

# SOCIALIST PRESS



## INSIDE WSL Conference

Pages 3 and 4

### Terry Eagleton on Althusser

Centre pages

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Affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

## Rovers, Jags resist betrayal

Hopes of an all-out struggle to defend hard-won union rights and agreements in BL cars revived last week despite the frenzied efforts of the AUEW to prevent a strike and a total abdication of leadership by TGWU officials.

Indeed as we go to press TGWU General Secretary Moss Evans is pondering whether he should call out the union's 47,000 members who form the majority of BL's semi-skilled workforce on official strike—or whether he should hold back and wait for the growing wave of unofficial shop floor resistance to subside.

### Mandate

The issue has been forced to Evans attention by the strikes that have erupted in BL's midlands car plants. But he is not basing his decision on this clear evidence of workers' willingness to fight Edwardes—nor on the unmistakable mandate for action given to him by the recent ballot rejection of BL's 5%-with-strings package.

Instead he has been sounding out the views of individual TGWU convenors—who have time and again held back from any serious fight on the issue.

The Longbridge convenor, Communist Party member Jack Adams, for instance, has consistently *opposed* moves for strike action against Edwardes' insulting offer—pointing to the successful victimisation of Derek Robinson as evidence that it would be "foolhardy" to strike now.

In the Cowley Body Plant, the right wing leadership suffered a rebuff last weekend as a resolution calling on Evans to call all-out strike action throughout BL cars was passed overwhelmingly by the 5/60 Branch.

### Mass meetings

But this did not stop these same leaders from intervening the very next day to *stop* sectional strike action, arguing that 55% of the plant must support a strike before it can be called.

But such leaders have no intention of calling mass meetings to allow the members to express their views. They know full well that even where mass meetings have previously voted *against* strike action, the solid resistance that has emerged in the last week from workers in Jaguar, Rover and Sherpa van plants have created completely new conditions for a fight.

Given a clear official call for action there would be a solid response throughout BL cars. And in Rovers, AUEW semi-skilled workers are already following the lead of their TGWU brothers and sisters.

### Closures

The situation offers a better than ever chance to challenge not only Edwardes' 92 pages of strings but also the miserable 5% pay offer and the package of closures and redundancies that still threaten thousands of BL jobs.

Yet once again, as so many times before in the long saga of the struggle to defend jobs and



Evans



Edwardes

# BRING ALL LEYLAND OUT!

living standards in BL, the crucial factor is the reluctance of union leaders to fight—even now, when the very existence of trade unionism in BL plants is at stake.

\*First TGWU convenors and officials brushed aside the ballot vote which even Edwardes admitted amounted to a vote for strike action against the package—and hung fire for weeks, leaving the steel workers to fight on alone.

\*Then, as negotiators rejected the package and recommended strike action, TGWU officials sat back and watched Terry Duffy and the AUEW Executive conduct their fraudulent "straw poll" and exploit craft divisions as a pretext for instructing their members to take no action.

\*In the wake of the AUEW

sabotage TGWU officials *again* refused to give any lead, leaving the decision on action up to stewards in each plant.

\*As mass meetings, denied any perspective of a united struggle, voted against action, TGWU official Grenville Hawley was so confident that no strike would take place that he went off on holiday—as did BL boss Edwardes.

\*The fly in Hawley's ointment was the stubborn determination of workers in Jaguar, who set the pace in defying Edwardes April 8 ultimatum.

Their stand was followed by strikes in Rover (Solihull, Acocks Green, Tysley) in the Sherpa plant (Common Lane) and the threatened Castle Bromwich plant—which has now cut off supplies of bodies for the Mini at Longbridge.

against the whole pay-closures-and-strings package.

They are demanding:

\*Mass meetings in every plant not yet out to vote again on strike action in the light of the official strikes already underway in the Midlands.

\*Pickets to man the gates of plants still working to leaflet with an appeal for support and halt vital component supplies.

\*A link-up of strike committees throughout BL to offer a firm alternative to the TGWU bureaucracy.

\*An unambiguous strike call from Evans to all 47,000 TGWU members in BL cars. To press this case the LAC will be lobbying this week's meeting of the union's Finance and General Purposes Committee.

\*No to the 5%! Press the full £24/35 hour week claim!

\*No to the strings! Defend hard-won trade union rights!

\*No to the closures! Defend all jobs! Occupy threatened plants!

This struggle is a vital one for every BL carworker. And once again it underlines the necessity of constructing a principled revolutionary leadership in the BL unions if workers' independent interests are to be defended.

\*Laid-off workers from the Mini are now picketing the Longbridge plant—pointing out that Edwardes' new strings have—among other things—scrapped their 80% lay-off pay.

\*Yet still Evans is holding back on an all-out strike call.

Stewards from the Leyland Action Committee, however, are seizing the opportunity to mount a company-wide fight



Hawley (left)

## Carter threat to use force

In both Iran and in the USA reactionary leaders are searching for a way out of the confrontation that has developed over the American embassy hostages.

For President Carter, the miserable failure of US diplomatic and economic sanctions against Iran has now been compounded by a similar failure of his attempts to whip up a coordinated response from his fellow imperialist leaders—all of whom fear for their own oil supplies and for the long-term stability of the Gulf region.

For Ayatollah Khomeini, supporting the seizure of the hostages seemed at first to be an ideal and comparatively harmless means of diverting mass attention from mounting unemployment and economic crisis through a limited anti-imperialist mobilisation.

### Shah's regime

As moves to consolidate an Islamic dictatorship in Iran and suppress the national struggles of Kurds, Arabs, Azerbaijanis and others drew out unpleasant memories of the Shah's repression, the demand for the Shah's extradition seemed a useful cover.

But in following this course of action, Khomeini has in fact helped to paint both himself and his protege President Bani-Sadr into a corner.

Bani-Sadr has from the outset opposed the holding of the hostages, and sought to reconstruct the centralised state apparatus and repressive machinery in Iran, and to make overtures to US imperialism—particularly in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan.

But his efforts to bring an end to the hostages confrontation have run up against the anti-imperialist sentiments of the Iranian masses: and neither

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Bani-Sadr

# W. European capitalists search for political answers

Thatcher's partial victory over the steelworkers has not had the effect of firing the bourgeois rulers of the rest of Western Europe with the self-confidence it so sorely needs.

Recent weeks have seen several significant events in many quarters which illustrate the way in which the maintenance of bourgeois rule remains deeply problematic.

If Thatcher is still basking in the gains she has made in steel and BL, virtually no other Western European government can today feel even the limited comfort which she does.

In France, the relations between the two main bourgeois parties in the government coalition—the Gaullist RPR and Giscard's Republican Party—are growing increasingly bitter.

President Giscard can no longer rely on RPR parliamentary support on major items of government policy such as the Budget.

There is increasing discussion of the possibility of a new government coalition between Giscardians and Mitterand's Socialist Party.

## Cold war

In West Germany, the deteriorating economic situation and pressures arising from Carter's cold war drive are threatening the future of Helmut Schmidt's right wing social democratic government.

The far right winger Joseph Strauss is preparing to take over after the forthcoming elections.

In Holland, the right wing government remains under considerable pressure from national wage demands backed up by strike action.

All these governments, however, are relatively speaking, the



Chirac (left) with Giscard

stable governments of Western Europe.

It is in Italy, Belgium, Spain and Portugal that the problems of bourgeois rule are today most acute.

Italy's 39th government crisis since World War II has been resolved at whirlwind speed—largely, it seems, because of Italy's presidency of the EEC council of ministers.

The rapid setting up of another government under Francesco Cossiga—this time in coalition with the Republicans and the Socialist Party—doesn't even begin to resolve Italy's semi-permanent government crisis.

The Christian Democrats could hardly find a less reliable ally in government at the

present time than the Socialist Party.

Of course the SP does have enough parliamentary seats to give the new coalition a majority.

But it was the deep split in the SP which led to the fall of Cossiga's previous ministry.

## Benevolent

The SP withdrew from its position of benevolent neutrality because the "left" of the party started arguing that the only government it would support is a grand "historic compromise" coalition including both Christian Democrats and Communists.

At least for now they have changed their tune and are

willing to support the first centre-left coalition for a decade.

But while the "centre-left" formula in the early 1960s was trumpeted as a long-term solution to Italy's governmental problems, this time the trumpeting is very heavily muted.

Nobody, not even the participants expect the new government to last more than a few weeks, or at most months, before it is broken apart by the same pressures which have destroyed its predecessors.

It is unlikely to outlast the municipal elections of June 8.

The main source of these pressures is the demand of the working class for a resolution of its pressing material problems—mass unemployment and inflation above all.

Its traditional leaderships in the CP and Socialist Party, terrified of mobilising their rank and file, hold out the hope that there is a way forward through the participation of the workers' parties in government.

No political prediction is more certain than that Socialist participation in the new government will produce no benefit for the working class.

## Fearful

This is why, fearful as they are of losing support to the CP "opposition", the Socialists—probably sooner rather than later—will pull out.

For a brief interlude, then, Italy has a government. But as one leak is plugged, another has developed—Belgium.

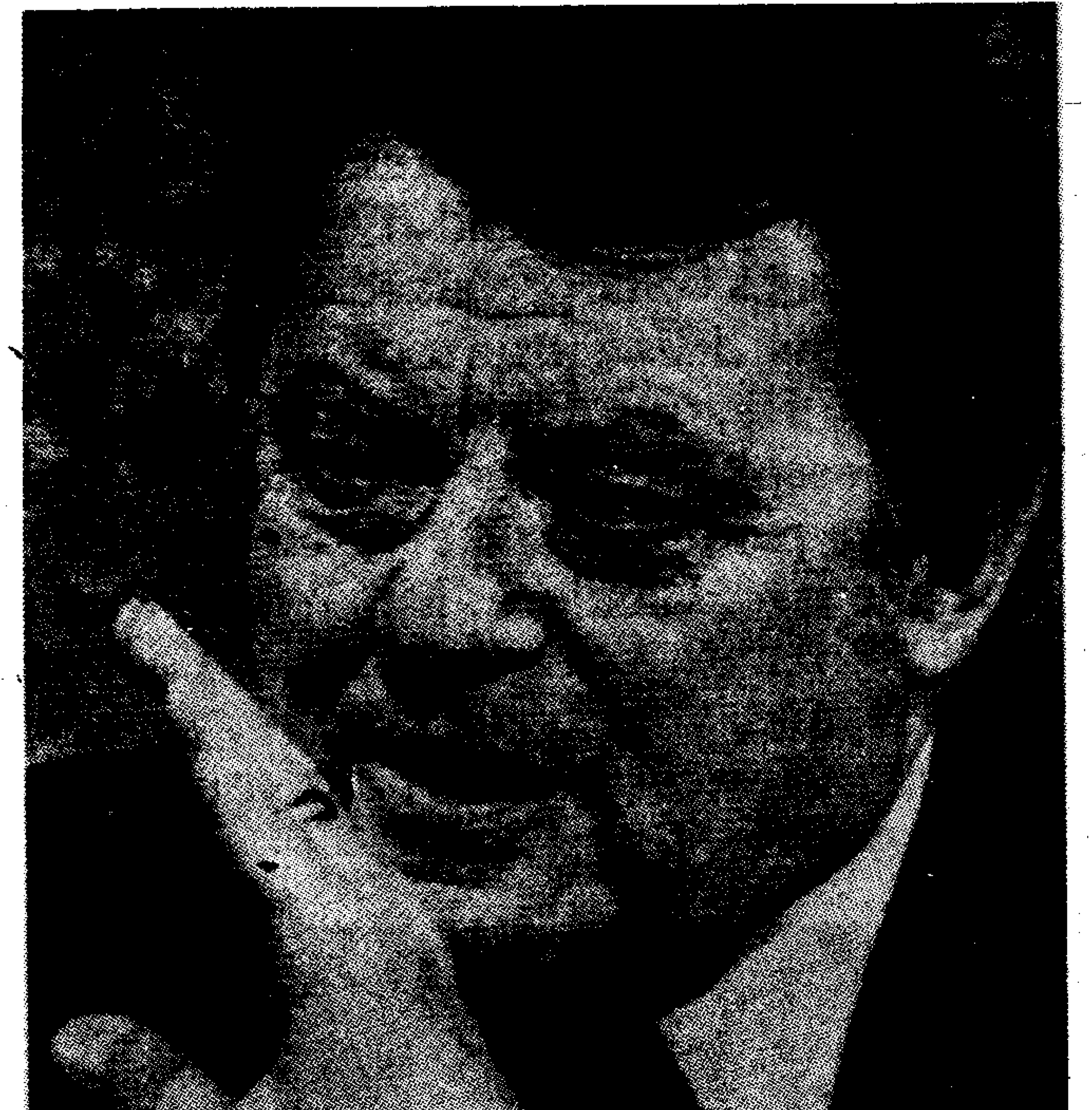
The acute difficulties of the Belgian bourgeoisie take the form of growing conflict between the French-speaking (Walloon) and Dutch-speaking (Flemish) communities.

Underlying this communal conflict also lies the failure of capitalism to meet the needs of the masses, coupled with the efforts of rival sections of the capitalist class, with enthusiastic participation on the part of the petty bourgeoisie, to spread the illusory notion that communal "autonomy" will resolve some of the masses' problems.

When the conflict threatened two years ago to tear the country apart, a "saviour" was called into the Premiership—Wilfried Martens.

## Unknown

Martens, like Cossiga in Italy, was the only "acceptable" Premier in a political crisis because he was a political unknown without support in the leading (Christian Demo-



German rightist Strauss

crat) section of the coalition.

Martens has held on for two years on the basis of a plan for a major constitutional change which would make Belgium into a form of federation.

But now, with the defection from this plan of a group of Social Democratic senators, the plan is, it seems, definitively dead. A new crisis has opened which will be exceptionally difficult to resolve.

No new Martens has yet appeared from obscurity to hold the crumbling country together a bit longer.

## Autonomy

It is also the problem of national self-determination which daily weakens the government of Adolfo Suarez in Spain.

After the dismal showing of his party in both the Basque and Catalan regional parliamentary elections, the establishment of a Basque "autonomous government" last week has not reduced the explosive implications of the national question.

The left petty bourgeois nationalist party, Herri Batasuna—the political wing of the terrorist organisation ETA (military)—is boycotting the assembly, a position which still has considerable support among sections of the radicalised masses in Euskadi.

The new Basque "government" takes office without any significant power and in circumstances where Euskadi remains under Francoist military and police occupation.

This makes it unlikely that the nationalist agitation in Euskadi which has several times in the last three years threatened to lead to a military coup by the right wing, will not be stilled.

Nor will the development of the economic crisis. The Spanish economy is now probably in as bad a state as any in Western Europe.

## Unemployment

Inflation is close to 20% and unemployment has risen by nearly 200% since 1977 to an official (much underestimated) total of 1.5 million.

It is the combination of the acute national question and the sharply deteriorating economic situation which makes the crisis of bourgeois rule in Spain today more profound than in any other country—reflected not, as in Italy and Belgium, in the form of a parliamentary crisis but of extreme lack of authority on the part of the government and evident readiness of

the military general staff to take political action.

It is this readiness which also distinguishes Spain from the rest of Europe, where, despite the increasing failures of parliamentary democracy from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, the military are still much less assertive than in Spain.

Finally, in Portugal the continued failure of the bourgeoisie to redress the profound damage done to bourgeois rule by the revolutionary developments of 1974 and 1975 are being expressed in a new twist in the political crisis.

Last week military President Eanes, in the name of the Council of the Revolution, vetoed the new far right-wing government's legislation designed to return significant nationalised sectors of the economy to the private sector.

## Unsavoury

The news coincides with the discovery by the government of a far right wing candidate for the forthcoming presidential elections—General Antonio Soares Carneiro.

Despite his unsavoury record Carneiro, like Cossiga and Martens, is acceptable to the capitalists as a ruler because he is largely unknown—a fact which itself reflects the profound loss of authority of Europe's capitalist class.

# Carter's threat

Cont'd from page 1

Bani-Sadr nor Khomeini have been prepared to flout the millions on the streets by simply enforcing the release of Carter's beleaguered gang of CIA spies and cypher-clerks.

This is why, so far, none of Carter's diplomatic or economic measures have had any effect on the crisis.

Meanwhile the obvious strength of the anti-imperialist movement is a vital reason why Carter's fellow imperialist leaders are so terrified that the US may resort to military means—a naval blockade, mining Iranian ports or other, more desperate steps—in a bid to secure the hostages' release.

Effectively deserted by his allies, under pressure from warring reactionaries at home and without any real hope of inflicting a military defeat on Iran without risking a wholesale anti-imperialist eruption throughout the oil-rich Middle East, Carter has only one real ray of hope left as the days tick by towards his "deadline"

## Slacken grip

If the anti-communist hangers-on of Iraq's Ba'athist regime were to carry out their threatened military attack on Iran, perhaps Khomeini and Bani-Sadr would slacken their grip on the hostages while they turned to repel the Iraqis.

On the other hand Carter must also fear that sooner than climb down under such con-

ditions the Iranian leaders might simply brand the Iraqi action an American plot and give the order for the execution of the hostages.

Whatever the outcome of the present confrontation, the imperialist leaders will not rest content until they reestablish firm control of the vital oil supplies in the Gulf—and this brings the lingering threat of imperialist war, which must be opposed by the workers' movement.

## Proletariat

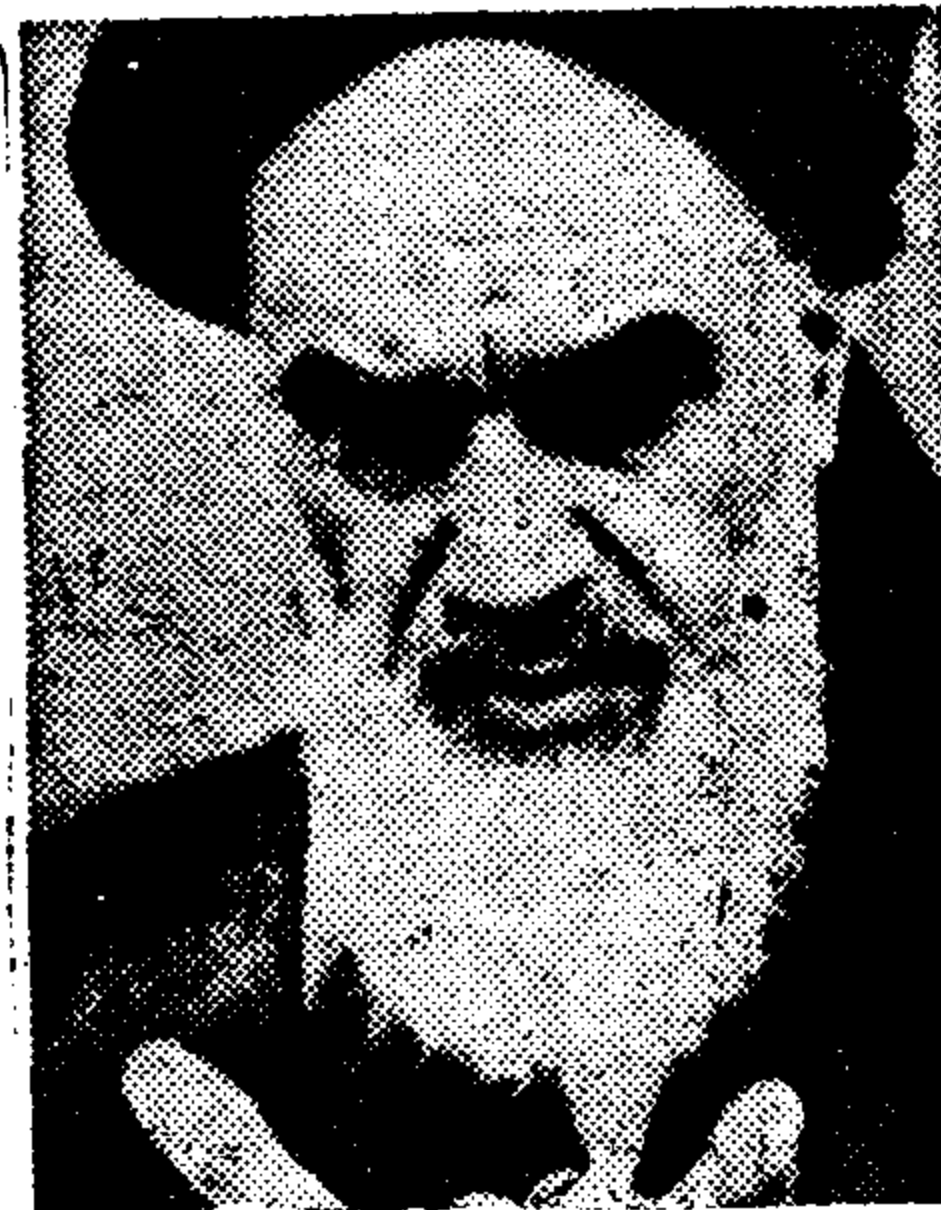
At the same time the interests of the working masses and oppressed nationalities within Iran itself cannot be secured without the development of a proletarian leadership that can mobilise the mass

action needed to topple the Islamic regime and institute a workers and peasants government in Iran.

**Iranian students in Britain have launched a campaign to defend the life of Dr Hussein Bor, an active fighter for national rights in Iranian Baluchestan.**

Bor, a victim of SAVAK persecution under the Shah, is in hospital in Tehran after an attempt on his life, most likely by agents of Khomeini's new successor to the SAVAK—SAVAMA.

We join the Iranian students in condemning this attack and in opposition to the numerous repressive measures of the Khomeini regime.



Khomeini

**KURDISH STUDENTS AGAINST THE DEPORTATION OF KURDISH STUDENTS FROM IRAQ**

**Demonstration  
Assemble 1 p.m. 19 April  
Embankment  
March to picket of Iraqi  
Embassy**

## NOW OUT

**DON'T LET TURKEY BECOME ANOTHER CHILE!**



A Workers Socialist League pamphlet 15p

WSL pamphlet on the situation in Turkey. Available, price 30p including p&p, from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

# WSL Conference report

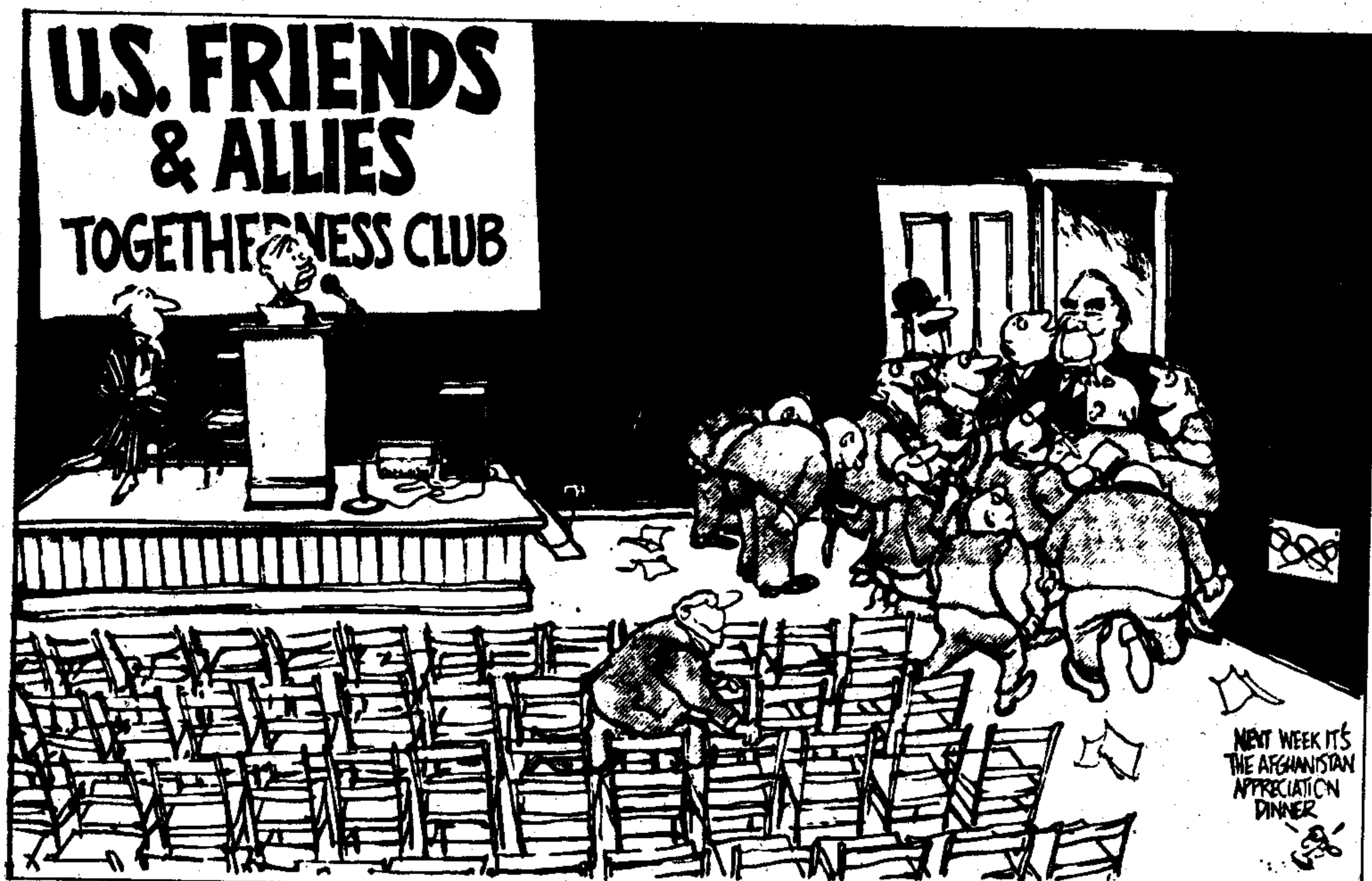
# BEHIND THE GOLD WAR MOVES

The Workers Socialist League's international document *Behind Carter's Cold War Offensive*, adopted on April 6 looks at the events preceding the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and points out the steadily weakening position of both imperialism and Stalinism in the face of rising anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles.

The document looks at the background to the launching by Nixon and Kissinger of the tactic of "detente" in 1973 and examines the reasons why this renewed attempt by the imperialists to act jointly with the Stalinists in containing the struggles of the working class on a world scale failed to prevent major defeats for imperialism in Vietnam, Ethiopia, Angola, Portugal, Iran and Nicaragua.

Locating Carter's post-Afghanistan policy switch in this context, the document probes the acute problems and contradictions faced by the US imperialists in adopting their renewed aggressive stance towards anti-imperialist struggles under a guise of an anti-Soviet war drive.

But it stresses that: "There must be no illusions that under pressure of defeats, imperialism on a national or international scale will simply give up the ghost, or peacefully and gradually disappear from the scene. Any scenario which



"Dear friends, I have a list of boycotts and sanctions for your consideration . . . er, friends and allies, er . . . sanctions and boycotts against the Soviet . . . Friends, could I have your attention . . . er . . ."

depicts a dwindling imperialism finally handing over power to the working class is a deadly, reformist illusion refuted by Marxism and refuted by the whole historical experience of the working class".

It goes on to compare and contrast the 1980 Cold War to the classic Cold War period of the late 1940s and early 50s—pointing in particular to the relative weakening of US imperialism not only in military and economic terms in relation to the USSR, but also in terms of its competitors in W. Europe

and Japan—many of whom have developed their own extensive trading links with the Stalinist bureaucracies, and cannot be simply press-ganged into concerted action with the US imperialists.

### Differences

Differences were raised in the conference on the document's assessment of the motives behind the Kremlin leaders' decision to invade Afghanistan, on its insistence that this move was in essence

defensive, and on the conclusion that there is therefore no possibility of Soviet military moves towards Iran.

A number of members argued for the WSL to adopt a position of calling for the withdrawal of the Russian invasion force, linked to demands for the mobilisation of the Afghan workers and poor peasants to repel imperialist-backed attacks. These positions were heavily defeated by the conference.

But there was no disagreement on the document's declaration that:

"What we must and do

Well over 100 members, observers and fraternal delegates attended the three-day Fourth Annual Conference of the Workers Socialist League on April 4-6.

Five main policy documents were adopted offering general guidelines of WSL orientation in the building of a Trotskyist party in Britain, an analysis of the background to the imperialist Cold War offensive, an assessment of the latest changes and development in the crisis of the world Trotskyist movement, an assessment of the development of the WSL's political work amongst women and a perspective for assisting in the building of the Socialist Youth League.

Brief summaries of these documents appear in this issue of *Socialist Press*: extended extracts will appear in the next few weeks.

exclude is the prospect of the Stalinist bureaucracy unleashing or mobilising the revolutionary potential of the working class either in the deformed and degenerated workers' states or in the countries in the orbit of imperialism. Cold War or no Cold War, the Stalinist bureaucrats recognise as surely as the imperialists that the most dangerous enemy of their parasitic power and privilege remains the working class".

In this light the document includes a brief examination of the political and economic crisis dogging the Stalinists of East Europe, Cuba, SE Asia and China, and points to the necessity of defending the nationalised property relations in these states while fighting for the political overthrow of the bureaucracies.

Extracts from this document will appear in next week's *Socialist Press*.

## Debate on FI crisis

The still unresolved political crisis and fragmentation of the post-war Trotskyist movement provided the basis for a lively debate at the WSL conference.

A short document entitled "The WSL, the TILC and the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International" was adopted by the conference—but only after a small minority of comrades had provoked considerable discussion by counterposing their own very different conception of the way in which the crisis of the world Trotskyist movement must be resolved.

### Reconstruction

The WSL majority reemphasised that our call for the "reconstruction" of the FI is used explicitly to *reject* any sectarian proclamation of the WSL and its co-thinkers as "the" Fourth International, while at the same time rejecting any simple "reorganisation" of the existing tendencies into a new "international" without the establishment of a principled basis of political agreement.

The minority pointed in contrast to the emergence under the banner of orthodox Trotskyism of the Parity Commission (comprising the OCRFI, the Bolshevik Faction and the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency), and called for the "regroupment" of the PC organisations into single national sections. The WSL, they suggested, should on this basis approach the British Bolshevik Faction grouping and the OCRFI section of the Socialist Labour Group.

This view was decisively rejected by a succession of speakers who pointed to the substantial political differences that separate our movement from the PC leadership, and to the necessity to avoid the temptation simply to reshuffle the

organisations of the world Trotskyist movement without resolving the problems that have split and divided it throughout the post-war period.

### Broken isolation

Our chances to bring about such a development have been massively improved by the establishment of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, which has for the first time broken the national isolation of the WSL and opened up the possibility of a coordinated international fight for political clarity.

In an additional resolution the WSL committed itself unequivocally to the struggle for the *unity* of Trotskyist forces in a single, democratic centralist world party on the basis of a thoroughgoing international discussion and programmatic agreement.



75p including p&p from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

## TILC Resolution on Parity Commission

1) The TILC at its meeting on April 8 1980 heard a report from its representatives who visited the Parity Commission in Paris on March 16.

From this report it appeared that what had originally promised to be a development offering new opportunities in the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International is undergoing a process of rapid change.

2) When first approached by the PC, our organisations were assured that there was no intention by the PC's organisers of forming a new international movement. We were told that the sole task of the PC was to organise as quickly as possible a conference "open to all those organisations regarding themselves as based on the Trotskyist programme", and designed to start the process of discussion and clarification on the question of Pabloism.

On this basis we welcomed the call for the conference, and declared our willingness to work for it on the Parity Commission. This remains our position.

3) But it now appears—despite public statements to the contrary by some national groupings adhering to the PC—that the PC no longer intends to organise any such conference. Nor is the PC any longer inviting other Trotskyists to join it in undertaking such a task. Instead the PC has effectively formed itself into a joint secretariat of the Bolshevik Faction (BF), Leninist Trotskyist Tendency (LTT) and the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI), acting as a new international organisation and closed to other organisations.

4) In place of the 'open conference' of world Trotskyists, we are now told that the PC plans to hold a closed conference of PC forces—together with those elements that declare the PC to be the main axis around which the Fourth International will be reconstructed and its components to represent the continuity of the struggle against revisionism in the Trotskyist movement. Yet we hear the USFI has been invited. In place of the invitation to other organisations to join the PC are rules offering only associate (non-voting) membership to organisations by unanimous vote of all 3 PC groupings.

5) The PC has meanwhile begun to issue political statements on Iran, on Nicaragua, on Afghanistan, on Peru and El Salvador as well as a general political resolution.

Besides profoundly wrong positions on Afghanistan, confusing revolutionary and reactionary movements and paving the way for major deviations on such a basic issue as defence of the USSR, it is to be stressed that all of these statements appear to be written in such a way as to evade the fundamental political differences between the BF and the OCRFI. PC leaders stress that they intend to pursue discussions only on areas where a substantial measure of agreement exists, and not to debate out their differences.

6) It is here that we must fundamentally disagree with the method employed by the PC. The historical experiences of the post-war FI show that the International cannot be reconstruct-

ed on the basis of diplomatic statements restating already agreed positions. What is needed is a thorough discussion of the real political and programmatic issues that have split and divided the Trotskyist movement since 1953—the role of Stalinism; the political independence of the working class from petty bourgeois nationalist movements; and the application of the Transitional Programme to the fight in the mass movement of the working class. Mere agreement on the Nicaraguan events—although the PC rightfully exposed the complete Pabloite liquidationism of the USFI on this issue—is inadequate as a basis to reconstruct the FI. We should remember in this context that Healy emerged on the "right" side against Pablo in 1953.

7) The present course of the PC stands in marked contrast to its early political statements, which indeed emphasised the need for identifying the historical roots (starting from Pabloism) of the crisis of the FI which produced the 1979 USec split. Yet the present trajectory of the PC appears to be not towards resolving these basic problems but towards a repetition of the unprincipled "reunification" of 1963—which was at that point correctly opposed by the OCI.

8) The TILC restates its commitment to struggle for the broadest possible discussion in the world Trotskyist movement to lay a principled programmatic basis for the reconstruction of the FI as a democratic centralist world party of socialist revolution. The trajectory of the PC, on the other hand, appears to be

towards an avoidance of discussion on basic issues, and a diplomatic agreement conducted at leadership level, without the involvement of the rank and file of the PC organisations. This can in our view only lay the basis for political confusion and future splits.

9) We therefore call on the PC to return to its original terms of reference and its stated objectives—the convening of an open conference to begin the process of political clarification needed for the reconstruction of the FI.

We call on the PC to open itself to those forces that declare their adherence to the Trotskyist programme and are willing to constructively engage in the political preparation and building of such a conference.

We propose that its agenda should embrace the struggle against the methods of Pabloism in connection with Stalinism, social democracy and petty bourgeois nationalist movements.

10) On such a basis we declare ourselves willing to participate in the Parity Commission in the preparation of that Open Conference.

Meantime we approach the presently constituted Parity Commission on the basis of seeking discussions between our two distinct international organisations. We seek to initiate a political debate, which we feel should be unrestrained and public.

We are ready to continue such a discussion outside the framework of the PC: and for our part we intend to submit our political reply to the declarations already passed by the PC.

# WSL conference report



Callaghan



Tory leaders in conference



## PREPARE TO BRING DOWN

## TORIES!

## Keynote of WSL conference

### Build Woman Worker groups

The document 'Perspectives for Work Amongst Women' summed up the results of a year's work by the WSL which had brought the successful launching of the paper *Woman Worker* and an all-round strengthening of the WSL Women's Commission.

Pointing to the way in which the intensified oppression of women, their elimination from the workforce, and isolation in the home flows from the requirements of capitalism in crisis, the document moves on to look at the ways in which the WSL has been able to intervene and mobilise working class women in a wide range of struggles against the cuts, in unionisation struggles, in nursery and other campaigns in which women both within and outside the organised labour movement have been involved.

### Criticisms

From the floor of the conference came some criticisms of the document, linked to calls for greater urgency to be attached to theoretical work on the whole question of sexual oppression and sexuality.

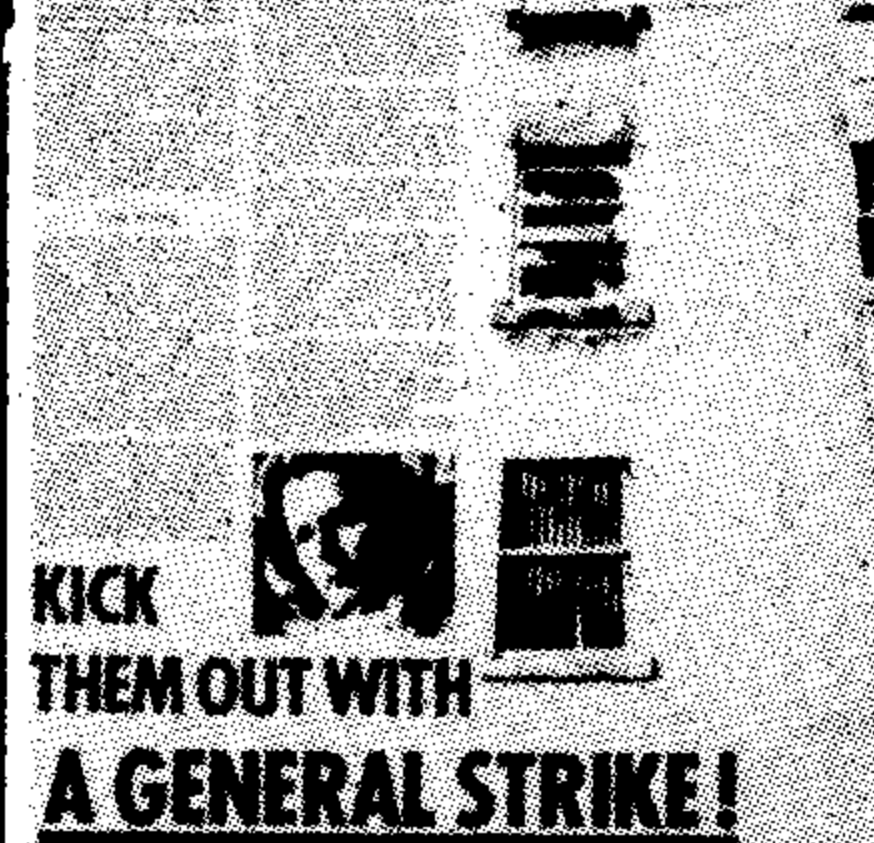
A framework and timetable for such work was agreed by the conference.

A number of other delegates however emphasised the need for such theoretical work to be conducted not in abstraction but hand in hand with the struggle in practice to mobilise women in struggle against the trade union and Labour bureaucracy and to win them to revolutionary politics.

Womens paper of the Workers Socialist League

### woman worker

Tories attack housing and jobs ...



WOMAN WORKER 6 is available, price 18p, incl. p&p from WSL BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

The British Perspectives document—into which a large number of complementary amendments were incorporated—begins with a general view of the impact on the class struggle of the election last May of the Thatcher government.

It goes on to analyse the international economic and political crisis within which the Tories are driven onto the offensive, and the particular reflection of the economic crisis in the British capitalist economy.

Stressing that every one of the Tory government's policies tends to benefit the banks and finance capital at the expense of manufacturing industry, the

document goes on to point out the acute dangers this brings for the working class, in the form of mass unemployment, and the use of that unemployment in a bid to further force down real wages and to weaken the strength of the workers' movement.

Social services and health cuts, education cuts, and the virtual halt in council house building all point to the fact that the Tories—in response to the insoluble crisis of capitalism—are set to impose an actual reverse on social progress for the British working class.

Such an attack requires the strengthening of the forces of the state, through increased

police and military spending and anti-union laws.

At the same time the Tories are working to divide the working class through racist legislation and moves to utilise the individual family unit as the prime target of their strike-breaking media and press propaganda.

### Irish war

At the same time the Tories have pressed ahead with their attempts to crush the Irish liberation struggle.

In this situation the crucial weakness and treachery of the existing reformist and Stalinist leadership of the working class has been exposed—in the refusal of union leaders to fight on wages, on jobs, on conditions, against employers' blackmailing plea for viability, against government spending cuts, or even in defence of democratic rights.

Yet, as the document stresses, the willingness of the working class to defend its interests poses a continual challenge to such betrayals, and to the right wing leadership within the Labour Party.

The document examines the importance in this situation of the role played by the Labour 'lefts' in containing the forward movement of the working class within Parliamentary, reformist channels—creating the illusion that the political problems of the working class can be resolved through the Labour Party.

### Expose lefts

Such leaders cannot be simply ignored: they retain the allegiance of many thousands of advanced workers. Instead it is necessary to put down demands on the 'lefts' that can expose their limitation, and take workers forward:

"We contrast to the class collaboration, confusion and betrayal of simply another Labour government under a Callaghan or a Benn, the call for a workers government, a government responsive to the needs and demands of the workers' movement and committed to the struggle for workers' inde-

pendent interests."

The *Times* was the only paper to draw any analogy with other subjects.

"It may be of some consolation to them to know that they head a large company of valued friends and distinguished servants of this country who have recently been outraged by some portrayal or other on the box: field marshalls, Admirals of the Fleet, secretaries of state for Northern Ireland, spymasters, Jews (who deplore Holocaust) Germans (who deplore our insatiable appetite for films about the war) immigrants, Puritans, Libertarians, Welshmen, bishops, prime ministers (our very own), MPs (almost without cessation)."

Absent from this list was the police. There is little doubt that there would be a unanimous squeal of press protest at any similar exposure of police corruption.

In short, all the reaction from the capitalist press tells us is that it is prepared for the time being to defend TV's right to make a film offensive to Arab state rulers. The hypocrisy revealed by this is more eloquent than the words on the paper.

## PRESS GANG



"Against this view stand our own traditions of free speech and seeking after the truth. And these simply do not admit of diktats which ban programmes not to the government's taste. That is simply not our way."

This came from the *Daily Telegraph*, the paper which unequivocally stated just a few months ago that it would have sacked the BBC Panorama team which filmed the IRA at Carrickmore, had they been on the *Telegraph* payroll.

However Ireland was not the subject under discussion in this defence of the freedom of the press, and it was clearly far enough away from the mind of the leader writer not to raise any embarrassing questions.

The subject was in fact the response from the Saudi Arabian royal ruling clique to the showing of the ATV film, *Death of a Princess*, which portrayed a fictionalised documentary account of the execution of Princess Misha'al and her lover for adultery.

The film was said to have put at risk the lucrative contracts between British firms and the Saudis.

In matters relating to Ireland the few programmes which get made with any degree of understanding of the anti-imperialist

struggle are of course subject to just those diktats which the *Telegraph* denies.

The BBC has a policy of 'referring upwards' any programme on the Irish war even before it is made. By and large the government, the TV chiefs and press exercise as sophisticated a degree of censorship on Ireland as can be found anywhere in the world.

In rejecting the crude forms of censorship favoured by the Saudi royal government the press is also expressing its preference for this sophistication.

There was indeed not a little racialism in the patronising way in which the leader writers explained that the free ways of the British are inscrutable to the Arabs. (The *Daily Mail* headed its leader 'Customs of the mysterious West').

Nor did the defence of the ATV programme makers extend much beyond formal defence of their right to make the film.

The *Guardian* said that Lord Carrington's apology (which he denies is an apology) was correct.

"He could scarcely do less than regret a rift in Anglo-Saudi relations, for that would indeed be a very regrettable matter."

The *Times* said: "An expression of regret that offence had been taken was appropriate. It is not at all the

# Teachers' leaders run from fight

Harsh reality intruded into this year's NUT conference, knocking into second place the routine junketing of delegates and friends.

Even speeches made by members of the Executive reflected the growing concern of the membership, at the erosion of jobs, wages and their control of what they teach.

Nevertheless, the proceedings did take place in a somewhat unreal atmosphere with the 1979 wage claim (not to mention the 1980 claim) still outstanding and with the Clegg report conveniently unpublished until the delegates are safely dispersed.

Desperately trying to hold up some example of action that they have condoned in the past year, the Executive called on Nottingham teacher Eileen Crosbie to address conference on the first day.

She is suspended for refusing to take a class of 40 nursery pupils with the assistance of only one nursery nurse.

## Rolling strikes

Since January more than 450 teachers from 35 schools in Nottingham have been out on rolling strikes in her support.

The Executive then obviously considered they had done their bit and refused to allow a suspension of standing orders for delegates from Avon to report on their action.

This was one of the relatively few occasions when crude right wing witch-hunting was resorted to by an Executive member.

The Executive has been greatly weakened in its anti-left crusade by the retirement of veteran Stalinist right winger Max Morris, while his protegee Malcolm Horne succeeded in only making a fool of himself.

The other reason for the much less sharp exchanges is that the policies being put forward by those who have long wanted to fight the cuts, have begun to be recognised by members as more and more "realistic" and necessary in the face of the Tory onslaught.

It should be said that the Socialist Teachers Alliance, despite major political weaknesses, has done a lot of patient, careful work, and has broken down some of the previous hostility.

For example, if a delegate from East London had moved an important amendment to the Executive report on the penultimate day of conference in previous years there would have been groans and hissing.

## Blair Peach

This year, however, the addendum which called attention to the death of Blair Peach and to the delay in calling a public enquiry, was accepted by the Executive and was carried. (We, of course, have called consistently for a workers inquiry into the murder).

As usual, most of the Executive motions were carried, and they introduced five memoranda.

The salaries memorandum 1981-82 was suitably vague, talking only of "increases in salaries for all teachers to improve their real standard of living" although it did promise to get "a new salary structure".

A useful discussion did take place, however, around the fight for decent wages for new teachers and the defence of wages through a sliding scale on an index to be decided by the union itself.

Delegates pointed out that the memorandum on nursery education was produced as a white-wash job for continuing to take no action against closures.

One delegate from Witney and Burford pointed out that when she was involved in the occupation of a nursery class in Oxford two years ago the

Executive had opposed a suspension of standing orders even to discuss it!

The Executive did get defeated on their memorandum on union finance and subscriptions and their rule change on the calling of special conferences on salaries—which would allow three-quarters of the Executive to decide not to call a conference—was thrown out.

So too was a move to use the strike fund for administration.

There was general agreement in conference opposing the use of public funds for assisted places; the need for united action and fraternal relations

to racist legislation.

The basic demand for the right to free abortion on demand was yet again attacked by the Executive who even refused to declare its opposition to the Corrie Bill.

## Half-day strikes

The pressure that the Executive feels under came out clearly in the address to conference by General Secretary Fred Jarvis, who announced the decision to support the May 14 Day of Action with half-day strikes and other "appropriate action".



Jarvis



Parents picketing the nursery class of suspended Nottingham teacher Eileen Crosbie

with other teaching unions; for the rights of members in special education to take industrial action; and against government attempts to link conditions of service to a salary settlement.

There was heated debate on the motion on racialism.

The Executive carried an amendment to cut out from the main motion a pledge of support for members refusing to work with those engaged in racist activities and to rule such activities incompatible with membership of the NUT.

It also deleted affiliation to the ANL, a call for the disbanding of the SPG and opposition

This was, unfortunately, not an instruction and local associations are left to decide for themselves what action to take.

## Fear of members

Jarvis felt compelled to add: "This is not meant to be a general strike to bring down the government. It is an exercise of the right of working people to withdraw their labour to show their opinion of the government's policies."

This fear of the membership moving too far and too fast for its dynamic (!) leadership shone through his hasty reminder that

the NUT is politically unaligned and not against this government because of its political complexion.

How teachers are to fight to defend jobs and wages under a government of "this complexion" was not made clear.

The membership will quickly begin to learn, however, as it moves into struggle against the Tories and sees more clearly the need to fight against a leadership which is nothing more than an obstacle to that fight.

# Carlisle walks in-200 walk out!

The appearance of Tory Education Minister Mark Carlisle was enough to prompt an immediate walk out by over 200 NUT conference delegates last Tuesday.

Many other delegates stayed away from the session, unable to stomach the sight of the axeman of education sitting on a trade union platform.

But a lot of delegates mistakenly decided to sit through his hour-long arrogant exposition of cuts, government control of the curriculum and attacks on conditions of service.

Seconds after Carlisle's opening sentence many sections of the hall rose to their feet, backs to Carlisle, in applause as delegates from Avon unfurled a large banner demanding "Give Avon Back its Teachers".

## Banner

Minutes later there was more applause as "All out May 14" was hung from the balcony.

Then, as Carlisle slowly began to get into his stride of attacks on teachers' conditions of service and on the compre-

hensive system the 200 delegates walked out and held an alternative meeting with a speaker from Avon outlining the difficulties and achievements experienced by the NUT members there.

The next day Kennedy, NUT President, was questioned on the divisiveness of his decision to announce to Carlisle and the general public that "only 111" delegates had taken part in the walk-out.

## "Black shirts"

Kennedy took advantage of this opportunity to further denigrate and witch-hunt the demonstrators by likening them to "a squad of Moseley's black-shirts".

A second demonstration of left wing anger against the actions of the National Executive was held on Wednesday evening when a group of delegates and members of Blackpool Trades Council picketed the "Mayor's Reception"—a free evening's entertainment offered by Blackpool's Tory Mayor and accepted by the Executive at the expense of the housing and other services of the people of Blackpool.



Carlisle

## Left wing image shattered

# KINNOCK IN THE OPEN

Neil "green cheese" Kinnock put the last nail in the coffin of his left reputation when speaking to the NUT Secondary Teachers Section on Easter Saturday.

Appealing to the delegates to take a "balanced view" he described at length the disaster zone that will be the state education service after five years of Tory rule—without offering the slightest suggestion that the Thatcher government should be brought down before ending its term of office.

He then explained why it would be impossible for an incoming Labour administration to find the funds to restore the cuts.

The combination of the Tory cuts and their ideological attack on free state education—in the form of bringing back selection procedures, the assisted places scheme, benefits in the Budget to public schools through their "charity" status and so on—was, Kinnock said, a

lethal one.

Carlisle and Thatcher want to introduce selection at 11, at 16 for further education and even at 14, when options are chosen for specialisation.

They aim to make academic success the only criteria for success.

## Central control

The £939 million of cuts over the next five years will be socially discriminatory and a means of exerting more central government control over local authorities.

Kinnock admitted that local councils were faced with the invidious choice of cuts or rate rises but gave no way forward for Labour councils fighting the cuts.

Nor, of course, did he make any mention of the record of the previous Labour administration, whose policy of spending cuts and similar anti-working class policies helped Labour to lose last May's general election to the Tories.

Instead Kinnock placed the

ball back into the teachers' court.

Teachers, he said, must go on the offensive to save the education system—thus implying that schools had sat back and accepted the attacks made on them past and present.

"Parents and some politicians will support you", he said—"but it is your responsibility to be at the forefront of the campaign".

"I am accused", he went on "of a certain lack of zeal".

But far from making apologies for this, Kinnock declared he would make no promises to restore education cuts. Instead he simply repeated his belief that only people who think the moon is made of green cheese would expect such promises.

For Kinnock it is all a question of competing priorities.

But since he is ready to allow the Thatcher government at least one full term of office—by which time Tory monetarism will have wreaked havoc—his first priorities before restoring the cuts are apparently production and poverty.

Thus in true social democratic fashion Kinnock pledges himself to reforming the system, helping ailing capitalism back to its feet, while urging Thatcher to hand out a few more pounds in child benefit to salve his conscience.

## Cabinet post

Kinnock's "balanced view" is now tipped by the trappings of office—the ministerial car he already travels in—the promise of Cabinet position in the next Labour government.

He cannot afford to be associated now even with those lefts who do still talk of mobilising the working class against the Tories and of Labour councils refusing to implement the cuts.

It's easier to talk of "exposing the private sector" and "amending the charity laws and withdrawing finance from LEA's who send pupils to private schools" at some vague time in the future than it is to lead a struggle now to drive out the Tories and their vicious anti-working class policies.



# MAKERS OF MODERN MARXISM 8. Louis Althusser

No single contemporary Marxist philosopher has had a deeper influence over the past decade than Louis Althusser, veteran theoretician of the French Communist Party.

The positions set forward in Althusser's major works—*For Marx* (1965), *Reading Capital* (1965), *Lenin and Philosophy* (1968)—have infiltrated Marxist theory from political science to anthropology, from the writing of history to the criticism of art.

'Althusserianism', whether as a fashionable flirtation with Althusser's language or as a more serious body of work, represents the most radical challenge, from within the Marxist camp, to revolutionary theory and practice.

It is one which Trotskyists can by no means ignore.

It would be impossible in a brief article to summarise Althusser's thought. Instead I propose to single out four central areas of his theory, and in each case to do three things:

First, to show what is of value in these positions, as correctives to inadequate Marxist formulations; second to show how what is of value is closely intertwined with theoretical positions which must be rejected; and third, to point out in each case the connection between Althusser's theoretical errors and the Stalinism of which he has for so long been a leading ideologue.

**1. The theory of knowledge.** Althusser rightly and vehemently rejects all empiricist theories of knowledge.

This is more than a pious gesture, because empiricism in one form or another, still deeply contaminates much Marxism.

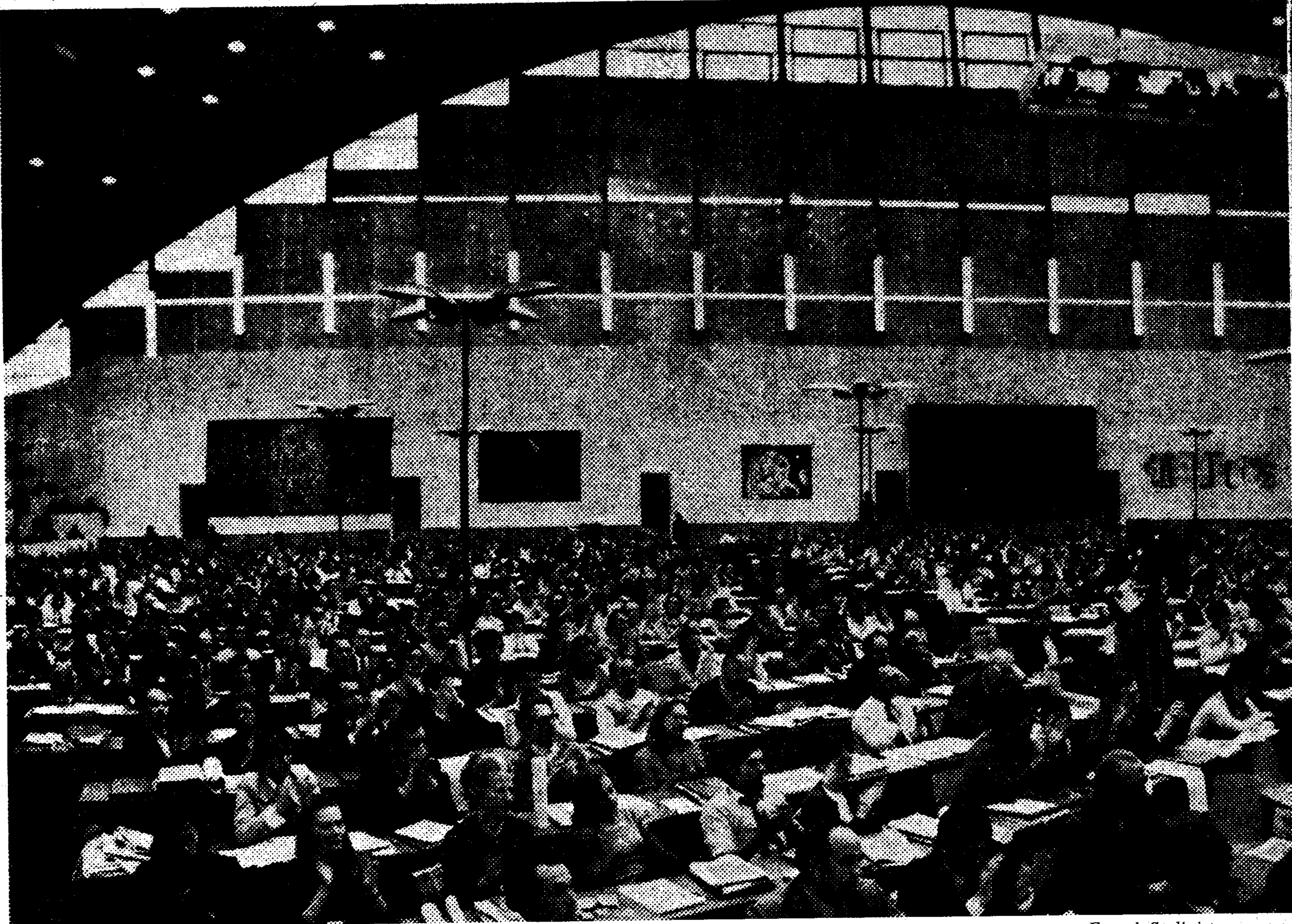
Many Marxists, consciously or not, continue to hold a crude theory of knowledge whereby 'truth' is established by measuring your concepts of things against the things themselves.

This, as Althusser perceives, is utterly naive and incoherent. For we never have access to things, whether they be coffee-cups or capitalist society, except through concepts.

There is no 'naked' encounter with reality, independent of particular conceptual frameworks.

To measure your concepts against the things themselves itself demands concepts in which to do it; and then how do we measure the truth of these concepts?

Althusser argues, then, that all reality is *construc-*



French Stalinist congress.

ted in and by particular conceptual discourses.

All knowledge of reality occurs within what he calls a 'problematic'—an historically particular structure of concepts, in which certain ideas will be granted a privileged status, and others silently excluded.

The 'problematic' of the bourgeois political economists necessarily excluded the concept of 'labour power'; in criticising their work, Marx revealed this hidden problematic and actively transformed it.

Marx could not have written *Capital* without developing a particular structure of concepts, such as the 'commodity', which made the capitalist mode of production intelligible.

He didn't simply look around him and see what was there, as a crude empiricist theory of knowledge would suggest.

Moreover, that structure of concepts was not just given once and for all: it took Marx a long time to elaborate it, and it underwent constant historical development.

So far, then, there is little to differentiate Althusser's theory of knowledge from Marx's.

But there is more to Althusser's theory than that. For him, theory is essentially a kind of *practice*

—a form of *production*.

Theoretical labour, like any other form of labour, takes certain 'raw materials' (concepts), and by the use of certain 'instruments of production' (theoretical procedures) transforms them into a particular theoretical product.

As an account of the theoretical process, this usefully dispels idealist illusions that theory 'comes from nowhere', although it is really not much more than a metaphor.

But in another sense it is itself idealist: for it really comes down to saying that the Marxist theoretician doesn't need to leave his study.

Theory, for Althusser, is an *autonomous* practice, which propels itself along by its own internal procedures.

There is no need to relate theory to practice, because theory is a practice anyway.

We never need to relate theories to other forms of practice in order to test them out, because the truth of a theory is guaranteed entirely by procedures internal to that theory.

Althusser has later modified the extreme theoreticism of this position:

He would now define Marxist philosophy as 'the class-struggle at the level of theory'—by which he means

that it is only by first of all taking up a proletarian, materialist position at the level of theory that the autonomous science of historical materialism can be developed.

But the class struggle enters in here only as a *theoretical precondition* for Marxist science.

This is hardly the relation between theory and the class struggle which Lenin had in mind when he wrote that "Correct revolutionary theory assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement."

It is the absence of such a dialectic in Althusser which defines his Stalinism.

Theory is essentially the property of the party bureaucracy, sealed off from the practical activity of the working class, to be dispensed to the masses from above.

**2. 'Humanism'.** Althusser's attempt to win complete autonomy for theory can be seen as part of a struggle for his own particular theories within the French CP.

But it is also an extreme caricature of what, taken in itself, is a valuable opposition to 'historicist' notions of Marxist theory.

We have encountered such notions several times in

the 'Hegelian-Marxist' thinkers examined in these articles: the *reduction* of dialectical materialism to no more than the 'expression' of the particular historical interests of a class, which thus tends to deprive Marxist theory of all objective validity and degrade it to a form of pragmatism.

Althusser's work is a timely antidote to such reductionism, even if it's attempts to counter it keel over into the most rampant idealism.

Something similar can be said of Althusser's resolute denunciation of what he terms 'Marxist humanism'.

He means by this those forms of Marxist theory which continue to base themselves upon some concept of 'Man', and which read history as the process whereby this entity becomes alienated from itself (class society) and later restored to itself (communism).

This, to be sure, is the perspective underlying Marx's early writings, influenced as they were by Hegelian and Feuerbachian humanism; but Althusser insists on a more-or-less complete 'epistemological break' between an earlier idealist Marx and a later scientific one.

The early Marx still thinks in terms of such

idealist concepts as 'species-being'—the 'essence' of 'humanity' which is alienated under capitalism.

For his work to achieve the scientific status of *Capital*, it had to break decisively with such humanism for an entirely different, scientific set of concepts: forces and relations of production, base and superstructure and so on.

Whether or not there is such a clean break between Hegel and Marx is still a matter of fierce contention within Marxist scholarship. My own view is that Althusser is right to claim that the early Marx is a 'humanist', and that humanism is *ideological*; at the same time, Althusser almost certainly underestimates the continuities between earlier and later Marx, and is forced into some drastic scissors-and-paste manoeuvres.

The mature Marxist doctrine of the 'fetishism of commodities', for example, echoes the earlier 'humanist' themes of alienation; the Althusserians accordingly throw overboard a keystone of Marxist theory.

The root of Althusser's opposition to Marxist humanism is that it undermines the *Scientific* nature of Marxism by reducing everything back to the activities of 'living human individuals'.

For Marxism can be understood

# ALTHUSSER



Althusser fails to grasp exploitation at the point of production

From the 1920s to the present day, major contributions to Marxist theory have been made by thinkers indifferent or implacably opposed to the revolutionary heritage of Trotskyism.

From George Lukacs to Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci to Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Korsch to Herbert Marcuse, a powerful body of 'Western Marxist' theory has been developed, which has yet to receive full critical assessment by Trotskyists themselves.

How are the Stalinist or revisionist politics of these writers to be weighed against their theoretical contributions to Marxist theory?

In this series, Terry Eagleton examines the work of the theorists named above, as an introduction to a full evaluation of their work.

way: it operates by objective laws, accessible to scientific analysis, which determine the activity of human beings.

Althusser's 'anti-humanism' is thus a necessary counterblast to those forms of subjectivised Marxism—whether Hegelian, existentialist or ethical—which have been reviewed in this series.

In opposition to the antics of such revisionist luminaries of the French CP as Roger Garaudy, who came to see Marxism as some poetic scheme of human redemption compatible with Christianity, Althusser unwaveringly sought to defend its scientific claims.

He did this, however, at an immense price. For in order to combat the contamination of Marxism by one form of bourgeois ideology, he reached for another: structuralism.

Structuralism certainly shifts emphasis away from 'living human individuals', but only at the cost of reducing them to mere functions of some invariant 'structure' which works out

its purposes through their heads.

History itself, for structuralism, is little more than the weaving of a set of variations on such a static structure; and Althusser and his collaborators accordingly set out to define modes of production as mere permutations of certain given elements, with all the misplaced ingenuity of a mathematician solving quadratic equations while his university burns down around him.

What structuralism is finally unable to account for is how structures get historically transformed.

Human practices, for structuralism, are just 'effects' of the structure itself, and are thus eternally contained within it.

It is not difficult to see the appeal of such a theory to the French Stalinists. Nothing could have pleased them better than to hear from their leading intellectual, in the most sophisticated theoretical language,

that the working class were merely 'functions' and 'effects' of the capitalist structure.

3. 'Historicism'. For Althusser, much Marxism has gone on repeating a mistake of Hegel's. Hegel believed that all historical phenomena could be reduced to a single essence or principle, of which such phenomena were merely 'expressions'.

For him, this principle was the World-Spirit; but Marxism has often enough simply replaced this principle with another—the mode of production, the productive forces, the class struggle—and left the Hegelian picture intact.

Althusser argues against this reduction that there is no 'essence' to history for Marxism.

Societies are made up of four distinct 'regions'—economic, political, ideological and theoretical—no one of which can be reduced to the others. Each 'region' has a 'relative autonomy' of the whole, and each is related to the others in complex, varying ways.

Each area develops by its own internal laws, as well as in conjunction with the others; and these developments, as between the various areas, are usually uneven.

Althusser is not denying that the economic is, in the last instance, determinant. When he writes, in a notorious phrase, that 'the last instance never comes', he does not reject the ultimate determinacy of the 'base'.

He means, rightly, that this determinacy is never 'naked', never 'purely' economic, always deeply intertwined with political and ideological factors.

Borrowing a concept from Freud, Althusser speaks of all historical phenomena as 'overdetermined': they are never the product of a single, abstract cause, but rather of the simultaneous action of several causes.

Such a position valuably counteracts reductionist tendencies within Marxism—that mechanical linking of the political, economic and ideological which can have disastrous political consequences.

But it is also highly convenient for Althusser's own politics. True to his Stalinism, Althusser holds that the key to capitalist exploitation lies in the political region—in the state framework which allows the proceeds of production to be unequally distributed among the classes.

For him, as for the bourgeois political economists whom Marx combated, the actual social organisation of production is merely a technical matter. It is not here that the secret of the capital-labour relation lies; it is merely in the distribution of the product.

If, then, the state itself can be taken over, the actual social organisation of production can go on much as before.

Socialism is essentially a juridical matter of who owns the means of production through the state; it is not basically a question of social relations at the point of production.

Little wonder, then, that Althusser is happy to keep 'economic' and 'political' separate.

For this is precisely what his Stalinism demands. Indeed the most blatant exposure of this truth can be found in his comments on what he naturally refers to as the 'cult' of personality:

"Everything that has been said of the 'cult of personality' refers exactly to the domain of the superstructure and therefore of State organisation and ideologies; further it refers largely to this domain alone, which we know from Marxist theory possesses a 'relative autonomy' (which explains very simply, in theory, how the socialist infrastructure (of the Soviet Union) has been able to develop without essential damage during this period of errors affecting the superstructure).

For Marx

Nothing, indeed could be more simple. Stalinism, we are relieved to learn, is merely a matter of the superstructure; while one or two unhappy events were occurring there, the 'socialist' infrastructure proceeded merrily on its way, protected from the superstructure by its 'relative autonomy'.

4. Ideology. There are two main ways in which Althusser has made an important, original contribution to the Marxist theory of ideology.

First, in his insistence that ideology is not reducible to 'false consciousness'. For one thing, it is for the most part deeply unconscious; for another thing, ideology is not just a 'distorted reflection' of reality, but rather signifies the way men and women live out their relation to that reality.

Secondly, Althusser has shown us the 'materiality' of ideology. It is not just a cloud of illusions floating above the economic base; it is embedded in material practices and institutions (family, education, media, political parties, churches and so on), which are quite as material as economic production itself.

Ideology is more than a disembodied set of ideas: it is a material, practical force within class-society.

What Althusser is unable to do, however, is to relate ideology adequately to the class struggle. In his earlier work, ideology figures merely as the opposite of science; later on, ideology is presented as a monolith into which individuals are passively inserted, an automatic mechanism whereby capitalism reproduces itself.

This is a view almost indistinguishable from that of bourgeois sociology. Althusser pays scant attention to the contradictions within ideology, by which individuals may be transformed from passive subjects to revolutionary agents.

His vision of class-society is that of a self-contained structure which carries within it the mechanisms of its own, potentially eternal reproduction.

Once again, no vision could follow more logically from his Stalinism.

Althusser's stress on the autonomy of 'theoretical practice' has proved extremely attractive to whole groups of younger left wing intellectuals in Europe—not surprisingly, since it assigns a high status to their own activity.

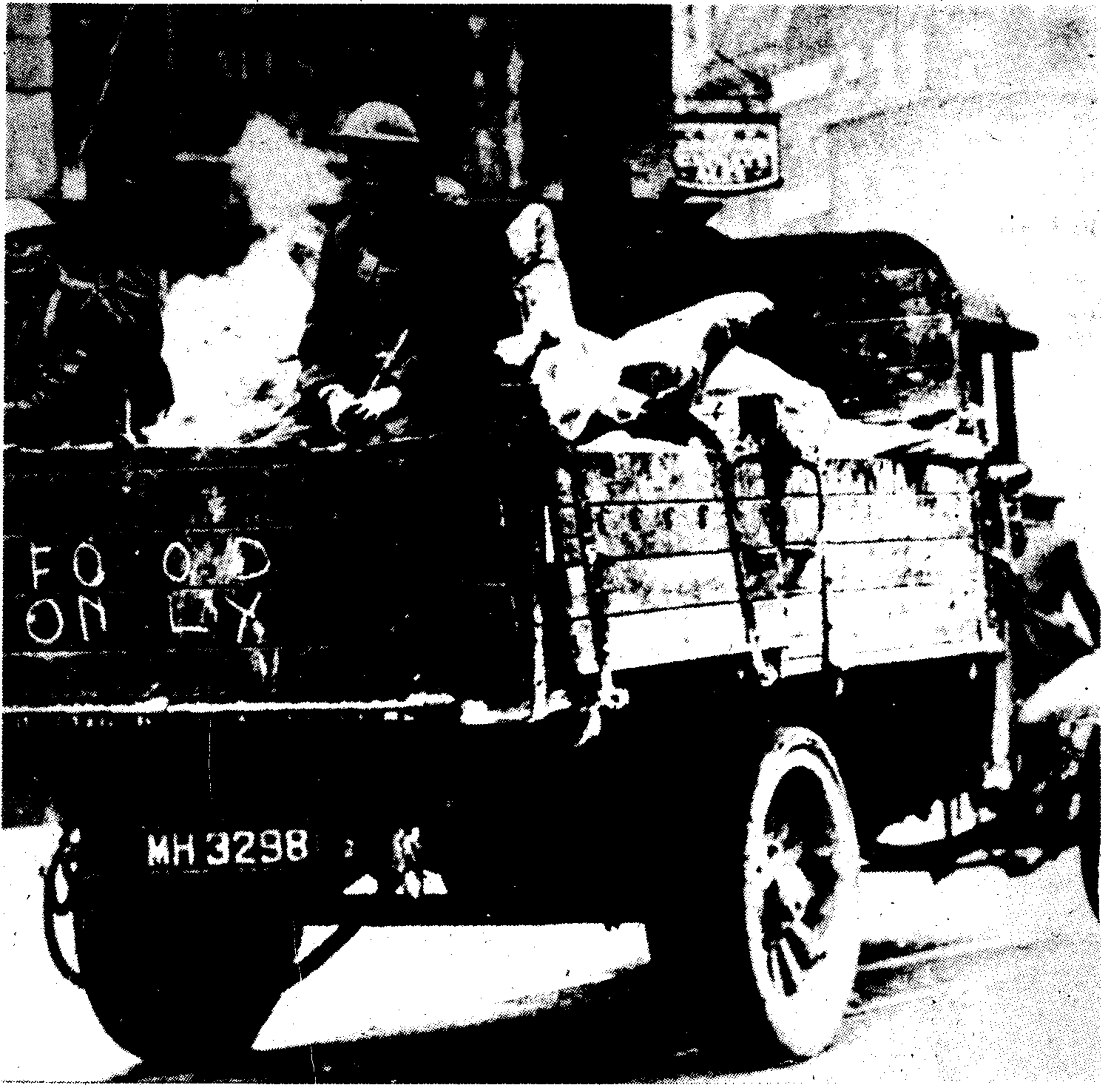
As Regis Debray, a former pupil of Althusser's put it: 'All we had to do to become good theoreticians was to be lazy bastards'.

Some of those intellectuals are now clearly beyond redemption: the English 'Marxists' Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess, former disciples of Althusser and widely influential among English students, have to date rejected as 'erroneous' the concepts of mode of production, economic determination, Marx's theory of value, materialism, the revolutionary party and more or less any other Marxist notion you care to mention.

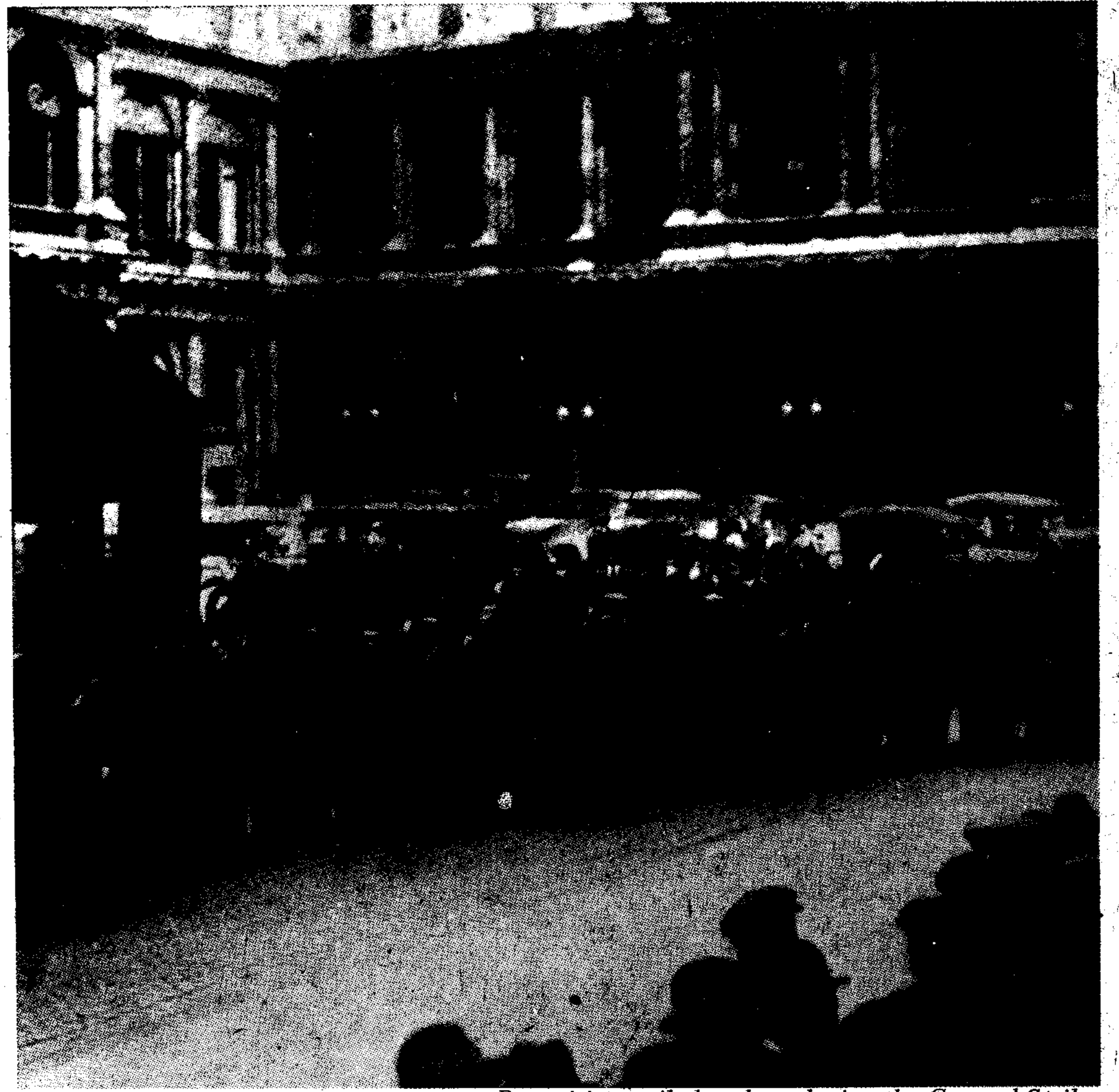
None of this follows logically from Althusser's own work; there are other 'Althusserian' theorists who have made valuable contributions, and should be engaged in controversy. As for 'Marxists' like Hindess and Hirst, only one response is possible: their theories should be opposed and destroyed.



Stalin with fellow bureaucrats



Soldiers guard food lorries



Recruiting strikebreakers during the General Strike

# THE GENERAL STRIKE

Part Two

For a long time after 1926, it was often considered that the Communist Party had done what it could.

After all, despite the arrest of most of its leaders in 1925, and of many hundreds during the strike itself, the CP had played an active role in almost every area, been represented on numerous strike committees and councils of action, and recruited large numbers of workers, especially miners after the General Strike.

The Communist Party alone, through its press, had warned in advance of the importance of the struggle and called for the establishment of councils of action, defence squads and other necessary forms of preparation.

All of these steps represented undoubted achievements. However, they were closely allied to a political line which was unable to bring out the strengths of the working class in such a way as to take the necessary steps to victory.

The last Party publication before the beginning of the strike echoed the views of the union leaders by saying that the proposed councils of action 'should not take over any of the duties that ordinarily belong to the trade unions', and in its first statement after it started said, 'All that it needs now is for every man to stand firm and the fight is won'.

The first few months of 1980 have brought to the fore the demand for a General Strike to bring down the Tory government. Such a demand naturally gives rise to further discussion on the lessons of the 1926 General Strike, betrayed by the TUC. With this in view, we are reprinting in two parts an extended article on the General Strike by John Docherty, first published in a supplement to Socialist Press in April 1976.

It was a great achievement of Brian Pearce in a series of articles originally published in the late 50s, to draw attention to the origin and international character of the development of the early Communist Party in Britain, to describe how it built its industrial base and how it made the errors that it did in 1926.

Some ten years later, in 1967-69, Michael Woodhouse systematically analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the British Communist Party in the crucial period of the early 20s, the only time it tried seriously to build a revolutionary leadership in the working class movement.

The main arguments of Trotsky, and following him, of Pearce and Woodhouse, about the struggle for revolutionary leadership in the British working class in the 1920s may be briefly summarised as follows.

Although it was an enormously positive step to establish the Communist Party in 1920,

to reorganise it on democratic centralist lines in 1922-23 and to make the necessary turn to mass work by setting up the Minority Movement in 1924, the Party failed to break decisively from its own sectarian and syndicalist roots and to develop a policy which could mobilise the working class independently of its bureaucratic leadership.

In the period from the collapse of the Labour Government at the end of 1924 to the great victory of 'Red Friday' in July 1925, the CP made some inroads into the mass movement, winning support in the trades councils, in the Miners Federation and many other areas.

### Stalinist grip

This impetus was lost as the Stalinist faction consolidated its hold on the Communist International, supported a policy of alliance with sections of trade union 'lefts' through the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, and turned the British Party away from the positive, independent policies for which it had begun to search in its first hesitant steps into the mass movement.

In 1925 Trotsky outlined in *Where Is Britain Going?* the need for a decisive break from the trade union 'lefts' as well as the rights, the need for an ideological struggle against Fabianism and the decisive importance of the building of 'a correct and resolute revolutionary leadership'.

### Closer

However, as the struggle which the CP correctly warned was inevitable grew closer and closer, there was, as Woodhouse puts it:

"Very little concrete evidence that the party did anything to break out of the limitations placed on preparation imposed on the rank and file by the trade union apparatus or that it saw its role as anything more than 'gingering up' the official leaderships".

One of the leading members of the Party at about this time presented a 'Plan of Action' to a strike committee in the North-East which repudiated a concern

'with any wider horizons', and restricted the committee to 'our limited objectives'.

It was only days later, and effectively after the end of the strike that the CP called for independent joint meetings of the councils of action or even posed in abstract general terms the replacement of the current leaders of the movement.

### Trotsky

For many years after 1926, it was very difficult to discover how it came about that such a poor lead had been given to the embattled British working class.

Only in the late 1950s did Trotsky's writings on this period become generally available, showing that there was quite a different method in existence which called for the independent mobilisation of the working class in a way that challenges the bureaucratic leadership.

Since these views were first fought for by Trotsky within the Communist International in the 1920s, they have been subject to attack in a number of different ways.

At first of course, the Stalinists developed a style of polemic which accused the opponents of their opportunist policies of being agents of fascism and counter-revolution.

It is of some interest to see the reappearance of such views in a pamphlet by Ernie Troy entitled *Soviet Trade Unions and the General Strike*.

This is written in a quaint Stalinist knockabout style, with long quotations from the works of Stalin, no references to any books containing a different point of view, and a complete ignorance of the difference between the various opposition tendencies within the Communist movement during the 1920s.

### 'Bloc'

It is of interest to note that Stalin is quoted as describing the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee as a 'bloc' which could be used to organise a united movement against the capitalist offensive. It was certainly nothing of the kind.

He also goes on to misrepresent his opponents as supporters of breakaway 'dual unionism'. This in fact was

Stalin's own policy for Britain two years later.

### Lies

The lies, distortions and pure ignorance contained in this pamphlet are easy enough to refute with the most elementary knowledge of what actually happened.

Nowadays the Stalinist leadership has to take more serious account of the careful analysis of the history of our movement undertaken in particular by Woodhouse and Pearce, though generally they prefer to exclude specific reference to this work, perhaps in the hope that people may not find out about it.



tendentious views of Klugmann to careful analysis is rather like trying to study the specific gravity of suet pudding.

However, the defence of the Stalinist positions on these questions went a stage further with the publication of a collection of articles edited by Jeffrey Skelley and entitled *The General Strike 1926*.

### Material

It must be said that this book contains some useful material, particularly in the new information it provides on local activities.

However, its main purpose is to associate the mistaken but sincere and combative Communist Party of 1926 with the utterly rotten policies of today.

Thus Martin Jacques, who is both a university lecturer and a member of the CP Executive Committee writes about the period as if all that was involved was the manoeuvres of various sections of the bureaucracy, without any independent mobilisation of the working class. To see things in that way is to gratuitously insult those who once fought for something different.

It is left to Klugmann in another essay in the volume, entitled *Marxism, Reformism and the General Strike* to justify once again the line of the CP at the time, and indeed ever since.

### Enormous length

He writes at enormous length to arrive at the irrefutable proposition that reformists cannot lead revolutionary struggles.

He concludes from this that 'It has been a tragic feature of British working class history' that resentment against the betrayal has been directed 'against individual betrayers and not against the most real enemy - reformist theory, reformist ideas'.

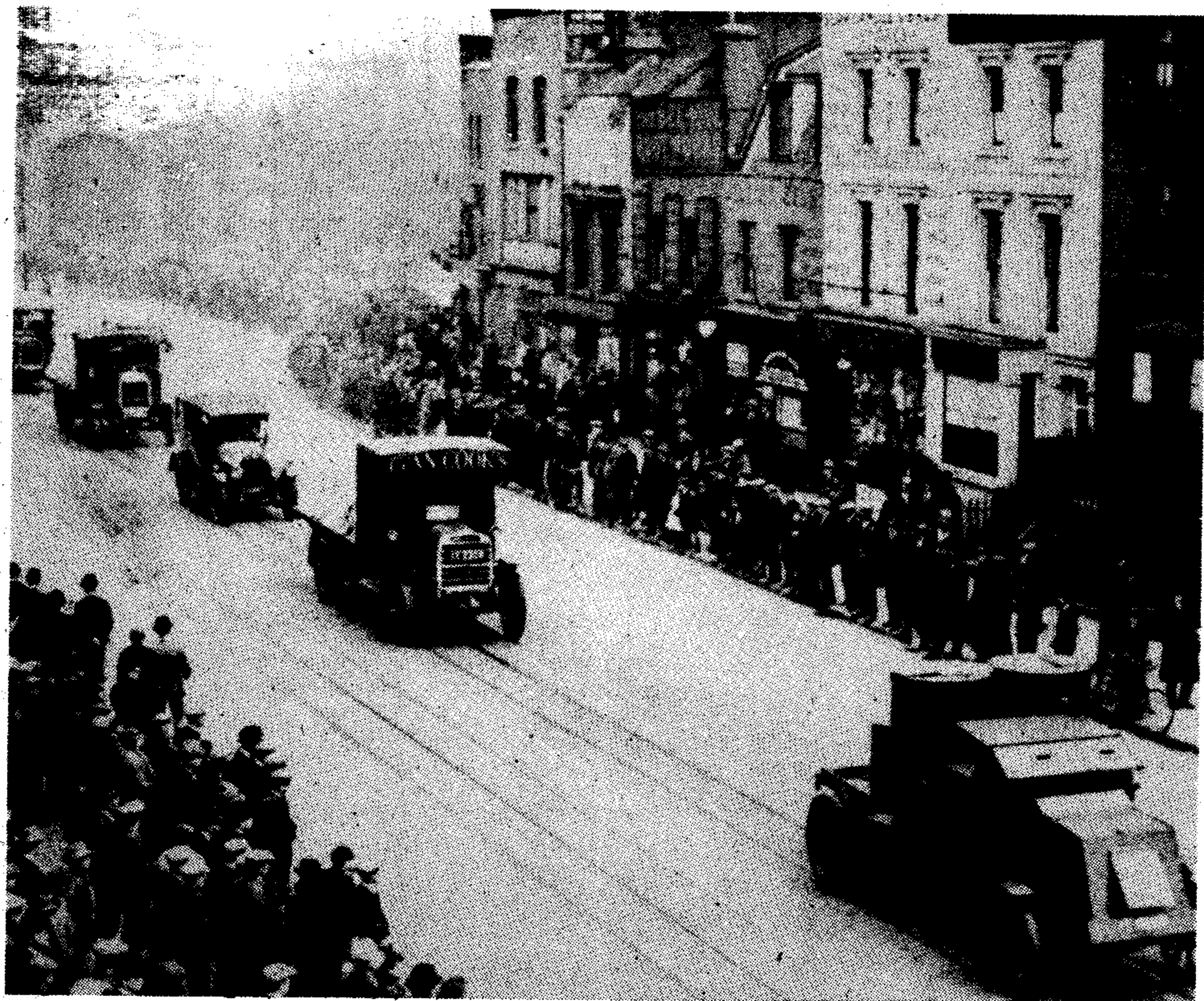
If this odd statement means anything it must be that revolutionaries should not in fact struggle to replace the present counter-revolutionary leaders at all but should manoeuvre around them on the basis of 'revolutionary ideas'.

This is certainly the kind of policy he considers to have been



Recruiting strikebreakers during the General Strike





Armoured cars escort food convoy through Poplar

appropriate for the General Strike, when The Party well knew that . . . the workers . . . were not ready to challenge the social system.

Everything else that they did flowed from this, and has been used to justify every Stalinist effort to hold back and defeat the working class ever since.

There is a curious congruence between these views and those presented in a recent pamphlet by James Hinton and Richard Hyman, two lecturers at Warwick University associated with the International Socialist group (now the SWP) entitled *Trade Unions and Revolution: The Industrial Politics of the Early Communist Party*. The main thesis presented in this work is that the CP could not have done any better. The fact is, we are told, 'it was a mistake to construct a mass revolutionary party' in a 'profoundly unfavourable situation'.

Though they agree that the Communist Party in the period before the General Strike tied itself too closely to the trade union lefts, they also quote a most uncharacteristic statement from just before the struggle pointing to the potential of the councils of action. Even the Stalinists themselves have not gone that far in defending their position!

### Statistics

By the use of statistics about strikes and union membership in a way that must have gone down well in many a post-graduate seminar, Hinton and Hyman argue from their Olympian hindsight that there was no 'revolutionary situation' in the mid-1920s.

They sneer at the 'orthodox Trotskyists', who, unlike themselves fail to understand that history moves 'in its devious way through the contradictory cross currents of the immensely varied and many-sided consciousness of the working masses'.

However, it is they who show an utter contempt for the needs and aspirations of the working class in failing to even consider how revolutionaries could or should have intervened in the dynamic relationship between the workers and their established leaders. In fact it is they who leave the masses to the tender mercies of the bureaucrats and the Stalinists.

The one question that our authors refuse to consider in all their grand talk of revolutionary situations and the self-action of the masses, is just how revolutionaries were supposed to confront the real problems that faced the miners and all sections of the working class.

The capitalists and the ruling class decided to make a stand after July 1925.

Hinton and Hyman apparently consider that at this point they should have been 'cadre building', and preserving the purity of their theory.

### Miners

But the efforts of even the smallest group of revolutionary workers cannot be developed in this way.

The miners and the rest of the working class were not

thrown in May 1926 into a 'revolutionary situation' that they could smell or measure with a slide rule.

They moved in a mass way in a struggle which could have developed on to a much higher level.

Revolutionaries had a responsibility to present policies to develop the struggle, even if they could not predict in advance how it would finally work out.

While it is certainly true that the orientation towards the trade union 'lefts' in 1925-6 represented a fatal error, it is also worthwhile recalling the strengths and achievements of the Minority Movement before it finally succumbed to Stalinist degeneration.

### Step forward

It was above all not a kind of precursor of the SWP 'Rank and File' organisation, which places itself outside the dynamic of the struggle for leadership in the working class.

It represented a considerable step forward from the wartime shop stewards movement, in that it hoped not to bypass the official leadership, but in putting forward a programme to bring together the interests of all sections of the working class in a unified, revolutionary way.

By challenging the established leaders within the mass organisations, it openly proclaimed that it aimed to become a 'majority movement'.

There is no doubt that they had a considerable effect in forcing the hands of the union leaders on 'Red Friday'.

It strengthened the miners, gave confidence to the trades councils, and did much to prepare the working class for the battles that were bound to come.

It was a lack of sensitivity to the moods of the working class as the struggle developed that made the denunciation of the 'lefts' by the Communist Party and the Minority Movement after the General Strike ring

much less true.

The failure of anybody at all to present any other possibility meant that there was no new road open to the working class when they were overwhelmed by the sell-out.

When the Coventry Council of Action sent a delegation to the TUC after the surrender to demand 'the recall of the General Strike in the name of the workers of Coventry' one of the delegation found that when they met the 'left' Purcell:

"the mighty leader whom I had known as a fighter was cowed and beaten . . . The iron man . . . had feet of clay".

It is clear that more than fifty years after the event the General Strike and its problems live with us.

We can of course see a capitalist class still determined to solve its crisis at the expense of the working class and a trade union and Labour bureaucracy determined to help them with the task.

Many echoes of the strength and determination of the working class have been heard in the battles of the miners, the dockers, the engineering workers and the steelworkers in recent years.

It is important not to confuse the wrong policies of the Communist Party in those years with the counter-revolutionary activities of those who masquerade behind the same name today.

### Analysis

Above all, it is necessary to see that the struggle for a revolutionary programme in the working class is inseparable from a continual analysis of the political process within the working class and the testing of different layers of its leadership.

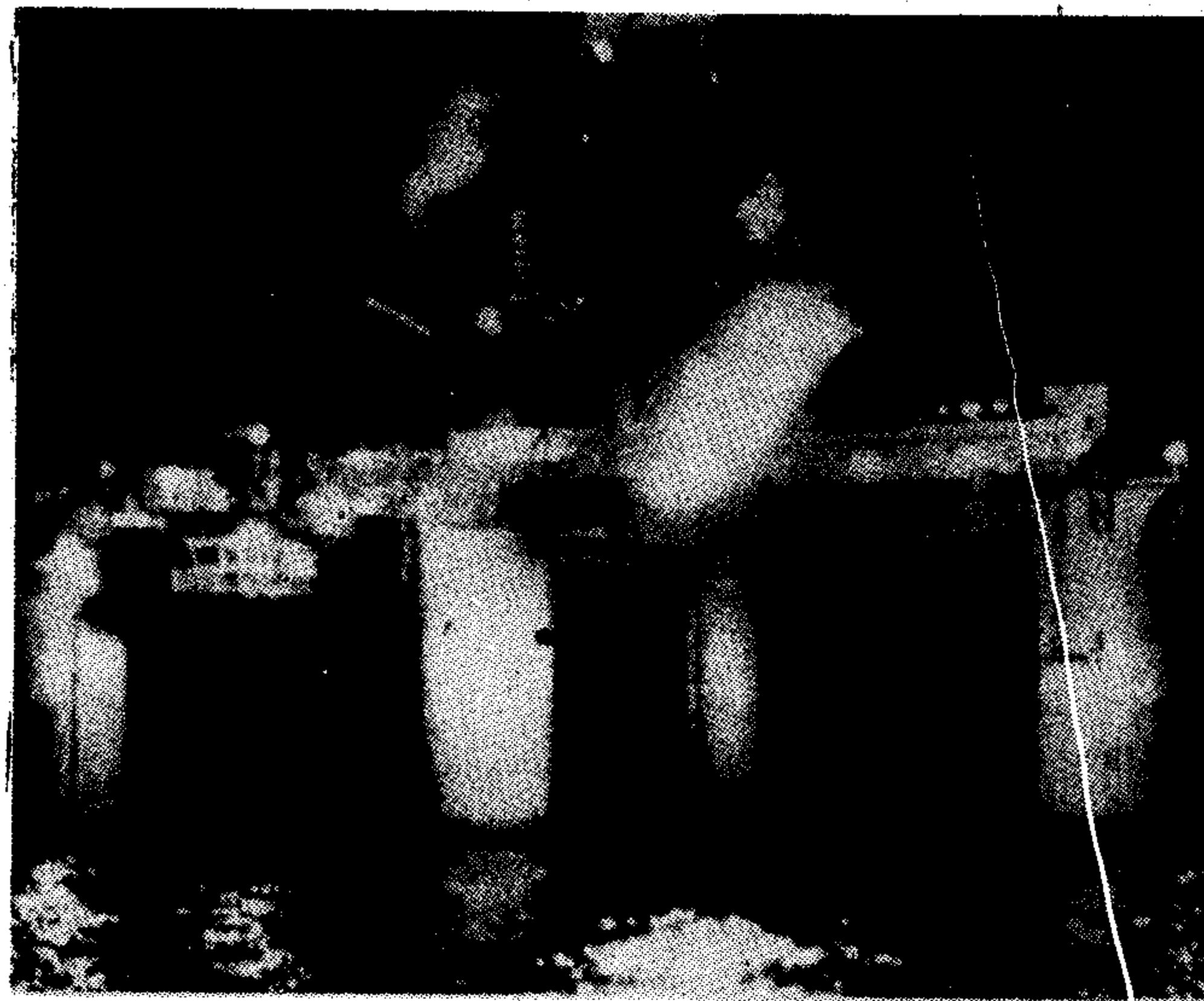
It is in this process that even small groups of revolutionaries can play a central role in the construction of the mass revolutionary party which is necessary to put an end to capitalist exploitation for good.

# RIG SAFETY: HOLD A UNION INQUIRY

The horrific tragedy of the collapse of the "Aleksander Keilland" hotel platform into the North Sea with the loss of 123 lives has concentrated the attention of trade unionists upon the whole question of health and safety standards onboard North Sea oil installations.

The demand for a trade union controlled enquiry into the disaster is strengthened daily as fresh doubts as to the safety of the semi-submersible rig are voiced.

One of the major issues is that the platform was not purpose built to accommodate workers but was a converted drilling platform from which the 200 ton derrick had not been removed.



### Replacement

That the management recognised this drilling tower intensified the instability of the rig is suggested by the fact that it was due for replacement by a sister-rig, the "Henrick Ibsen", which had no derrick.

Mr Sverre Nielson, managing director of Stavanger Drilling, has said, "There's no doubt that, once the rig started to list, the derrick would have had a bad effect."

Why did the leg of the platform crack in the first place? Now that the disaster has occurred, reports are emerging of warnings given up to four years ago about the insufficiently tested materials used in the construction of such rigs.

Hollow steel structures of large dimension but built of extremely thin material continue to be used, despite the warnings of experts.

The fifth leg of the "Aleksander Keilland" which broke away was 5 ft by 4 ft in diameter but made of metal only 30mm thick.

The whole question of metal fatigue on such immense structures in the hazardous conditions of the North Sea has also been insufficiently researched.

Trade unionists will not be fobbed off by references to the unpredictable nature of the elements.

They are rightly suspicious that standards of health and safety are blatantly ignored in the search for quick profits from North Sea oil.

### Less strict

The fact that regulations are less strict in the British sector as compared to the Norwegian where the recent disaster took place, tends to strengthen their worst fears.

The recent publication of the Burgoyne Report on safety

in the oilfields must intensify the call for a workers' inquiry. This report, which was commissioned by Tony Benn four years ago, contains a strongly worded dissenting note by the two trade unionists in the Committee.

Whereas the majority position was that matters of health and safety should remain in the hands of the Department of Energy, the trade unionists involved have demanded that these matters come under the surveillance of the Health and Safety Executive and the unions.

Their stand has been backed by Benn, who has drawn attention to the absence of trade union representation on the rigs as being a serious factor in safety.

### Anti-union

This rightly spotlights the notorious resistance of the multinational companies, such as Phillips and Esso, to recognition for the trade unions on offshore installations.

Nor is this blatant disregard for safety confined to offshore working. The five week suspension of workers by the Chicago Bridge Company on the site at Hunterston, Ayrshire, where they are building a platform for Phillips is over this very same issue.

There men have been expected to work on totally unsafe staging at heights of over 100 feet. The determined resistance of the workers in defence of minimum safety standards has met fierce hostility from the American management.

Hellbent upon extracting maximum profits from the oil bonanza, construction companies such as Chicago Bridge, Marathon and the French-based UEI have rushed to take advantage of the prospects opened up to them by first a supine Labour Administration and then a rapacious

Tory government.

Marathon, having milked £1 million in 1972 from the last Tory government, in return for an agreement to set up business on the site of the defunct John Browns Shipyard in Clydebank, have now sold out to the French UEI who have demanded large scale redundancies as their terms of entry.

As a further measure of their unscrupulous approach the same companies are having some of their work done in shipyards such as Govan Shipbuilders and Cammell-Laird—where men are being paid lower rates than those employed on the platform building sites.

In protest against this anomaly, 900 boilermakers at Govan went on strike last week seeking parity with the men on the sites.

This attempt to take advantage of a lack of orders in the shipyards and secure work done at lower wage rates is now meeting resistance from workers in the yards.

The demand, already taken up by some trade unionists, for a conference of representatives of all workers in the oil production and related industries, must be campaigned for with new vigour in the light of the recent disaster.

Such a conference should consider:

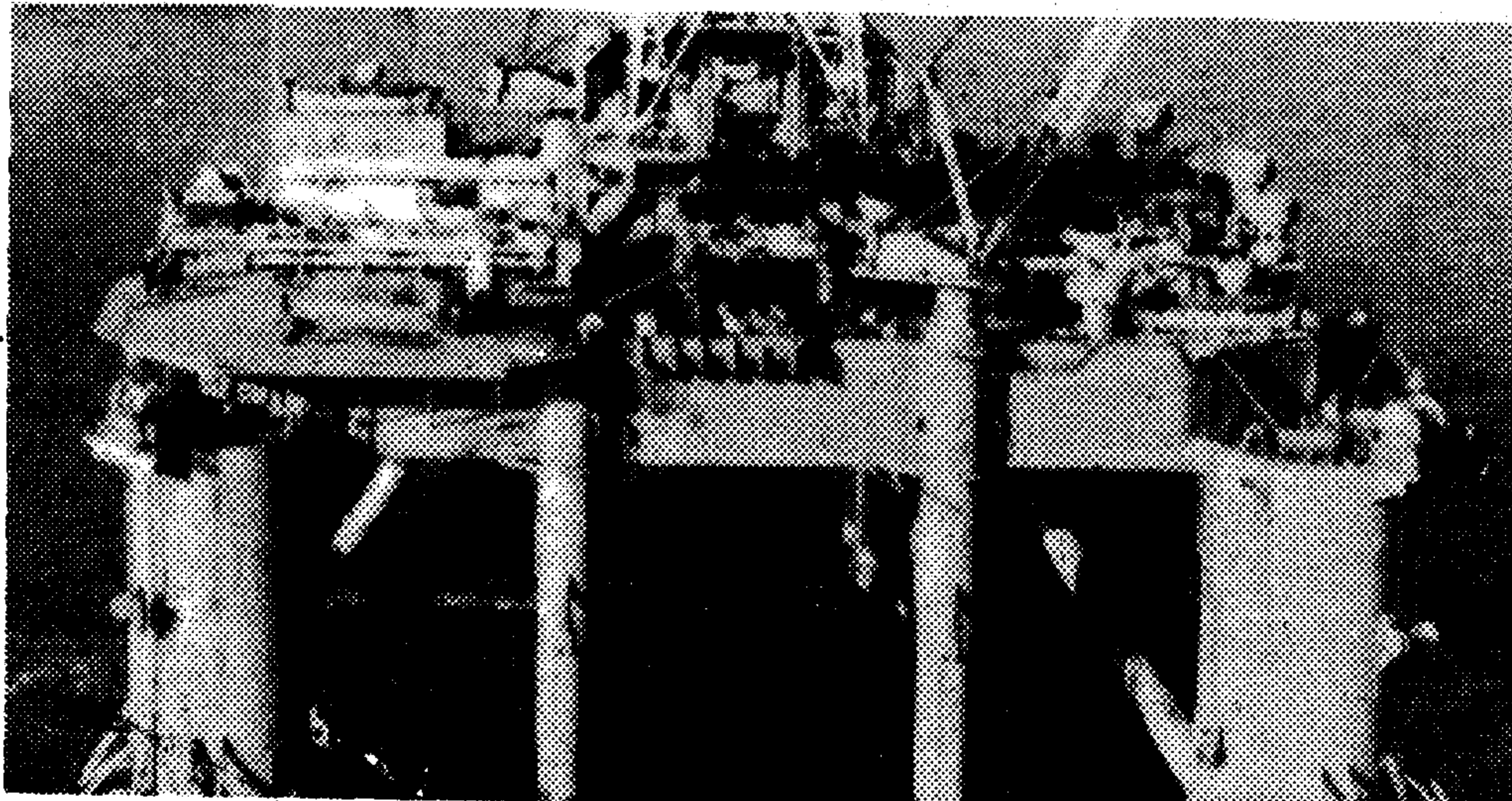
- \*a full scale inquiry by the labour movement into health and safety standards both onshore and offshore.

- \*a renewed struggle for unionisation on the rigs.

- \*a campaign for parity of wages for workers involved in similar work on rig construction.

- \*the demand that the next Labour government nationalise the oil production and related industries under workers' control.

By Ian McCalman



## The Battle for Trotskyism

Second edition of the opposition documents presented inside the WRP by the present leadership of the Workers Socialist League With a new introduction Price £2.50 plus 20p postage and package from Workers Socialist League BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX



# Occupy to save Perivale Hospital

The main lines of argument in the recent meeting to save the Perivale Maternity Hospital (West London) from closure were put by May Heywood, Ealing Labour Councillor and a member of the Area Health Authority.

She stated that there are too many maternity beds in the AHA and that too much money is being spent on the NHS in London.

All she objected to was making Perivale the recipient of the cuts!

Marion Stern, however, of the Ealing Community Health Council, pointed out that there was something like a 70% occupancy of the maternity beds in the AHA and as it is impossible accurately to predict the birth rate it is therefore impossible to say if there are too many beds or not.

### Good case

She went on to put forward an extremely good case for the retention of Perivale.

The area it serves has a high number of women of child-bearing age, and has poor housing and social services.

She told the meeting "the number of babies who die in the first days of life is highest in Ealing compared to surrounding areas. Ealing needs a good

maternity service."

Sister Lee from the hospital stated the opposition from the entire workforce to the closure and the members of COHSE at the hospital have now sent their reply to the AHA consultative document.

In speeches from the floor, Councillor Heywood's arguments were attacked.

### Chopped

She was simply saying that beds in another part of the AHA—such as the West London Hospital maternity unit—which are under threat, should be chopped.

The need was for a united fight against the cuts as a whole and not arguing over "priorities".

The two senior nurses also at the meeting stated categorically that the hospital would not be occupied because of the danger to the patients of inadequate medical cover.

But what other action can be taken to ensure the welfare of the mothers and babies?

Obviously preparations have to be well laid for such an occupation; these should include:

- \*enlisting the support of local GPs to keep referring patients;
- \*ensuring that ambulance workers will continue to bring patients in;
- \*getting sympathetic consultants and other doctors to con-

tinue giving adequate cover;

\*taking up the offer of the AHA Joint Shop Stewards Committee to give full support—including sympathetic strike action;

\*making sure that supplies of linen, etc., continue to be ordered;

\*continuing the campaign for support locally.

Other points can be added to this list. Pete Rowlands, Secretary of Hounslow Trades Council, pointed out that even if this year's cuts are pushed through the AHA will have a deficit of £2.3 million.

The time to fight is now. Unfortunately he did not bring out the past record of Councillor Heywood, who was deeply implicated in the vicious closure of the occupied Hounslow Hospital.

A lobby has been called to protest at the closure of the AHA on 21 May.

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# Court threat to nursery sit-in

The occupation of the Wandsworth Day Nursery in Nightingale Road is in its sixth week.

Gas services were cut off last week despite the fact that NALGO has given support and the local NALGO official Stan Bush had written a letter to this effect.

Gas workers who came to turn off the supply were told of this union support and to check with Bush—but returned an hour later with a supervisor to disconnect services. Bush was telephoned but refused to budge from his office—which is only ten minutes away from the occupation.

Bush has no doubt made glowing speeches in the past and no doubt will make them in the future on the destruction of the welfare state brought about by the cuts.

But he and his fellow union officials are aiding and abetting the Tories by their refusal to act to defend the services actually being cut.

At a recent council meeting it was agreed that the officers can apply for court proceedings for repossession of buildings occupied by "squatters" without referring back to a council meeting.

The occupation has now been served with notice of the court hearing which will be on Friday 25 April at mid-day at the High Court.

This means that the Sheriff of London will be carrying out the eviction.

No doubt Wandsworth Tories believe that media coverage will go in their favour and deter others in the area from taking similar action.

Yet this may not be the case. St. Margaret's Nursery at Battersea have been informed that their nursery is next for the axe and have asked Nightingale Lane occupiers to speak at a meeting of parents and workers on how occupations are run.

Ironically the eviction of Nightingale Lane Nursery may occur on Monday April 28.

This will be exactly two years to the day after the eviction of the occupied South Oxford Nursery Class under the Labour government.

Then, as now, the hard task has been fighting for union officials to lead action that will make an eviction impossible—i.e. supporting strike action.

Just the threat of such action two years ago at the EGA hospital in London made the Labour government retreat from the closure—which was eventually carried through by the Tories. The leadership of the unions

refused to fight the Labour leaders and is not prepared to fight under a Tory government.

Increasingly the need for a change of leadership in the working class is posed both at local and national level if we are not to see further defeats.

Wandsworth occupiers now have time to get the vital

support that is needed: but at the same time pressure must still be brought to bear on trade union and Labour leaders in the area to black any future use of the building to be run as a private facility and to cut off their services.

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Cost: £12 including accommodation for the eight days. A cheap meal will be provided at lunch time and there will be a pooled fare arrangement. Creche facilities.

# 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.

Please send me more details about the Workers Socialist League.

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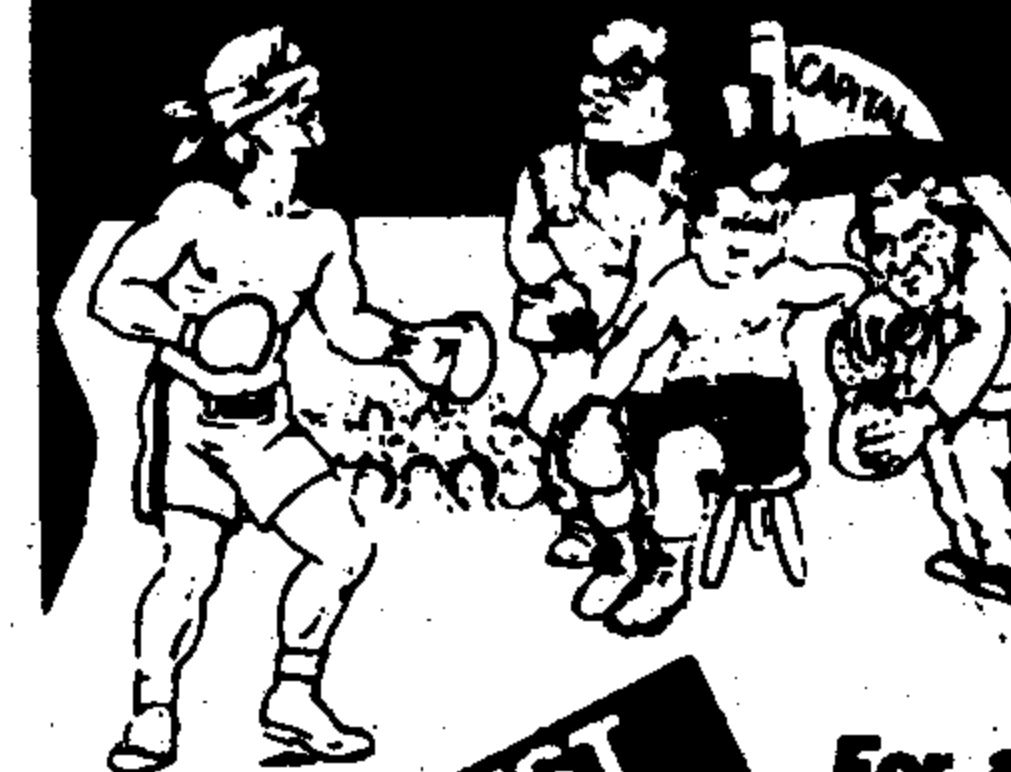
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# SERTUC jamboree for Stalinists

There was a timeless quality about Saturday's South East Regional Council of the TUC's emergency conference on the Employment Bill, attended by 240 delegates.

There was much left talk from SERTUC Secretary Jack Dromey and platform speakers Ken Gill, the Stalinist General Secretary of AUEW/TASS and Bill Keyes, General Secretary of SOGAT, who harked back to the heady days of the struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill—which they at the time did all in their power to contain and derail.

## Concordat

But in all the anti-Tory rhetoric there was not so much as a mention of the Concordat and the anti-working class policies carried out by the last Labour government.

Nor was there any reference to the sell-out of the steel strike and Bill Keyes' involvement in the Lever Commission of Inquiry.

Derek Robinson was hailed as a martyr—but the AUEW leadership's role in his victimisation was glossed over, as was the AUEW's role in sabotaging strike action against the Edwards anti-union measures in Leyland.

Jack Dromey manoeuvred the speaking slips to ensure that no Trotskyist could intervene to expose the cosy talk shop.

Nearly all the speakers were Communist Party members who talked not of the betrayals of leadership, but of the need to "educate" the members on the shop floor.

When a Tory came to the rostrum and was heckled, Dromey actually defended him, saying "there must be room for differences in the movement".

## Not ready

A Militant supporter said that the TUC must call a 24 hour General Strike on May 14th but that a call for an indefinite general strike could not be made as the working class was not ready for that yet.

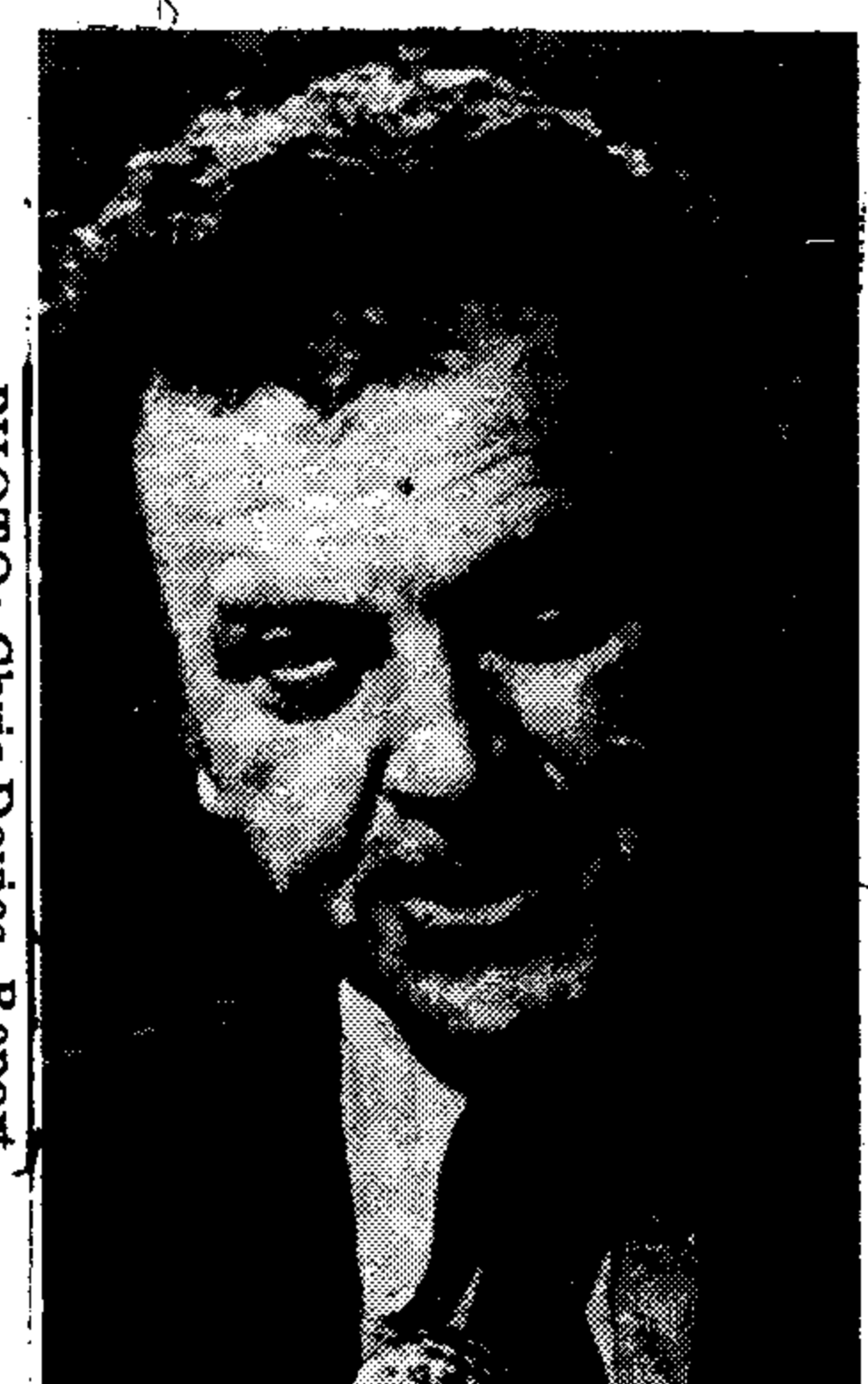
This theme was eagerly taken up by Dromey, Gill and Keyes in their reply.

One speaker had made mild criticism of the TUC's failure to make a clear call for a strike on May 14. This led Gill to spring to Len Murray's defence. "Len Murray has been much clearer than any General Secretary since 1926 [!]. I'm prepared to congratulate Len Murray."

Keyes agreed with him saying:

"We could have found ourselves outmanoeuvred on the General Council if we had put a strike resolution".

Dromey joined them in the



Gill

praise of Murray and said that the leadership had done all they could and that the main problem would be in mobilising the membership for May 14th.

A fight must be taken up now in all unions for strike action against the Employment Bill.

Challenged by a Socialist Press supporter after the conference to justify his role in the steel strike sell-out, Keyes claimed that a ballot on the Lever Commission's pay proposals would have produced a "9-1" vote to return to work.

Keyes claimed that he had been under pressure from other TUC leaders not to present a

But it is clear that the likes of Dromey see May 14 as a huge diversion.

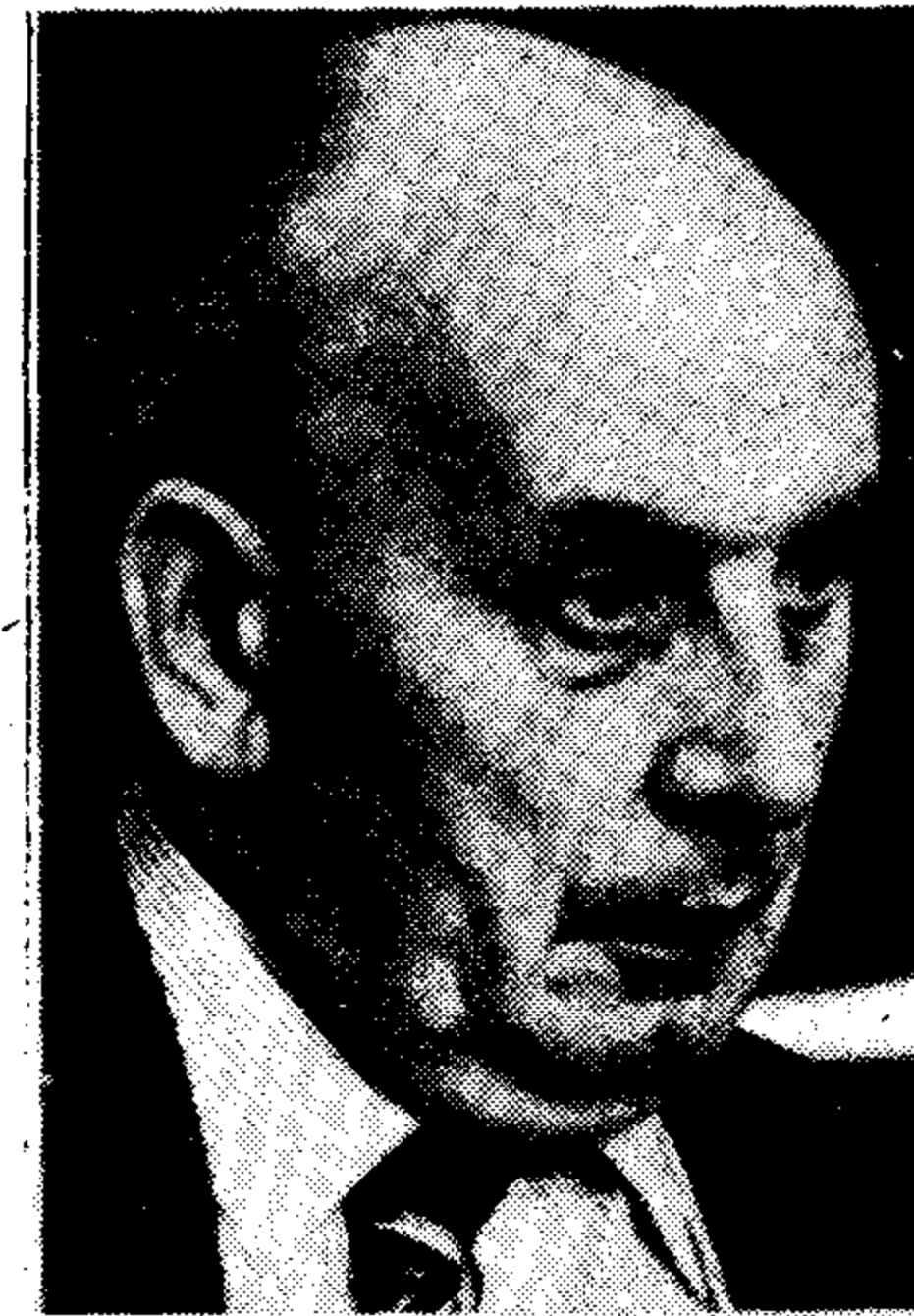
It is necessary to fight for strike action on May 14 not as a one-off affair, but as preparation for the General Strike that is needed to bring down the Tory government.

minority report from the Lever inquiry—but failed to explain his support for the majority's miserable proposal of a 1.1% rise.

Nor would he argue a case for SOGAT's refusal to support the NGA's industrial action in pursuit of the three-union joint pay claim. In Keyes' view "The NGA will never get what they are asking for."



Dromey



Keyes

# NUJ conference: left motions blocked

The annual conference of the National Union of Journalists opens in Portrush, Northern Ireland, this Friday with the fourth biggest branch in the union denied representation.

The National Executive Committee of the NUJ overturned a recommendation of a special committee it had set up and voted to bar the 2,000-strong book branch for being more than 10% in arrears with its subs.

The book branch has a number of left resolutions on the agenda—not least among them one calling for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

The NEC decision is a highly convenient one and has exposed the reactionary nature of the disenfranchising rule, which was introduced three years ago.

The Bristol branch, for example, has lost its place at the conference, although virtually all staff journalists in its branch are paid up.

Attempts by the branch to get a number of freelancers in union membership despite dues arrears, have now backfired on them.

Attempts were being made to get the ruling reversed before the conference began.

The agenda includes a call for the union to affiliate to the Labour Party, for the election of officials, for withdrawal from the Press Council and enforcement of the union's code of conduct, and for wage rises to match inflation.

On Ireland the Government and the BBC face attack for their censorship of the Carrickmore events and the Oxford branch has called for a labour movement conference organised by the NUJ on censorship.

# Union bureaucrats back Liverpool rates retreat

Liverpool city council have voted to increase rates in the city by 50%, instead of implementing the Tory cut-backs in services.

The Labour group, the largest party on the council but without the overall majority, succeeded in getting their budget through the council after the Liberals' abstention on Wednesday 26 March—with no opposition from any of the Labour councillors, who include Militant supporter Derek Hatton.

The meeting was a recalled meeting after the failure to reach agreement which had occurred the previous week.

## Deficit

At this earlier meeting Hatton had boldly proposed a motion against the main Labour group resolution. It called for the policy of deficit budgeting; no cuts; a 13% rate-rise in line with government recommenda-

tions to merely cover the increase in inflation; and the cancelling of interest payments on loans to the banks coupled with a campaign to mobilise the working class in support of the council.

## Wrath

Only nine councillors had the guts to back this proposal which predictably provoked the wrath of the majority of careerist time servers and created uproar for several minutes.

This courageous stand deserved the support of all workers and served to expose the thoroughly spineless and cowardly majority of the remainder of the Labour group.

The backlash from the right wing in the Labour Party came swiftly when they proposed a motion from the right wing in the Labour Party executive to expel the nine from the Party.

Threats were made by right wing district secretary Wally Edwards to withdraw official status from one candidate in

the coming council elections.

And leaflets for the elections opposing the rate-rises in the Labour budget were arbitrarily and mysteriously changed on the way to the printers.

The background to these events has been a campaign by the right wing and Communist Party members in the public sector union branches to scare-monger the members with horror stories about thousands of redundancies if the policy of 'no cuts, no rate rises' was adopted.

Even so, the Labour Party district executive narrowly voted in favour of this policy of deficit budgeting.

## Packed

A policy conference on the issue called shortly afterwards however, was packed out by the right wing and public sector union delegates who had been whipped up into an ill-considered opposition to the deficit spending policy and reversed

# ALL OUT MAY 14!

AS THE TUC's May 14 Day of Action grows closer the list of trade union bodies calling for or recommending strike action has grown rapidly—now including the NUR, GMWU, NUPE, SOGAT, NUJ, NUT, ASMTS, FTATU, the Seamen's Union and the Scottish TUC.

There is little doubt that the day will register a huge protest at Tory cuts, anti-union laws and mass unem-

ployment: but nor is there any doubt that TUC leaders desperately hope to confine the action to a one-day token affair which will leave the Tories safely in office.

The fight for strike action on May 14 must therefore be combined with redoubled demands on the TUC to break off all talks with the Tories and call General Strike Action to bring down the Thatcher government.

# NGA: call all out strike!

1,274 firms, employing 20% of the membership of the National Graphical Association, have now signed interim agreements on the current pay and hours claim.

The NGA claim is for an £80 minimum earnings level and

a 37½ hour week by April of next year, starting with a 1½ hour reduction in the working week this month, as a first step towards a 35 hour week.

The employers' "final" offer is a minimum earnings level of £75 and a 37½ hour week by July 1982 with the first reduction of one hour not being implemented until January of next year.

The employers are also demanding new agreements on manning levels and flexibility.

SOGAT and NATSOPA, who submitted the same claim as the NGA, have recommended acceptance of the employers' offer. The NGA National Council, however, rejected the offer and the union has now embarked on a series of selective strikes which have caused 160 editions of various newspapers to fail to appear and led to 1,000 workers taking indefinite strike action and occupying their plants.

The firms signing the interim agreement are exempt from industrial action in return for agreeing to the union claim on wages and hours.

The interim agreement will, says the NGA, be replaced by whatever final agreement is reached between the employers, the BPIF and Newspaper Society, and the union.

## Long battle

But the employers are preparing for a long battle and the Newspaper Society are meeting to discuss their tactics in relation to the industrial action.

While the NGA has not yet endorsed any of the productivity proposals that were discussed before negotiations finally broke down, it is clear that if the employers are prepared to offer more money, NGA officials will soon be round the table negotiating away their members' jobs.

NGA members should demand all-out strike action for £80 and 37½ hours now—and no strings!

# BSC war on jobs

In the wake of the sell-out on wages, steel workers are coming face to face with the BSC offensive on jobs.

Management in Scotland are demanding an immediate increase in production with a 1,900 reduction in the labour force.

One of the groups to be eliminated at Ravenscraig is that of craftsmen's mates. There is also pressure being exerted to end demarcation between different types of craftsmen.

The increased production is not to meet new orders—but to take up work that has hitherto been done at Llanwrn and Port Talbot in South Wales.

Feelings still run high in the plants over the issue of continuing the blacking of transport firms which broke the picket lines during the strike.

Militants hold to the position that the blacking decision should stand.

## SAVE OUR NURSERIES CAMPAIGN

Regional Conference  
May 17 1980  
Nottingham

## "How to Defend Nurseries against Closures"

Region covered includes Coventry, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Birmingham.

For details contact: Ann McKinley, 33 Norreys Avenue, Oxford, or Margaret Lee, 28 Bramble Drive, Portchester Lodge, Nottingham.

# SOCIALIST PRESS



## Lesson of steel strike:

# NEW LEADERS

# NEEDED!

BACK PAGE COMMENT

The sheer dimension of the sell-out moves by union officials in the steel industry and in British Leyland sum up the harsh political problems now faced by the British working class in the struggle against Thatcher's bosses' government.

Five years of TUC collaboration with wage-cutting Labour governments; five years of arguing that workers must sacrifice jobs, living standards and social services in order to restore the "viability" of British capitalism; five years of steadfast opposition to independent struggles by the working class, have driven the trade union bureaucracy even further to the right than any period since the war.

If any worker had seriously believed that those union leaders who refused to defend their members under a Labour government would suddenly begin to lead struggles against the Tories, the first nine months of Tory rule and the outcome of the longest national strike since 1926 should provide a bitter answer.

### Opposed

The TUC leaders who once argued against action under the slogan "save the Labour government" are equally opposed to action against Thatcher. Their commitment is in no way to any notion of socialism, but to the negotiation of petty reforms and concessions within the framework of capitalism.

In a period of world-wide capitalist recession and crisis, in which the drive for profits forces employers onto the offensive against the working class, this search for reforms within the system turns into an all-out struggle to preserve the system itself—and the government that defends it.



Sirs



Not crushed: steel strikers

Could there be a clearer example of such behaviour than the steel strike? As soon as it began in January it became clear that in South Wales and other areas it was possible to extend and generalise the struggle beyond the wages issue to link up with the defence of jobs in the industry and the growing anti-Tory militancy within the working class as a whole.

Yet the TUC leaders saw this not as an opportunity, but as a threat to their control of the membership, on which their own power and privileges rest.

So for 14 weeks they ensured that the strike remained isolated. They blocked growing demands for a General Strike to defeat the Tory offensive on pay and jobs; they connived at wholesale, massive scabbing on the strike by dockers, transport workers and others; and they allowed steel pickets to focus their energies on private steel plants and stockholders rather than on stopping production at the big engineering and automotive plants.

Yet as soon as a strike call by BL union negotiators offered a real chance of another section of workers joining the steel strike in struggle against the Tories, union leaders on all sides moved like greased lightning.

### Renegade

A phony commission of inquiry, headed by millionaire Labourite Lord Lever, and staffed by print union leader Bill Keyes and renegade ex-Labour minister Richard Marsh was set up.

It offered a few pence more than BSC's "final offer".

Meanwhile in BL TGWU leaders held back politely while the extreme right wing AUEW Executive knifed the strike call—declaring their confidence in

Michael Edwardes and BL management not to "abuse" the 92-page package of anti-union strings to be imposed on the BL workforce.

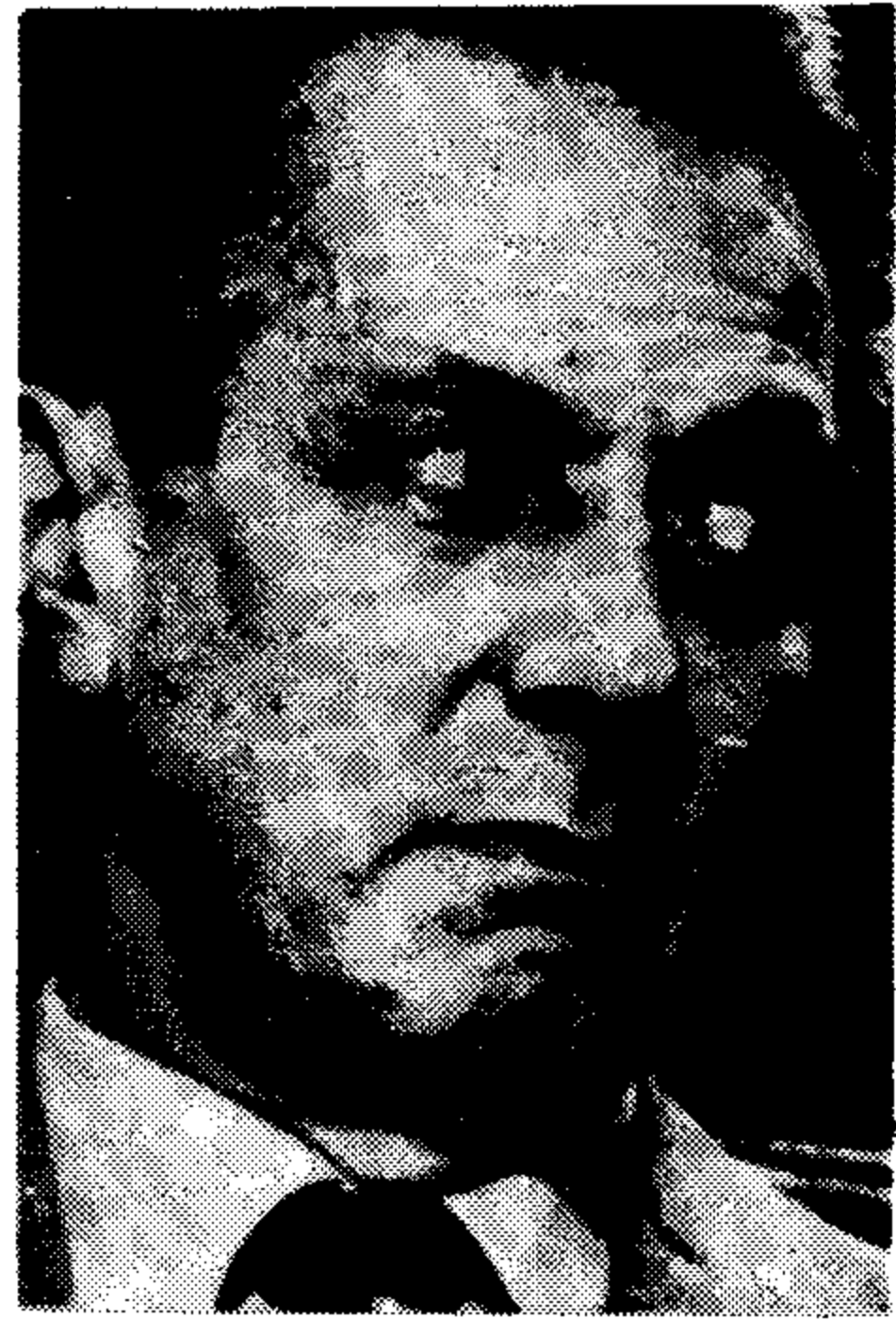
It was, appropriately enough, on April Fool's Day that Bill Sirs took up the fight to force the Lever Commission's proposals through meetings of the ISTC negotiating committee and Executive.

### Instruction

There were pockets of resistance in many areas. But the official instruction to return to work brought the ending of the steel strike.

Yet, as subsequent struggles on blacking of scab suppliers and on payment of back wages have shown, the steel strikers have returned not defeated and crushed but betrayed by a leadership that is incapable of defending their interests.

In BL, too, despite years of betrayals and every effort by union leaders to avoid strike action, the feeling on the shop floor against Edwardes' union-



Joseph

busting moves has brought a resurgence of strike action from what appeared to be the ashes of a successful sell-out.

While workers remain determined to fight, there is the possibility of defeating the employers and the Tory government. But at the same time it is necessary to recognise the acute crisis of leadership that has weakened the struggles so far and stands as a threat for the future.

Repeated betrayals—though they may not actually crush the working class—can have a cumulative effect. They spread demoralisation, and open the door to actual defeats and setbacks.

The Tories have successfully sat out the steel strike: but they have yet to inflict the kind of historic defeat on the working class which they must achieve in order to establish the levels of exploitation they seek.

### Militant

The steelworkers on the other hand have emerged still militant, but effectively leaderless, and facing an unprecedented attack on their jobs and working conditions.

Nothing is resolved. But the most urgent question of all is the construction in the steel unions and throughout the workers movement of a leadership that starts not from the search for "reforms" within the system, not from conceding the employers' "right" to extract profits but from the necessity to defend the independent interests of the working class—through mass action to defeat the Tories and their Labour and TUC lackeys, and establish a workers government to create a planned, socialist economy.

The Workers Socialist League is fighting to construct precisely such a revolutionary leadership.

ANNIVERSARY OF SOUTHALL

PICKET YOUR LOCAL POLICE STATION WED APRIL 23rd

DISBAND THE SPG

DEMONSTRATION SUN APRIL 27th

Assemble 1pm Speakers Corner Marble Arch  
March via Scotland Yard to Rally in Trafalgar Square  
REMEMBER BLAIR PEACH

## Troops out -demand NUPE strikers

The strike by hospital ancillary workers at six Belfast hospitals including the Royal Victoria Hospital is one of the first major industrial actions against the effective martial law repression operating in the North of Ireland.

Hospital workers have for years been angered by the heavy military presence inside the hospital—but their anger erupted into action last week when a soldier's rifle went off accidentally in a corridor.

NUPE members at the Royal Victoria Hospital walked out—to be followed by solidarity action in five other Belfast hospitals. They are demanding the complete withdrawal of troops from the premises.

### Attacked

The 1,200 strikers have been immediately attacked by NUPE's National Executive, which called for a return to work while talks were held on the issue of the troops, and by local NUPE official John Coulthard who has issued a virtual invitation to "volunteer" scabs to cross NUPE picket lines.

While condemning allegations that "a republican caucus exists within the union" at the hospital, and claiming that the difference between him and the strikers is simply that he can "deliver the goods" while the strikers cannot, Coulthard has gone on to condemn the strike as "futile".

"Our members must know that if they stay out until Christmas it will not make one whit of difference to the army presence," he declared in a press statement. Attacking the strike leaders, he went on:

"The striking members have been pushed into a corner... They have allowed themselves to be led there by hotheads."

With such 'leadership' from Coulthard it is scarcely surprising that the strikers are demanding that he be excluded from talks on the army presence in the hospital.

### Not easy

Nobody can pretend that it is an easy matter to force the withdrawal of British troops from even a single building in the occupied six counties.

But the obvious readiness of NUPE members to take up this fight is an expression of the rising hostility to British imperialism in the North of Ireland.

And the refusal of Coulthard along with Alan Fisher and the British NUPE leadership, to strengthen and develop this struggle is an expression of their collaboration with British capitalism and its brutal colonial oppression in Ireland.

British trade unionists, as well as socialists in Ireland, North and South must however draw strength from the struggle of the NUPE strikers, and step up the struggle to force the withdrawal of British troops not only from the Royal Victoria Hospital, but from the six counties as a whole.

## FUND

A record collection of just over £500 in cash to aid the development of our international work was taken at the recent WSL Conference. Together with the successful completion of the first half of our £3,000 fund the same weekend, and the raising, month by month of our regular Socialist Press Fund, this represents an enormous achievement for a movement of our size.

But now, more than ever, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. The more successful we are in taking up the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International, the heavier our financial commitments become.

So an immediate fight must be taken up to raise the second half of our £3,000 Special Fund which we must have completed by the TILC Summer School at the end of July. The current total is £1539.85.

All donations should be sent to:

Socialist Press Special Fund  
BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX