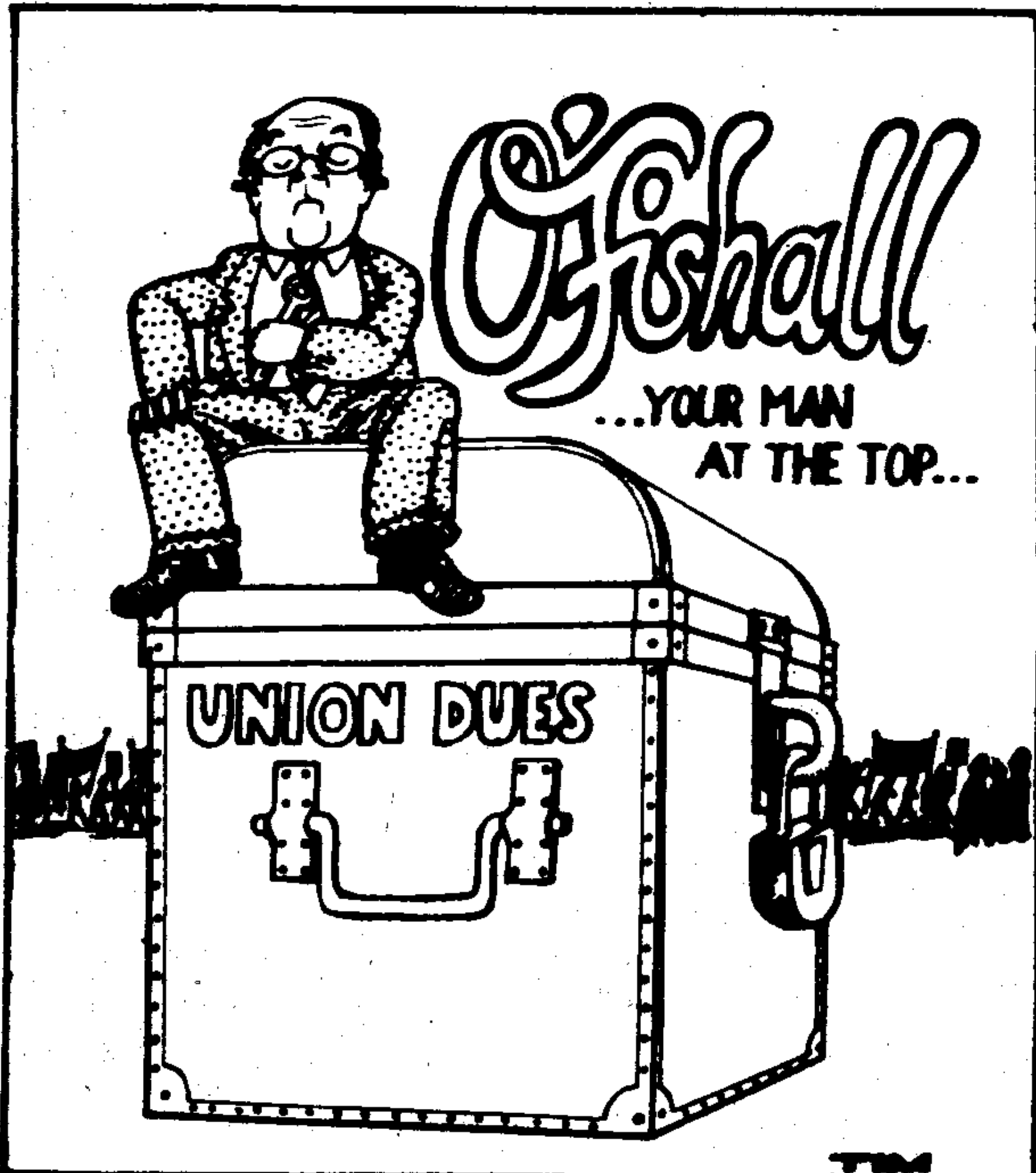
AUEW official Ken Cure said that he would refuse to come near the plant while the strike continued.

Opponents of the new position argued for the original recommendation and for the strike to be made official straight away.

The vote went roughly 54-36 for the officials' recommendation.

Although delaying tactics and interventions of this kind have held the line for the management since the new five grade structure was forced in, hostility to the grading is not far below the surface in most BL plants.

*As we go to press on Monday we hear that the Browns Lane workers have resumed their action against the grading system.



SOCIALIST PRESS



More violence against Mugabe

As imperialist allegations of "terrorism" ring out daily against Robert Mugabe's ZANU(PF) party, it is increasingly clear that the main thrust of Governor Soames and the Rhodesian state forces is towards harrasing and intimidating ZANU supporters—and even attempting to murder Mugabe himself.

The challenge facing imperialism's attempt to impose a neo-colonial solution in Zimbabwe stems from the inability of the petty bourgeois nationalist leadership to control the most militant guerrillas and sections of the working class.

These sections see clearly that the Lancaster House elections can bear no results of benefit to the mass of working people.

Balancing act

Mugabe and Nkomo are doing a balancing act on the wall of sudden death, with their own militants and rank and file on one side and the guns of General Walls and the South African army on the other.

While they compete with each other to draw greater crowds and marginalise Muzorewa, they must at the same time be careful not to arouse any expectations or set in motion a forward movement of the working class which would engulf them.

While they complain about the Rhodesian army and Muzorewa's auxiliaries viciously intimidating the electorate, they know that it is these forces which are maintaining the state

Continued, p.2.

CORRIE BILL HELD UP: FORCE A THREE-LINE WHIP!



John Corrie's savage anti-abortion bill ran into problems in the House of Commons last Friday—but it is far from dead.

It now seems certain that three Friday sessions will be available for its Third Reading rather than the expected two; and it is possible that pro-Corrie filibustering and other Tory manoeuvres could procure even more time to force through this medieval attack on women's rights.

But it is unlikely that the Tory government will give any of its own time for the Corrie proposals, despite the enthusiastic support for the Bill from the leader of the House, Catholic Norman St. John Stevas.

Health minister Gerard Vaughan has made it clear that

the government opposes most of the Bill's provisions—and is prepared to support only the reduction of the upper time limit from 28 weeks of pregnancy to 24.

Labour, Liberal and Tory leaders now seem agreed on this new restriction—but not on Corrie's other, more far-reaching proposals.

Hostility

Corrie had originally called for a 20-week limit. But his Bill—which also attempted to alter the criteria for legal abortion, and to shut down charitable clinics—has been met by unprecedented hostility not only from women throughout the country, but also from men.

A petition against the Bill has so far produced a staggering 200,000 signatures. Two separ-

ate opinion polls in the last ten days have agreed that 54% of all adults either oppose any restrictions on existing abortion rights, or actually favour more liberal legislation.

And 80% of women in Britain feel that abortion is an issue to be decided simply between the woman concerned and her doctor.

One in four women of child-bearing age declared that, if faced by unwanted pregnancy, they would continue to seek abortion whatever new restrictions are passed in Parliament.

This prospect of a wholesale growth of backstreet abortions, with all the squalor and misery that this entails, and the problems of imposing a law that would be so widely flouted, have clearly played on the minds of MPs—spurred on by the huge 20,000-strong anti-



Jo Richardson addressing anti-Corrie rally

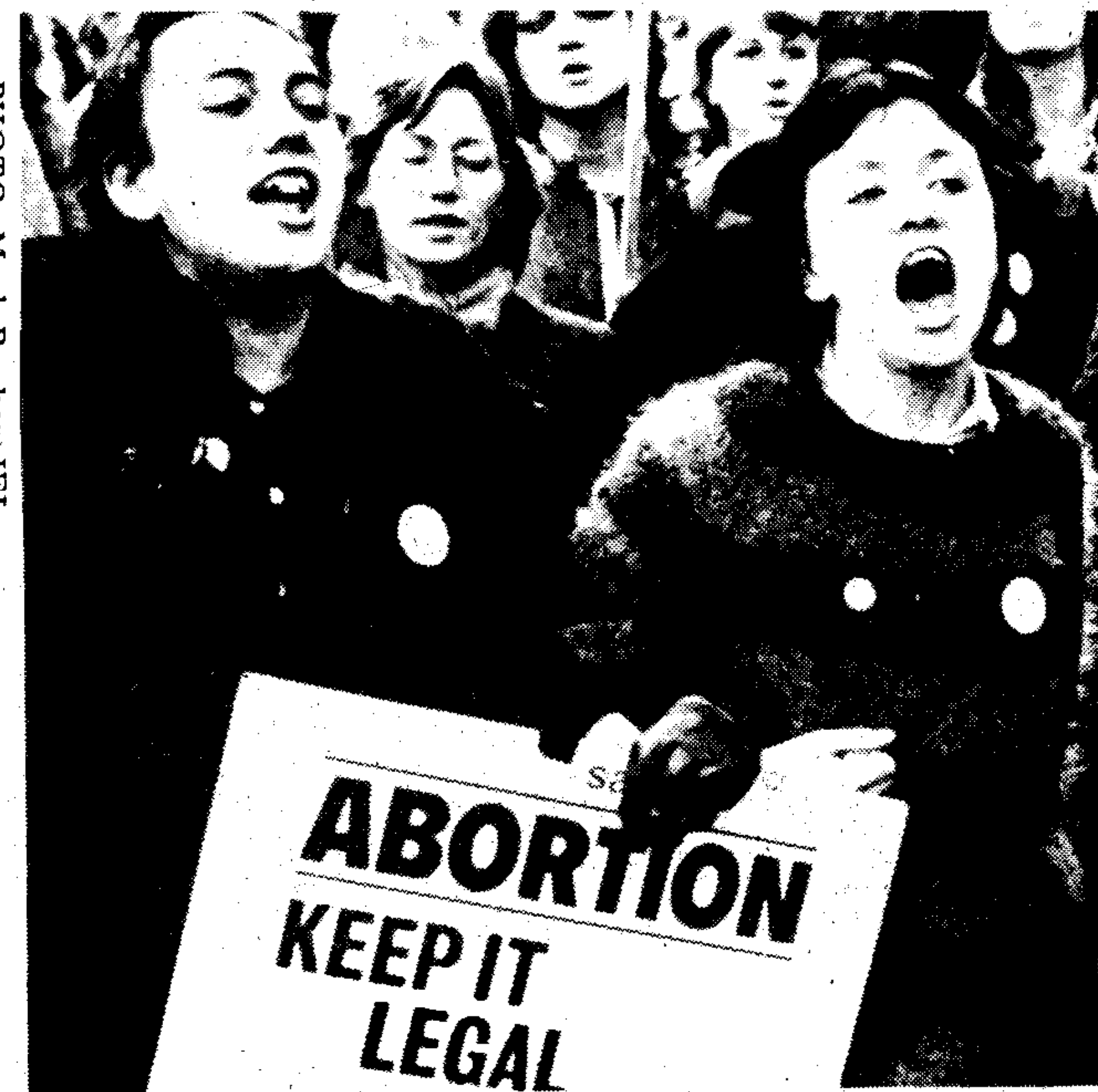


PHOTO: Mark Risher, IFL

Anti-Corrie demonstrators

Corrie lobby on February 5.

The Bill became immediately bogged down in a protracted discussion—with only two out of 21 groups of amendments being discussed in a five-hour session.

And the possibility emerged that it might never actually reach its crucial Third Reading vote.

But this does not mean that the labour movement should relax in the struggle to block this legislation—which is designed to reverse decades of struggle for women's rights.

There are still dozens of Labour MPs committed to support for anti-abortion legislation. And dozens more failed even to turn up to vote against

earlier stages of the Corrie Bill.

Left wingers like Jo Richardson who have fought the Bill tooth and nail (and others like Tony Benn who now emerge against it) must be called upon to fight within the PLP for a three-line whip on all Labour MPs to turn out and vote in line with the Party's conference policy of "free abortion on request" and against any restrictions in existing abortion rights.

Labour Parties and trade unions must act to remove MPs that flout this declared policy of the labour movement in order to follow the dictates of their bigoted "conscience" and vote for laws that would cause unnecessary suffering to thousands of working class women.

FUND

A good response during the past week, including an anonymous donation of £40 has put our February fund right on target with nearly half the fund in already.

However we cannot afford to relax if we are to find the rest of the money by the end of the month.

We still need £391.50 to make that target of £750.

At the same time we ask readers and supporters not to forget our £3,000 Special Fund. We were speeding towards our first £1,000 until last week when only £15 came in. Remember, our aim is to raise the first half of this Special Fund by Easter!

All donations to either fund should be sent to our new address:
Socialist Press Fund
BM Box 5277
London WC1V 6XX

KNIVES OUT AGAINST THE STEEL STRIKE

See also page 11

As the steel strike moves into its sixth week of increasingly bitter confrontation with the Tory government, it is coming under sustained attack from different sections of the trade union bureaucracy.

Even as ISTC leader Bill Sirs and Blastfurnacemen's leader Hector Smith licked their wounds after the ignominious collapse of the much-heralded "new offer" from BSC, craft and general union bureaucrats were preparing to accept an almost identical deal for their 70,000 members, and thus split the workforce down the middle.

Sordid deal

The craft unions have given their backing to a sordid deal which offers a 10% increase—

conditional on acceptance of a full-scale attack on working conditions involving flexibility of labour and demanning—and a possible additional 4% if local productivity schemes are agreed by May 18, at the expense of further jobs and conditions.

Confrontation

All this has been conceded by the craft union leaders for a total amount—14.4%—which is still well short of the going rate of inflation under the Tories.

What terrifies these negotiators is the growing prospect of direct confrontation with the Tory government itself, as the pay strike drags on and threatens to intermingle—particularly in South Wales—with the fight against BSC's programme of plant closures and mass sackings.

The same fear motivates the British TUC, led by General

Secretary Len Murray. Murray's main efforts in the last few weeks have been devoted *not* to mobilising support for the steelworkers, but to piling pressure on the Welsh TUC to call off their proposed indefinite general stoppage by unions affected by the steel closures.

This Welsh General Strike was originally called for January 21. Under massive TUC pressure it was postponed to March 10, with a Day of Action called in Cardiff on January 28—which mobilised 200,000 workers in strike action.

Now, petrified that the stoppage might actually take place, Murray has persuaded the Welsh TUC to call a special one-day conference on February 27, at which the recommendation will be to hand over control of protest action against the BSC closures to the British TUC—thus effectively abandoning the General Strike.



Murray

It is clear that most of the 350 delegates expected at this conference would be under firm instructions from union leaders to vote for the recommendation.

So convinced are Welsh miners that this is tantamount

to scrapping the General Strike call that Welsh NUM President Emlyn Williams has talked of the possibility of the NUM—which voted 9-1 for action against the steel and pit closures—going it alone in taking strike action from March 3.

The firmness of the miners' stand has paid off. As we go to press it has been announced that the NCB will provide a £22 million subsidy to preserve the 7,000 threatened jobs in South Wales.

Such a concession will obviously have the effect of weakening the fight for General Strike action on March 10—but shows that a determined fight can produce results.

Transport and railway workers must take a similar stand in action alongside steel workers to stop BSC's closure plans and defend the 40,000 threatened jobs in South Wales.