

# SOCIALIST PRESS



247

Affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee



# IRISH WAR ERUPTS IN LABOUR PARTY

## Political status now!

Like a whiff of fresh air in a main sewer, Tony Benn's statement on Ireland last week will be seen by thousands of socialists in Britain as a welcome move towards breaking Labour's craven support for Tory policies.

Many workers have been sickened beyond measure by the Labour Party leadership's attitude towards the hunger strikers.

### Special visit

Shadow spokesman Don Concannon summed up this attitude. He paid a special visit to Bobby Sands on his deathbed to tell Sands to his face that the Labour leadership supports Thatcher's hard line, and his opposition to the hunger strikers' five demands.

Foot himself jumped to his feet in Parliament immediately after Sands' death to declare his unswerving support for Thatcher's hard line, and his opposition to the hunger strikers' five demands.

In the aftermath of the death of Francis Hughes, Labour Peer Lord Paget went even further—calling on the Tories to forbid the publication of any news of the hunger strikes or what is happening:

"And when hunger strikers die of it, why don't we bury them in jail?"

But within the party's rank and file a very different mood has begun to emerge. A growing number of ward meetings have begun carrying emergency resolutions in support of the hunger strikers and calling for an end to the bipartisan policy.

### Minute's silence

Some Labour Party meetings have marked Bobby Sands' death with a minute's

silence. Trade union bodies have begun to challenge the Tory stance and that of their Labour lackeys.

This has begun to percolate through to some Labour MPs. 32 signed a motion calling on the Tories to make concessions to the hunger strikers. 14 also signed one regretting the government's intransigence.

And, at long last Tony Benn, who as recently as May Day was refusing to say anything about Ireland, made his call for the withdrawal of British troops, and a united Ireland.

Of course it was a weak and confused statement. It called for the British troops to be replaced by UN troops—who would, of course, carry out the same repressive function. It made no clear call for political status or support for the hunger strikers.

But it has spelled out that the problem is the continued British presence in Ireland: and it has underlined the need for the Irish people themselves to determine their own political future.

### Strengthened

As the first leading Labour politician to break from the "bipartisan" policy Benn has thus strengthened those fighting in the constituencies and the unions in opposition to British imperialist rule.

And at the same time he has weakened the resolve of the Shadow Cabinet.

There were immediate attempts by Foot and the right wing to gag him—and there was talk of demanding his resignation. But Benn stood his ground, and it became clear that Foot could not sack him.

And even hardened reactionary Merlyn Rees, himself a former Labour torture

chief in Ireland, began making noises about reconsidering the unconditional guarantee to the Loyalist population which is at the centre of the "bipartisan" policy.

Meanwhile on the PLP's Northern Ireland Committee all 18 MPs who spoke at a recent meeting said that they favoured a united Ireland—a policy that would be unattainable as long as the British continue to prop up the northern Orange state.

### Weak

These developments appear pitifully slow and pathetically weak. They take place at a time and tempo far remote from the mass movement that has developed in the six counties in support of the hunger strikers.

While Bobby Sands' funeral drew over 70,000 mainly from the Catholic working class of Belfast, the funeral of Francis Hughes in rural Bellaghy saw a staggering 50,000 supporters struggle around RUC roadblocks and through stringent security checks to pay their respects to a brave fighter against imperialism.

In the south, too, there have been large demonstrations and strikes in support of the hunger strikers.

And throughout Europe socialist parties have been putting the Labour Party to shame with their denunciations of the Thatcher government and support for the just demands of the hunger strikers.

### Gathering pace

But at last the fight against imperialist policies is gathering pace.

As Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara draw close to death, and Brendan

McLaughlin joins the courageous ranks of the hunger strikers, many trade unionists and socialists who previously ignored the Irish struggle are coming to realise that these men are not common criminals.

They are prisoners of war, imprisoned for the struggle to rid this country of British imperialist domination, and sentenced in military political courts. They enjoy huge popular support throughout the Catholic population in the six counties.

Far from being isolated criminals they are recognised—as Sands' election and funeral confirmed—as the vanguard fighters for the rights of the oppressed.

Now more than ever there is a chance to mobilise in their support throughout the British labour movement.

### Opportunity

We call on all our readers on every active socialist and trade unionist to seize this opportunity. Build on and develop the limited leadership offered by Tony Benn!

Fight for the removal of Don Concannon! Challenge TUC complicity with imperialism in Ireland!

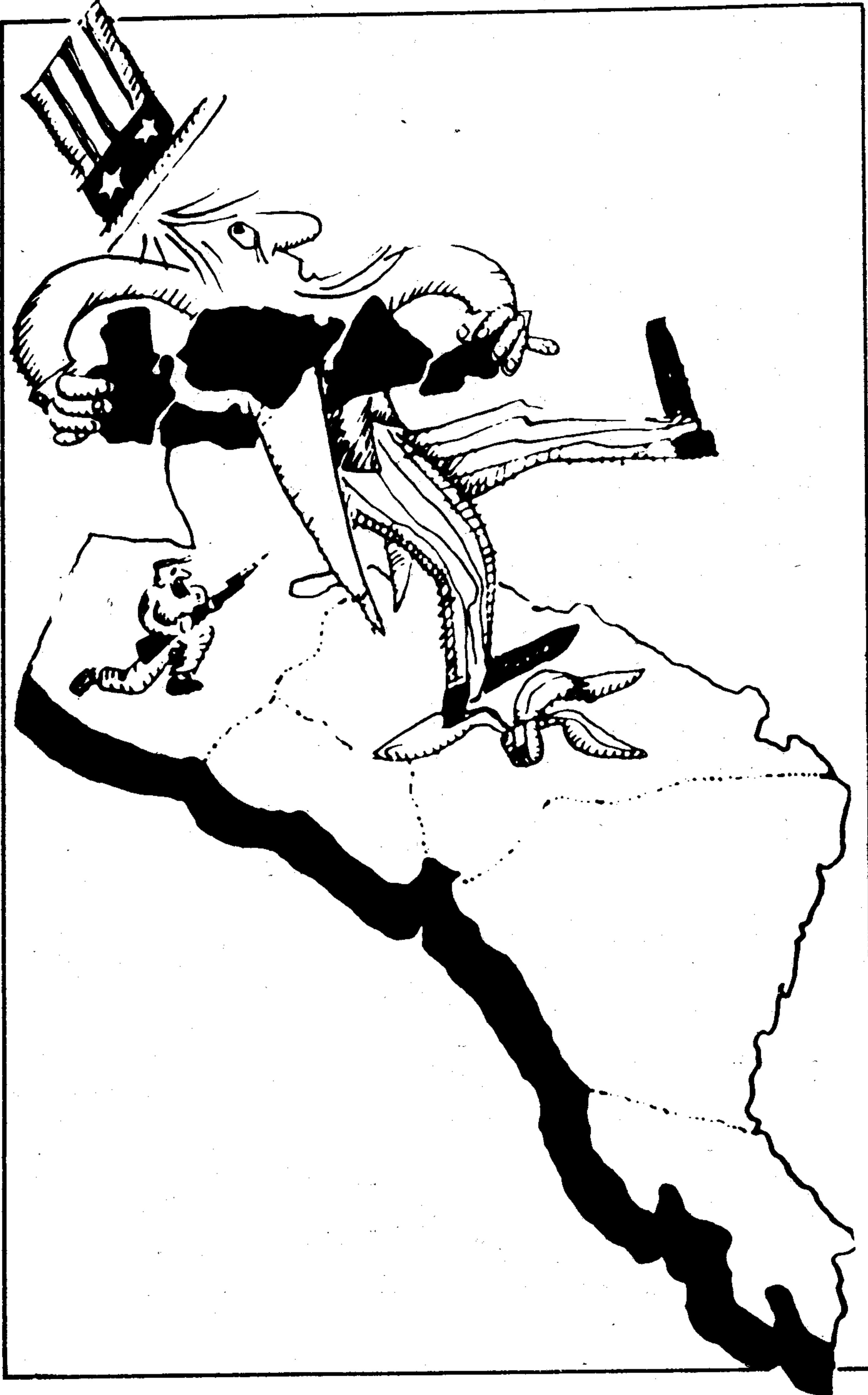
\*Press resolutions through Labour Party ward GMCs, and trade union bodies at every level supporting the prisoners' demands and calling for an end to the "bipartisan" block with the Tories.

\*Raise petitions for the same demands in Labour Parties and union branches.

\*Support the lobby at the May meeting of Labour NEC called by the Labour Committee on Ireland.

\*Combat the press lies and distortions!

\*Leaflet factories at workplaces spelling out the issues involved in the hunger strike. Organise meeting pickets, solidarity activity.



# Victories for Salvador guerrillas

Over the last two weeks the guerrillas of the FMLN have made major advances in the Eastern department of Morazan inflicting heavy losses on the hard-pressed army and National Guard.

This region of El Salvador, and particularly its capital San Francisco de Gotuera, has for the last seven months been a major centre of the civil war with the guerrillas, principally the Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), controlling extensive liberated zones, and much of the communications, with the army pinned down to a few towns.

### 20 a day

Army losses are now running at 20 men a day and in the second week of May a 'major offensive' designed to drive the ERP into the arms of the Honduran army waiting for them on the border, resulted in a virtually total collapse.

It brought the loss of one of the dictatorship's prized 'Huey' helicopters, ten of which were delivered by Reagan earlier in the year.

Contrary to the optimistic pronouncements peddled by Washington, the Salvadorean military hierarchy has been consistent in emphasising the continuing strength of the FMLN.

### True

This, of course, is not unconnected with their desire to lay their hands on more imperialist hardware with which to slaughter the Salvadorean masses.

But it also happens to be true. While the FMLN has failed to develop a strong presence in the western provinces, it has built up its forces in the east and north with important encounters taking place within 35 miles of San Salvador.

There are a number of indications that while the FMLN forces are gaining in experience, perfecting hit and run operations and consolidating their hold on key

regions, the dictatorship's repressive apparatus increasingly obliged to pressgang terrified youths in their early teens, are incapable of winning a major campaign (as opposed to dragging off and butchering unarmed peasants and workers).

At the end of the rainy season they will undoubtedly face a renewed guerrilla push.

With this in mind, the European imperialists, headed by the Second International (whose forces have been significantly augmented by Mitterand) continue to put pressure on Reagan to enter into negotiations. So far he has refused to yield.

### Resolution

This intransigence, which before long will require direct military intervention or a humiliating retreat, has caused the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to think twice and pass a resolution requiring Reagan to certify that the dictatorship 'controls the security forces, respects human rights

and implements the planned political reforms."

Their re-cycling of Carter's eyewash about the regime's 'reformist' character may yet prove to be annoying for the administration especially since internal opposition to its role in El Salvador has built up very quickly.

Yet Reagan has good friends in the European states. They have got the popular frontist FDR leadership to table an ever-present offer of negotiations. It is highly likely that the FDR's strategy in the military field is to force talks rather than defeat the Duarte regime.

While Duarte and his cabal of Christian Democratic ministers might come to welcome such a way out, the colonels refuse to countenance it, and their threat to the civilian facade of the regime remains strong.

On the left it remains to be seen whether the rank and file of the FMLN will allow the bourgeois leadership of the FDR to sell out the struggle.

# Spain: danger grows

Six down. 1379 to go. That up to now is the present tally of Francoist generals.

The recent attack by ETA-militar and GRAPO brings to six the number of generals killed in the last three years by terrorist attacks.

bit fancifully, they had advanced plans for a prison breakout by 90 ETA political prisoners.

But then again on May 15 three more Civil Guards were shot in the Basque country and the high level of political tension returned.

In the face of the coup danger the leader of the

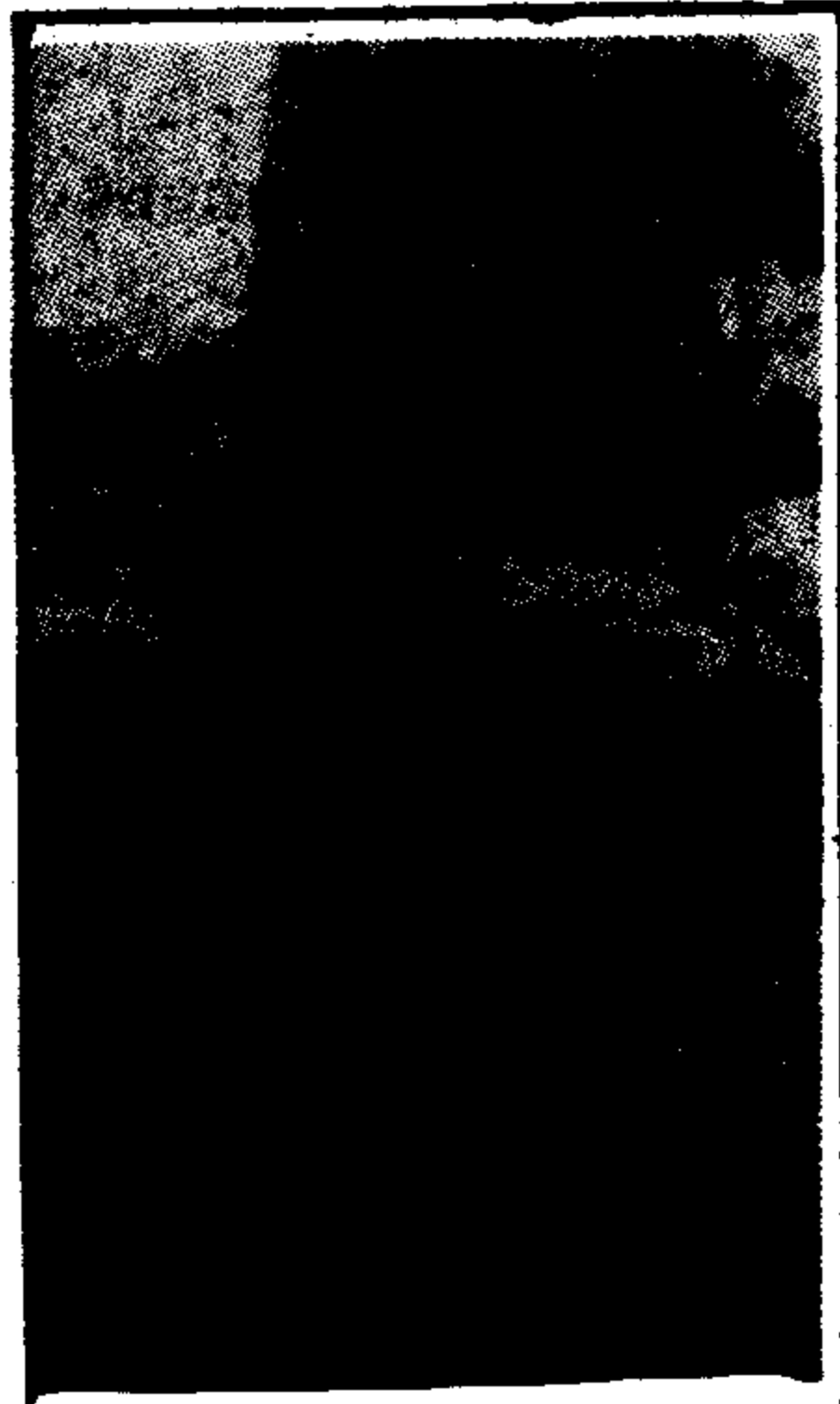
Socialist Party has called again and even more vigorously not for preparation by the working class but for full cooperation with the security forces.

And the CP has made similar statements.

We do not apologise for repeating this argument in *Socialist Press*.

The danger to the Spanish working class is now so acute that the labour movement internationally must be on permanent vigil in defence of democratic rights in Spain and to prepare concrete solidarity action in the event of any further coup.

## Nurseries: How & Why to Fight for Them



"The aim is to force the state to run the services we need. Many unions - NUPE, NALGO, NUT, etc., cover all sectors in the social and educational services, and their union officials must be forced to act in support of policies already accepted against the cuts..."

So states this vital booklet 60p plus 15p p&p from NCCC, c/o Surrey Docks Child Care Project, Dockland Settlement, Redriff Rd, London SE16.

### The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle

The founding programmatic document of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

Available, price 80p including postage from WSL BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

### STILL AVAILABLE Socialist Youth League pamphlet THEIR CRISIS—OUR SOLUTION

Price 30p including post and packing from SYL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

In fact if you fire on a member of the army in Spain it's hard not to hit a General: there are so many of them—about one for every 200 other ranks.

Despite such a superfluity of generals, every one of them that bites the dust encourages the others towards the imposition of a new period of Francoist military rule.

And in order to stop them from taking action, the politicians—government and opposition—frantically try to do everything the generals want them to.

Last week, however, the threat of an immediate coup seemed to recede for a period as the state authorities appeared to make some gains against the supposed authors of the attacks on the military.

Between May 7 and May 14 there was no major terrorist attack in the Basque country.

Three alleged members of GRAPO were arrested in Madrid and accused of the murder of General Gonzalez de Suso on May 3.

Eight alleged ETA members were arrested in the Basque country and seven others in Madrid, where, the press speculated a

# Press Gang



The leader of the world's largest religious sect was gunned down last week as he was conducting a quasi-religious ceremony at the multi-million pound headquarters of his organisation.

Pope John Paul II was shot by a member of the fascist Grey Wolves—apparently in protest against 'Russian and American imperialism'.

The pope was leaning out of his 'Popemobile' (paid for by workers and peasants across the world), waving in his godlike manner when the would-be assassin struck.

The 'wave of sympathy' reported across the world could not be more misplaced. The motives of the shooting are obscure to say the least, but it was clearly not a protest against the real evils of the Roman Catholic church.

In fact this religious totem had already intervened in a crucial referendum in Italy on abortion rights and was on the verge of doing so again. (He has said doctors and nurses who carry out abortions will be excommunicated).

The most regrettable aspect of the assassination attempt is that the political

influence of this church leader should be enhanced in direct proportion to the lead content of his body. There is a serious danger that abortion rights in Italy could be even more severely restricted than they have been.

But that is only the immediate backyard extent of his influence. The pope has led an international crusade against the liberation of women, against anti-imperialist struggles and against what is perceived as socialism.

In Poland he managed to swing the weight of his church both against the workers states and at the same time against the progressive content of Solidarity and in favour of collaboration and compromise with Stalinism.

In Ireland he made a few token phrases (now conveniently forgotten) against injustice while attacking the armed struggle against the British army.

In South America he spoke with misty eyed concern about the plight of the poor and then harangued women who try to limit their own fertility.

His concern about poverty does not of course prevent him extracting the last penny from the peasant masses and the impoverished workers to melt down into

yet one more silver chalice.

Truly, the pope, with his monasteries, nunneries, support for authority, restrictive morals and medieval intolerance is a blood brother of the leader of the Moonies, whose assassination—if carried out—would bring no tears to the eyes of the world's leaders.

The *Sunday Times* says the assassination attempt was 'pure evil, conceived in the human brain' thus settling for mysticism to explain the very material presence of the bullets. In doing so the *Sunday Times* and every other Fleet Street paper (for once without exception) tries to make the following point.

The pope was shot by terrorism. It was the most purely evil example of an international evil. The place we (the British ruling class) are most affected by that terrorism is Ireland. Therefore it follows that the hunger strikers are to be condemned because they support a method of struggle which in other hands in another country pumped bullets into a saint.

This conception is less than immaculate but it is handy. Even from the entrails of a wounded pope can the bourgeoisie produce a home spun lesson in survival.



# JOIN THE WSL!

Please send me more details about the Workers Socialist League.

Name .....

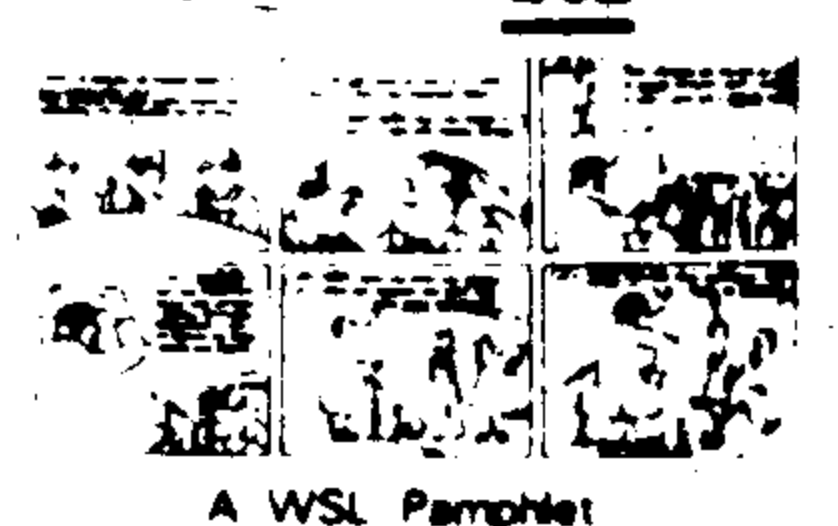
Address .....

Send to: WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

### MERSEYSIDE

### FACTORY CLOSURES

Why campaigns were lost & how they can be won



Price 27p including postage from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX

# French right wing resort to violence

While all the working class parties in France were preparing for the second round of the Presidential election campaign in support of the Socialist candidate Mitterand, the sitting candidate Giscard d'Estaing showed the workers the iron fist of reaction that would strike at even the mildest of socialist governments.

In the most unexpected of places—the Centre Universitaire at Assas in Paris—where there has not even been a token student strike in over 11 years—an alliance of extreme right wing student groups called a strike and violently cleared their opponents from the building.

The pretext for the action was a protest against a decision by the administration to abolish an exam, in use only at Assas, which allowed some students to graduate in February instead of June.

The administration argued that the exam was uneconomic, only allowing 5 to 10% of students to leave early, but costing nearly as much as the full final exam to operate.

There appears to have been little opposition from the majority of students to the proposal—little over a thousand out of 17,500 replied to a 'referendum' from the student union on the question, and no more than a hundred attended the eve of strike union meeting, despite forceful attempts by the extreme right to ensure a good attendance.

It is clear that from the beginning of the affair the extreme right was intent only to use the question as the occasion for a show of physical force.

The generally improvised nature of the right wing action is evidence of their alarm at the election results rather than the abolition of the February exam, which certainly did not need such a hurried response.



Ultra-right is exploiting mass youth unemployment

So ill prepared were the right wingers that they did not succeed in mounting a picket line on the first morning of the action, Tuesday 28 April.

"We are not used to this kind of thing" said one of the organisers, "and anyway students are not in the habit of getting up early".

As a result most lectures got under way without difficulty, although a number of students had stayed away to avoid the threatened violence.

During the course of the morning the right wing assembled their forces and stormed into the lecture rooms, snatching microphones away from the lecturers and driving the students out. This phase of the operation was far less amateur.

The right wingers were uniformed—leather jackets, navy blue woollen hats and 'ranger boots', and armed with thunderflashes and small gas bombs which proved most efficient means of clearing lecture rooms. When one lecturer shouted at them 'You are

Nazis' they were quick to agree with him. Their main chant was 'O . . . O . . . Occident'.

They succeeded in clearing the university without any active resistance from the majority of students and lecturers by 11 o'clock, and barricaded the entrances to the university, and violently repelled some attempts to re-enter the building.

Police cleared the building in the early afternoon, but only after being held off with a hail of dustbins and gas bombs.

Fighting continued in the streets around the university for some time afterwards, and the right wingers later reoccupied the university and effectively stopped all work for the day.

The following day saw a much smaller number of students attempt to attend the university and the right wing asserted their control again by mid-morning.

Molotov cocktails were being prepared to repel the large force of police which was gathering in nearby streets, as a result of which the President of the University withdrew his request for police assistance and allowed the closure to continue to the end of the day.

Having made their show of effective political force the right wing student organisations appear to have lost interest in the original issue of the February exam.

The right wing alliance is a new feature of the political scene in France. No doubt it reflects the response of the far right to the suppression of the neo-fascist FANE by the state, and the turn to more extreme political means by the former



Marc Frederiksen, chief of the now disbanded neo-Nazi group FANE.

members of that group.

More importantly, it shows that the 'liberal' wing of the French ruling class remains willing, as ever, to impose its will by armed force on the working class.

The evidence for this view is the enthusiastic support for the alliance which was given by the Comite des etudiant liberaux de France (CELDF), the student organisation of Giscard's followers.

The other groups have a long history of extreme right wing views and actions. They include the Groupe union et defense (GUD), the Front des etudiant nationalistes (FEN), the Union nationale inter-universitaire (UNI), as well as various 'corporatist'

groupings.

The fact that these groups were able to achieve their aims so easily reflects upon the deep political divisions amongst the left wing student organisations, flowing in large part from the sectarianism of the Communist Party of France (PCF).

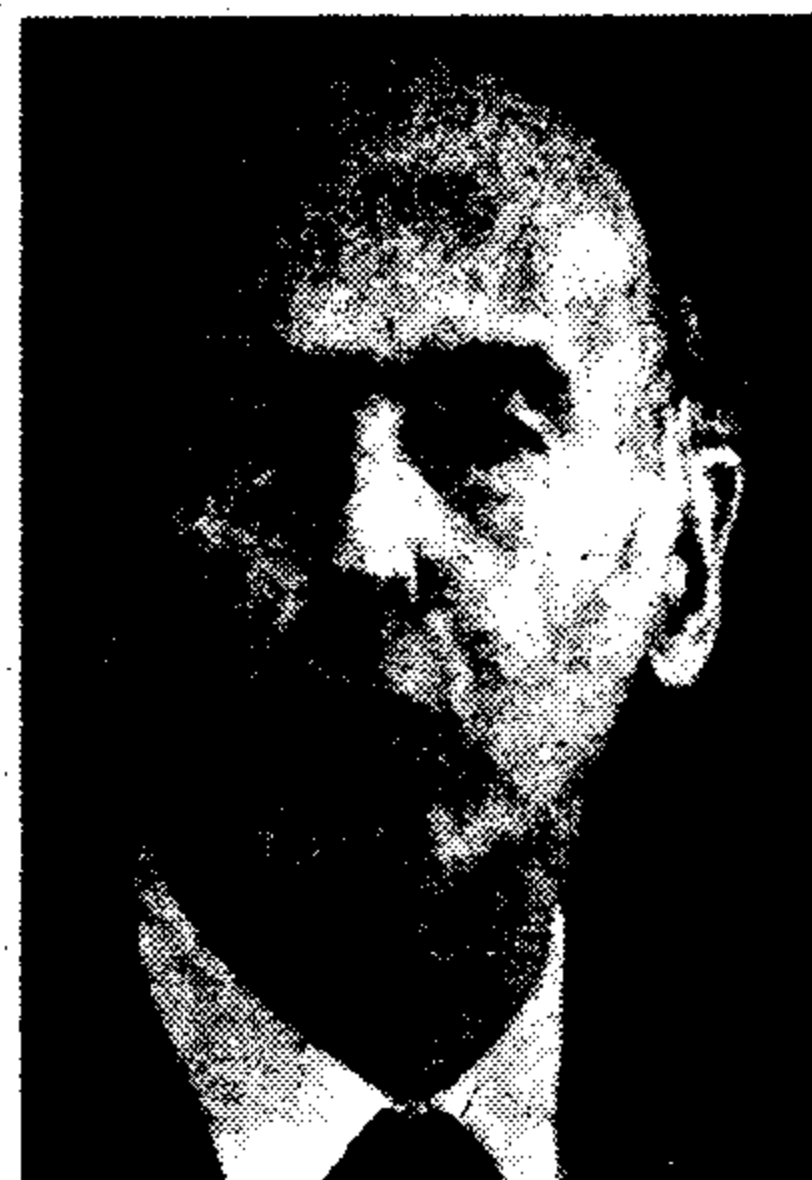
## Squabbling

However, the right wing warning is not just aimed at students but at the whole of the working class, itself weakened by the deep divisions and months of

squabbling between leaders of the Socialist and Communist Parties and disorientated by the recent twists and turns of the Stalinist CP leaders into and out of Eurocommunism, far left sectarianism and outright racism.

In the past the working class has shown itself able to force its leaders to act together against the threat from the extreme right.

In the next few weeks this determination must be found again if the democratic rights of the workers are to survive the growing right wing wave of violence.



Giscard

# Strikes in China

Further evidence of growing labour unrest in China came to light recently at a press conference given by Chen Yu, vice president of the trade union federation of China, at the end of April.

While trying to play down the significance of these events, and without giving precise dates, Chen Yu spoke of a two-day stoppage in an iron foundry at Anshan to the north-east of Peking, and a similar dispute at a glass works in Shanghai. He insisted that these were very small strikes involving only a minor proportion of the workforce in both cases.

He denied rumours that there had been a strike at the steel works at Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi province,

but admitted that there had been 'discussion' caused by discontented young workers, whose main grievance was their enforced separation from their families.

## Increases

It will not have escaped notice that in March the government decreed significant increases in the number of days holiday allowed to workers for family visits.

There are estimated still to be several hundred thousand separated families as a result of the economic policies pursued in previous periods.

Even more significant than the admission, however guarded, of the outbreak of strike action, was Chen Yu's revelation of the scale of youth unemployment.

Four million young

people he described as 'waiting for work'. This is a small figure compared to some estimates made by the capitalist press, but it is far larger than any previous admission by Chinese leaders.

Recent issues of official Chinese bulletins have also admitted to the fact that workers and students have been increasingly discontented in several areas of China.

Among the causes of the problems were disputes over bonuses and wage increases, and also over the allocation of new housing units.

## Criticised

In the universities the standard of food has been regularly criticised, and students have agitated in support of writers such as Bai Hua who have been attacked by the authorities.

Perhaps most significant of all Chen Yu's revelations was that there exist 'all sorts of organisations calling themselves free and independent' operating in the factories and workplaces.

## Demands

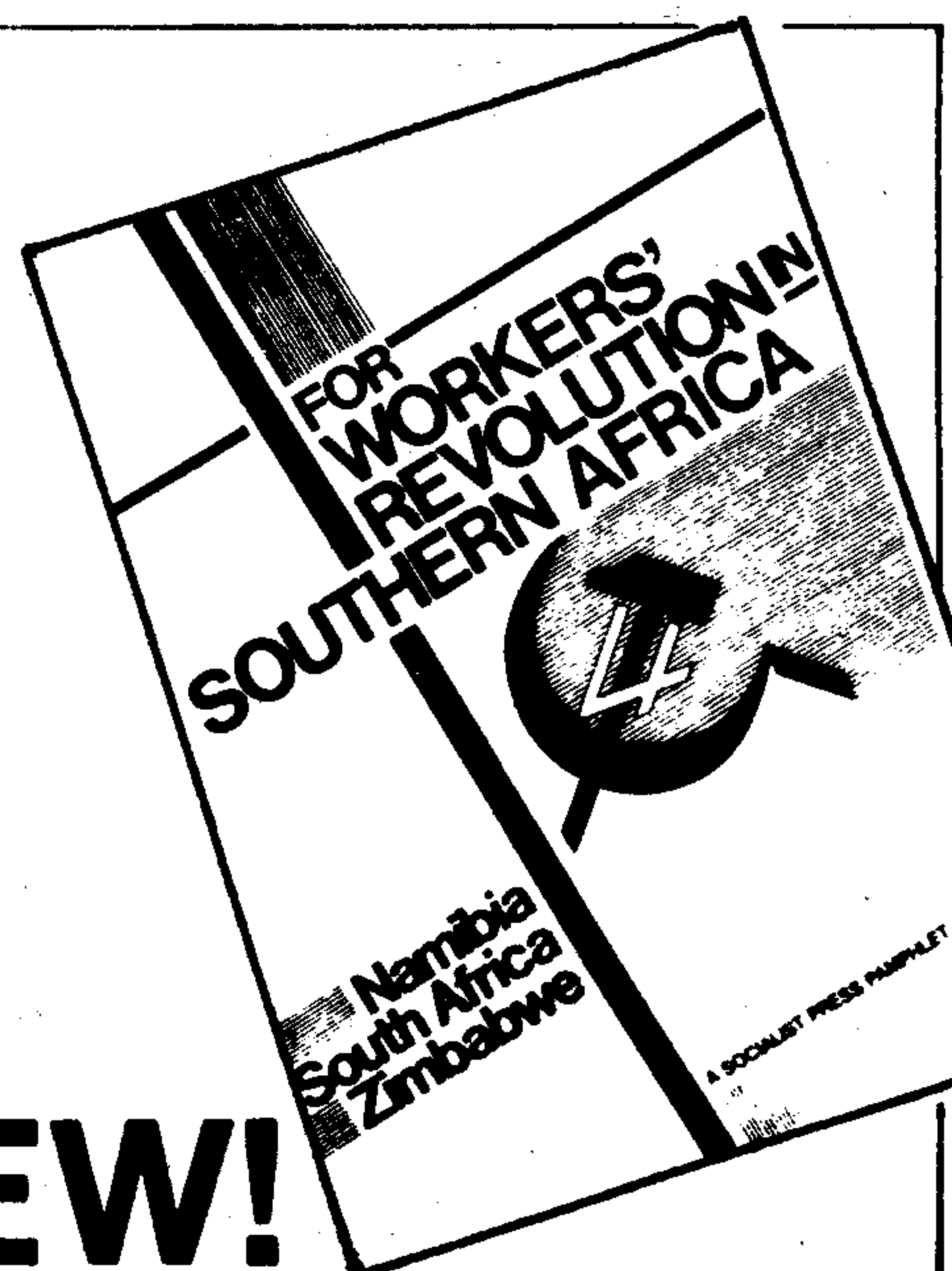
In his view these all represent the continuing action of the 'Gang of Four' and their supporters, but it seems unlikely that the existence of 'several factions' can be accounted for solely in terms of former ultra-leftists.

The possibilities exist for the creation of independent workers' organisations in support of economic and democratic demands in China today, but as in Poland it will only be through the creation of a



Deng

new party, a Trotskyist party, that the masses will come to overthrow the parasitic ruling bureaucracy.



NEW!

Socialist Press pamphlet on Southern Africa

Price 60p (including postage) from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

# Brixton: for a workers' inquiry

By Henry Phillips

Lord Scarman, it appears, believes he is conducting an enquiry into wild animals.

The problem, he said on the BBC shortly after his enquiry opened at Church House, Westminster, was not the way black and white individuals in Brixton related to each other but what happened when "the herd instinct" took over.

Scarman—appointed by Tory Home Secretary William "Whitewash" (as he is increasingly known locally)—thus laid bare the nature of his investigation.

He implies that he is investigating the implications for the Brixton area of racial conflict.

## Cover-up

In reality, of course, this is part of an attempt by the government and its allies to cover up the real nature of what happened in Brixton on April 11 and 12.

Those events had nothing to do with inter-racial conflict. They were a mass rebellion of oppressed people against a police army of occupation.

Both blacks and whites participated in this rebellion—though its basic strength, of course, came from the young black people of Brixton whose daily lives are infested with police repression.

The harassment reached a peak in the few weeks before April 11 when the vastly inflated police force conducted its infamous Operation Swamp 81.

Since April 12, though the police have become a bit less visible on the streets, raiding activities on mostly black homes have continued and may even have been stepped up.

On the pretext of looking for property stolen in the looting of shops on April 11, the police have raided homes at dawn and taken whole families into the police station for hours of questioning.

Two street pickets and a public meeting on Bobby Sands have been broken up by the local police.

Despite (or perhaps

because of) the feeling of vast numbers of people in Brixton that they are living in a form of police state, the amount of protest action called by major political organisations remains very limited.

The proposal passed at a large meeting organised by the Labour Party Young Socialists for a labour movement and people's enquiry has still not resulted in such an enquiry taking place—in spite of verbal support from leading figures on the council and from MPs.

Meanwhile some leading labour movement figures who formerly rejected Scarman and supported an independent enquiry now appear to be prepared to cooperate with Scarman.

This, according to press reports which we have so far been unable to confirm, applies to Ted Knight, safely re-elected council leader (23 votes to 11) last week after a right wing challenge in the Labour Group.

Also the Labour council as a whole is preparing to give evidence to Scarman though the Lambeth Trades Council has voted to boycott the enquiry.

While the jockeying about the enquiry goes on the racist, sexist and generally repressive policies of the police continue.

## Major step

The urgent need now is to mobilise some of the strength of the rebellion of April 11 and 12 against the continuation of repression and the attempt to whitewash it by the Tories.

A genuine independent enquiry, run by labour movement, black and community organisations would be a major step towards that.

It could take the form of a strong, continuous and many-sided propaganda against the conditions of deprivation and oppression in which many people—especially black, Irish and gay people—live in Brixton.

But also the public airing of demands in demonstrations is needed.

There was a small picket of the first Westminster session of Scarman's



Aftermath of Brixton riot

enquiry. And last Saturday, People Against Police Repression, "a group of people living in Brixton who have been disturbed and angered by the recent behaviour of the police" held a successful picket of about 70 people of the police station against police repression.

These should be the prelude to bigger demonstrations supported by all the labour movement, socialist and progressive organisations.

One such demonstration should take place on June 15 when Lord Scarman will begin to receive evidence in Brixton.

If that demonstration is built for properly it should be possible to give Scarman clear evidence that his enquiry is widely regarded—especially by those whose problems it is supposed to investigate—as a fraud and a cover-up.

# RAIDS KILL BUT OCCUPATIONS SAVE LIVES—OFFICIAL

"Concern was expressed by those who did not want the hospital to close that moving patients would kill them and that the authority by its action was hastening their deaths."

"... the proportion of patients surviving fell steeply during the three months September to November 1980."

These two statements, the first by a Professor Millard and the second taken from the report commissioned to study the deaths of patients transferred from St. Benedict's (page 3), highlight the reasons for the fierce opposition to the closure of St. Benedict's.

The report recently published amid the fanfare of a 'set-up' press conference was, the Defence Committee believe, originally commissioned due to the pressure from some Regional Health Authority members to monitor the patients transferred from St. Benedict's in order to assess the effect the move had on them.

## Delay

The Area Health Authority was originally due to report in April, but said that it had "missed the cycle" of meetings and would not be able to report until May.

The committee believes that the delay in reporting was to allow time for Professor Millard to prepare his justifying preface—which nearly dismisses the 23 deaths as necessary for future generations, deaths which were necessary to "achieve essential development of services for the elderly..."

Members of the St. Benedict's Defence Committee have studied the report and feel it is essential that all its false and concocted assumptions should be attacked.

What the Committee asked for was a simple report comparing deaths from September 9 1980 (date of the first removal of patients) with previous periods. What in fact the AHA have produced is a mixed-up jumble of statistical jargon which

starts in July 1980 and so includes three months which do not measure the effect of the trauma following a forced move. The moves only began in September.

According to the committee's calculations, using the mortality in relation to morbidity criteria used in the interim report (12 months equals 32 deaths), already 26 patients have died in six months.

Taking the figures from September 1980 (when the transfers began), they calculate that over a twelve month period the mortality rate could be 46.

That an AHA can make a crass decision to cut geriatric services in a time of growing need purely for financial reasons is irresponsible. However, that it would go to great lengths and lie with statistics to cover up the guilt laid on its doorstep by the increased death rate is reprehensible.

Despite all its factual inaccuracies and false statistics the report firmly finds that during the period of the occupation the mortality rate fell ("... mortality between December 1979 and August 1980 was slightly lower than in any of the three preceding years"). This proves, significantly, that standards of patient care do not fall during occupations.

## Trauma

It shows that staff, themselves under great stress, continue to put patients first.

The report shows that mortality increased, as the supporters of St. Benedict's said it would, following the trauma of uprooting elderly and frail people.

Deaths were predictable and avoidable. Those who opposed the closure knew this as did those who advocated it.

The advocates of closure chose financial considerations first and patients second and should now have the courage to accept the consequences of their decision.

Patients have died and 200 long term geriatric beds have been lost in this district.

# Coventry : fighting for workers defence squads

A national demonstration in Coventry has been called in response to the racist murder of Satnam Gill and thirty other attacks on blacks in April alone.

The demonstration is part of the growing response and fight of the black community and labour movement, and is a part of the crucial struggle to build the united strength of black youth, workers and the whole labour movement to drive the fascists off the

streets.

By harnessing the militancy of black youth and by attracting sections of the black workers' organisations, the Committee for Anti-Racist Defence Squads who called the demonstration alongside other organisations has been able to make a start in building the black movement.

By taking to the streets for anti-racist defence inside the Labour Party, Trades Council and trade unions the left has been forced away from words and has been spurred into action.

Workers self defence is being put firmly on the agenda in the Coventry labour movement, and the reformists and right wing are scrambling to regain the situation, and are being politically exposed in the process.

Among the gains of the last week was the motion passed by the Coventry

South-East Labour Party calling for affiliation and financial aid to the Committee and for the organising of anti-racist defence.

Besides organising physical resistance to the fascists' attacks on blacks, the Committee for Anti-Racist Defence Squads is leading the political struggle inside the labour movement for workers self defence.

This is because black self defence can only ultimately be secured through the united strength of the working class.

Racism and fascism are the result of crisis-ridden capitalism, and are only part of the attacks that are made on the labour movement by the bosses.

Though the bosses in the case of Coventry may not be directly responsible for the

fascist gangs, they have cleared the way for them—by daily insisting through the media (which they own) that blacks and immigration are a problem.

It is not Marxist theory alone that tells us that the organisations of the working class are tomorrow's target of the fascists. Already there has been the attack on the Labour Party meeting in Swansley, and in Coventry the threat of physical attacks on the Labour Party meeting in Upper Stoke ward public meeting showed.

It is our task to build workers' self defence now inside the labour movement, to defend our organisations, and as an integral part of the fight for a workers government and armed reaction that will provoke from the bosses.

Black self-defence must not be left to develop in isolation from the strength of the whole working class, because it is not the bravery of black youth that will be noticed by the bosses, their police, their press and their courts.

They will seize on that isolation to victimise them even further and make them a terrible example to the whole working class.

We must not allow the bosses to turn the failure of their capitalist system to provide jobs and decent living standards, into an attack on the black community.

\*Build anti-racist defence squads and workers defence squads!

\*Drive the fascists off the streets!

# New Cross fire verdict

Having failed in their attempt to halt the inquest into the Deptford fire in which 13 young blacks died, parents of the victims are now considering what action to take in response to the open verdict reached by the Coroner's jury.

The police version of the events—that the fire was started inside the front room of the house by black youths after a fight—was completely demolished by witnesses.

The five black youths on whose statements the police based their case all stated under oath that their statements were forced out of them by police officers.

The police denied that they pressured the youths—all of whom were on bail in

relation to other charges—during the three days that they were held for questioning.

But it has since emerged that two other youths, also held for three days, but against whom no charges were pending, were released, without signing statements backing the police version, only after threats of Habeas Corpus were made to the police.

The Coroner failed to take any notes of what was said in his court and summed up not from the evidence but from the discredited statements given under pressure to the police.

It is clear that the truth of this case will not be reached in the coroner's court and that only a labour movement inquiry into the fire stands any chance at all of establishing what really happened.

**MAURICE LUDMER**  
We heard with great regret of the death of Maurice Ludmer, editor of the anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight'. We shall be publishing an obituary next week.

# Festival of women against the Tories

MARY-ANN TODD gives a personal view of the festival 'Women's Rights Against the Tories', held in London on Saturday May 9.

The Festival 'Women's Rights against Tory Attacks' on May 9 was based on the principle of offering something for everyone, on a broad base of anti-Toryism.

As such it is virtually impossible for one individual to offer an overall assessment of the Festival.

It attempted to make available all the currents, strands and movements that have been developing over the past twelve years in the women's movement, in conjunction with the specific response of women to the Tory attacks.

With such a loose-knit grouping coming together on a vague basis of being anti-system, anti-state, and on the basis of all being women, it was very difficult to discern a united theme.

Whatever the intention of the organisers, each workshop and participating group followed its own line.

The original publicity had stated:

"We are marking the second anniversary of the Thatcher government with a national women's rights festival. Our message is: women are fighting back."

May 9 will be a day to rally our forces, to share experiences, ideas and information, to protest against the Tories' attacks on our rights and to enjoy ourselves."

This was far closer to the actual day's events than the explanation about the Festival in the programme, which explained that the central theme of the day was the fight against women's unemployment and a woman's right to work:

"Since 1975 women's unemployment has increased by 207% (compared with 61% for men) threatening to set back the fight for women's rights by decades: now in every aspect of our lives, women are under attack."

Yet out of nearly 100 events on the day only one



Royal Pride strikers on the picket line

workshop was directly centred on defence of jobs.

This was an excellent workshop, though frustratingly short. Any of the struggles discussed warranted a workshop of its own.

There were speakers from BPC, Lee Jeans, Longworth Hospital and the struggle at Royal Pride.

It is all too rare a breath of fresh air when people from struggles can come together and discuss their experiences—in an open forum that is not in the stranglehold of some trade union official chairing or

steering the discussion away from any demands on them or criticism of their inaction.

Certainly no trade union officer or official would have felt comfortable in that workshop.

Nearly every speaker focussed on the betrayals of trade union officials to whom they had turned for support, and who had sold them out or left the struggle totally isolated.

The message from the workshop came over loud and clear: solidarity, funds, rallies, and demos are fine and necessary, but won't win

the struggles over jobs.

What is stopping the victories of these brave fighters is the corrupt and deadly trade union leaders—whether from SOGAT, FTAT, or COHSE.

## Forefront

They are determined not to extend industrial action, to keep it confined, to abandon it, to get it settled as quickly as possible.

What was also clear is that it is women who have been in the forefront of the fight against unemployment

—from Meccano; Eileen Crosbie, St Benedicts Hospital, through now to Lee Jeans showing the way jobs could be defended.

It is impossible to judge just how much this active fighting spirit was carried into the trade union workshops.

It looked as if the Women in the NUT was well attended, but Women in the Print Unions only had three, including the BPC and Pergamon speakers.

The engineering unions had two, and NUPE had five. In the context of the

necessary fight back against wholesale attack on women's jobs and rights the "Checklist of issues concerning women in the trade unions" issued as a basis for discussion depressingly missed the point.

Many a trade union official would be happy discussing this checklist of issues, which concentrated entirely on positive discrimination within the unions (without even raising accountability and democracy), on equal opportunities committees, women's caucuses, training facilities available for women and national rank and file women's movements in each union.

Nowhere does it suggest discussing what each union is actually doing in response to the Tory attacks or what is the role of leadership.

It is based entirely on a concept of perfecting trade union organisation in terms of sex, regardless of politics.

Presumably only when we've got the union sorted out with women properly represented can we turn our attention to fighting the Tories!

Fortunately the women in Lee Jeans, Longworth and Royal Pride have not waited for their unions to become properly structured before responding to the Tory attacks.

Of course their unions are horribly unrepresentative—especially in the NUTGW and FTAT.

It is very important to change this—and there is no doubt that the struggles of these women will hasten that change.

Perhaps the intention of the festival was to be a way of organising women to show them what they can go forward and do, point by point, now in their workplaces, communities, women's groups, trade unions, labour parties, solidarity campaigns, to defend jobs, rights, services, and to bring down the government.

I don't think however we were all strengthened in an ability to tackle the Tories

except through listening to the determination and anger of women who have struggled like Anwar Ditta.

We were excited and encouraged, however, by the richness and variety of the women's arts groups that have developed to virtually dominate the alternative fringe theatre world in London; by the films and bands, that owe their existence entirely to the women's liberation movement that challenge sex role stereotyping.

It was very frustrating to have such a crammed full programme of events, making it impossible to get to a fraction of workshops and events that you wanted to attend.

The festival could have easily been spread over a week and still have been enjoyable and stimulating.

## Irish struggle

Without doubt the issues and themes that attracted the most attention were the question of violence against women, the workshops on rape and pornography, and (what was probably the biggest attendance at a workshop) over 200 participated on the question of Women in Armagh and the Irish struggle.

The most memorable experience was the speech of a member of the Relatives Action Committee.

This came after a speech from Jo Richardson who described the Tories' attacks but offered no direction on what to do about it apart from references to NAC. She ignored hecklers asking her where she stood on Labour Party policy on Ireland.

The speaker from the RAC gave a simple, direct, overwhelmingly powerful argument for political status and an insight into the horrendous oppression of the jails and the uncompromising bravery of the hunger strikers and the blanket protesters.

Though no call for troops out was made, it was implicit in the speech, which totally convinced hundreds of women there that there is no way we can remain indifferent or uninvolved in the fight against British imperialism in the six counties.

The minute's silence on the death of Bobby Sands—as a mark of respect to a class fighter, regardless of sex—was a mark of acceptance by all that the great enemy is imperialism and capitalism.

## Similar

The Festival was very similar overall to the early Women's Liberation Movement conferences which also had speakers from struggles, workshops on abortion, rape, black women, gay women and women in Ireland.

This Festival had more class content in response to the extent of the Tories' attacks and the deepening of capitalism's crisis.

It was interesting, stimulating, and jam packed.

It was also the sort of forum where conflict over policies and direction was diffused.

It offered unity and sisterhood, was very colourful and good fun.

But a hell of a lot more is needed apart from this to defeat the Tories and carry forward the fight for revolutionary socialism.

# Technology kills jobs!

The giant Philips electrical monopoly once had the UK capacity to manufacture 400,000 colour TV sets a year in two plants, at Lowestoft (employing 1,100) and Croydon (employing 1400).

Now they have shut their Lowestoft plant, sacking 1,100 and have increased their capacity to 500,000 sets based on Croydon alone.

For many workers this is the reality of unemployment—jobs disappearing not because of a worldwide recession; not because of de-stocking, but because there is no need to employ people to do the work.

In TV manufacture there are two factors that have led to a big reduction in the labour content per set, changes in technology mean less components per set, and management have devised 'improved' production methods.

TV sets are not the only

product where the introduction of the microprocessor has slashed the number of components.

Singers now produce a sewing machine where one microprocessor has replaced 350 mechanical parts.

The same is happening in automobile electronics, in telecommunications equipment, and in many other areas.

## Maintenance

This affects the jobs not only of those who work in manufacturing industry, but in servicing and maintenance.

Western Electric estimate that there will be a 75% reduction in the need for labour in maintenance, repairs and installations work as a result of the introduction of electronic telephone exchanges.

Of course, the effects of 'new technology' on employment are by no means confined to the consequences of so drastic a reduction of the

number of components in so many manufactured goods.

But far too often discussion on the subject tends to be confined to the likely impact of robotics on production lines.

We are all aware of the consequences of this (we need look no further than Longbridge) but this is by no means all, or even the major part of the story.

One group who will be most severely affected, for instance, will be postmen, suffering the direct effect of the reduction of the amount of mail as improved computer-based communications systems hit the amount of business mail.

Indeed, it is likely that, severe though it may be for some workers, the job reduction following on the introduction of robots on the shop floor, will be considerably slower to affect us than other areas of new technology, simply because robots are still very expensive.

It is in the office that

cheap computer-based systems are already hitting jobs.

APEX expects 500,000 office jobs to go by 1983. And a recent study in the Land Registry Department of the Civil Service indicated that computerisation would reduce the number of typists' jobs from 662 to 20, and cut clerical jobs from 3393 to 2492.

There is considerable evidence that many firms are using the recession as an excuse to get rid of labour, and then replacing the "redundant" workers with new technology systems.

Any study of unemployment figures shows a steep underlying rise in structural, not merely cyclical unemployment, and the projections to the future are equally grim.

And unemployment is not the only threat that 'new technology' poses to organised workers.

Deskilling will increasingly rob many workers of their

bargaining strength, while improved communication systems will strengthen the power of multi-national companies.

It will be perfectly possible to carry on the day-to-day running of a factory in Scotland from a head office in California.

The first demand that new technology stimulates is that for shorter working time. But this is not in itself sufficient.

Changes in technology raise very directly the question of control; we have the means to vastly increase the wealth of the world, to abolish many boring routine jobs. But these potential opportunities present themselves to us as a threat to jobs and a loss of bargaining power.

Never was the anarchy of capitalism more clearly made.

What is needed is the development of plans on new technology by shop stewards committees, linking staff and manual unions.



# Healey heckled, but CHAPPLE LIVES TO

## Hammer blows at Losinksa

# BETRAY AGAIN

Apart from the pay campaign debate the CPSA Annual Conference at Brighton saw several major victories for the left, including one (the election of senior full-time officers) of historic compromise in the fight for democracy in the workers' movement.

The "Daylight" (Moderate) Group-dominated National Executive received a succession of hammer blows on just about every major policy decision.

Despite the drubbing handed out to the right-wing, the national elections showed that Kate Losinksa, Charlie Elliott and their supporters still have a clear majority on the NEC.

The Broad Left did however make inroads in the elections and practically swept the board in the DHSS and Department of Employment.

The most significant decision of the week was the left's victory on the election of full-time officers.

The Executive's recommendations were thrown out and a rule change was approved (with the necessary two-thirds majority on a card vote) making election of all senior full-time officials mandatory every five years.

This is the start of a process which can lead to more regular election of all full timers.

The Executive was also slammed for attempting to allow Work Experience Programmes into the civil service (totally against adopted policies) and for accepting job losses in negotiations over new technology.

Tensions reached a peak in the debate over affiliation to CND, which was eventually carried by a 2-1 majority.

On hearing the result of the vote about 100 delegates from the right wing bastion of the Ministry of Defence section staged a walk-out—threatening to withdraw their members from the pay strikes.

They were pursued by chants of "scab" and individual delegates allowed themselves to be provoked into a brief flurry of pushing and shoving.

The debates on affiliations saw the defeat of moves to disaffiliate from the Anti Nazi League and a long overdue airing of affiliation to the National Abortion Campaign.

### Successful

The mere fact that the latter debate took place was due to activities of the reborn Civil Service Women's Rights Group, which organised successful lobbying of the standing orders committee to ensure that the NAC question could not be filibustered off the agenda for a fourth year running (Losinksa and Charlie Elliott the two leading right wingers both have links with Catholic Action).

The "discussion" in the end was highly unsatisfactory, with hand-picked LIFE and SPUC members churning out the old anti-abortion horror stories. Eventually 'next business' was moved and declared to be carried by Losinksa (to the outrage of all in the observers' gallery who could see the voting).

It is clear however that the Civil Service Women's Rights Group has gained enormous impetus.

A start was also made on the vital task of curbing the powers of the President (a post which is more significant than its equivalent in any other British trade union).

Certainly Losinksa and her "Daylight" cronies are

very worried about developments.

Their witch-hunting and "Trotskyite"-baiting is becoming more and more desperate. It is very likely that they will turn increasingly to the courts to protect their position (already they are taking legal advice on at least three important internal matters).

The Broad Left for its part has stepped up recruitment and is well placed to expose the "Moderates" over their conduct of the pay campaign.

A packed Broad Left fringe rally was addressed by Dennis Skinner MP at his loudest and leftest.

He stressed the need to bring down the Tories outside Parliament and launched a scathing attack on the Healey/Shore/Hattersley wing of the Labour Party.

He also rejected the bipartisan policy on Ireland and described Don Concannon's visit to the dying Bobby Sands as "disgusting and nauseating".

The Conference reflected the rapidly falling average age of the CPSA membership—with a significant number of very young delegates.

### Hopeful

The future for the left in the union therefore looks very hopeful—only political stagnation amongst the Broad Left leadership can lead to the wasting of the current opportunities.

The Militant grouping is still very much dominant, with a cadre of very able but politically constipated members in leadership positions.

The influence of the Communist Party and Tribune left is visibly declining, though still important.

*Socialist Press* and *Socialist Organiser* supporters must build the Socialist Caucus as a policy-formulating group within the Broad Left.

"Free speech for dissidents in the EETPU" was among the witty slogans of a 70-strong rank and file lobby of the union's Biennial Conference last week.

The slogan hit the nail on the head. For while it suits Frank Chapple's anti-communist crusade to lend opportunist verbal support to the Polish Solidarity movement (a resolution to this effect was carried at the conference), he and his right wing cronies oppose the revolutionary class character of Solidarity.

Hence a resolution from Dagenham calling on the EETPU to emulate the new Polish union—with a single union having all its officials elected and its negotiations broadcast to the workers affected—was omitted from the conference order paper, despite angry protests.

The lobby had been called to draw attention to the level of bureaucratic repression within the EETPU—with both the Midlands branch (Birmingham) and London Central branch currently closed down, and other branches—including Cardiff branch—denied the opportunity to send delegates.

In the event a motion in opposition to the bureaucratic closure of branches and lodges was carried against the wishes of the Executive Council.

But despite stiff resistance from the floor of the conference the EC eventually declared a rule change eliminating the "transferable vote" system of election which Chapple had introduced in the 1960s.

That system had increasingly begun to benefit the left wing in the union—raising the spectre of an eventual left wing victory. But the Communist Party (who customarily come



second in the initial poll) supported the EC proposal to switch to a system of two rounds—in which the top two candidates in the first round go forward to a run-off election. This they hope will eliminate the CP's left wing opponents.

No speaker was allowed to oppose this proposal—despite the fact that a Southampton delegate was on his feet for an hour supported by chants of "let him speak".

Even then the motion was lost on the first show of hands, and it took a tongue-lashing from Frank Chapple who took over the chair, to whip the abstainers into line and procure a vote close enough to be declared carried.

But nothing could disguise the heavy 2-1 defeat suffered by the EC on the issue of participation in private medical schemes.

The EETPU has become notorious throughout the labour movement for its

negotiation of such schemes for sections of its members.

But despite efforts to rule it off the agenda, a resolution condemning Tory attacks on the NHS, pledging to defend the NHS, and calling on the EC to oppose "all forms of private practice including medical insurance schemes such as those operated by BUPA and the Private Patients' Plan", to dissociate itself from all such agreements, and deploring the "support and comfort afforded to private health schemes by the participation of trade unions" was carried.

Another motion that was clearly carried on a show of hands—but declared lost by chairman Tom Breakall—was on picket lines.

It sought to commit the union to respecting picket lines both of other sections of the EETPU and of other unions.

Such elementary trade unionism was carried by a good majority—and as Breakall pronounced it

defeated he was greeted by ten minutes of jeering and slow handclapping from angry delegates, while he fumed about "Maoists" and "Trotskyists" trying to break up the conference.

Dennis Healey's electioneering speech, filled with selected witch-hunting material, also received a surprisingly stormy reception from delegates in which again the chair seemed almost to lose control of the conference.

But the Standing Orders Committee retained their composure sufficiently to block any discussion of the 30 emergency resolutions submitted calling for support for the Irish hunger strikers and their five demands.

Chapple has survived another conference: but the groundswell of opposition within the union remains strong. And the key role in suppressing that movement will continue to be played by Chapple's former Stalinist comrades in the Communist Party.

## Hull sell-out

"The bastards should be strung up". "We should break their arms". They are nothing but a bunch of traitors."

These were just some of the remarks directed at the leadership of the six unions involved in the six day long strike at the Humber factory in Hull. It ended in defeat when a mass meeting on Monday 12 May the workers voted by 228 to 211 in support of the full time officials' recommendation of a return to work pending negotiations.

This was in direct opposition to the principled line taken by the strike committee who called for a continuation of the strike and for

the action to be made official by all the unions involved.

Up to that time only the TGWU with a dozen members had recognised the action. The strike began on Friday 27 March after management had put up a notice at the plant informing the workforce that they were going to implement 10% redundancies at the factory and that there would be no annual wage increase.

For the first month the strike under the control of the strike committee had remained solid.

In the last two weeks of the strike the official leadership became more prominent in the struggle.

At a mass meeting held at Bevin House, the TGWU

headquarters, on 5 May, the officials recommended a return to work based on a letter put out to all the workforce by the management.

The meeting voted to continue the strike by a 2-1 majority.

The sell-out came after pickets had successfully defeated a bid by management to open the gates to the factory and after 50,000 workers had returned redundancy notices sent to them by post.

Management appeared to be weakening. But their trump card was the union officials. As one striker told *Socialist Press*:

"We know what the bosses are, and we know that their most effective weapons are our so-called friends."

## Jenkins rebuffed as ASTMS backs Benn

Clive Jenkins' increasingly right wing leadership of ASTMS received a jolt last weekend.

Their attempt to manoeuvre support for Dennis Healey in the elections for Deputy leadership of the Labour Party was defeated.

In its place, a motion was passed by the Annual Delegate Conference instructing the party's delegation to elect Clive Benn as Deputy.

The NEC had attempted to avoid a vote at conference by withdrawing their initial proposal to support the "status quo" in the Labour leadership, and substituting a vague call for consultation at Divisional and Branch level to "advise" the NEC

and the delegation.

While this at first appeared plausible to some delegates, including some left wingers, it was plainly a manoeuvre to avoid any mandate and leave Jenkins free to press for a vote for Healey or some "dark horse" vote-splitting candidate.

### Ten resolutions

It was countered by ten emergency resolutions calling for a vote for Benn. The resolutions came from No 7 Divisional Council, pledging the union's votes to Benn "on a platform of implementing conference decisions."

Jenkins himself got up to oppose this resolution, quoting from a speech made by Benn to a Labour Party conference in 1960—some 21 years ago—calling for

Party unity.

In reply, Rory Murphy for DC No. 7 pointed out that while some would criticise Benn's record, surely nobody would try to defend Healey's. And, he argued, we have all learned something in the last 21 years: "I was only 6 then!"

A card vote was taken, and the sight of a crestfallen Clive Jenkins receiving the result brought jubilation to left wing delegates—it was carried 146,840 to 140,340.

The ASTMS decision is more significant in the Benn campaign than the 600,000 votes committed to his support by NUPE a week earlier.

It is the first occasion on which the platform has been defeated in order to mandate a union delegation on

elections under Labour's new electoral college system.

It shows the need to drive the campaign for democratisation right into the trade union movement.

The ASTMS conference also saw important rule changes to increase democratic control of the union's delegations to the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

But attempts to amend the rules to enable the recruitment of unemployed potential members of ASTMS were defeated.

And the reactionary element of the union came into full and ugly view when delegates barracked and slow-handclapped Sheffield delegate Ron Giles as he attempted to move for an emergency motion in support of the Irish hunger strikers.

# BL workers face new stage of Edwardes plan

BL's announcement of a new round of plant closures represents another challenge to the trade union movement over the defence of jobs.

The closures are an extension of the Edwardes plan first launched in September 1979.

They effectively mean the closure of five more plants and the axing of 5,000 more jobs as part of a strategy aimed at concentrating production in two main areas—Longbridge and Cowley.

The two key management decisions are the scrapping of the TR7 sports car and the transfer of the new SD1 Rover Saloon from Solihull to the Cowley Assembly Plant when it is launched in April 1982.

## Time scale

This could lead to the closure of the modern SD1 Assembly Plant with a loss of 1,600 jobs and throw the future of the Speke body plant into jeopardy which presses frames for the TR7.

Coventry Engines would be seriously affected and BL say they "are looking seriously" at the future of the plant. In addition the Service Division plant in Cardiff is to close.

Foundry capacity would also be cut back—resulting in the closure of the Wellingborough foundry this year and leaving a serious question mark over the No. 3 Foundry in Leeds.

Although Jaguar will remain open and receive a new model in 1983, the plant is earmarked for rationalisation and thousands of jobs are at risk.

The plan as a whole is carefully conceived. Completion in one year gives management exactly the kind of time scale they need to defuse opposition.

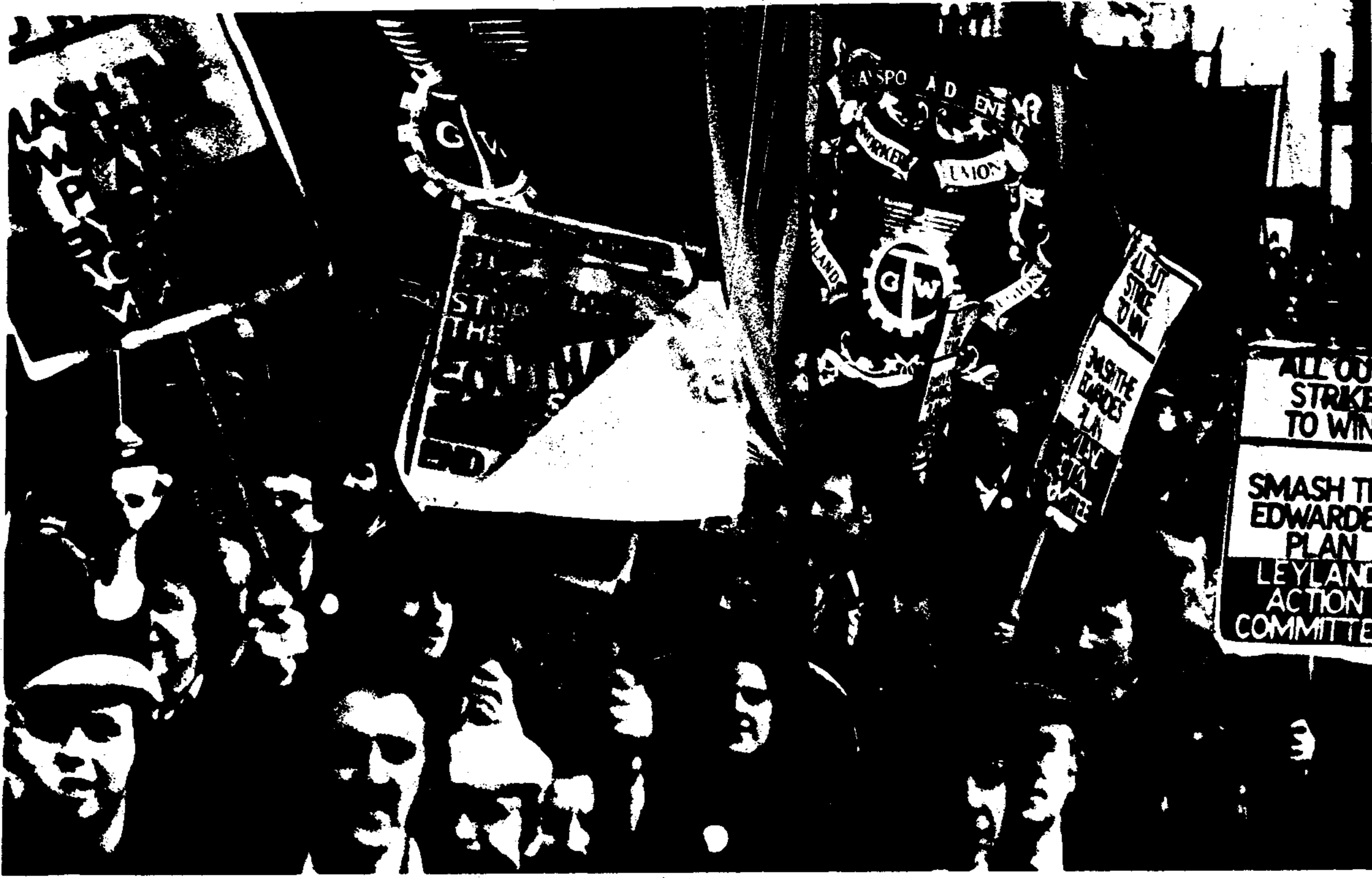
The pressure is immediately placed onto the individual worker. Management say job losses will be achieved "as far as possible" by voluntary means.

## Fait accompli

Where plants are to be closed the normal plant closure terms will apply "subject to there being co-operation in the orderly transfer of work, run down and closure".

Management will move quickly to present workers with a fait accompli. Already by September they plan to close the TR7 and achieve the first stage of the closure of the SD1 plant.

At the Cowley Assembly Plant management is laying plans for the expansion of



production in the factory. Compulsory redundancies which looked a certainty when the Maxi ceases production in June now seem unlikely and even the present VR scheme may cease.

The Triumph Acclaim (Honda) is to be launched in October and will be followed rapidly by the new face lift hatchback Princess and, they hope, the new Rover.

## Closure

In 1983 the first model of the LC10 range will be launched in the Cowley Assembly South Works.

But workers at Cowley who may feel safer as a result of these moves should not be deluded. Their future cannot be separated from the effects of the Edwardes and Thatcher policies on the corporation as a whole.

They should remember that the original "Edwardes Plan" of September 1978 designated Rovers as a growth area and transferred the TR7 from the doomed Assembly Plant at Canley in Coventry!

Every cut Edwardes makes is a step towards the complete closure of BL.

Whatever BL's present strategy, how can two car assembly plants plus Jaguar and Rover compete in the world car manufacturing industry today?

But, true to form, the trade union officials are doing nothing to oppose the closure. They were given the information by management last Tuesday, but as

yet not a single initiative has emerged from them.

Of course there have been some angry words: Brian Mathers, the Midlands Regional Secretary of the TGWU, has said the decision is "a scandal". Grenville Hawley, national automotive secretary of the TGWU has said it is "diabolical".

At the same time Hawley cancelled a convenors' conference scheduled for Monday of this week, to discuss management's proposed new procedure agreement.

The meeting would inevitably have discussed the new round of plant closures.

Their attitude is not surprising. Although the TGWU at first objected, the unions (organised at that time through the CSEU) actually supported the closure of 13 plants under the original Edwardes plan. They argued that it was necessary in

order to make BL viable.

And when Edwardes balloted the workforce on his so-called "survival plan" the Confed enclosed a letter urging a yes vote for Edwardes.

That vote was a big defeat for the BL workforce. Edwardes sacked Derek Robinson on the basis of it and has used it as his authority ever since.

Those events make today's fight harder.

## Never challenged

But Edwardes' authority has never been challenged. In each confrontation he has got away scot free—because of the betrayals of the officials and in many cases the convenors as well.

A fight must begin now. Shop stewards at the Cowley Assembly Plant have pledged not to accept the SD1 if the closure is resisted at Solihull.

But the key lies in the threatened plants themselves. Supporting action can only be effective if they resist.

A mass meeting at Rovers last Wednesday carried a resolution from the stewards committee pledging resistance to the closure by all means possible.

But in reality the resolution doesn't mean very much. Time is the crucial factor.

Although the final closure may be 11 months away, management will move quickly to start negotiations on severance pay and undermine the development of any resistance.

Action has to be taken now. But ways have to be found to give confidence to workers facing that struggle.

Edwardes argues that the plants are "not viable". He is already pointing to losses

of £266 million in BL's car operations, to the recession and to the strength of the pound as reasons for the closures.

Workers must immediately be given an answer to these questions. Who says that those were the losses in the car side?

Is it not that BL paid £100 million to the banks in the interest on the so-called government "hand-outs", and that they spent a further £100 million on redundancies and closures?

Edwardes has just had a 52% pay increase giving him £100,000 a year—open the books of BL!

Workers have the right to a secure job! Why should they be thrown on the scrap heap because of the crisis of a system they can't control and because of the policies of a reactionary government and management?

The only effective action

is the occupation of the threatened plants immediately and the call for a strike in support in the rest of the combine.

To achieve this the threatened plants must act together. A meeting of convenors and stewards from the threatened plants should be convened immediately to give confidence to the workforce and propose action against the closures.

The combine committee which meets on June 6, must also take action to back up this initiative. A conference of BL workers and stewards should be called to extend support and organise resistance.

\*Occupy the five plants now.

\*Call for support throughout BL.

\*Open the books of BL!

\*Black all movement of production or machines!

## Metro strikers return to work

Last week 900 workers on the Mini Metro assembly track in Longbridge voted to return to work after a week on strike against speed-up on the track.

During that week no less than 4 mass meetings were held to pressure them into a return to work. Two of those meetings were addressed by the district officials as well as the works committee. The dispute was referred to by Thatcher in parliament.

Eventually the pressure was successful and the strike was broken.

The strike was essentially about jobs. Speed up is about putting workers on the dole and the ending of this strike is another step in that direction.

The irony is that the very officials who pressed for this particular return to work support the People's March for Jobs.

More pious heat is generated in the official trade union movement about the evils of unemployment than any other issue—but in practice the story is always very

different. The Metro strike was created entirely by the management's offensive inside the plant.

Work effort on the Metro has reached the stage where workers are pushed out of station because they cannot hold the job—they are disciplined by management for "insufficient effort".

This came to a head with the headliner gang who walked out—they were quickly followed by the rest of the 900 workers in the trim assembly area.

This is typical of the offensive going on throughout BL and industry general at the present time.

It is very closely linked to the dispute in Ford Halewood over discipline procedures.

Pious speeches will not defend jobs or protect the unemployed.

The defence of jobs means the full strength of the trade unions being used at the point where jobs are threatened, thus creating the conditions for the employment and the government to be pushed back on the issue.

## Postal ballot to knife strike

Brian Mathers, Midlands Regional Secretary of the TGWU has been busy in the last few weeks.

It took him a great deal of effort to ensure the collapse of the solid three month strike in defence of 1,000 jobs at the Ansell's brewery.

## Failed

All his previous efforts had failed. So Mathers organised his own postal ballot, over the heads of the Ansell's shop stewards, telling individual TGWU members that "the time has come to make a decision" and urging them to end the dispute and accept redundancy payments.

Stewards fought for a boycott but after months of TGWU sabotage, Mathers' manoeuvre was the final straw for many workers, and

procured a sufficient number of votes to collapse the strike.

Fresh from these labours, Mathers then began to turn his attention to forestalling any action in defence of jobs at the threatened BL car plants.

Small wonder then, that Mathers got a rough ride from militants when he got up to speak at a rally to greet the Peoples March for Jobs when it arrived in Sandwell last Saturday.

Ansell's strikers and others joined in boos and jeers that drowned out his voice.

Having personally assisted in the massacre of 1,000 jobs that week, Mathers could speak at first hand of unemployment—from the other side of the fence!

Mathers, however, remains one of the darlings of the *Morning Star*. So, while the *Star* shrank modestly from criticising the



Mathers

betrayed Ansell's strikers, who condemned those who joined in their barracking of Mathers as "ultra-left" elements.

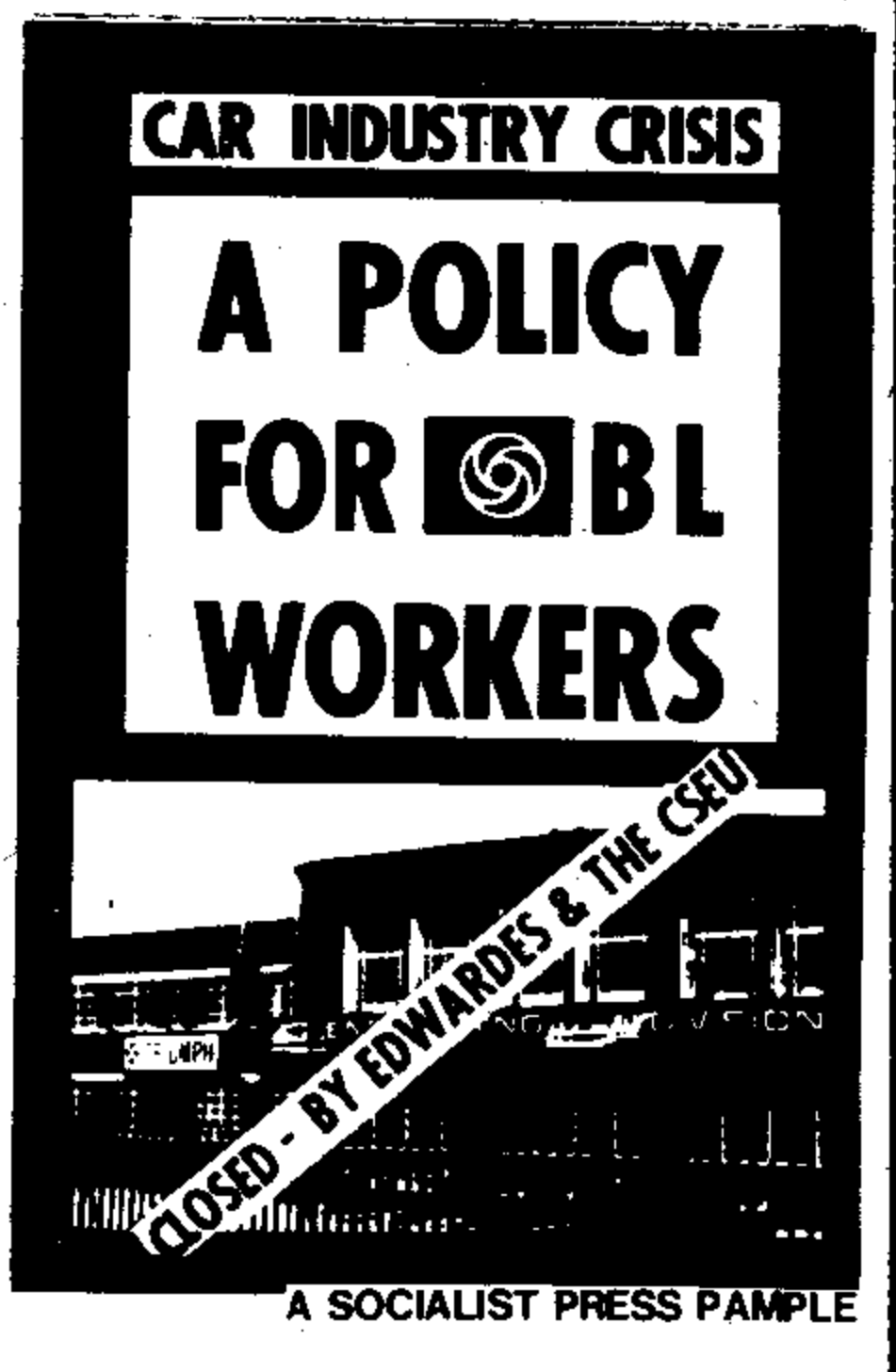
Of course for the class struggle to make its presence so rudely felt in a "people's" gathering was an acute embarrassment for both the Stalinists and for Mathers.

But it is high time that the hypocrisy of union leaders whining about unemployment while assisting the employers to axe jobs by the thousand was roundly and loudly exposed.

### STILL AVAILABLE

Workers Socialist League pamphlet  
**A POLICY FOR BL WORKERS**

Price 45p including postage from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX



## SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Press

### Rates

Trial sub (UK).  
Six issues . . . . .£2.00  
Six months . . . . .£8.00  
One year . . . . .£14.00  
Europe:  
Six months . . . . .£9.00  
Rest of world:  
Six months . . . . .£10.00

Write to: Socialist Press, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

### SOCIALIST PRESS

Longbridge: now sell-out  
**RIGGED 'INQUIRY' WON'T RESTATE THE EIGHT!**



# COURT ATTACKS SCOTS SIT IN

The Edinburgh Court of Session last week fined 54 TGWU members £100 each and their steward £150 for taking part in a sit-in strike.

They had defied a warrant of ejection issued by a sheriff's officer, and twice ignored orders to appear before the judge, Lord Brand, to answer the injunction.

The dispute, at Bestobell Insulation in Glasgow, centres on management attempts to weaken union organisation. They have been giving lagging work, normally done by TGWU members from the 7/162 branch, to boilermakers.

The strikers were evicted from their initial sit-in at the Scott Lithgow shipyard, where lagging work is being done by Bestobell on the 'Isolair' support vessel.

They then occupied the company's offices.

The judge announced that he was tempted to imprison them for contempt of court. The strikers after the hearing declared that their fight would go on, and they would not pay the fines.

Bestobell's is again being picketed.

This use of the courts to fine and attempt to intimidate strikers fighting in defence of trade union rights

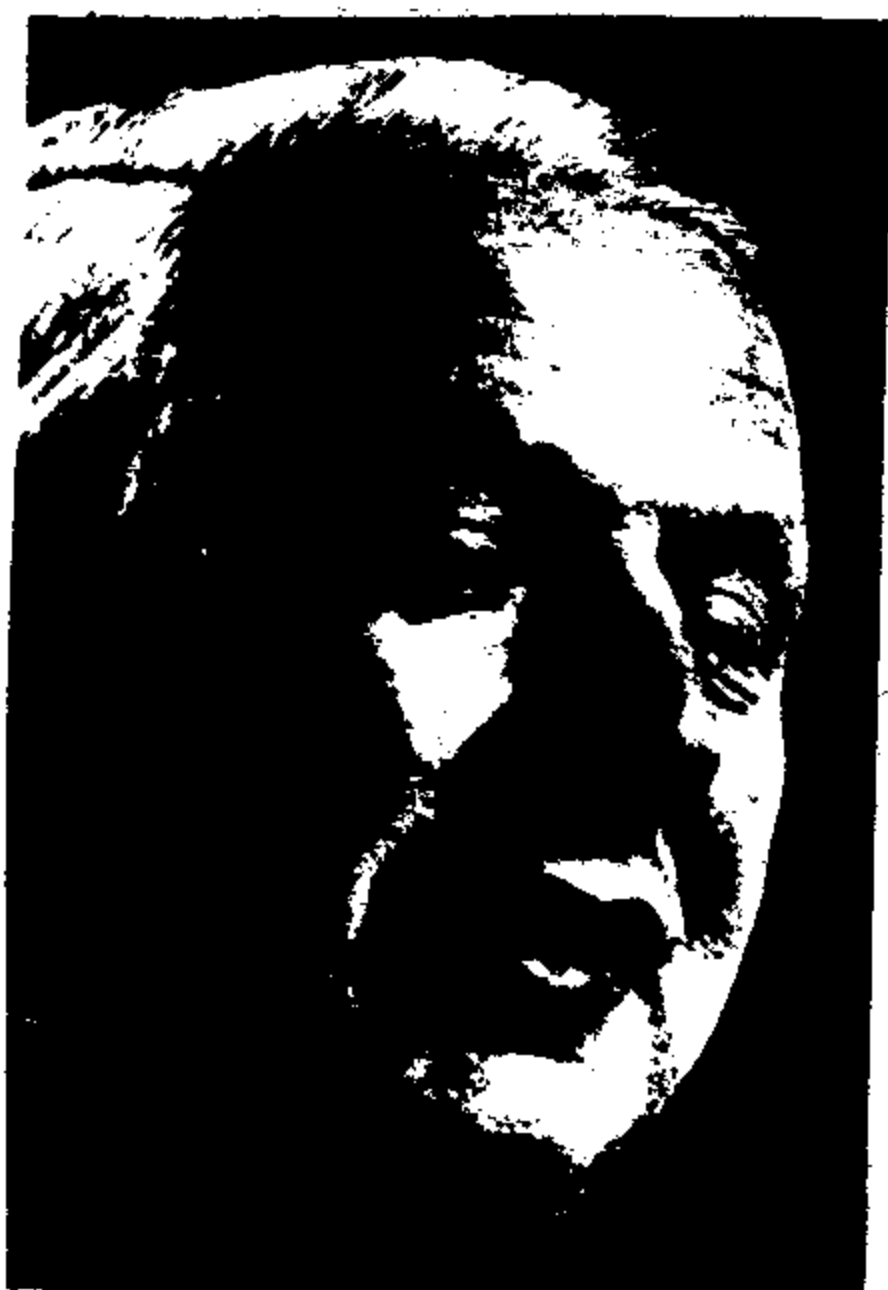
## Ayr pickets fined

In Elgin District Court on Tuesday last, Sheriff P.B. Smith imposed fines of £100 each on pickets involved in an industrial dispute at Ayrshire Marine Constructors at Hunterston in December of last year.

The fines were levied under the charges of breach of the peace for blocking a private access road to the yard.

Although recognising that no-one was physically prevented from going to work, Sheriff Smith described the presence of the pickets as "potentially alarming". Another 43 still await sentence.

Dominic Sullivan, former shop steward on the site said "This decision has far reaching implications for the trade union movement and we will be looking for their support to continue the fight."



*Prior* is a sinister development.

It comes only a few days after the first injunction was issued against pickets under Prior's so-called Employment Act.

With union officials time and again proving themselves completely unwilling

to challenge the courts or the Tory government, every such legal attack strengthens the employers.

### Defence

The Scottish labour movement must rally to the defence of these workers. They have made it clear that they want to defend *all* jobs, and that they simply want the boilermakers redeployed off lagging work.

Their willingness to fight the employers has now brought them into conflict with the law—the same law which restricts the rights of every trade unionist.

The TGWU must back them in their stand, and action mobilised against any further legal harassment.

Messages/money to J.P. McKenna, c/o TGWU, 216 West Regent Street, Glasgow.

## Halewood halted

The whole of Ford car production in Britain is at a standstill as we go to press, with 10,000 strikers at Halewood saying that they will not return until the company withdraws its punitive disciplinary code.

The code was imposed without union agreement and provides for the suspension of workers who engage in unofficial strikes both for the shift in which the strike takes place and for the next shift as well.

The present dispute began when four body plant workers were suspended for refusing to work to impossible standards.

As workers walked out in their defence production was hit and lay-offs began. By last Monday 10,000 workers on both shifts and assembly and body plants were in dispute.

Management have weighed in with the now routine threat of closure—though the Halewood plant has been the site of £207 million investment in preparation for the new Escort.

TGWU national official Ron Todd put on the spot by the mass walkout is calling on management to "rethink" the disciplinary code: workers should insist that the conclusion reached is that the code is scrapped and hard-won conditions protected.

## Fund

With only ten days to go to the end of May we are miles behind on our monthly fund. £252.28 is all we've got, nearly £600 short of our monthly target of £850!

We know it is hard when we are raising an ambitious £2,500 Special Fund not to forget the regular fund but it is nonetheless essential that this money is raised as well.

So we must give the monthly fund an immediate boost to put us back on target.

Rush your contribution immediately to:  
Socialist Press Monthly Fund  
BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

# SOCIALIST PRESS ★

A film crew from ITV's 'TV Eye' has been touring union conferences following the fight for the deputy leadership of the Labour party.

But they have run into a real problem of balance. While Benn has held well-publicised and well-attended fringe meetings, Healey's campaign has been largely behind the scenes, remote from any rank and file involvement.

Here Healey is caught leaving the EETPU conference, where he was roundly heckled, but picked up the endorsement of the extreme right wing Chapple leadership.

Benn, meanwhile has won the support of ASTMS and SOGAT.



# CIVIL SERVANTS STEP UP FIGHT

At their annual conferences last week the Civil and Public Services Association, the Society of Civil and Public Servants, the Inland Revenue Staff Federation and the Civil Service Union all voted overwhelmingly to step up the pay campaign to bring out more members on selective strike and to build for a week long all-out strike in the near future.

The key debate was held at the CPSA conference in Brighton where delegates representing nearly half the trade unionists in the civil service met for their annual conference.

Emergency resolutions tabled for the pay campaign ranged from simple demands for escalation of the action through to calls for all-out indefinite strikes.

### Opposed

The National Executive opposed all the resolutions and offered no proposals for stepping up the fight—revealing the blend of tactical idiocy and simple incompetence that they showed all week (see full conference report, page 10).

Eventually all sections of the left had to pull in behind the position put by Militant supporters and moved by Dave San of Liverpool Customs and Excise Branch. This called for all-out indefinite action in the

ports, airports and passport offices; for the maintenance of all other selective strikes (such as the computers now out); for an increase in the strike levy; for a national, all-members five day strike with a national demonstration and lobby of Parliament; and for emergency benefit payments to be made in the DHSS and Department of Employment sections.

### Discussions

The resolution also instructed the NEC to begin discussions with the other civil service unions on the need for an all-out indefinite strike.

It was clear that the leadership was in for a major defeat as speaker after speaker hammered home the need to step up the action and bring the government to its knees.

Even Ken Thomas, general secretary and normally faithful mouthpiece for the right wing, refused to bail out the Moderate Group dominated NEC.

It was left to Marion Chambers (fresh from being voted off her own section executive) to attempt to do a King Canute and turn back the tide of anger.

Foolishly she challenged delegates who could deliver more than 60% support in their branches for all-out action to come down the front.

With delegates streaming forward, the President, Kate Losinska, went as red as her carrot-dyed hair as she



*Ken Thomas*

screamed for order.

Clearly the problem now is to force the Council of Civil Service Unions leadership to respect their mandate and act.

With the campaign into its tenth week there is no significant crack in the resolve of the membership. Indeed unofficial all-out action is beginning to break out in some areas.

The government, though it has been hit severely in terms of its income, is still trying to demoralise civil servants by stonewalling.

Against this background the union bureaucracy is faced with quite a problem. If they cannot get the

government to budge even a little by the end of May then an all-out strike for a week seems inevitable.

But there will be strong sections of members who will simply refuse to go back to work after a week's strike—and the leadership will rapidly lose control over the whole campaign.

What seems clear is that any improved offer above 7% (probably with promises of arbitration next year) will be put to the membership.

The fight for all activists must then be to secure a massive rejection of any such sell-out proposals.