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**WOMEN
and the fight
for
leadership**

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DEFY TORY COURTS!

Even while TUC leaders fiddled with their speeches for their half-hearted Day of Action, the High Court ruling against the print unions calling strike action on that day underlined once again the need for an all-out mobilisation to bring down this Tory government.

Yet instead of defying the Courts and redoubling the fight for action to defend union rights, the union leaders allowed themselves to remain sitting ducks for an orchestrated and massive press campaign designed to minimise the scale of the May 14 stoppages and thus inflict a setback on the anti-Tory struggle.

Forging ahead

There be no mistake: the Thatcher government is forging ahead on all fronts with its coordinated offensive against the unions at every level.

While James Prior's Employment Bill, containing a battery of new anti-union laws, is passed through Parliament, Tory judges and employers have been combining to create a body of precedents in existing legislation, designed to hamstring basic union activity.

And at shopfloor level Michael Edwardes and the British Leyland management have spearheaded an anti-union offensive designed to outflank, isolate, discredit and defeat trade union bodies and the shop stewards movement in order to create conditions for a full-scale onslaught on jobs and working conditions.

In implementing this attack the Tories and the employers continue to rely on the cowardice and collaboration of the trade union leaders, and their hostility to any form of full-scale action by their membership.

But with workers in every industry increasingly recognising the threat to their jobs, living standards and basic rights that is posed by the policies of this government, the union bureaucrats themselves are under pressure to stand firm against such attacks.

So while NGA and SOGAT leaders climbed down at once before last week's court injunction, the right wing leadership of NATSOPA took an unexpectedly defiant stand, refusing to withdraw the circular pronounced illegal by the court, and thereby theoretically risking jail for contempt.

Precedent

It seems unlikely that either the government or the management of Express Newspapers, who brought the original court action, will press the case to such a level of confrontation.

And it seems certain that no Fleet Street paper will be produced on May 14—court or no court.

But the ruling by Mr Justice Griffiths that unions have no legal right to call their members out on a political strike against the government now stands firmly established as a precedent in law. None of the four unions is even going to appeal against

Their offer to issue new

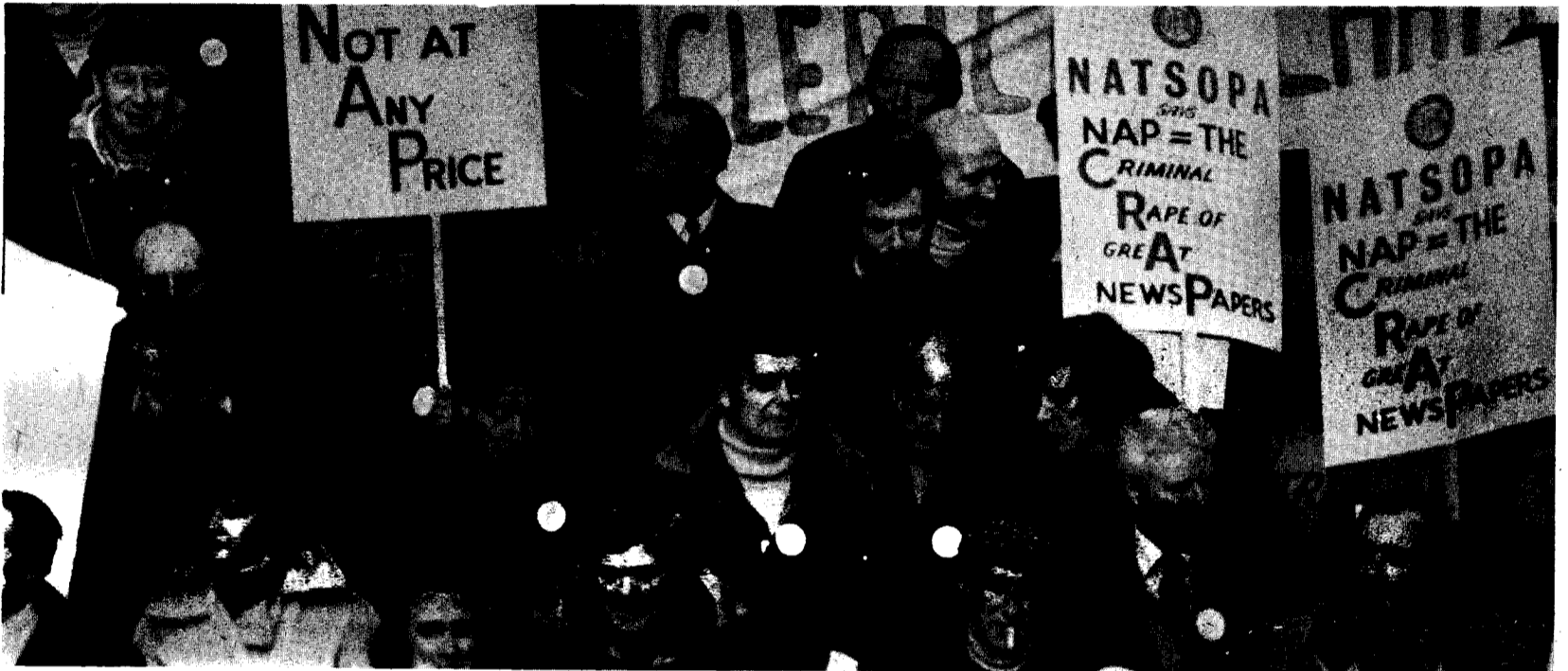


PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

NATSOPA workers on the march in defence of jobs at the Times last year

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE!



Prior

circulars to their members stressing that the May 14 stoppage was a purely voluntary affair was rejected as unacceptable by both the employers and the High Court: the issue at stake was to declare it against the law even to call for a political strike.

This latest legal precedent follows on court rulings that in 1977 declared it illegal for the UPW to black mail to South Africa in solidarity with the struggle against apartheid, or to black post to the strike-bound Grunwick management in solidarity with the marathon unionist struggle in Britain.

The NUJ is next month to appeal in the House of Lords against the 1979 court ruling that its seven week pay strike against provincial newspaper employers was called illegally—and that therefore scabs cannot be disciplined for strike-breaking.

During the lorry drivers' strike of 1979 TGWU militant Reg Fall was barred by a court injunction from picketing James

Prior's old firm United Biscuits to seek solidarity from fellow lorry drivers.

And the NGA was last year fined a savage £80,000 damages for blacking firms that continued to advertise in the anti-union Nottingham Evening Post.

The steel strike saw a renewed attempt by Lord Denning to strengthen the body of precedent making solidarity action illegal, when he ordered the ISTC to withdraw its strike call to workers in private steel firms.

Combined attacks

A full-scale confrontation was only avoided by an almost immediate decision by the House of Lords to overturn Denning's ruling—but the Tory Employment Bill now contains specific provisions to illegalise most forms of solidarity action, as well as mass picketing.

The Tories are thus combining economic attacks on the working class—cuts, closures,

runaway inflation—with attacks on workers' basic organisations designed to prevent the likelihood of united class action to stop the government in its tracks.

Thatcher's anti-union strategy differs therefore from that of the ill-fated Heath government in that it does not revolve around the imposition of one comprehensive Industrial Relations Act.

Rather they are setting out to:

- *create the legal basis for unions to be picked off one by one;

- *weaken the closed shop as a prelude to all-out efforts at strikebreaking;

- *establish the mechanism of secret ballots so that individual union members can be more easily manipulated by the employers and the mass media;

- *whip up a climate of witch-hunt in which militants can be vilified and victimised;

- *and, by putting union leaders firmly on the defensive at a time when their members

are seeking action to defend themselves, utilise the obvious weaknesses of the leadership of the working class to demoralise, split and divide the resistance.

'Foolhardy'

As Prior cynically told Scottish Tories last weekend, it would be foolhardy simply to pass a barrage of draconian anti-union laws.

"To do so would unite the whole of the trade union movement 100% against the Conservative government."

"The unions are in a state of flux. They are divided about their future. While the division is going on there is the possibility of change, and that is what we want."

Prior overstates the opposition to the Tory offensive from the union leaders. They are not "divided" on whether or not to fight the Tories: some are in favour of that.

The only tactical disagreement within the TUC is whether some show of opposition should be made in one-off protests like May 14, or whether, like EETPU leader Chapple and

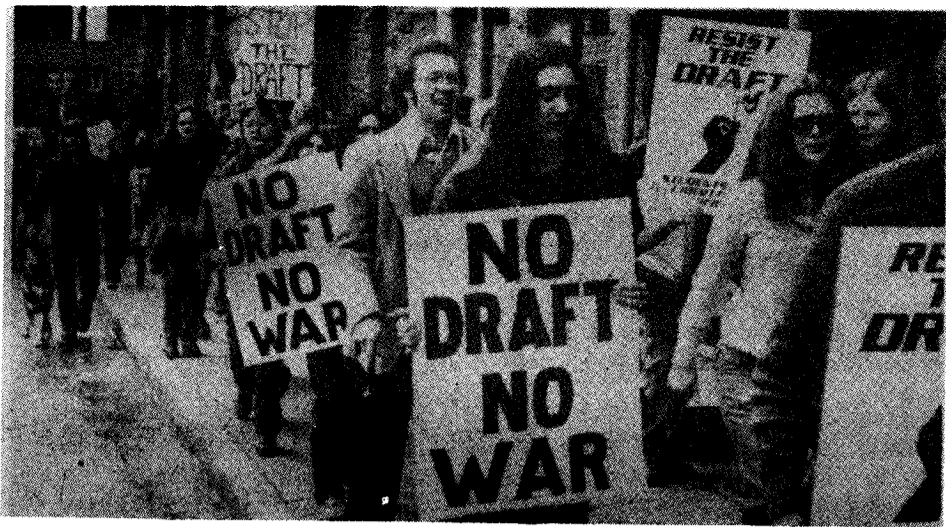
UPW leader Jackson, they should simply throw in the towel and wait for the next election.

For the working class the answer is that both positions are extremely dangerous: basic union rights, jobs, social services and living standards are under an attack unprecedented since the war. They can only be defended through the defeat of this government.

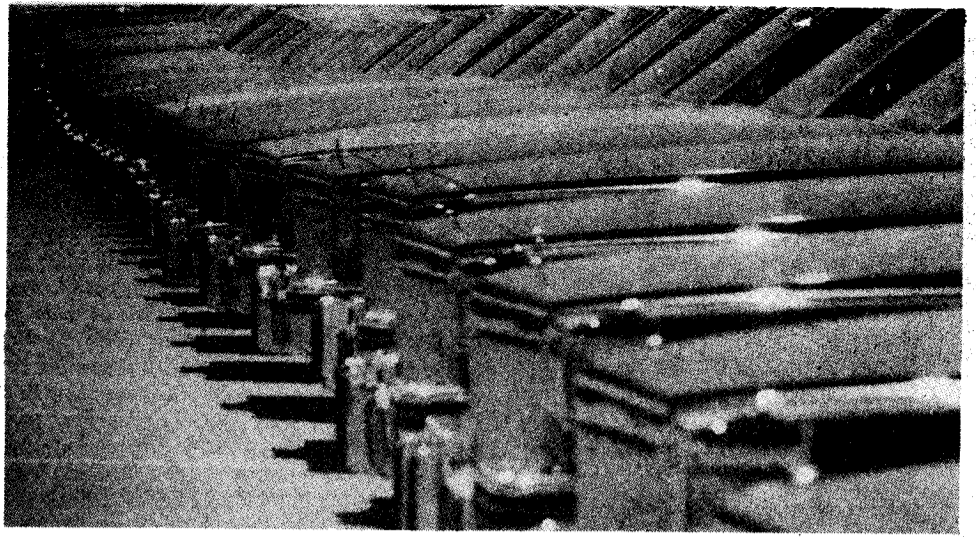
This calls for united class action—a general strike to bring down Thatcher, and to create conditions to drive out the anti-working class leaders of the Labour Party.

Last week's High Court judgement declares such a general strike illegal. In any event it is opposed by union bureaucrats and Labourites who know it would remove them from their cosy privileged positions.

This is why a revolutionary leadership must be built to mobilise and lead such a struggle to defend workers' interests through the fight for a workers' government and a planned socialist economy.



Growing opposition to Carter's war moves



A field full of unsold Cadillacs

CARTER UNLEASHES US REPRESSION

Described last week by one commentator as a "banana skin President" because of his tendency to fall over whichever way he goes, Jimmy Carter faces a grim situation at home and abroad.

Internationally neither his sabre rattling, nor his catastrophic attempt at actual armed intervention, nor his wheedling diplomatic overtures have succeeded in their purpose of containing and subduing mounting anti-imperialist struggles in the Middle East, Central America and the Caribbean.

But at home Carter has been driven by the runaway economic crisis to unleash a major recession in election year.

The recession has been long expected—and longed for by bankers and speculators who had impatiently demanded that Carter take such firm anti-working class action to restore stability to the dollar, reduce soaring interest rates and curb inflation.

As the first signs of the slump became apparent the profiteers went wild with joy: the stock market boomed in New York, London and Tokyo; US bankers began cutting their lending rates; and the dollar gained in strength.

But of course not everyone was celebrating—there were

REPRESSION

Chrysler lay-offs, together with those of the other two major US car giants, Ford and General Motors, now total nearly 300,000—one carworker in every four is now laid off.

The impact of this is beginning to be felt in other industries and on the major car-producing centres.

Detroit—"motor city"—is fast becoming a ghost town. And new steel orders have fallen 50% in little over a month—heralding a new round of lay-offs and closures in the crisis-bound US steel industry.

The slump in the housing industry appears to be the worst since the 1930s, and consumer spending appears to have fallen back—with profound implications for wide sections of US industry.

As one banker pointed out "I don't know who they'll be, but there are other Chryslers out there."

But if the slump brings problems for some employers, it certainly means hard times for the American working class.

Unemployment shot up by a staggering 827,000 in the single month of March—rising from 6.2% to 7%. Since this is only the first stage in the recession it can be expected that unemployment in the US will rise to at least 9-10 million.

New factory orders are falling, stocks of unsold goods and unused materials are rising, and the average working week is falling as the economy grinds into low gear.

But Carter is doing his best to press forward the recession with a vicious package of government spending cuts that will have a dramatic impact on US cities.

Austerity

In hard-pressed Detroit the administration is planning an 11% cutback in the city workforce—including the sacking of 700 policemen—as the money runs out. The pattern of austerity and cuts is echoed

throughout the USA.

A recent survey showed 75 out of 100 cities facing a financial squeeze as a result of Carter's decision to lop \$1.7 billion from the Federal revenue sharing scheme, \$625 million off transport subsidies, and further sums off job creation and training schemes which keep thousands of municipal employees on the payroll.

New York city alone stands to lose \$435 million in Federal aid as a result of these cuts—added to an existing deficit of \$677 million for the year.

Carter's axe is not restricted to city halls: he is slashing \$1.7 billion from fuel subsidies and \$800 million from the Federal food stamps scheme—both of which benefit exclusively the most oppressed and poverty-stricken layers of the US working class.

But there is little sign that even these draconian attacks will have any impact on the US inflation rate—currently running near the 20% mark.

Carter however, can draw

some consolation: in launching these attacks on workers in election year he knows full well that his main rival—the geriatric Ronald Reagan—is unable to put forward any more attractive alternative.

And with the evident failure of Edward Kennedy to con more than a small percentage of Democratic voters that he offers any coherent challenge to Carter on basic issues, the President has been able to weather every disaster so far and emerge as top dog in the primary elections.

Sigh of relief

But while bourgeois leaders breathe a sigh of relief that voters are still willing to trek out and support one of the two capitalist parties that effectively monopolise US political life, there are increasing signs of the alienation of workers and youth—many of whom make up the regular massive abstention in US elections.

In particular Carter's Cold War offensive and preparations for military adventures on a world scale have drawn forth a growing anti-war movement beginning on the campuses, but rapidly reaching into the unions. The challenge now before US workers is to build and politically develop the movement—to show the links between Carter's war drive and the requirements of US capitalism at home and abroad.

Labour Party

On this basis the campaign must be stepped up to force the unions to break from the twin capitalist parties—Republican and Democrat—and commit their resources to building a mass Labour Party to defend the independent interests of the working class.

Within such a party revolutionaries would fight for a programme of democratic and transitional demands designed to mobilise workers in the struggle for a workers government and the establishment of a planned socialist economy in the USA.



Carter

gloomy faces even amongst the American bourgeoisie. The slump in the car industry makes it increasingly doubtful if the Chrysler corporation—which lost \$400 million in the first quarter of this year—can survive.

Stalinist spending cuts

A cutback in public expenditure on all fronts, 5% less jobs by the end of 1981, 10% reductions in the supply of equipment and stationery to administrations and 20% parking spaces at workplaces, a freeze on advertising expenditure, office modernisation and a cutback in street-lighting.

That is the list not of axeman Thatcher but of axeman

Gierek, Stalinist boss of Poland. The cuts are the latest efforts of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy to balance its shaky economic books.

The failure of the Polish "socialist planned economy" is chronic. For years the bureaucracy has unsuccessfully tried to force reductions in workers' living standards in order to force the working class to pay for bureaucratic privilege, defence spending, the vast cost of maintaining a huge repressive apparatus and the consequences of the inability of bureaucratic

methods to develop the full potential of the productive forces.

Several times the leaders have tried to inflict such attacks by sharp increases in prices.

But each time they have done so, the hostile reaction of the masses, especially in the workers' uprising in 1976, has made this impossible. They have been forced to retreat ignominiously.

Upturned hands

And they have retreated into the arms of the imperialist

bankers who have, through private banks and the IMF, poured billions of dollars into the upturned hands of the Polish bureaucrats.

Poland now owes \$7 billion and its debt servicing this year will take over 50% of its export earnings.

With the capitalists becoming tighter-fisted, the bureaucracy is now forced to try massive public spending cuts.

This, they hope, will produce the needed cuts in workers living standards in a less

noticeable way than wage cuts or price rises.

The plan involves a cut of 10 billion zlotys (about £200 million) and involves the loss of 36,000 jobs even on the regime's estimates.

Though the bureaucracy says the job cuts will happen through natural wastage it is clear that they will create significant unemployment.

And that implies that the already numerous signs of open mass opposition to the Polish bureaucracy will continue to grow.

Mass lay-offs at Fiat

A combination of the world-wide crisis of the motor industry and the defensive manoeuvres of the hard-pressed Italian capitalists produced a sensational attack on workers in Fiat last week.

The Italian motor giant, jointly owned by Italian capital and Gaddafi's government in Libya, announced that 78,000 workers (out of 114,000) would be put on short time throughout the months of June and July.

The management blames this move on a drop in world-wide

demand (50% of Fiat cars are exported) and claims to need to cut its stocks by 30,000 cars.

There can be no doubt of the ferocity of the objective economic crisis facing Fiat—but trade union leaders also believe that the lay-offs are meant—BL style—to soften up the workforce in advance of the impending negotiations on a new wage contract.

The workforce certainly regards the management's action as provocative and is putting great pressure on the unions to call action against Fiat.

The government of Francesco Cossiga clearly

regards the situation as an emergency and Cossiga himself was forced to hold an emergency meeting with national union leaders.

The Christian Democrat Party is clearly alarmed by the possible effects such a dramatic new anti-working class attack may have on its chances in the country-wide local elections which take place on June 8—and on the outcome of which almost certainly depends the future of Cossiga's shaky centre-left government.

The credibility of the Christian Democrat-Socialist coalition has been further under-

mined by continuing financial scandals concerning leading Christian Democrats and by the failure of the recent wave of arrests of Red Brigade members to halt their assassinations.

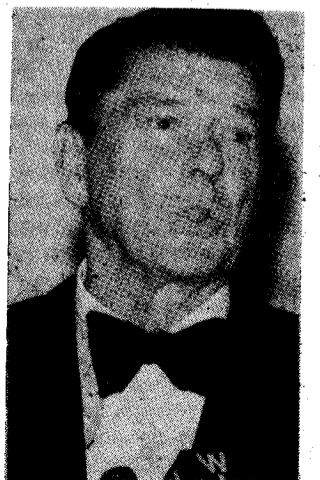
The arrests followed the revelations of Patrizio Peci who collapsed under police interrogation and wrote a 60-page 'confession' including details of the structure, members and safe houses of the Red Brigades in Turin and Genoa.

Although the authority of the document is open to doubt, it has exploded the myth that support for the Red Brigades is

limited to petit-bourgeois social misfits.

The majority arrested were factory workers, youth and housewives, with one worker being seized in a raid on the assembly line at Fiat.

The fact that such layers are driven to support the tactics of the Red Brigades is a decisive condemnation not only of the class collaboration of the Italian trade unions and Stalinists but also of the failure of the main Italian left groups and tendencies to offer any effective road for mass action against Italian capitalism's attacks against the working class.



Reagan



S. AFRICAN YOUTH STRUGGLE —BAROMETER OF THE MASSES

"We don't want no education; we don't want no thought control".

These are the well known words of a song by the Pink Floyd whose sale last week was banned by South Africa's racist regime.

This bit of thought control was one of the more panicky responses of the regime to a new upsurge of South Africa's oppressed masses over the last month.

Well over 100,000 predominantly 'coloured' working class youth, have been rallying round slogans like 'Down with racist education' and 'Don't force us out of school to supply cheap labour for capitalism'.

Unarmed

They have boycotted classes in schools, colleges and universities throughout South Africa, and in the western Cape in particular.

Less than four years after the Soweto uprisings, when thousands of unarmed school students were gunned down by the police, black youth are once again pushed to the fore in the struggle against the apartheid capitalist state.

Moreover, the current struggles have already demonstrated that the Soweto events contained the kernel of the emerging class struggles in Southern Africa.

The struggle of the youth reflects and gains strength from the burgeoning combativity of an undefeated black proletariat moving into struggle in the wake of the post-Soweto lull (See SP 184).

In recent months, partial struggles have erupted with increasing frequency and intensity around demands relating to the everyday material needs of workers.

In particular strikes, boycotts and mass protests have developed around the chronic housing shortage and exorbitant rent charges; the massive increase in the price of transport and essential foodstuffs; and unemployment, material conditions in workplaces and wages.

The working class youth in South Africa are, in the objective conditions prevailing there, "the barometer of the degree of political awakening of the masses" (Trotsky).

Pressures

Immersed in the class through their parents and social milieu, the youth are most sensitive to all the pressures and frustrations wracking the class as a whole.

The embryonic struggles boiling at the base of society invariably find their initial expression amongst the youth.

Being impetuous, lacking both the experience and conservatism of their parents and desiring above all a better future for themselves, the youth—to



Soweto 1976

whom the future belongs—are the heralds of the class battles that must follow.

In the present struggles the youth received their impetus from, and turned immediately to the only force capable of winning even the most partial struggle—their worker parents.

The great political lesson of Soweto for the youth was the increasing realisation from their own experience in struggle that their worker parents—whom they had initially castigated for being 'backward'—actually embodied the revolutionary strength to shake the capitalist system to its foundations.

Fighting unity

When workers stayed at home in two nationwide political strikes in 1976, a powerful fighting unity was established which the youth—till then isolated and hence vulnerable to vicious repression—were clearly objectively unable to generate alone.

The carrying through of this crucial lesson of Soweto was demonstrated by the way in which politically advanced layers of youth immediately posed the need to turn to the working class.

Beginning with a meeting of worker parents and youth from one school in Cape Town, where a student/parent committee was established to take up their grievances the struggle rapidly gathered momentum.

Deepening its scope politically and broadening it

geographically, youth and workers in struggle spontaneously began to assert a pronounced level of political and organisational independence.

Initial demands

From the initial demands for free text books, the abolition of school uniforms and for investigation into the appalling material conditions at schools, corrupt teachers and 'gutter education', the demands quickly extended to include the sacking of teachers politically hostile to the demands of the youth, the reinstatement of politically sympathetic teachers, pay increases for teachers and the abolition of racist education.

Parallel with these developments, the organisational form which grew out of the struggle expanded to include teachers and student-parent representatives from schools, the 'coloured' university, and colleges in the whole of Cape Town area.

At the same time, youth in numerous towns and cities throughout South Africa began to demonstrate their hostility to every manifestation of the oppressive racist education system.

In the face of this situation the state, fearing above all else the latent strength of the working class from which the youth struggle had burst, conceded to some of the students' demands and dismissed a principal, issued free text books and promised

an immediate investigation into the material conditions in schools.

In addition, principals at most schools were forced by the strength of the movement, into recognising the student representative councils which had sprung up in the course of the struggle.

Sensing both the initiative they had won and the level of control they had asserted in forcing concessions, militants looked for further ways of developing the struggles.

From meetings, sit-ins and occasional school and street demonstrations the youth, with the widespread support of their worker parents and teachers, now threatened a complete school boycott in support of their demands.

Within days thousands of school and college students throughout the country were boycotting classes.

In the Cape, the student-parent committee mushroomed into the Committee of 61, comprising 240 delegates from 61 schools representing 60,000 striking youth.

Declaring that their education is "ideological control on the part of the state designed to train people for the cheap labour market", the committee's demands included a free, democratic non-racial system of compulsory education for all; equal pay for all teachers; the abolition of the Coloured Affairs Department and the denial of access of security police to schools.

The boycott now involves over 100,000 youth spread throughout the country.

It has been strengthened by the wide-ranging levels of solidarity that have been built up around it—particularly amongst community based worker organisations.

The degree of political and organisational independence forged in the heat of struggle has temporarily removed the room for manoeuvre of the petty-bourgeoisie, who have been either dragged in the wake of the struggle or already exposed as traitors.

The extent of control asserted by youth in struggle draws its strength from the revolutionary appetite of the working class which has simultaneously starved the petty bourgeoisie of a compromising role.

The state is forced to reckon with this objective balance of class forces.

On the defensive, it is combining selective arrests and attacks on open demonstrations with diplomatic overtures to the organisations which have emerged from the struggle itself.

It has been the mobilised strength of workers and youth which has forced the concessions already won from the state. Those gains need to be consolidated and extended.

The boycott tactic has thus far served as a central weapon around which mobilisation and organisation have been forged.

The crucial advance made has been in the assertion of a

level of control by youth and worker parents over schools and education. It is in the development of that control that the road ahead lies.

This demands the organisational forms, tactics and political leadership through which working class youth move forward from the boycott towards the extension of full control with worker parents over schools and education—control over access, buildings, resources, syllabus, training and the use of their own skills.

The struggle towards this goal will be confronted not merely by the strength of the state and petty bourgeois opportunists, but by the political reformism of the Stalinists and petty bourgeois nationalists.

Popular frontism—which turns the working class away from reliance on its own independent strength and the struggle for its own class interests—and guerrillaism—which adds to that the removal of layers of militants from the day to day struggles of the working class—are both potentially disastrous obstacles to the development of the working class revolution.

It is Trotskyists alone, who starting from the real conditions and day to day struggles of the working class can provide the transitional perspective and programme capable of carrying through spontaneous partial struggles uninterruptedly to the only solution which secures the interest of the workers—the workers government and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

	Annual per capita expenditure (Rands)	Teacher-pupil ratio	Compulsory education age	Professionally qualified teachers	Total population	Total enrolment in schools	Total enrolment in matric	Matric passes
African	55	1:47.6	10	2.2%	18,629,000	156,045 (11%)	3,493 (0.2%)	No figures
Coloured	185	1:29.6	12	3.7%	2,434,000	106,787 (15%)	6,329 (2.6%)	3,233 (0.25%)
Asian	236	1:26.2	15	18.2%	746,000	58,152 (27%)	4,980 (2.6%)	3,630 (2.3%)
White	551	1:19.6	16	95.0%	4,320,000	344,302 (37%)	53,157 (5.6%)	47,121 (5.1%)

(1 Rand = £0.55)

Import controls: the growing unholy alliance

If you won't fight the employers, you must wind up willy-nilly in alliance with them.

This is particularly the case when a crisis-ridden capitalist class is on the offensive through-out industry, closing down factories, speeding up production and throwing tens of thousands of workers on the dole.

Raucous

As Thatcher's policies of slump and confrontation make themselves increasingly felt in Britain, there is rising, raucous, and united clamour both from the most bankrupt sectors of employers and from trade union and Labour leaders, for a policy of import controls to protect "British" industries and "British" jobs at the expense of "foreign" competition.

The TGWU has firmly nailed its colours to the mast of import controls, giving over space in its union journal to chauvinist adverts produced by BL management and adopting a 10-point programme for industrial expansion centred on a call for selective import controls.

A wide range of other unions—from the right wing-led ISTC and textile unions through to the Stalinist-led TASS, and Furniture Trades union FTAT, have also taken up this call, with campaigns using viciously nationalist slogans.

Total ban

The Labour NEC has gone further than most, calling for a total ban on imports of finished cars to Britain by 1982, and immediate steps to impose a minimum British content to imports.

But while the NEC vote on this policy was split 10-6, the Labour leadership—left and right wing alike—is united around the call for import controls contained within the

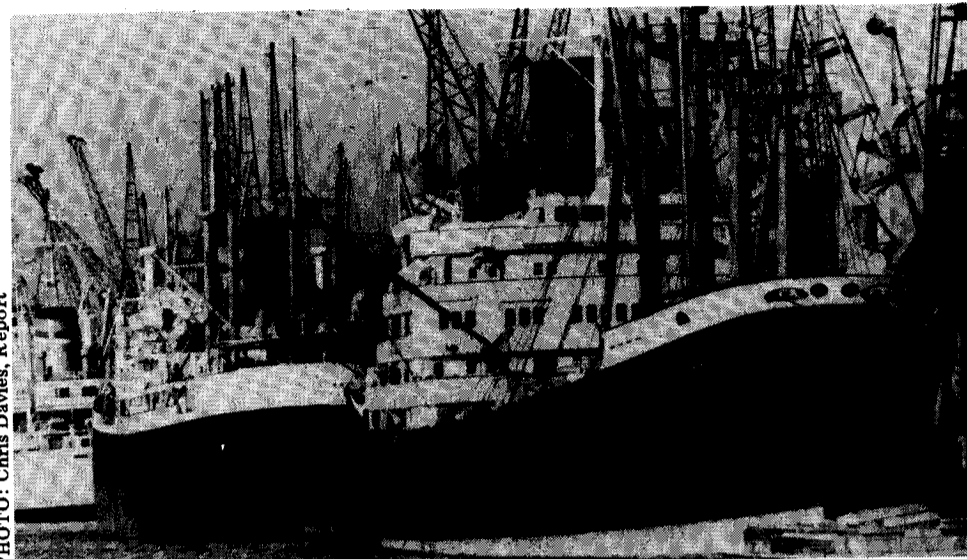


PHOTO: Chris Davies, Report

resolution to be put before the Party's Special Conference on May 31, which declares that:

"We are determined not to allow manufactured imports to continue to destroy our industries and jobs."

The blend of 'left' and right in the four selected platform speakers for the Special Conference—Callaghan, Benn, Heffer and Lester—epitomises the essential unity of the reformist approach to the current economic crisis.

But on the import control question the reformists find themselves in the same camp as the Stalinists of the Communist Party on the one hand, and a growing list of desperate employers on the other.

Capitalist firms in textiles, footwear, cutlery, silverware, carpets and man-made fibres have headed a growing pack of weak or bankrupt employers calling on the Tories to pull back a little from their policy of driving the weakest to the wall, and to offer them a little special protection.

BL management, too, even while forging ahead with their deal to produce the Honda Bounty, have called for restrictions on imports of other Japanese cars, and on imports from Spain and Eastern Europe.

Majority

Within the CBI as a whole a clear majority has emerged in favour of some form of import controls. The debate has shifted to a discussion of how wide-ranging such controls should be.

One school of thought, headed by the Cambridge Department of Applied Economics calls for broadly-based controls—or high tariffs on imports—as a means of spurring on expansion in British firms.

But a prime difficulty for such a strategy is the fact that out of last year's £31 billion manufactured imports, some £23 million consisted of such goods as machinery, aero engines, engineering components, industrial instruments and

materials—without which British manufacturing industry would face a major crisis!

The alternative line—peddled more or less explicitly by many Labour 'lefts' is to call for specific, temporary controls to provide a period of convalescence for ailing industries suffering from Thatcher's surgery.

The idea would be to give these firms a period of guaranteed home market sales to invest in new equipment, cut back their labour force and impose new working conditions sufficient to increase the rate of exploitation on the shop floor.

Labour's spokesman on industry, John Silkin, straddled both strategies when he argued at a TGWU one-day conference for a system of general controls on imports of manufactured goods. Such a system he argued "would give industry a breathing space in which to modernise".

In other words, import controls are not really seen either by employers or by reformist leaders as a means of saving jobs: they are seen as a means of protecting British employers while they bring in new equipment and techniques



which will eliminate jobs by the thousand!

Not one section of the trade union or Labour leadership is prepared to challenge the central argument used by the capitalists to carry through these attacks: that industry must be made "viable" (i.e. profitable) at the expense of the workforce.

The TUC leaders start out instead from the perspective of winning reforms within the capitalist system: they are therefore passionately devoted to preserving the system's health.

Only from a flourishing, profitable capitalist system, they argue, can workers hope for concessions in terms of wage increases and improved conditions.

Yet the world-wide economic crisis of the capitalist system, and the particular crisis of British capitalism underlines the fact that such a vision is a dangerous pipe-dream which leads in practice to the abandonment of any struggle for the independent interests of the working class.

In opposing the demand for import controls the Workers Socialist League argues not for the old capitalist ideal of 'free trade'; rather we are opposed

to the notion that there is any form of "common interest" between British workers and British employers.

To defend jobs, we spell out a clear programme for independent working class action!

*No redundancies: For work sharing without loss of pay under the control of elected trade union committees!

*No closures: occupy threatened factories; fight for supporting strikes and blacking action!

Open the books

*No to the "viability" argument. Open the books of the employers, their suppliers, distributors and bankers to elected trade union committees! Expose the anarchy of capitalist production based on private profit!

*For the nationalisation of basic industry: Build mass action and councils of action to bring down the Tory government! Kick out the Callaghan-Healey leadership of the Labour Party! For a workers government.

*For a programme of public works: Create new jobs in socially useful projects under workers' management.

PRESS GANG



When Len Murray and the TUC called their Day of Action nearly six months back it must have seemed a nice safe diversion from the struggles of the working class.

The TUC has obviously been taken aback by the ferocity of the Tories' response to a day in which strike action was not called, and a half hearted series of 'take it or leave it' circulars were sent out.

For Fleet Street it was not just a question of witch-hunts as usual.

The one section of the working class which was certain—well in advance—to be out on May 14 was Fleet Street print workers.

The Daily Express was therefore able to go well beyond the savage attacks on the trade unions in its pages (where it labelled May 14 Day of Shame) by taking the print unions to court.

As early as April 16 the Express had warned:

"We hope it will not be necessary for this newspaper to take the initiative in upholding the rule of law".

Under Victor Matthews ownership the Express has become a much sharper mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie, more sensitive to its present needs (rather than its Empire past).

Inevitable

Once the injunction was sought its outcome was inevitable.

The Express declared 'Now you are free to work' and said:

"The trade union leaders must make an effort to adjust themselves to the new political situation in this country. Business has to learn to live with the Labour government; the unions must learn to live with the Conservatives."

The Sun led its front page with the headlines 'Outside the law! Union's strike call illegal, rules judge' and widened the

implications of the case beyond the question of the union circulars.

According to the Sun: Workers who do go on strike could be sacked or sued for breach of contract."

With the full force of law in their sails the papers stepped up their attacks on the 14th. But embarrassingly for the press the courts delivered another ruling on the very same day as Mr Justice Griffiths pronounced on the day of action.

Lord Denning ruled that Granada TV had to reveal its source of the leak of material from the British Steel Corporation.

The Observer, amongst other papers, concluded that if the ruling was not reversed then the law would have to be defied.

When the courts attack the political rights of the working class they must be obeyed; when they attack democratic rights which affect sections of the bourgeoisie also, then that is by no means so certain.

NAC MUST REJECT 'SEPARATIST' MOVE

After the success of the campaign against John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill, the National Abortion Campaign is trying to set its own house in order and work out just what its attitude to the womens liberation movement and the labour movement should be.

The agenda for its conference on May 17-18 includes a discussion of the question of women's autonomy and separatism.

The womens liberation movement argues that abortion and child rearing are something that only women can understand.

They go on from this to demand that only women should organise campaigns on the abortion issue—regardless of their politics.

This not only excludes sympathetic men from playing an active role in fighting abortion restrictions, but also implies that the sole reason why abortion is restricted is because men hold most positions of power.

This leads them to neglect

the fact that abortion is also a class issue—an attack on working class women (who wouldn't have the money to go to a private clinic if abortion was made illegal and who can't afford private medicine if an NHS hospital won't take them).

Obviously attacks on abortion rights are an example of both sexual oppression of women and of the generalised attacks on the working class.

The question is how to fight for free abortion on demand and a woman's right to choose about abortion—and all the other issues that affect her.

The womens liberation movement sees any move towards the trade unions and the labour movement as a compromise of the principle of woman-organised campaigning.

But the fact remains that with abortion as with jobs, nurseries, adequate maternity grants and leave, health care and the free NHS—all the things women need to have any choice about the way they live—the fight can only be waged successfully through the mobilisation of the organised labour movement.

Consciousness raising groups

have been important to some women to talk about issues like sexism or rape.

But when it comes to fighting for democratic rights and welfare services in the face of a vicious Tory government, only campaigns with the organised strength of the labour movement to back them, will get anywhere.

If NAC is going to rule out working with the trade unions and reject any involvement of men, then who will support working women next time the Tories put up an anti-abortion Bill or when NHS abortions become even more restricted because of the cuts?

The fight will have to be taken up in the labour movement with or without NAC. Serious campaigners for abortion rights should therefore reject the dangerous arguments of the womens liberation movement and confront the tough but not insoluble problems of mobilising the labour movement in conflict with its bureaucratic leaders in the struggle against a Tory government already hell-bent on destroying existing hard won rights of women.



WOMEN AND THE FIGHT FOR REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP



A profound social and political crisis is wracking the countries in the imperialist orbit. As international capitalism, facing a crisis of profitability, intensifies its attempts to drive up the rate of exploitation, women are among the first to receive the blows of intensified oppression.

The most oppressed and weakly organised sections of the working class suffer most from the austerity measures imposed everywhere by bourgeois governments.

Nor is this any accidental development. Now is the time when the capitalist class, in order to carry through its rationalisation and speed-up, most needs to weaken and divide the organised working class, and to direct its reactionary appeal to each worker to act as an individual against the interests of the class as a whole.

In 1977 the Workers Socialist League adopted a basic document 'Perspectives for Work Amongst Women'. It defined the basic tasks of Trotskyists in the struggle against women's oppression.

In particular it focussed on the fact that women's rights can only be won and defended in a political *conflict* with the reformist trade union leadership and the Labour leaders—then engaged in the wage-cutting Callaghan government. It pointed to the central role of the bourgeois family unit in the oppression of women and stressed that:

"The exclusion of women from political life not only deprives the working class of a potential ally from its own ranks, but also strengthens the position of the bureaucracy, who are allowed to turn their backs on the mass of the oppressed."

This understanding meant that, for the WSL:

"The question of work among women is not an optional extra . . . It is of decisive importance in the struggle to resolve the crisis of leadership with the working class."

It examined the question of rising unemployment among women, the attitude of the labour bureaucracy to the struggles of women, and the false responses to such questions from the Women's Liberation Movement and the Communist Party.

And it laid down key elements of programme as the basis for a turn to work amongst women, and for the formation of the WSL Women's Commission.

This foundation has laid the basis for a consistent development of the WSL's work amongst women which last year saw the successful launching of the bi-monthly paper *Woman Worker* as a means of broadening and strengthening our contacts amongst working class women both in the labour movement and in the home.

The WSL 4th Annual Conference last month carried a further document, examining some of the practical lessons of the struggles in which our comrades have been active in the struggle against women's oppression, and developing further in the light of practical experience, the programme and perspectives on which we base that fight. We reprint a shortened version of it here.

and anti-communist witch hunts and victimisations clearly demonstrate.

Whether it be the introduction of postal ballots into the unions—designed to put workers under the maximum pressure from the capitalist mass media and the family at home, and to minimise the influence of trade union solidarity and fellow workers—or the promise of individual 'tax cuts' at the expense of slashed social services; the offer to sell council houses at knock-down prices in

order to take them out of the public sector—or the attempt to blackmail strikers back to work by slashing social security benefits for their families; the Tories time and again demonstrate how central is the reactionary divisive role of the individual family unit to their anti-working class strategy.

Nor are the Tories alone in attempting to buttress this bastion of class rule and sexual oppression. Indeed their programme of public spending cuts stands on the shoulders of

those initiated by the Labour leaders.

These cuts in every instance serve not only to force women out of the workforce and back into the home, but also to impose new and more onerous duties on the individual family unit through the withdrawal of social services and health care for the elderly, and cutbacks in nurseries, child care, education and youth facilities.

These tasks fall back on the home, and, crucially, on the shoulders of the wife/mother

who has traditionally carried out such domestic toil.

Yet Callaghan and the Labour leaders actually focussed a major plank of their ill-fated 1979 electoral campaign on the hypocritical claim to have been the party that benefited the working class family! Some Labourites, along with a majority of the Liberal Party, have gone even further, and suggested a state payment to persuade mothers to remain at home with their children as an aid to 'law and order'!

The need for this ideological offensive on the question of the family has its material roots in the developing economic crisis of capitalism.

The capitalist system, even at the heights of the post war boom period, proved itself unable to offer an alternative to the private, individual drudgery of domestic labour in the home, to offer any organised means of lifting the burden of child care from individual mothers, or to offer full employment even to

Pressure is being brought to bear to bolster up the bourgeois family unit—the most basic social unit of capitalism, and the central institution through which women, youth and gays are oppressed. Every possible division of the working class—racial, sexual and political—is consciously heightened in this period by the bourgeoisie, as immigration laws

PHOTOS: Andrew Ward Report, Mark Rusher, Ian Mackintosh, IFL



the restricted number of women able to seek work outside the home.

Now the gathering world recession is throwing capitalist production into stagnation and decline. Whole industries are being driven to the wall, and workers by the thousand are being driven out of employment in collapsing firms and slashed public services.

Far from offering the slightest hope of eventually liberating women from the confines of the home, the capitalist class is forced to seek means for driving thousands of women out of the organised labour movement, and of simultaneously utilising the family unit as the target for the most reactionary propaganda.



Thatcher

It is this crisis, which confronts all sections of the working class, that creates conditions in which large numbers of women now in trade unions, and important layers of unorganised women in the home, emerging in struggles to defend jobs and wages, against public spending cuts, against the impact of the housing crisis, or simply seeking a means of resisting the whole battery of Tory attacks—can and must be drawn into the struggle for revolutionary leadership in the working class.

Every serious demand now raised by women in the struggle against their oppression must bring them into conflict with the official labour bureaucracy.

The demands and aspirations of women have always been neglected by reformist leaders, who have based themselves on the most conservative and privileged layers of the workers' movement.

Now these demands are cast aside entirely by bureaucrats determined if necessary to sacrifice the interests of the whole working class sooner than mobilise independent mass action for the overthrow of the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

The struggle in defence of jobs, wages or conditions; the struggle to stop the Tory spend-

ing cuts; the struggle to create the material conditions for lifting the burden of domestic labour from the shoulders of individual women in the home: all require the turn to the building of a revolutionary socialist leadership in the working class—in which women must play their full part.

The method of work among women and the theoretical basis to it, in the WSL, is based on a class analysis of the oppression of women. We recognise that women's liberation and personal liberation in general can only be achieved by the overthrow of capitalism and the political overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracies and the establishment of a planned economy that will destroy the material basis to women's oppression.

At the same time, we recognise that while only socialism will create the material conditions that make the emancipation of women a possibility, this process is by no means automatic. The reactionary ideology that both justifies and intensifies women's oppression is much older than capitalism and will live on after its overthrow unless communists lead a conscious campaign to stamp it out.

In a planned economy it will become possible to provide communal facilities to supercede the work done by women's domestic labour, with high-quality but cheap dining halls, and laundries as well as a comprehensive free childcare provision.

Workers' and consumers' control of education will be an important factor in combatting the conditioning of children into gender stereotypes.

However, there is no guarantee that the economy will be planned to relieve the burden of women in this way, except in the consciousness among the communist leaders of the working class that these facilities are a priority.

Our task is to mobilise working class and radicalised petty-bourgeois women behind the programme of the Fourth International.

We have to build a mass communist women's movement with a programme of transitional and democratic demands which convey to women the necessity of overthrowing capitalism in order to pave the way for their emancipation.

Our programme for women

takes up their material oppression as workers and as housewives, in a series of transitional demands on such issues as pay, conditions, jobs, prices, and the welfare state.

We also take up, using revolutionary methods, the democratic demands of women, such as equality in the law, equal job and educational opportunities.

We place particular emphasis on those demands which point the way to the replacement of the functions of the individual family with communal provision for domestic tasks.

In order to fight for these demands, women have to be drawn out of the isolation of the home and into the labour movement.

The reactionary leaders of the working class will fight to block these necessary demands; they must be exposed in the eyes of the working class and replaced by a revolutionary leadership.

Democratic rights

Women are not only oppressed economically at work and through a low and deteriorating standard of living, but also through the denial of their democratic rights.

An enormous list of examples could be drawn up—despite the apparent legal equality which women enjoy in Britain as a result of the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act. As communists, we fight hard for an extension of democratic rights, but our method and our understanding of the limitations on democratic rights distinguish us from bourgeois feminism and liberal champions of women's democratic rights.

Even in a fight for an elementary right such as equal job opportunities, we try to draw out the political implications of the struggle and show that such rights can never be guaranteed in a capitalist system.

Each gain made in the fight for formal equality for women not only politically weakens capitalism, but also strips away a layer of the mystique that surrounds women's oppression.

The EPA and SDA have neither ensured equal pay, nor abolished sex discrimination—what could be a stronger argument for showing that parliament cannot legislate the emancipation of women?

Women's oppression, clearly, goes far deeper than legal inequality. Although we fight alongside the supporters of bourgeois feminism in the

struggle to extend democratic rights, our methods are revolutionary.

We do not rely on protests, lobbies and letter-writing but on mass action by the working class, and on organising women within the labour movement to fight against the bureaucracy's reluctance to call action.

An example of our method of fighting for democratic rights is the way we have taken up the struggle for abortion rights in the mass organisations of the working class.

The right to choose what form of birth control (if any) to use is fundamental to women's liberation because it challenges the whole sexist ideology that a woman only has one 'natural' role: mother.

The WSL has fought consistently for free abortion on demand, linking opposition to reactionary anti-abortion legislation to the fight in defence of the health service.

The threat posed by the Corrie Bill gave this campaign an even greater importance. We have taken this fight for abortion rights into the labour movement—in particular our work in ASTMS, where we have fought to mandate sponsored MPs with union policy of free abortion on request.

Our method of taking this into the labour movement is entirely different to that of NAC which has also made a turn to the unions. While NAC, following the lead of the Communist Party and uncritically supported by the International Marxist Group, has developed a cosy relationship with the union bureaucrats, we direct our work *against* these traitors.

This we demonstrated forcibly at the NAC trade union conference in 1978, where the NAC platform uncritically presented Alan Fisher as a defender of women's rights. At the very time of this conference, Fisher and the rest of the NUPE bureaucracy were working overtime to stall action on the pay claim of their low-paid, mostly female, membership.

We fight to build the pro-abortion movement, and work within NAC as part of this aim. However, we do not tailor down our programme to fit NAC, as the IMG do, but fight for our programme, convinced that the fight for abortion rights must be linked with the fight against capitalism.

We try to broaden the campaign for abortion rights, recognising that a 'woman's right to choose' whether to have children is not simply a matter

of a legal choice on abortion, since no such 'choice' can ever be divorced from the social and economic environment in which it is made.

For this reason we do not raise the double slogan of NAC 'free abortion on demand—a woman's right to choose', which implies that the two are equivalent.

Our slogans, rather, are 'Free and safe abortion and contraception on demand—repeal anti-abortion legislation! No cuts! For an expansion of family planning and day care and abortion facilities; for workers' and users' control of the NHS! Open the books of the AHAs and drug companies—expose the profiteering from the needs of women! Abolish the age of consent—equal rights to abortion/contraception for youth!

The fight for equal job and educational opportunities for women and girls is particularly important in work amongst youth.

Because of the current rising unemployment among school leavers, there is growing pressure for young women to take the 'easy' option of marriage. Our comrades in NUSS and the Socialist Youth League should have an active orientation towards young women, and should be fighting in the schools and colleges for equal opportunities and treatment for girls.

This is of course only possible in the context of building NUSS, fighting the education cuts, and fighting for democratic control of schools and curricula by school students and staff. NUSS will be instrumental in turning young women towards the labour movement.

Another main arena of discrimination in opportunities is in apprenticeships in industry. The union bureaucracy have a scandalous record of connivance with appalling conditions for apprentices and young workers—including no strike and no union membership agreements and lengthy training periods on phenomenally low pay.

It is only in the context of removing the union leaders who condone these practices that a fight can be waged for opening up apprenticeships to young women.

As the SYL develops and draws in more young workers, the fight for equal union rights for youth and equal opportunities for young women will become increasingly important.

An important area of our

work in Britain is solidarity work for the struggle against imperialism in Ireland.

In fighting for solidarity and a principled position in the labour movement, we also take up the specific oppression that Irish women suffer at the hands of British imperialism and religious bigotry.

We fight for free contraception and abortion on demand as part of the fight for separation of church and state and a socialist united Ireland.

More emphasis should be placed on the plight of female republican prisoners who suffer the additional torture of sexual abuse.

The Development of 'Woman Worker'

Corresponding to the development of the WSL's work among women, it was recognised by the women's commission that there was a need to actually put into practice 'special methods' for this work, based on previous Bolshevik practice.

We stressed that having a special women's paper was neither a sign of condescension nor of capitulation to feminism.

We felt that if in the WSL we talk of the double oppression of women, we should attempt to find means of tackling the way in which the oppression of the male worker differs from that of a woman, both in her employment and in her traditional role in the family and home.

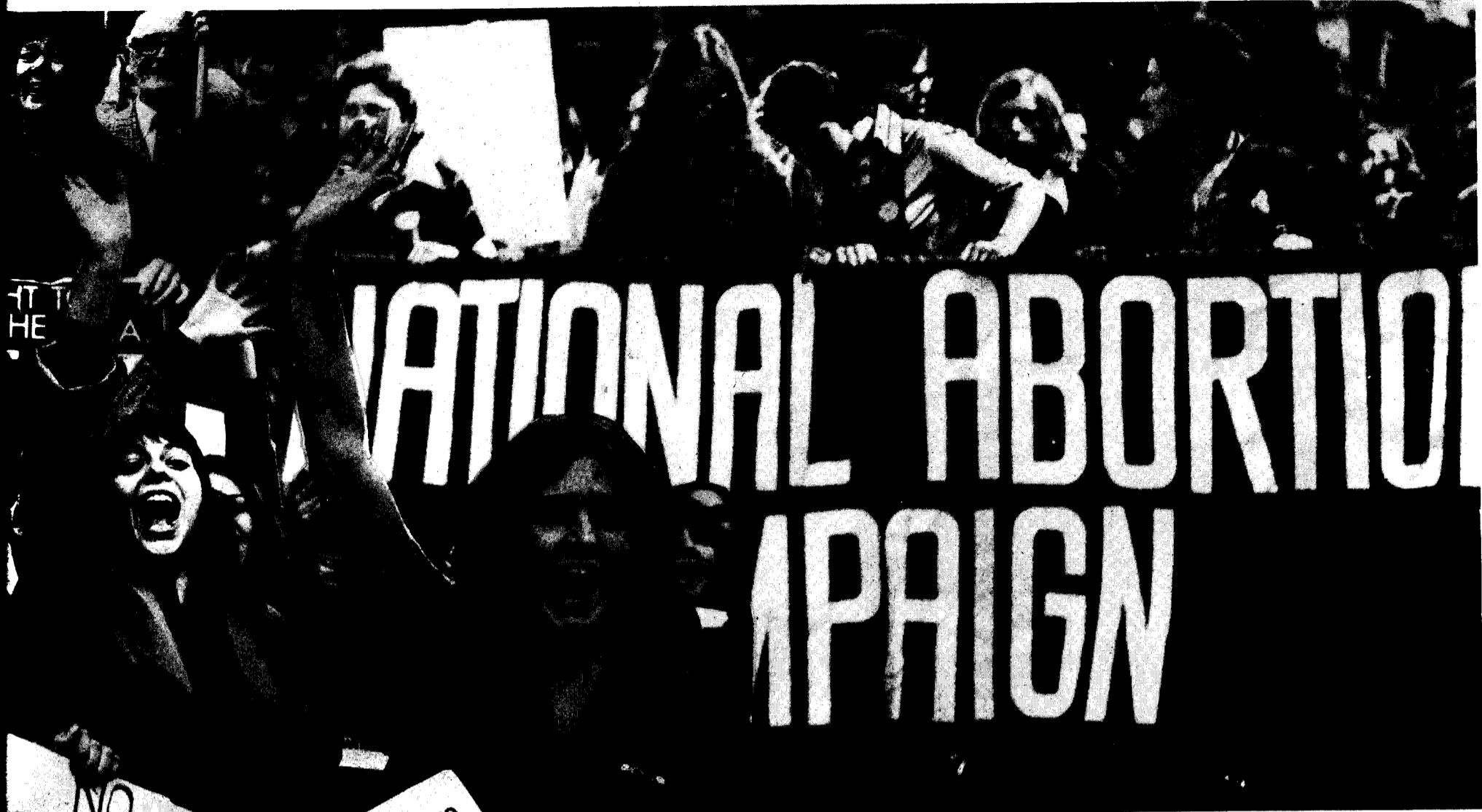
We see the paper as a vital means of drawing women to Marxism. As Zetkin states, 'Education of proletarian women precisely for the class struggle will be the chief task of *Die Gleichheit*.'

The strategic role of *Woman Worker* is to draw women towards the revolutionary party, to lay the basis for organising women into a communist women's movement under the direction of the WSL.

It links the everyday struggles of women against their oppression and exploitation to the need to overthrow capitalism. It draws women into the fight for communism, alongside the working class and behind the banner and programme of the Fourth International.

We have to direct our paper to working class women, recognising that the majority of working class women, even those with paid jobs, are *outside* the organised labour movement.

We must aim to reach



women isolated in the home who remain under the influence of bourgeois ideology, and a target of counter-revolutionary propaganda.

Our purpose is a paper that not only takes up issues which specifically oppress women, but will make a crucial link, make women understand, that such issues as the closures of BL and steel, and the fight against the cuts have a direct and crucial relevance to them.

As we have shown, the struggle to remove capitalism is not a question of numbers, as the Socialist Workers Party would maintain; we have countless examples that the workers united can be defeated.

It is crucially a question of leadership and programme, and of strategy on how to achieve socialism.

But policy is not enough, no matter how sharp its programmatic clarity, unless it is accepted by and put into practice by the class. *Woman Worker* has to reflect, therefore, the struggles we are carrying out in our work among women.

It is an organ of the movement and must act as a guideline of the seriousness of the movement's approach to this work, how we actually deal with the daily questions facing women in today's crisis.

Woman Worker Groups

We also want to see groups developing from *Woman Worker*. Groups have already met in some areas. These groups are also within the Bolshevik tradition, as Kollontai writes in 'Women Workers Struggle for Their Rights':

"It follows that the formation of groups of women workers within the party on the one hand lightens the task of attracting into the party the broad mass of less aware women... and on the other hand it is an opportunity to concentrate the party's attention on the special requirements of the women proletariat."

We stress that women worker groups, like the women's commission are *not* of exclusively women membership.

We see woman worker groups as having an appeal on a wide basis and would of course continually work to bring members towards the WSL, by discussing, for example, *Socialist Press* and explaining our policies and practice.

We would aim to widen their involvement in the class struggle beyond the specific issue through which they have been drawn to us. For instance, after we had helped to picket during a wages strike at Draftex, 13

women workers attended an initial woman worker meeting at which we discussed the overall effects of capitalism in crisis, especially the cuts and the BL closures, which would directly affect them.

Woman worker groups may well carry out work on specific questions related to women's oppression and we would encourage women trapped in the home to participate and have, for example, estate woman worker groups which could be instrumental in setting up tenants' committees or nursery campaigns.

In the North West, in Winsford, our comrades have established a strong Woman Worker Group, which intervened at a meeting of Labour councillors, who were loudly protesting about rent increases but proposing no action.

Our comrades, through the Woman Worker Group, proposed a rent strike; and the group also organised two busloads for a tenants' lobby of the councillors proposing the rent increases.

This is another example of the opportunities now available for work amongst women.

The scale of the Tories' attacks brings forward many previously unmobilised sections of the working class, demanding direction from the labour leadership in fighting the attacks.

Time and again the bureaucracy refuse to lead or organise any campaign and have no policies, in stark contrast to our programme.

Organising women outside the labour movement.

We stated in the first perspectives for work among women, three years ago, that we need to organise non-employed women in the community.

We included plans to involve housewives on 'parents committees, cuts committees, tenants committees, Labour Party wards, factory committees, nursery groups and price committees'.

How far have we been successful in putting this into practice? So far it has only been achieved within the struggle against the cuts, most notably in the nursery fight in Oxford; also, for example, in the school crossings campaign organised by our comrades in Hull.

But with soaring inflation, the removal of the price com-

mission, massive increases, not only in food and milk but gas, electricity, telephone, post, mortgages, rates, prescriptions—*price committees* are to be placed on the agenda and should be set up through the trade union movement with the fullest participation of housewives.

The £300 million housing cuts, the massive council rent increases, the ending of many council house repairs and selling off of houses, coupled with the 15% mortgage rate have caused an acute crisis in housing. Thousands of women have to raise families in appalling living conditions. The fight against rent increases should be carried out in *tenants committees*; women should play a vital role in these and also in *workers inquiries into housing needs*, investigating council house provision in localities, direct works, private contractors, property speculation.

These inquiries should draw up a *programme of public works* based on the needs of the homeless or badly housed, including the provision of community facilities which will relieve the individual drudgery of housework, communal laundries, eating places.

We should also state that we defend the right of the homeless to squat (e.g. Huntley Street), but see it as an individual solution, where what we must fight for is fullest state housing provision, nationalisation of the building companies, etc.

The proposed destruction of the school meals system represents a massive attack on women. Parents' committees can be set up to defend services, working with teachers and canteen staff to put pressure on the leadership of NUPE, NALGO and the GMWU who have scandalously stood back as school meal charges soar and jobs are slashed over years of rundown.

These committees can also organise, for example, blacking of private contractors brought in to provide a cafeteria system, support for canteen staff for strike action and the occupation of canteens due to close.

Organising the Unemployed/Claimants Unions.

We must also fight for the right of unemployed women to join a trade union appropriate to their training and experience. With attacks on claimants, in particular, the proposed 'social

security bill' representing a sharp attack on women, who form the majority of single parents and pensioners and who are obviously directly hit by the ending of maternity grants, it is necessary to take immediate steps in organising unemployed women.

We should fight to establish and build claimants unions, including women centrally within them. We stress, however, they must not be used to take pressure off the union bureaucracy.

We should use them as organised groups, demanding of the union leadership that the fight for their rights be taken up within the trade union movement and to demand to be allowed the fullest participation as members.

The Tories are going further than their Labour predecessors on a programme designed to create mass unemployment particularly among women. In a recently published report the TUC has stated that *known* unemployment among women has risen by 62% in the last four years!

Through cuts women will be forced back into their homes, providing those services which had previously been paid for by the state. In Leicester where the county council announced 1500 redundancies only ten of these axed jobs were those done by men!

It is significantly those women with families and usually therefore with a husband who are being made redundant. They are not therefore eligible for social security benefits, will not sign on and will remain politically concealed in unemployment statistics.

We must expose this way in which official statistics are distortions and cover-ups drummed up in capitalism's interest.

It is, of course, not only in the public sector that widespread closures and redundancies are taking place. Many firms employing mainly women have closed down, notably in textiles and light engineering, e.g. Singers, Courtaulds (7,000 jobs); in the dyeing and finishing trades 15,000 jobs have been lost in the past 12 months—the equivalent of three Shottons or three Corbys.

The textile trade union bureaucracies have not lifted a finger to fight redundancy. Many women will also be made redundant through the massive closures in steel and BL, mostly directly through supply firms. Unemployment among girls leaving school rose by 1978 from 35% to just under 50%.

The WSL opposes discriminatory measures that tell an employer who to sack first. Instead we oppose *all* redundancies, and demand that the work available be shared out among the *whole* workforce at no loss of pay.

We challenge the whole argument of 'viability', whether in the public or private sectors, recognising that it is a question of the viability of capitalism in crisis.

Women workers must play a role in the campaign to open the books, in occupations and in the struggle for a sliding scale of wages. In the NUTGW, for instance, we have mounted a determined fight to get the sliding scale adopted at national conference, including organising groups of women workers to lobby the trade union leaders.

This we were able to do after building shop stewards committees, covering a number of factories in the textile industry. This has earned our comrade constant hostility and attack from the executive. In recent elections, however, our comrade obtained 1,250 votes, as against 3,000 for the elected candidate, despite the bureaucracy prior to the election refusing to allow her to attend meetings of the membership.

Since those unions with a predominantly women membership are often the most bureaucratic and corrupt, the struggle for democracy in the unions is an important part of our fight to organise women workers in the labour movement.

We have considerable experience as a movement in fighting for basic democratic procedures in the unions. For example, in Hull our comrade fought and established a separate GMWU branch for unrepresented cleaners.

Within NUPE, a fight has been carried out to expose ballot-rigging, to open stewards committees to all stewards, to ensure branch elections are carried out for all delegates to conferences, and trades council.

Although the trade union movement is dominated by sexist male bureaucrats, we do not think that the primary problem with this leadership is their sex or sexism. The problem is their material privileged position and their reformist or Stalinist politics.

We are *opposed* therefore to any argument for positive discrimination in favour of women in appointments to trade union

posts. We do not want to replace male bureaucrats with female ones.

We fight for a full democracy: the election with right of recall for all positions in the union and for officials' wages to be the average of the members.

We are similarly opposed to the establishment of special conferences for women (e.g. the women's TUC).

We fight instead on the same principle we have done in the NUS—that the women's TUC autonomous conferences be turned into *campaigning* conferences open to women and men and for policy decisions made at them to be automatically discussed by the national TUC conferences.

We also fight for women's rights sub-committees at all levels of the trade union movement, which should have full recognition and a genuine influence over policy. Membership should be open to both women and men.

Caucuses

We see the question of caucuses within the trade union movement as one of tactics. We may well work in some cases with a specific group of women in our fight against the bureaucracy, but this would be only on the basis of our *policies*, and not because they are women.

We oppose the notion of women's caucuses promoted by feminists and followed by the IMG on the basis that women, regardless of the politics, will come up with a correct programme for women's rights. Caucuses on that basis serve only to split men and women workers.

The IMG and feminists argue that such caucuses are vital to develop women's confidence to lead the fight for their union rights. We point out that in order to establish such a fight, a conscious and confident leadership is required.

Rather than forming isolated caucuses, this leadership should be used to bring other women forward directly to put demands on the bureaucracy that will enable women to have the fullest involvement in the union.

For example, we should fight for branches to finance babysitting and for meetings to be held at times convenient for those with family responsibilities, while of course challenging the concept that family responsibilities are only those of the woman in the family.



PHOTO: Mark Risher, IFL

Fisher addressing sparse audience at beginning of low pay campaign

Unionisation.

Women have been and remain under-unionised. It is vital to draw them into the trade union movement, as unemployed or part-timers but also in workplaces where there has been no previous trade union organisation. The WSL has been in the forefront of key unionisation struggles, particularly in the hotels strikes and in Garners which if won would have had a major impact on the appalling conditions of the hotel and catering industry employing large numbers of women workers.

In all these struggles it has become clear to strikers under WSL direction that the essential struggle is against the existing reformist and Stalinist leaders of the labour movement and not in getting women to fight.

The Struggle for Equal Rights

Another important aspect of our work in the trade unions has been the fight for equality, especially on the shop floor.

In the IPC Box factory, heavy work and big machinery was used by management as an excuse to prevent women being put on better graded jobs which meant they continually had the low paid positions.

This was contested by a group of women led by our comrade in Winsford. They demanded to be given trial periods on these jobs and the union was forced to back them.

The results were the same rights to jobs previously considered men's, higher grading and higher pay and the relationship between male and female workers was strengthened by this struggle, with the women realising it was the management not the men that oppressed them.

In BL, there has been an intervention by our comrades for a number of years on equal opportunities for women.

Our comrades were able to get a campaign agreed by the BL combine committee including a demand on management to produce figures on job applications in order to show discrimination in the hiring of women workers. The Stalinists have refused to activate this campaign.

Cuts

It is predominantly in the fight against public spending cuts that our work among women has been carried out this year. The cuts are the sharpest

expression of the attacks on working class women which flow from the present crisis.

The TUC has refused to organise a day of action until a year after the Tories chopped their first billions off the public sector.

But while the union leadership play around with their glossy badges, cuts kits etc, there has been a mass response from women all over the country mobilised against the cuts. These mobilisations have taken place outside the trade unions in community campaigns.

Campaign for nursery provision

In Oxfordshire, when the Tory council announced its plans to close all nursery schools and classes, 150 parents immediately attended meetings called by the Oxford City Nursery Campaign.

This work has been a central part of our organising among women, pursuing our policies in stopping the cuts and on the fight for state provision for the under-fives.

This provision is vital for working class mothers whether at work or at home denied financial independence and social status. The Oxford campaign stands as a sharp focus of the fight against the cuts.

A major orientation of all such campaigns has been to direct community campaigns into the trade union movement: the solution lies in the class struggle against Tories, Labourites, and against capitalism.

It does not lie with ad hoc individual solutions, such as private playgroups and charity funding (e.g. Stoke Mandeville). The cuts will not be stopped by protest community action, petitions and letters to local papers and MPs.

We must point this out to women drawn around a community campaign. In the bid to save South Oxford nursery, we had mass community support, thousands of signatures, but it didn't stop the closure.

In 1976 80,000 marched against cuts but it didn't save a single hospital bed or job.

Cuts will be stopped only by independent working class action to bring down the Tory government.

Closures will only be effectively stopped by occupations, which continually raise the question of workers' control.

We recognise that occupations are not enough in themselves and can be easily ended,

through court orders. We call, therefore, for supporting strike action: occupation can gain widespread verbal support from the union leaders, but they refuse to act upon it.

Calling for such action exposes to women around the occupation the determination of the Stalinists and reformists not to fight for their jobs and services.

The most well-known occupation—the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital—was fought for by a NUPE steward comrade, and she got the policy adopted.

Occupation has been adopted as national policy by NUPE and COHSE. We must take up the demand at every level that this policy be carried out.

Workplace nurseries

In the time of a national demolition of state provision we maintain our position on workplace nurseries. We argue that the campaign for workplace nurseries takes trade union pressure off the local authorities to increase and maintain facilities. We must expose the way the trade union leadership put forward do-nothing campaigns for workplace nurseries as a means of avoiding the fight against the cuts.

Where workplace nurseries already exist or where particular circumstances make them a crucial proposal, we fight to defend them and for them to be employer-financed but under the control of trade union and users' committees.

Health Service

The defence of the NHS, a fundamental right, is crucial for all working class women. The Tories have put crippling cash limits on health spending, while even AHA figures have inflation running at 21%.

The situation is ripe for demanding a sliding scale of state expenditure index-linked to inflation determined by elected workers committees.

Model resolutions in defence of the health service should be put through every union branch but in particular those within the NHS.

The 'open the books' demand can be seen by women workers in the public sector to have its most direct relevance to the NHS.

New hospitals are vital as additions, not substitutions, for previous provision. If the AHAs

argue that there is no money, we must point to the need to nationalise drug and building firms under workers management.

In Oxford, the WSL fought for the establishment of a workers enquiry into the needs of the elderly. This has become a very important form of fighting the cuts and has carried out well-researched work on home helps and on the closure of Cowley Road hospital.

Both areas of cuts affect a nearly all-women workforce and the workers enquiry has been of direct interest to home helps and the staff at Cowley Road who have helped its investigations, given us a vital access to working women, encouraging them to take up the fight against the cuts.

Another crucial aspect of the inquiry is that it also examines the needs of an enormous section of women much neglected in the fight for women's rights: these are women pensioners, who after a lifetime of oppression suffer further abuse and hardship as price increases and cuts hit them.

In trades councils all over the country, comrades have been fighting for emergency conferences, demos and lobbies as the first steps in trades councils manifesting their opposition to the cuts.

Many trades council officers under TUC direction block this, but where they have taken place our comrades have successfully fought to have our policies accepted, for instance Todmorden, Leicester and Oxford.

Labour Party

The Labour Party has, for a long time, organised women separately in Women's Sections. This is less a sign of awareness of women's oppression than a reflection of it, since the primary role of these bodies is, generally, to carry out "women's work"—like making cakes and soft toys for bazaars. Nevertheless, in some cases there can be opportunities to raise political questions within women's sections. The 1979 Women's Conference, for instance, adopted a series of positions well to the left of the main LP conference—including a call for a sliding scale of wages.

SP and WW supporters in the Labour Party have a flexible attitude to working in Women's sections, while arguing for them to be replaced by committees on women's rights at every level in the party—open to both women and men.

The Tory attacks on the working class have led to a sudden increase in the ranks of the Labour Party. Many of these anti-Tory militants are women looking for a way to fight back against the Tories' attacks on their jobs, social services and democratic rights. They turn to the Labour Party and particularly to its left wing as an alternative, and as a means of retaliating. Our task, and the task of SP and WW supporters in the Labour Party, is to show them that reformism—whether left or right—does not offer a genuine alternative, and that overthrowing capitalism—not tinkering with it—is the only solution to the problems facing the working class. In the coming period, the most crucial work of SP and WW supporters will be in the fight to get local councils to defy the Tories, refuse to implement cuts or rate and rent increases, and overspend.

Independently-organised anti-cuts campaigns, in which women are playing a leading role, will increase the pressure on Labour-controlled councils. It is in the course of struggles such as these that the politics of the Labourites will come into conflict with the demands of women and the working class—demonstrating the need for a revolutionary programme and party.

WW groups should encourage their supporters to join the Labour Party to fight for the policies of SP and WW. In some cases this will be the most fruitful arena for political struggle, since many women who aren't in paid employment find it extremely hard to join or participate fully in a trade union.

Gays

The WSL must urgently develop its theoretical work on sexual oppression. But this must not be used as a pretext for delaying the intervention of the WSL in the fight for gay rights, based on our existing programme.

The responsibility for this falls partly on gay WSL members who can most easily intervene in the gay movement in such organisations as the Gay Activists Alliance (in which the IMG has a major intervention), in the Gay Rights at Work conferences which are planned, and in gay trade union fractions (which exist for example in NUT, NATFHE, NALGO, UPW).

The purpose of such inter-

ventions will be partly to fight for the direction of the struggle into the organised labour movement and against the bureaucracy.

But this position will be meaningful only if the WSL fights as a whole for gay rights in the trade unions and the Labour Party (we should for instance continually raise the question of anti-discrimination clauses in union programmes, Labour Party manifestos, as well as taking up specific cases of discrimination).

We would like to conclude these perspectives with the following quotation from Kollontai, Moscow 1918: "I would hope that this document might serve as some guidance for those of my comrades who intend to devote themselves to work among the female proletariat in particular. I hope that they will get from it the certainty that in taking upon themselves this difficult and sometimes thankless work they are serving not the idea of the 'specialisation' of women, not a narrowly feminine business, but the whole task of building a united, strong, world-wide workers party which before our very eyes is achieving the bright new world of international communism."

Woman Worker

Bi-monthly women's paper of the Workers Socialist League. Available price 16p (including postage) from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

After four years of delays Commission admits gays repressed in N. Ireland

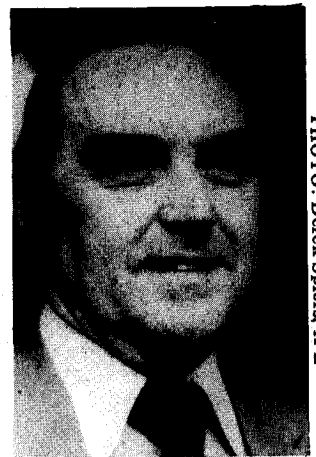


PHOTO: Derek Spiers, IFL

Mason

The opinion of the Human Rights Commission when it is made public, probably in a few weeks time, will produce further pressure on Mason's Tory successors to introduce the order. Northern Ireland Minister Atkins has said that he has no intention at present of introducing it but may review that if circumstances changed (widely believed to be a reference to the Commission's judgement).

All socialists must give complete support to the struggle of gay people in Northern Ireland for the most elementary legal rights.

This depends in no way on the opinions of a 'Human Rights' Commission which takes four years to decide that 10 years potential imprisonment for normal sexual conduct represents discrimination.

But the judgement will be the occasion of mobilisations by gay organisations throughout Western Europe against the reactionary position of the British government. Socialists should support those mobilisations.

But it is important that a campaign on this issue should in no way tie itself to the 1967 Act which applies in England and Wales.

That law itself is extremely discriminatory against homosexuals. It legalises only conduct between two people "in private"—which doesn't include public lavatories and similar places which are the site of massive police repression of gays.

The number of convictions for indecency offences has risen since the introduction of the 1967 law.

And the 1967 law establishes a legal age of consent for sexual conduct between males of 21 compared with 16 for women in heterosexual relationships. (There is no age of consent for males in heterosexual relationships).

As socialists we reject this discrimination, but in the context of opposition to any age of consent or any other attempt by the bourgeois state to control sexual conduct.

It is also important that in any campaign around the question of gay rights in Northern Ireland it must be clearly stated that the question of gay oppression is not separate from British imperialism as a whole.

One of the main reasons why gay men have even less legal rights in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales is, as the filthy political deal between Mason and the Unionists shows, the need of British imperialism (under Labour as well as Tory governments) to maintain an alliance with the reactionary, barbaric forces of Unionism.

Not for the first time, an official institution of the European bourgeoisie has been unable to avoid the conclusion that the British government has violated "human rights" in Northern Ireland.

It has now been widely leaked that the European Human Rights Commission, (a part of the Council of Europe, not the EEC) has found in favour of Jeff Dudgeon, secretary of the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA), on one of the three grounds of the complaint which he first made in 1976. His "right to non-interference in private life" has been found to have been violated by the existing law.

Since the law prohibits in Northern Ireland, as it did in England and Wales until 1967, and still does in Scotland too, all sexual relations between adult men, it is laughable that it has taken this body which is supposed to be a watchdog of human rights in Europe four whole years to decide that the rights of gays are violated by this viciously repressive law.

But despite the absurdity of taking so long to conclude the more than obvious, the shortly-to-be-published judgement is nevertheless one which is a grave potential embarrassment to the Thatcher government and could also have wider political repercussions in Europe. (For instance, both the Republic of Ireland and Cyprus still maintain a legal ban on all gay sexual relations).

In 1978, under pressure from protests at a grotesque injustice, the Labour government published its intentions to extend the limited 1967 Act to Northern Ireland. (The 1967 Act de-criminalised sexual relations in private between two men).



PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

Marching for gay rights—London 1978

But instead of extending the law Mason opened a period of "public consultation" in the full knowledge that this would allow the mobilisation of a massive reactionary religious campaign against the rights of homosexuals.

Paisley collected 70,000 signatures on his "Save Ulster from Sodomy" petition to prevent the order being signed. At the same time the British government received objections from one doctor, four lawyers, 304 other private individuals, from the Christian Democratic Socialist Party, the County

Down Grand Arch Royal Purple Chapter, the Grand Orange Lodges of Belfast, Antrim and Ireland, along with nine Unionist-dominated district councils and a motley collection of non-conformist and sectarian churches, including the Mormons.

In favour of the order, aside from various gay rights organisations, were the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Alliance Party, the Unionist Party of Northern Ireland and the Liberal Party, along with the British government-appointed Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights.

Mason

Northern Ireland Secretary Mason and the rest of the Labour government have attempted to create the idea that they wished, as good and decent supporters of human rights, to implement the order, but were prevented from doing so by their respect as good and decent democrats, by the obvious weight of public opinion against implementation.

This position is hypocritical and fraudulent. That of course is apparent in general from the whole nature of the Labour government's imperialist policies in Northern Ireland which made perfectly plain that it had no respect whatever for either so-called human rights or democracy.

The specific fraud becomes even more clear from reading the Labour government's submission to the European Human Rights Commission which considered the complaint brought by Jeff Dudgeon.

In three submissions, dated February and August 1977 and March 1979, the "Agent of the United Kingdom Government" while arguing that the government had not yet made up its mind whether to introduce the

order, produced arguments which not only defer to "public opinion" in Northern Ireland but which also in effect oppose legal rights for gay people anywhere.

Mason's Agent said that it is: "plain, on the one hand, that while there has been an advance in knowledge, it has by no means reached a stage where it can be determined with any degree of certainty how particular individuals will react to homosexual experience; and that, on the other hand, that homosexual behaviour raises issues of a moral character on which many sections of society hold strong views, both on religious and other grounds... the fact that... Northern Ireland is a region where values are strongly based on religious foundations, provides a substantial argument for the retention of legislative provisions which are calculated to reinforce and maintain those values."

(Supplementary Observations of the Government of the UK, page 5).

In the March 1979 submission the "Deputy Agent of the UK", a Mrs Audrey Glover, develops a more full-blooded defence of the reactionary law.

There is, she says, a moral case for the law and the difference in treatment (between homosexuals and heterosexuals):

"has an objective and reasonable justification. The law is designed in part to protect young males from influences and pressures of an undesirable kind... which can be harmful to psychological development.

"Similar influences and pressures do not exist in relation to heterosexual relationships. The law is also designed to uphold the moral standards supported by significant elements of the Northern Ireland community.

"These standards tend to protect the family as a funda-

mental social unit and the threat to the position of that unit as the basic constituent of society comes more from homosexual than from heterosexual relationships.

"The means used in the present law (the threat and use of criminal sanctions) are not disproportionate to the aims of the legislation." (Observations of the government of the UK, 20 March 1979 Section IV).

Glover adds for good measure a justification of the difference between the treatment of male and female homosexuality claiming that 'homosexuals exhibited a tendency to proselytise other males, especially adolescents. The moral factors present do not exist to anything like the same extent in relations to female homosexuality'.

So, in spite of its claim to wish to extend the 1967 law as long as it did not violate its "very special responsibility to ensure that the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland are taken into account", the Agents of Callaghan and Mason were producing their own moral arguments for the repression of gays which are virtually indistinguishable from those of Ian Paisley, the Ayatollah Khomeini, Stalin, Hitler or Anita Bryant.

The logic of the Labour government's position was that even the 1967 Act should be reversed in England and Wales.

But what finally proves the hypocrisy of the Labour government's position is the sordid deal which it did in its last few months in office when it reached an agreement with the Ulster Unionists that it would not introduce the Order if it received a parliamentary lifeline from the Ulster MPs.

The barbarically reactionary observations quoted above were significantly written after this deal had been made.

THE LAW TODAY IN NORTHERN IRELAND Offences Against the Person Act 1861

61. Whosoever shall be convicted of the abominable crime of buggery, committed either with mankind or with any animal, shall be liable to be kept in penal servitude for life.

62. Whosoever shall attempt to commit the said abominable crime, or shall be guilty of any assault with intent to commit the same, or of any indecent assault upon any male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and being convicted thereof shall be liable to be kept in penal servitude for any term not exceeding ten years.

Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885

11. Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years.

NOW AVAILABLE

Labour movement bulletin on Ireland with background articles on witch-hunts in Oxford and Tameside. 25p including p&p from WSL, BM Box 5277 London WC1V 6XX.



A labour movement bulletin on IRELAND No 3 March 1980 10p



Leicester nursery fight forces concessions

The rapid development of the nursery campaigns in Leicester has clearly caught both the officials at County Hall and the leaders of NALGO off balance.

After a series of large meetings organised by the West Leicester and Leicester Nursery Campaigns throughout the city, local councillors and bureaucrats have already begun ducking for cover.

At County Hall, the announced decision to close Fosse Road Day Nursery was almost immediately modified to a 'review' of its prospects in the autumn.

Adequate cover

In addition, following a lobby by 70 supporters of the nursery campaign, of a special meeting between nursery staff and social services officers, it has been agreed to advertise for a new matron for the nursery and for a member of staff to ensure adequate immediate cover.

Meanwhile, in the school nursery classes, militancy has been mounting.

With the first redundancy notices going out on May 1, union officials have been caught on the hop by the immediate response of members.

In the NUT, primary teachers dismissed the official leaflet on nursery provision as 'useless and two years out of date', and proceeded to win approval for their own statement explaining their decision to strike on May 14 in opposition to the cuts in terms of the nursery cutbacks.

Strike ballot

Similarly in NALGO, officials have been forced to ballot members over strike action on redundancies.

With feelings running high over the recent events in Nottingham it seems likely that any NALGO action in the schools would win the active support of hundreds of local teachers.

Nor is it likely that they will settle for just a token one day.

What is needed now is a fight to unite the whole of the struggle around the cuts in a co-ordinated campaign of industrial action which prepares the way for the bringing down of the Tory government.

That means building around a programme which starts from the actual needs of the working class not those of bankrupt '80s capitalism.

The nursery conference in Nottingham this weekend can begin the work around such a

programme.

*No cuts! No closures! No redundancies!

*Free state day care on demand with provision for children of working mothers after school and in the school holidays.

*Expand nursery education to cater for all 3-5 year olds.

*For a sliding scale of public spending tied to the real rise in the cost of living—as assessed by committees of trade unionists and housewives.

*Open the books of the local authorities to expose the profiteering by banks and private contractors.

Labourite sues NUJ

Millionaire publisher Mr Robert Maxwell of Pergamon Press, Oxford, and a member of the Labour Party and ASTMS is taking the National Union of Journalists to court.

Last Friday 9 May Maxwell was successful in getting a temporary injunction preventing the union repeating the content of a circular to chapel officers, sent out by the union earlier in May.

The circular asked chapel officers to look for a job for an NUJ member sacked from Pergamon for allegedly attempting to defraud the company of £13.75 when he went sick for a day to attend another job interview.

The injunction remains in force pending a High Court hearing this Friday.

This action by Maxwell follows a lengthy struggle with the union going back to a three day strike last summer which secured the reinstatement of two NUJ members whose contracts the company claimed had run out.

Maxwell's strategy since then has been to witch-hunt chapel and Branch officers, and now even an NUJ national organiser in the very best traditions of McCarthyism.

Unfortunately for Maxwell few people seem to share his paranoid vision of 'communist' infiltration.

Recently Maxwell was the subject of a highly critical interview in a local free sheet the *Oxford Journal*, though the *Journal* withdrew the article

after Maxwell threatened to sue.

Part of the settlement involved a payment of £500 to the Labour Party.

Moves are now afoot from Labour Party members angered by Maxwell's record, to get the £500 returned.

On the same day as the High Court hearing, A. Wheaton and Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Maxwell's will be represented in another court, where the NUJ is seeking satisfaction from an Industrial Tribunal over redundancies.

ISTC DELAY

THE NEWS that this year's ISTC conference is to be postponed should surprise no one—least of all the irate steelworkers who were longing for a chance to get their boots onto Bill Sirs' windpipe after his sell-out settlement with BSC.

ISTC leaders claim that the decision is to save money. They could be right. Bill Sirs has gone on record as warning workers fighting for his removal and for the election of officials that he would take them to court if his life-appointed General Secretary position were threatened.

Compensating him for lost salary and perks could cost the union a pretty penny. On the other hand, leaving him in office could cost ISTC members thousands more lost jobs!

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL LIAISON COMMITTEE

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

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*TROTSKYISM AND THE FIGHT AGAINST WOMEN'S OPPRESSION.

*TROTSKYISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

*TROTSKYISM AND PETTY BOURGEOIS NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

*THE FIGHT FOR A TROTSKYIST YOUTH MOVEMENT

*RECONSTRUCT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Evening meetings on additional topics, films and social events.

The school will be attended by delegations from the organisations affiliated to the TILC and members of the WSL. A special invitation is being extended to supporters of the WSL to take part in the discussion and learn more about the WSL and the TILC.

Details are available from any WSL branch or from: WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

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.

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Second edition of the opposition documents presented inside the WRP by the present leadership of the Workers Socialist League

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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.

Name

Address

Send to WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

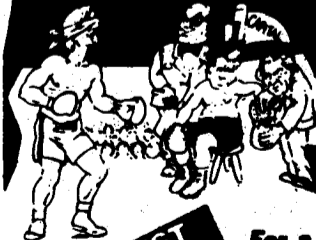
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Fighting for trade union solidarity

There was little special about the Oxford Mail and Times.

Like other provincial papers up and down the country it had been hit by sporadic strike action during the NGA pay dispute.

The Oxford Mail had been stopped on four separate days (for the first time in the paper's history) and the weekly Oxford Times had been delayed and stopped.

The lock out began with the NGA members ill-prepared for what was to come. They had been given an assurance that nothing would be produced during the lock out and on the first Monday they urged other workers in the building to go in to work and draw wage packets.

Within an hour the management had called journalists together and told them that they would be expected to work on a single duplicated sheet to be published daily under the Oxford Mail's masthead.

This pathetic sheet (confined to TV times, the weather and one sentence news items) was clearly a propaganda attempt to demonstrate the ability of the company to publish without the NGA.

Scab labour

It was exacerbated by the decision to publish once a week a two sided printed 'paper' produced on a small jobbing press by scab labour.

An immediate NUJ chapel meeting was called. I moved a resolution that we refuse to work on either sheet (a move which would mean immediate suspension).

Out of a chapel of 55 only seven were prepared to vote for

that. Inevitably arguments included the fact that the NGA had crossed our picket lines for seven weeks in 1978/9 and that since the scab sheets had no advertising and no cover price, we were not commercially aiding the company.

From this point, those of us who were clear that by staying at work we were siding with the company against the NGA, had a choice.

Majority

Either we could clear our own 'consciences' by taking individual decisions to get ourselves suspended or we could fight to bring out a majority or a substantial proportion of the chapel. Correctly we chose the latter.

The following day had produced a sharp change in the NGA. For the first time they set up a picket and asked our members not to cross.

While every other union went in to work the NUJ stayed out for two hours. Then a resolution that we refuse to cross the printers' picket lines was heavily lost.

Out of nine members who voted to stay out, six stayed on the picket to discuss what we should do. There was no unanimity even among this section of the chapel.

It was clear to all of us that given the right approach more members could be persuaded to come out.

But some of the six argued that to split the chapel decisively at this stage could cement those waverers inside the building.

After explaining to the NGA where we stood and why we were going in we then crossed the NGA picket line.

Sectarians who see in this a

By Peter McIntyre, FoC NUJ, Oxford Mail and Times.

class betrayal would have found themselves siding in effect with an influential section of the chapel leadership which was determined to stay at work.

It was their wish to present the choice as being one for individuals to take. They defended our right to 'do our own thing' and stay out, so long as that meant that we too accepted their right to stay in at work and scab on the dispute.

We did not see it as a question of individual 'principles' but as a question of a class response from the whole chapel.

The following day, the Provincial Newspapers Industrial Council (on which I am a delegate) confirmed that the criteria for refusing to work on scab publications was not whether journalists thought that they undermined the dispute, but whether the NGA members believed that they did.

Armed with this instruction a fresh chapel meeting was called and again the vote to stay out was heavily lost.

Picket line

By now the work we had been doing was having an effect on a largish section of the chapel.

There seemed little point in allowing a routine to develop of chapel meetings which consistently voted to stay at work and from the Friday morning the



Violent scenes on the Oxford Mail picket line

original six (all now convinced that this point had been reached) set up a NUJ picket line, alongside the printers.

On that day we stood alone. On the next working day (the following Tuesday) we handed out a leaflet to our members, 'Eight bad reasons for going to work and eight good ones for staying out'.

Numbers grew first to nine, then 11 and finally 12.

At this point, with support for the NGA visibly growing, the company announced that they intended going ahead with a full scale 16 page scab publication produced on the main printing press.

Because of the consistent work that had been done in the chapel a large majority of the remaining NUJ members then voted to come out.

By the end of Wednesday just 10 NUJ members, most of them in isolated district offices, were still at work.

The SLADE chapel met and refused to process plates for the scab paper and were suspended.

Two outside scabs had been brought into the building to fill NGA jobs on the printing press and the NATSOPA chapel of machine minders refused to work with them. They too were suspended.

Seven arrests

That afternoon a mass picket of over 150 workers gathered to stop the vans coming out.

Although the van drivers were also NATSOPA members they had scandalously decided to continue driving out the small scab sheets in the vans. A battle developed as the picket was attacked by about 100 police and the vans broke through the picket as seven people were arrested.

The following day (May 8) the scab paper was to be delivered. Another mass picket was called, but the sight of printers and journalists being led

away in handcuffs had reduced the active picket to about 80. Police numbers had grown to 150.

The scene was set for a massacre. As the seconds ticked away to the delivery time, the cavalry arrived in the nick of time, in the shape of a Post Office despatch rider bearing a telegram from NATSOPA head office, instructing the van drivers to refuse to deliver the paper. In dead silence the drivers slowly left the building and joined the picket.

Late that night the managing director himself drove a van loaded with 17,000 scab papers out of the building, past a small picket.

Joint meeting

Although the papers were distributed among newsagents (two days later than planned) the management offensive had clearly taken a blow.

Two years of urging had not been sufficient to convene a joint meeting of chapel officers from all unions in the building. Yet a mere nine days of News-

paper Society aggression forced all union leaderships into a joint meeting to plan how the scab paper should be brought to a halt!

Before these fresh plans could be put into effect the lockout was over.

Groundwork

The NGA leadership put their names to a deal, which though inadequate, was an almost complete victory on the terms that the NGA had been seeking.

In one newspaper office for the first time in its history one craft union had stood up for another and members of all four unions had been on the streets together.

This solidarity, repeated patchily through the Newspaper Society, has laid the groundwork for a new deal between the unions.

Instead of crossing each other's picket lines, the unions must now confirm a mutual defence pact which will defend all trade union rights against the Newspaper Society and their handpicked scabs.



Cheers as the NATSOPA telegram arrives at the Oxford Mail

Oxford teachers face sack

Last Friday Oxfordshire County Council issued some 60 redundancy notices to teachers.

These redundancies stem from the final sentence of the Council's ten-page cuts document published last September which announced their intention to get rid of teachers "surplus to establishment".

This "surplus" is some 200 teachers (some part time) in primary and secondary schools

throughout the county.

This figure has been whittled down by various methods including early retirement, redeployment, the harassment of part timers to accept shorter hours and the threat to sack a handful of so-called "incompetent" teachers.

It has also emerged that the Council has since last September taken on 220 teachers on short term contracts. This practice was condemned by the NUT in 1976 and teachers were assured

after the Oxford strike in July 1977 that the Council would no longer use this measure to cut teachers' jobs.

It has now emerged that this agreement was merely verbal and short-term—which underlines even more sharply the sell-out of that dispute by the then Divisional Secretary Jack Steadman.

NUT and NAS/UWT members in Oxfordshire must respond immediately to this threat to jobs by demanding all

out, indefinite strike action throughout the County until the redundancy notices are withdrawn and the 220 temporary contracts made permanent.

*Both the Oxford City and the Witney and Burford NUT branches have called on the NEC to call all out indefinite strike action in Nottinghamshire with a national levy until Eileen Crosbie is reinstated, and the City has invited her to speak.

Duffy's rise

After an exhausting few months railroading through a miserable 5% wage increase with strings in British Leyland, the right wing leadership of the AUEW have just voted themselves a thumping 26% pay increase.

Job-slashers Terry Duffy and John Boyd, who only

two weeks ago successfully opposed submitting any specific wage claim for engineering workers, will now receive a cool £11,162 per year—over £200 per week.

Executive members go up to £9,766: and the union's 190 full time officials will now get £8,320 per year.

THE CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST—A TROTSKYIST VIEWPOINT

A series of meetings in Britain by a member of the Communist League: the RCL of Egypt. The RCL, an illegal organisation under Sadat's regime, was prominent in the strikes of 1977.

SHEFFIELD

Thursday 15 May at 8.00 p.m.
University of Sheffield, Biology Lecture Theatre 2.

LONDON

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BIRMINGHAM

Wednesday 21 May at 7 p.m.
Doctor Johnson House, Bull Street, Room 46.

OXFORD

Thursday 22 May at 8.00 p.m.
44b Princes Street—next to East Oxford Community Centre

SOCIALIST PRESS



FUND

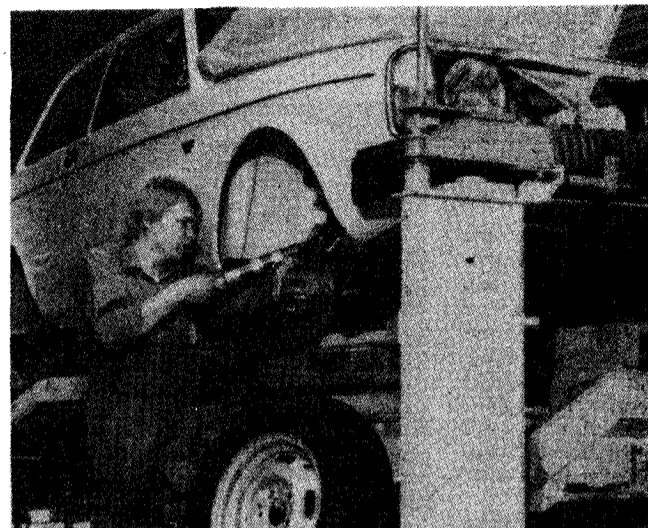
After a bad month for our fund in April, we are already trailing behind with our May fund. £180 in the first twelve days of the month is not going to see us reaching our target of £750 in time.

Yet another of our costs has risen recently, this time the cost of sending out the paper on the trains. This constant barrage of price increases can only be met if we succeed in raising our monthly fund in full.

Please send us a donation. Our address is:
Socialist Press Monthly Fund,
BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX

Socialist Press 100 Club 12 May, 1st: 57; 2nd: 78.

SWEDISH WORKERS DEFEAT BOSSES' OFFENSIVE



Volvo production line

The 6.8-7.3% wage increases won by Swedish workers in the settlement of their massive wage struggles may not seem huge. But they represent a severe blow at the strategy of the employers, and may yet result in the fall of the right wing government.

The Swedish TUC had put forward an 11% pay claim in the centralised wage negotiations. The employers responded by arguing they could not afford to pay any increase at all.

When the unions began selective strike action by some 25,000 workers, the Swedish employers' federation, the SAF, locked out over 700,000 private sector workers.

"Mediators" in the dispute came forward with a 2.3% pay offer. The employers agreed to this figure, but the unions

combatting an inflation rate of 7.5% responded by calling out a further 100,000 workers.

The right wing government of Thorbjorn Falldin attempted to pressurise union leaders into accepting the 2.3% offer by promising a price freeze until the end of the year.

But this too was rejected as inadequate and with the whole economy, including fuel supplies, grinding to a halt, the employers were over a barrel.

A new mediators' report was called for—which recommended wage increases of 6.8% in the private sector and 7.3% for local authority workers, together with food subsidies and tax concessions for the low paid.

This offer—more than *treble* the initial mediators' proposal—was accepted both by the unions and by the government. The employers, having at first rejected it as "harmful to industry and the economy" caved in, accepted the deal and called off the lockout. Their

tough stance had suffered a bloody defeat.

Already the recriminations have begun in the bosses' camp: sections of employers are questioning why the aggressive stance—a clear breach from the methods of class collaboration and compromise that have prevailed in Sweden since the 1930s—was adopted in the first instance.

Others are now looking with trepidation to the future now that class divisions have been sharpened to historic levels, and Swedish workers have recognised the potential strength they have in their hands.

Such is the feuding that seems likely to erupt in the capitalist camp that there are doubts as to whether the Falldin government could survive a Parliamentary vote of confidence.

The lesson is clear not only for Swedish workers but for

workers everywhere: united class action can stem and defeat the employers' offensive.

The task in the next period is to construct in every country

a revolutionary leadership that is prepared to mobilise such action, and to carry through such struggles with the objective of establishing a workers'

government, which alone can resolve the material problems faced by the working class as a result of the capitalist crisis.



Mass struggles are also erupting in Denmark with demonstrations against the closure of parks and against police violence

COLD BLOODED MURDER!

It takes a real "hero" to gun down an unarmed opponent who has already surrendered. Last week the SAS showed once again in their storming of the Iranian embassy that they are second to none as savage, cold-blooded hit men.

As Mohammed Faruqi, one of the freed hostages, admitted, the gunmen had given up any attempt at resistance within 10 seconds of the SAS raid, and dropped their weapons shouting "we surrender" in Persian.

Bullets

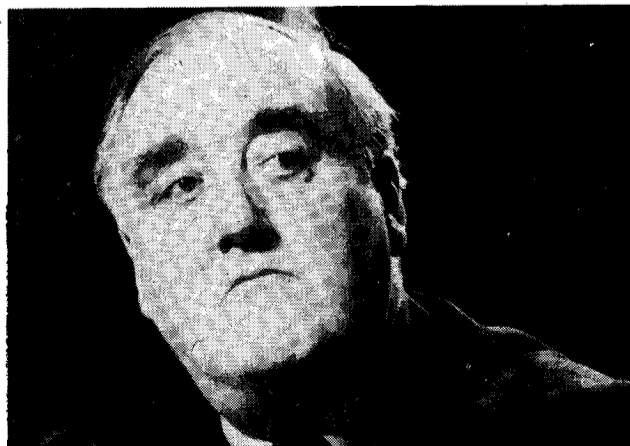
The SAS, not ones to stand on ceremony, pumped them full of bullets. According to Faruqi: "One of the terrorists was sitting on the floor, and when he was pointed out by the Iranians the commandos asked him to stand up, and then he was shot."

(Observer, May 11)
Such revelations of course do not make the front pages of the popular dailies. Neither do the real day-to-day activities

of the SAS, which in occupied Ireland is known to have shot down no less than *ten* unarmed victims in surprise ambushes.

Best known of these instances was the murder of 16-year old schoolboy John Boyle—shot three times in the back.

But also among the notches on SAS gun butts will be 21-year old Dennis Heaney, gunned down in Belfast in June 1978:



Whitelaw

after a bullet hit him in the leg, five more bullets were fired into his chest and stomach.

The arrival of these killers onto the streets of London has now been greeted by a fanfare from Whitelaw and the Tory press: particularly since their victims were unknown Arabs.

But this violence is the violence of a cornered and ruthless imperialism: the workers' movement must beware.

The National Graphical Association chalked up a significant victory against the Tory employers this week with the defeat of the lock-out in provincial papers.

As we went to press, printers in commercial print houses were still locked out but pressure on the British Printing Industries Federation to settle was dramatically increased.

The Newspaper Society had been consistently the more hawkish of the two employers' organisations but crumbled quickly after member companies began moving towards settlements of their own.

The NGA has won its wage demand for a minimum wage of £80 now and reduced hours to 37½ (at a slower rate than it had demanded). But the dispute had by now become not one directly about the wages and hours, but about whether the Newspaper Society could break the union, and in particular break its closed shop.

The most significant clause

that the management was demanding said that where the union had failed to fill jobs from its own list the management would have the right to fill them as they thought fit.

This could quickly have led to the collapse of the closed shop in the provincial press.

The clause has now been amended to read that where the union fails to fill the job, discussions will take place between the management and the union as to how it should be filled.

Joe Wade and the NGA leadership had already, before the lockout, given away a massive amount by signing deals which included demands for full flexibility and productivity and which spoke of the importance of new technology being introduced.

All this collaborationist prelude to the selling of jobs still stands. There is little doubt that most NGA members, and those in other unions who were supporting them, had braced themselves for a lockout lasting a couple of months, and that they were prepared to fight against all these clauses.

It is also true that the wage deal does not protect the membership against the effects of inflation, let alone bring a real increase in wages.

The deal therefore once again shows how the union bureaucracy is incapable of defending the interests of its members, despite the readiness of the membership to fight.

But it also shows that the Tory offensive can be resisted and defeated where strong unions stand firm, and receive support from other unions in the workplace.

In terms of the balance of forces there is little doubt that the Newspaper Society, which has embraced a policy of confrontation with the unions, has received a bloody nose and that the open division within its ranks will grow.

The NGA membership, shaken out of 20 years of peaceful coexistence, can now be given the confidence it needs to take the offensive and put an end to the continual attacks on jobs posed by new technology.