

STOP THE RETREAT!

The TUC leaders have acted as the loyal pace makers of a Labour government intent on helping the ruling class rob the workers of ever more of the wealth they create. The policy the Government claims was designed to "attack inflation" will, according to the jubilant bosses' paper, the 'Financial Times', "allow a large recovery of profits". And yet this policy is little more than the TUC's own recommendations plus the knuckleduster of legislation.

Toadies

It was the TUC General Council that said "We therefore conclude that there should be a universal application of the figure of £6 a week. The TUC will oppose any settlement in excess of this figure." It was the toadies at the top of the trade union movement that said "the General Council would, if it is considered necessary, agree to legislation to relieve employers of contractual obligations which could compel them to increase pay above the limits set out in this document." And it was the TUC General Council that registered a 19-13 vote in favour of the Government's White Paper last week.

The unions that voted against the White Paper were USDAW, ASTMS, AUEW, TASS, ASLEF, NUT, NUM, ACTT, NALGO and the Firemen. Some unions have started changing positions already. For instance USDAW and the NUT have already decided to vote for the White Paper. And, in a sell-out which makes a mockery of the wishes of their conference, the NUM Executive has voted 14-10 to support the White Paper.

It is crucial that an all out fight is waged — particularly between now and the September Congress meeting — to get unions lined up against the Government's plans.

Tuesday will see the

- NO to the £6 limit!
- NO to the Social Contract!
- NO to any kind of incomes policy

vote in Parliament on the measures. The Tribune group is split three ways on how to relate to it. Its right wing, people like Les Huckfield, want to vote with the government, the majority want to abstain, while a few will probably do as they should and oppose the Government. An amendment has been tabled in the names of Bidwell, Heffer, Thomas, Sedgemore, Kerr, Atkinson and others, but this will probably not be taken.

These divisions within the TUC and on the left of the Labour Party reflect the lessons Wilson has learned from the debacle of his 1966-70 confrontation with the unions. He has learned that if you want to avoid a confrontation with the unions you must not direct criminal sanctions against the working class. He has learned that if you want to avoid a clash with a broad section of MPs you must avoid contradicting the TUC. And if you want to avoid a clash with the Tribune left you have to put off legislation on sanctions altogether.

Shift

The most important difference between the present approach (and "In Place of Strife") on the one hand, and the Social Contract guidelines on the other, is that the sanctions are directed at the employers. This shift reflects the shift in the burden of responsibility for enforcing the anti working class measures away from the trade union bureaucracy and onto the bosses. The government obviously feels, despite its agreement with the TUC, that the trade union leaders are not capable of carrying out their traditional role of acting as a brake on rank and file militancy except as a supplement to other reactionary measures.

This estimate by the Labour leaders ought to be seen as paying tribute to the rank and file. Fortified by that, we should start campaigning right away on the basis of:

Workers' fight

5p

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Coalition collapses in Portugal

as AFM calls for 'people's committees'

The shaky existence of Portugal's fourth coalition government since the overthrow of Caetano was ended this week when the liberal PPD (Popular Democratic Party) decided to join the SP (Socialist Party) in withdrawing from the government. The ruling Armed Forces Movement, they claimed, had refused to meet their condition of promising that 'western style' democracy would be guaranteed for Portugal in the near future. Apart from the soldiers themselves, only the Communist Party and its satellite the MDP remained, making inevitable the reconstitution of the cabinet on a non party basis.

The SP-PPD move has been a calculated one: and one linked to a definite reassertion of the Right. On 13th July, several thousand people demonstrated in Aveiro to welcome the bishop of the diocese and support the Church hierarchy against the workers of Radio Renascenca, who have taken over the station. In Rio Major, CP and FSP (left Socialist) offices have been sacked.

Vague

The SP and PPD clearly enjoy support from major capitalist interests outside Portugal. The EEC has made many vague promises of economic aid to Portugal which have never materialised. The aid will come, they say, only on proof that Portugal is moving to 'western style democracy'. The British government, early this week, decided to impose import controls on Portuguese textiles.

The Armed Forces Movement plans, to which the SP and PPD were reacting, represented not so much a concerted attempt to impose a strict military regime (though serious dangers to workers' democracy are there) as a continuation of the chaos and paralysis which has gripped the AFM.

Judge

The 240-strong General Assembly of the Armed Forces Movement produced a policy statement on 9th July, after an 18 hour meeting. The statement proposes a structure of "people's committees", beginning with local committees and working up via regional assemblies to a National People's Assembly. Supreme power is, however, to remain with the military Supreme Revolutionary Council; there is to be direct military participation in the assemblies, and the AFM is to be the judge of the representative character of the assemblies.

The AFM document is vague about the exact nature of the "people's committees", though it sketches out wide powers for them. It says that the political parties as such will not be represented, though there is no indication that members of political parties would be barred from representing their trade unions or workers'

committees, and the statement insists that the AFM are "neither seeking to ignore the political parties dedicated to the construction of socialism nor to militarise the people".

There seems to be some shift to the left as compared to previous AFM statements, but the same AFM Assembly passed a motion of confidence in Vasco Goncalves, the Prime Minister, who represents a centre faction in the AFM, close to the Communist Party. The CP advocate "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution", closely controlled by the present (CP dominated) town councils.

On Sunday 13th July four members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, appearing on television, insisted that the schemes of "people's power" would not be brought in immediately, but only over ten or twenty years.

However, both the AFM's statements and the pressure from the right cannot fail to give an impulse to the creation of genuine workers' councils. If such councils really do develop, they can lead to a workers' democracy far more direct and flexible than any Parliamentary system, and would rapidly throw off any control by an increasingly divided AFM. Also vital in the next weeks will be the question of arming the workers' committees and permitting free political organisation in the army. Copcon, the internal security body which is generally reckoned to be the most left wing component of the armed forces, has only recently put out a document attacking "growing MRPP 'Maoist' infiltration in military units".

Dissolve

The key question is whether revolutionary socialists in Portugal can take advantage of the situation while remaining clear of the political dangers of reliance on the AFM. The difficulties are illustrated by the slogans of a demonstration of 8,000 workers and some soldiers on 16th July: "Dissolve the Constituent Assembly, end the coalition government. We want a people's government now".

The problem is that the unqualified slogan of "a people's government", or even "a revolutionary government" or "workers government" may in Portugal today be identified with a left wing military government, not with the self-regulating rule of workers' councils with full freedom of party organisation. While the programmatic orientation of a workers' government based on workers councils is absolutely essential for the situation in Portugal, there are many dangers in the slogan being mis-used, and there are indications that sections of the AFM will be willing to use it in a manipulative fashion and for different aims.

Contd. back page



"Alliance of MFA and People" — how progressive is it?

ANGOLA

'Intervention' — only under MPLA control!

The Portuguese regime faces a crisis in Angola. The FNLA movement — based in reactionary Zaire and financed by the CIA — is mounting increased attacks on the major and more left wing liberation movement, MPLA. The left in the AFM is advocating Portuguese military intervention on the side of the MPLA, though — especially given the right wing leanings of the Portuguese army units in Angola — the continued presence of Portuguese troops, or an increase in their forces, would be highly dangerous, justifiable only on the specific request and under the control of the MPLA. It is not accidental that there is fierce fighting in

Angola, while the transition to independence in Guinea Bissau and Mozambique was relatively peaceful. European and American economic interests in Angola are far greater, and there is a relatively large population of white settlers (300,000 of them — at present returning at a rate of 2000 a week to Portugal, where they will strengthen the right wing).

As the crisis in Portugal becomes more and more chaotic, the chances mount of a conflict engineered by the right wing which could be used as an excuse for NATO intervention. British workers must be prepared to give all possible aid to the workers of Portugal in such an event.

A NEW ICE AGE WITH LABOUR?

THE measures adopted in the White Paper are an evil mixture. On the one hand, evasion of confrontations between the trade unions and the Government; on the other, tough sanctions forcing the employers to do the fighting themselves.

The main feature of the document is the £6 limit on pay increases over the next 12 months. This is not just a limit on increases in the basic rate. It is on all increases calculated together. All fringe benefits, "improvements in non-wage benefits... will be... offset... against the pay figure". For instance if your weekly hours were to be reduced, this would be calculated as a cash equivalent and offset against the £6. Any cost of living agreements, wage-for-age agreements, bonus agreements etc. will in effect be scrapped so long as they threaten to take your aggregate pay increase over the £6 limit.

But of course £6 is the upper limit! The Government did not see fit to impose a lower limit on wages or wage increases. A working class Government would have legislated a national minimum wage and tied that to the rise in the cost of living. In that way it would genuinely have protected the low paid from inflation.

This £6 limit will in any case only be reached by many workers if they put up a fight for it.

CUTS IN PAY AND CUTS IN SOCIAL SERVICES

The policy takes effect from August 1st and is due to last 12 months. It will supercede previously made agreements if they have not yet come into effect. If an agreement has been negotiated to come into effect in September and it exceeds £6, then only £6 will be payable. If there is an existing agreement that takes effect in stages, some of which fall after August 1st, then any new agreement reached before the end of the year will not be allowed £6, but only the difference between the amount paid out in any stages of an old agreement after August 1st, and £6.

The only exemption allowed will be in the case of women, where rises over £6 will be allowed as a step

towards equal pay.

Those earning over £8,500 a year God bless 'em!—will not get the £6 rise... unless their shares increase in value, unless their perks improve, unless more items can be put on the expense account, unless of course they get another do-nothing directorship or let-out property at higher prices... In any case there are only 120,000 of them. The biggest leeches are getting a lot more than that without working, and they're not going to be touched at all.

The Government is going to police these measures by directly imposing them on the 2 million people it employs directly (in the civil service, health, armed forces etc). It will see to it that local authorities and public transport authorities (which employ between them about 3 million people) toe the line by withholding rate support grants and other subsidies if the £6 limit is breached. It also threatens to reduce the capital programme for local authorities breaking the barrier.

In the case of nationalised industries (which employ about 2 million) the government will not permit increases over £6 to be subsidised out of higher prices or additional funds. Any "excessive" increases will have to be paid for, it argues, by reducing the workforce.

In the private sector, "weapons will be used" the White Paper threatens "against those who breach the policy by exceeding the pay limit." What these "weapons" amount to is a stricter application of the Price Code, a refusal to allow a company which has permitted a breach of the £6 limit to pass on any increased cost—even within the limit—in the form of higher prices; a refusal to give assistance to any companies (regional grants, etc) breaching the limit; and refusal to buy from such firms.

Having made all these threats the White Paper adds, "if however the Government finds that the policy needs to be enforced by applying a legal power of compulsion they will not hesitate to do this."

These legal powers have already been drafted in the form of a Remuneration, Charges and Grants Bill, but they have not been presented to Parliament.

To the TUC's demand for price freezes, the Government has in



Fearless opposition to the Tories, but will they fight Labour's even harsher pay curbs?

effect given a flat refusal. The only hints in that direction are an increase in the food subsidy of a paltry £70 million (which still doesn't bring the subsidy level up to that before the April Budget) and a promise to keep the coming rent increases down to an average 60p.

The last section of the White Paper gives clear hints of massive cuts in public spending, and huge redundancies as a consequence. The announced programme of cuts in the education sector are only the first of these. It is quite clear from the talk of a "reduction of the public sector borrowing requirement" that cuts in social services, and therefore in sectors like building, will soon be announced.

UNEMPLOYMENT

THE GOVERNMENT has just published a report which estimates unemployed in 1976 will be 1½ million. This is a rise of 500,000 over the Government's previous estimate. If school leavers are included, claims the Financial Times in its off hand fashion, "there is no serious dispute that a total of one million unemployed ...

is likely this July or August".

The Government's forecast, however, was outdone by the forecast from the Institute of Directors. The predict that next year will see two million unemployed—and they are calling for more!

So much for the choice: accept wage curbs, or face unemployment!

...AND HOW TO BREAK IT!

THE RESPONSE from MPs and trade union leaders to the White Paper has been the same in one important respect. None of them put forward a policy which safeguards the living standards of the working class and throws the whole burden of the present crisis onto those who have created it, the capitalist class.

The key to such a policy is the sliding scale of wages. All wages should be protected by automatic cost of living increases based on a working class cost of living index. In the present situation that would mean a demand for about 70p for every 1% increase in the cost of living. Such increases should be worked out on a monthly basis and consolidated into the basic rate. This is a cast iron protection against rising prices.

It is vital that the incomes of those on pensions, benefits, grants, etc also be increased with the cost of living. Those on fixed incomes are the first victims of increases in the cost of living. Where such increases bring people into the "poverty trap", making them ineligible for special means-tested benefits, they should be additionally compensated for this loss.

Minimum wage

This policy should be supplemented by a national minimum wage also subject to automatic cost of living increases.

For some time now the TUC has been talking of a "social wage" by which they mean a wage calculated by including the average level of social service benefits—health, housing, education etc. The rate of inflation as well as the huge cuts in public spending is rapidly reducing the contribution of social service benefits to that wage. We must therefore demand absolutely no cuts in social service spending; it should go up with the cost of living so that its real value is protected.

The calculations as to the number that will be unemployed by the end of the year vary from 1½ million the

official figure!—to two million. Against unemployment we must demand above all a sliding scale of hours. This means a reduction in hours so that there is full employment, with no loss of pay.

Where the employers claim "poverty" and a lack of work we should reply by demanding a full investigation of the circumstances of the company, demanding access not only to its books but those accounts of the state that reveal the connection between private business and the public purse.

Workers' control

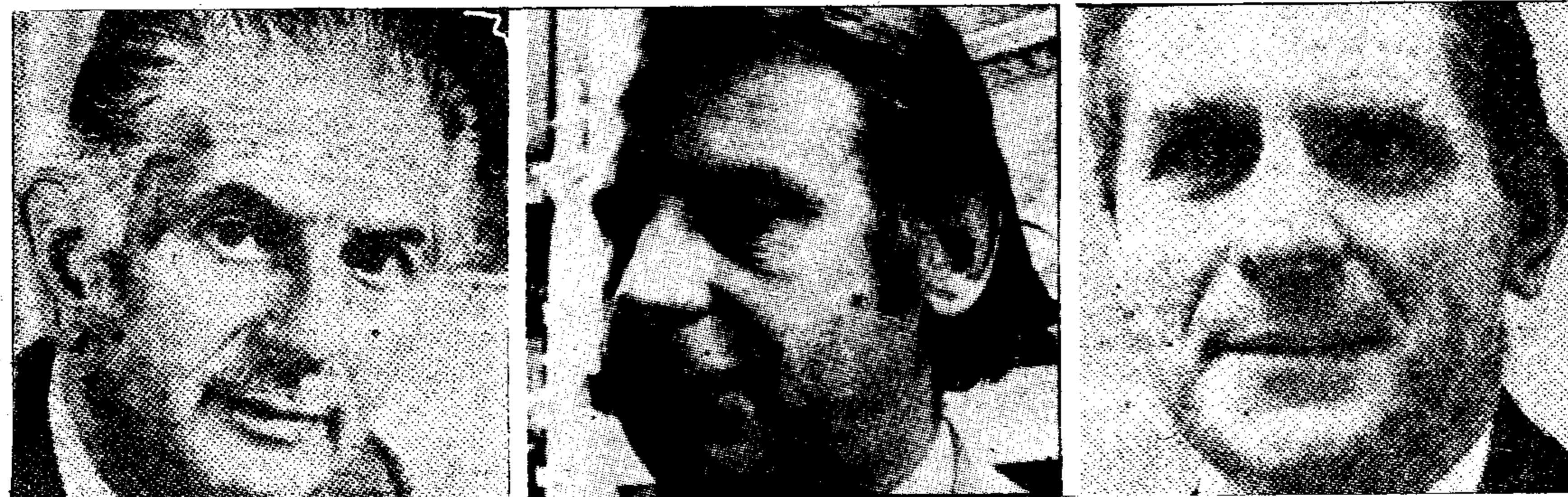
The demand for a cut in hours brings with it the need to reorganise the work force. This reorganisation should be in the hands of the workers themselves. A programme of work sharing at plant level demands a heightened struggle for workers' control over the process of production.

Retraining at full trade union rates should be in the hands of trade union bodies.

But a protection of our standard of living is not possible without production of necessities. It is no good having thousands of building workers unemployed—even if they were on full pay—if there are no houses being built when there is a shortage. It is therefore necessary for the Government to take over those companies whose operations are central to production for our needs. No compensation should be paid. Further the Government should expropriate any companies refusing to continue employing its workforce at proper rates.

These are the foremost points of a programme of defence of working class living standards. It is this that should be taken up by those who claim to stand for the interests of the working class... not the viciously anti working class policies of the Government, nor the irrelevant nationalistic utopianism of Tribune's left wing.

JACK PRICE



Monty Finniston (left), head of British Steel Corporation, now gets £28,100; Richard Marsh (centre), head of British Rail, gets £23,100 — they are each claiming £40,000. James Swaffield (right), head of GLC, has just been given a £70 a week rise to take his pay to £22,000... and this little piggy had jam on it!

Gutter press rushes to support

THE DAILY MAIL, a large section of the Parliamentary Labour Party—including some Tribunes—and the Social Democratic Alliance have combined to try to save Reg Prentice.

On Wednesday 23rd July the General Management Committee of Newham North East constituency Labour Party will vote on a motion calling on Reg Prentice, Minister of Overseas Development and member of the Cabinet, to resign at the next election.

For a moment the fight between left wingers at the rank and file and some of the right wing parliamentarians has been focused on this crucial vote. The many right wing MPs who sense the revolt from the rank and file beneath them are watching anxiously. The right wing press which lionises this totally anti working class specimen of a Labour MP shouts with horror. The Social Democratic Alliance, the right wing rank and file organisation that has the backing of Prentice and Home Secretary Jenkins, jumps to his support. And now 160 MPs have signed a letter of support for Reg Prentice.

Foremost in the fight for this man

Reg Prentice

who approved the jailing by the Tories in 1972 of dockers' stewards—the leaders of many of his own constituents—is the Daily Mail. This filthy rag has printed an "expose" of one of those in the Newham North East CLP who has advocated Prentice's removal, assistant secretary and youth officer Tony Kelly.

This piece of character assassination purports to give an account of Kelly's "criminal" past, desertion of his wife and present situation. In true muck-raking style the Daily Mail does not relate to the issues, nor does it bother with the many people in the constituency party who support the move to get rid of Prentice.

The left wing in the Labour Party needs to look at this and learn the lessons. The right wing are



Tony Kelly

organised. The right wing are armed—not least by the Tory press. The right wing are able to mobilise a large part of the Parliamentary Party behind them including some Tribunes who have signed the letter. Meanwhile the left is weak and largely unorganised.

Should the vote go in favour of Prentice's forced retirement, it is crucial that the most massive write-in campaign takes place urging the National Executive Committee to approve the decision.

TO understand Jayaprakash Narayan's movement we have to understand the situation in the country in general and in Bihar in particular. The country today presents a picture of a society which has little scope left for any kind of development unless the relations of production are qualitatively changed. The most important limiting factor on agricultural and industrial development is the system itself.

The economic stagnation, the widespread famine conditions even in years of good harvests, the under-utilisation of industrial capacity even when the industrial products in question are urgently needed, the mounting unemployment even where there is no dearth of natural resources which can be tapped for the benefit of the people — all these are manifestations of production relations which have long outlived their relevance and have become a crushing deadweight on social development; and all are the product of a nation whose development has been dominated and distorted by imperialism.

Corrupt

As for Bihar, the state has been reduced to a den of corrupt officials, politicians and landlords-cum-moneylenders. Two incidents may be mentioned in this context. Sachhidanand Prasad, a social worker of Ranka in the Palamau district, had taken up cases of evicted tribals in 1969, when the state was under a non-Congress government. All his efforts for almost three years resulted in nothing; he could not even get a hearing from the concerned officials, despite the dozens of petitions he wrote to the authorities, including successive chief ministers of the state and the Prime Minister of the country. On the contrary, the evicted tribals were intimidated and Prasad himself was beaten up and implicated in a theft and rape case (he was later acquitted by the court).

The other incident involves Theodore Kujur, who was the only person who could read and write in his village, Humia. He used to help people fight cases against moneylenders. So he was murdered. There was nothing mysterious about the circumstances of his murder; the only mystery was how the name of the suspect mentioned in the first information report was dropped in the charge sheet submitted by the police.

Moneylenders and landlords get all sorts of official patronage and encouragement in their oppression and exploitation of the poor peasants, Harijans ('untouchables') and tribals. This is vividly brought out by the survey by Father Saupin of Daho village in the

WHEN Indira Gandhi decided to embark on a massive wave of jailings of politicians, her own personal "enemy number one" was Jayaprakash Narayan, the leader of Janata — the "anti-corruption movement".

Well known outside India — usually by his initials, JP — Narayan's jailing has brought forth a whole barrage of denunciation in the Western press. Meanwhile, pro-Moscow papers like the Morning Star refer to the "imperialist links of Jayaprakash Narayan" and "the bankruptcy of his politics" as a way of justifying Gandhi's police state turn.

Narayan became Gandhi's personal "enemy number one" when, after a series of spontaneous mass actions in Gujarat state had led to electoral defeat for Gandhi's Congress Party there, he announced that he was going to use similar mass protest in his home state of Bihar for electoral purposes.

In Gujarat, students protesting against bad food and food shortages in their college canteens spearheaded a widespread agitation for food. These 'food riots' quickly went over into a campaign against corruption, the reasons for the shortages being seen as hoarding, speculation and administrative corruption rather than the basic class nature of the Indian (or Gujarat) economy.

Just one day after the Allahabad court verdict declaring Gandhi herself guilty of corruption, she received the news that her party, the ruling Congress Party, for which she had widely campaigned in Gujarat, had been defeated in the state elections.

This result clearly spelt out the electoral

dangers for her in the kind of campaign that had been waged in Gujarat, where Narayan had brought together a front including rightist, sectarian and separatist parties.

With the 'successes' of the anti-Government movement in Gujarat as a model, Narayan was already inserting himself into the existing struggles in Bihar in an effort to repeat the same result. All the elements were there: on January 1st 1974 there had been student demonstrations like those in Gujarat; the food crisis was desperate with mounting deaths from starvation, increased by hoarding and the smuggling of food grains out of Bihar; the administration was also a by-word for corruption and patronage.

At the same time, central government neglect was blatant: only nine industrial licences were issued in 1973 for Bihar, which has since seen a 150% increase in unemployment; the agricultural system is extremely backward; and electrification has reached fewer than 10,000 of the state's 67,665 villages.

In the last thirteen years, Bihar has had four different ministries. Four dominant castes account for only one-sixth of the population but appropriate most of the benefits of economic activity. The politics of caste are rife and interlink with a factionalism which underpins and undermines the political structure.

It is in this state that Jayaprakash Narayan was trying, until his arrest, to build a base for Janata. What his real objectives are is analysed in this article which we reprint from the Indian left wing journal Economic and Political Weekly. (It was published before Gandhi's coup.)

BIHAR

Eye of the storm

palamau area. A form of bond slavery, known as 'saunkia', is widely prevalent there. Father Saupin wrote as follows in *New Republic*: "In the saunkia system as practised here, if a man takes a loan of any amount, he will have to work for the moneylender as and when required till the loan is paid back. If for any reason, be it sickness, marriage or visiting a relative, they absent themselves from work, they incur a debt of two Rupees for every day they are absent. They just cannot fight back and so bow under the inevitable and keep working. They only respire they might get is when there is no work

with the man they are bonded to; then they can go out to work on contract labour, and even then, a portion of their hard won earnings is taken from them to pay back an ever increasing loan over which they have no check.

"In the village of Daho almost the entire village is bonded to about 14 moneylenders of a neighbouring village. For a loan of 175 Rupees a man has been working for 12 years; for a loan of Rs105, another has been working for 16 years, while for a loan of 22½lbs of barley a man has been working for 35 years, and his son has been working four

years. "All of these people are 'untouchables' and tribals whose lands have been lost to those who have exploited their ignorance."

Decline

The base for all this exploitation is provided by the extreme concentration of landholdings in the state. No less than 48% of the rural population is landless. Of the total cultivating households, 72% cultivate uneconomic holdings below 2 hectares. These holdings are, moreover, highly fragmented and the number of marginal and sub-marginal farmers is very high.

During the periods 1952-53 and 1969-70, the average growth rate of agricultural production was only 0.57 per cent per annum (as compared to 3.1% for the whole country). When this 'growth' is judged in relation to the increase in population, the economic decline of the people becomes apparent. And between 1964-65 agricultural production actually declined by 1.8% per annum, against an increase of 1.4% for the country.

In industry, stagnation and decline — though Bihar is rich in minerals and timber — has resulted in retrenchment and layoffs, and consequently workers' unrest has been increasing. After a very long spell of demoralisation — because of the dominant influence of reformism in working class struggles, and management and government

offensives — the working class has been gradually regaining its militancy and organisational strength. And this radicalisation has spread to the rural areas.

Districts

The government has responded to this spreading militancy by creating more districts in order to check the growing radicalisation of the masses by tightening up the administration. Previously there were 17 districts and four divisions of the state; now there are 29 districts and five divisions and more are to be created. The same has been the government's objective in creating more subdivisions. A leader of the chief landlord party (the Swatantra) expressed "shock" at the fact that Dalsingh Sarai had not been made a sub-division, arguing that it "was a Naxalite zone ... hence it deserved to be a sub-division to have a tighter control on the situation."

Almost all these districts have witnessed radical activities in the recent past.

In the towns, almost everywhere, the people have been getting restless, agitating for grain at cheaper prices, and for a declaration of famine. In many places the agitations had some time ago gone beyond 'accepted' forms and culminated in forcible seizure of hoarded grains etc.

In short, long before Gujarat was aflame, Bihar presented a picture of a whole established order breaking down under the weight of the very values of loot and plunder by which it lives.

Alarmed, the powerful vested interests, while still fighting among themselves, sent their SOS to Jayaprakash Narayan to keep the people's movements developing in the state within manageable limits

within. This is a role which JP has played more than once in the past. Though he has time and again declared his resolve to give up politics, he has never been very far from politics, especially when there has been the possibility of development of people's revolutionary activities.



Jayaprakash Narayan

Long before he accepted the leadership of the so-called movement in Bihar, he had devoted a great deal of energy to countering the politics of the Naxalites, a revolutionary Maoist grouping which concentrated on rural agitation and warfare.

Wherever peasant masses rebelled against the crushing deadweight of the social set-up, he visited the areas concerned to pacify the masses. His efforts were used by landlords and moneylenders to shore up their sinking position. His public lamentation over the deteriorating conditions of the masses notwithstanding, JP all along resisted any effort by the people to change the social set-up by countering and defeating the violence on which the whole system is based.

Tactics

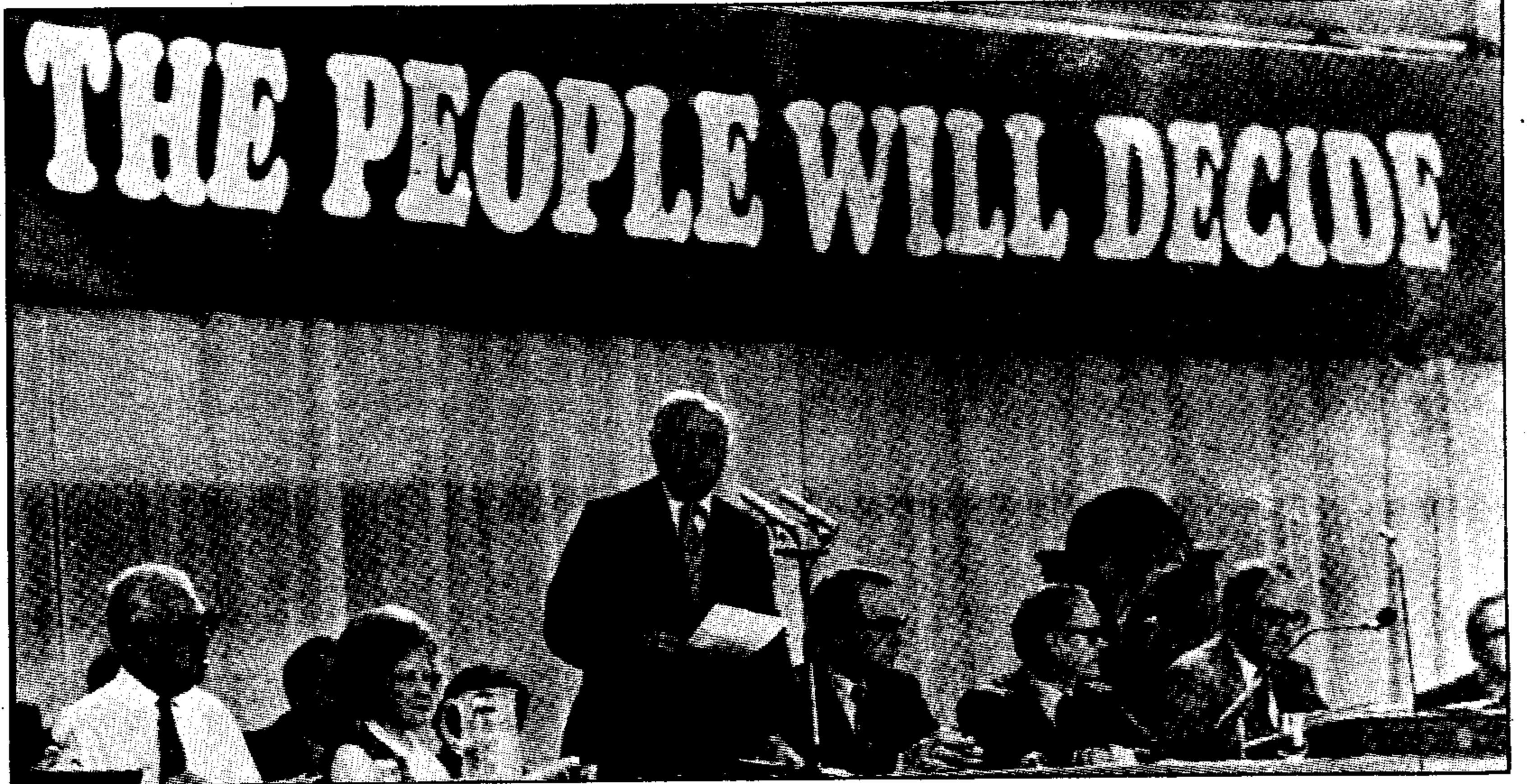
Mahatma Gandhi, through his leadership of the freedom struggle, succeeded in saving foreign and comprador Indian capital from the people's wrath. JP is trying to do the same. If there are differences between the tactics of the two, that is mainly due to the changed national and international situation. The people, therefore, face the same dilemma vis-a-vis JP's movement as they faced when Mahatma Gandhi was leading the freedom movement.

The communists had then followed the utopian line of trying to radicalise Gandhi's movement and had in the process completely abandoned their own initiative. At least then it could be pleaded that the world situation, and the Indian situation too, were not favourable for a revolution. Now even this argument for simple-mindedness does not exist. Today if one claims to be a revolutionary and supports what goes on in the name of JP's movement in Bihar, then one can do so only on the basis of complete falsification of the character and objectives of the movement.



REVOLUTIONARIES AND THE LABOUR LEFT

TWO WAYS TO GET IT WRONG



SOMETHING NEW is happening in British politics.

For 70 years the problem for revolutionary socialists in Britain has been the Labour Party: a party founded by the working class movement as its political instrument, a party organically linked to the trade unions, a party consistently enjoying the allegiance of the overwhelming majority of the working class, and yet a party pursuing capitalist, anti working class policies right from the start. The Labour Party has acted as a brilliantly effective mechanism for ensuring that rank and file aspirations for working class advance and for socialism are transformed into, at best, minor bureaucratic reformist tinkering in Parliament.

Now we have a uniquely favourable combination of circumstances for creating a real socialist — revolutionary socialist — movement in the British working class. Rank and file industrial militancy is at a high level, with many sections, like hospital workers and white collar employees, newly coming into struggle. A simmering social and economic crisis forces the attention of workers beyond sectional action, to questions of the general running of society. A Labour Government is in power, forced to choose clearly between the demands of capitalism and the demands of the working class. The revolutionary socialist left is numerically stronger than it has been for 50 years at least. If the revolutionary socialists can work out relevant tactics, particularly in relation to the Labour Party, then the possibility exists of major shifts in the political scene.

Panders

BOTH the International Socialist group and the International Marxist Group, in their response, have failed to formulate an adequate challenge to the Labour left.

The line of Socialist Worker, the paper of IS, is simple. On the one hand, it argues, we need a militant trade union fight-back, to which end we should build a rank and file movement; on the other hand, we need socialism, to which end we should join IS!

The only connection between these two policy planks is IS's appeal to our rosy imagination: we should "see every wages struggle as a part of the fight for the revolutionary rebuilding of society" (SW, 12-7-75). If only it were so! But the rigidly non political outlook of the IS-led National Rank and File Movement (even if it did represent the rank and file) does nothing to make it so, and IS itself panders to simple militant trade unionism.

Socialist Worker's editorial of 28th June puts forward as the answer: "a trade unionism rooted in the rank and file, whose aim is to fight against the employing class, not to worry about how to solve their problems". Very good: but the problem is that militant trade unionism is all they advocate, apart from their (often excellent) propaganda articles on the general need for socialism.

This approach leaves the whole field of national politics

here and now completely open to the Labour lefts. In Socialist Worker of 14th June the editorial recognises the political importance of the clashes inside the Labour Party: "Benn has engaged in a great deal more socialist sounding talk than he has ever translated into action ... It is this talk ... which angers big business ... They are after Benn ... because of what he could represent to many workers...". Yet Socialist Worker refuses to intervene in these politically important clashes, by taking up a debate with the Labour left, by directing demands at them, or even by giving the clashes substantial coverage in its columns.

The result is to leave IS members politically disarmed. To the worker who already is militant at rank and file trade union level they have nothing to offer except the general prospect of socialism. It will not be surprising if that militant opts instead for the Labour left, whom he may not consider perfect, but who at least have some political answers for the here and now.

The conclusion of the IS Central Committee statement (SW 12th July) underlines the emptiness of their policy:

Gigantic

"A united front inside the working class movement, bringing together Labour Party supporters, Communist Party supporters, and revolutionary socialists can not only defeat the right wing offensive. It can lay the basis, by unity in action, for the advance to socialism."

Red Weekly (the IMG's paper) of 10th July has almost the identical policy:

"But the most burning issue is to create united action against the Healey measures. If this is done, the burning resentment of millions against the effects of Wilson's attacks will be turned into a gigantic force which will revolutionise the political situation and begin to carve out a socialist solution."

What does all this mean? Does it mean anything more than "unity is strength" or some old adage like that? To argue for unity in action between different unions is certainly correct and will be very relevant in the likely event of the Labour government singling out some section of workers which it can 'bash' as an example. But if these words mean anything beyond that, they mean that a unity between different left political currents would create a situation which could, more or less organically, give rise to a revolutionary party. (Red Weekly, at least, makes it quite clear that unity between political groupings, not trade union unity, is what it is referring to).

What is the basis of this optimism? We aren't told. The major problems — will the Labour lefts lead any substantial class action we can unite with? on what policies? and what do we do if they don't lead action — are not even hinted at.

What Red Weekly and Socialist Worker would like to do is cast themselves in the classical 'united front' tactic — approaching the Labour left to

reach practical agreement on common class action against the right. But if they came straight out with that they would expose themselves to ridicule: they are simply not strong enough to force the Labour left to consider proposals from them for united action. So they produce instead vague, wishy washy talk of 'united action', whose only effect can be to persuade militants they should wait for the Labour left to do something, and then put their shoulders to the left reformist wheel; and that somehow, that left reformist wheel will roll towards socialism.

The IMG, with its customary enthusiastic going overboard, has made its main slogan "The Left must Unite for mass action against Wilson's Tory policies". (It sounds fine, but just think: who is it directed to? The Labour left, appealing

to them to join with the IMG? The IMG and its supporters, appealing to them to join with the Labour left? Rank and file workers in general, appealing to them to support some unspecified united left action?...)

They further call for the sacking of Wilson and the purging of the Labour right.

The IMG interlard their articles on the Labour left freely with routine denunciations of 'betrayals' and 'traitors' — but for all that, their focus on the Labour left is very dangerous politically. There are good objective reasons for focusing demands on the Labour government — it is the organ of the mass party based on the labour movement, and it is the organ responsible for the general running of society. Within that objective framework we can take account of distinctions

between 'left' and 'right'. But those distinctions are matters of shades and degrees; the boundaries between 'left' and 'right' are vague, shifting and to some extent arbitrary. To place the distinction between 'left' and 'right' at the centre of your strategy is to give it an altogether unreal objective significance.

Outcry

With the IMG, this relates to a definite theory which appears from time to time in Red Weekly: that the left in the Labour Party represents the working class element (though in a confused way) while the right represents the bourgeois elements which have taken over the party. This theory is wildly inaccurate (at the foundation of the Labour Party, it was the trade union delegates who insisted that the Party should not even have a verbal commitment to socialism) and in practice it merely gives the 'left' more credit than their due.

Likewise with the "Sack Wilson" slogan. Certainly revolutionaries could use a mass outcry for Wilson's removal — such as we saw during the 1966-70 government and may see again soon — to sharpen political consciousness. We could use it as an opportunity to explain our ideas on what government measures are needed, and to expose Benn, or whoever might replace Wilson. But it is quite a different matter if the IMG are the only people stomping around saying that Wilson's removal is the answer. All that can do is create illusions that a Benn government would be ever so much better.

Logical

The basic method the IMG is using is the politics of speculation. Instead of looking how to educate and mobilise those workers they can reach, they gaze at the 'tops' and speculate about what arrangement there would be best for the working class.

That was their approach in arguing for people to vote Labour: a Labour government, they said, would stimulate the struggle of the working class. Such an approach could only disarm workers in the face of Labour attempts, not to stimulate, but to demobilise the struggle of the working class, which are by no means as totally doomed to failure as the IMG argument would imply.

It is the approach which makes it logical for them to talk about "saving the Government" (RW 10th July). It is the approach which makes them harp on about "defending" Benn (which means what practically?), logically implying what leading IMG members have stated openly: that if Benn were sacked the IMG would demand his reinstatement. (The parliamentary road to socialism — by proxy!). More and more that IMG is returning to the "soggy left" policies of its predecessor 'The Week'. Perhaps they will rename Red Weekly, 'Red Week' — or, better, 'Pink Week'.

Contd. next page

.. AND HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

We have to seize upon every shift to the right by the Labour government, to strive to mobilise workers against the Government and for alternative working class policies.

The foremost points of a programme to meet the present attacks on the working class are: opposition to any pay curbs; the sliding scale of wages (automatic cost of living increases with a zero threshold), to be fought for both against individual employers and as a demand for Government measures; the shorter working week with no loss of pay; work or full pay; abolition of business secrecy; occupation of enterprises threatening large scale sackings or closures, workers' control of those enterprises with a view to forcing nationalisation without compensation; no cuts in health, education, or social services.

Illusions

Our purpose is to promote rank and file action around these policies, not to plead with the Government or to produce a purely passive, literary exposure of the Labour top leaders by demanding that they do X,Y,Z and then complaining that they don't. But we believe that rank and file action should concern itself not only with sectional improvements but with overall questions of government policy. Even where we are convinced that there is little practical possibility of the Labour government doing what we demand — for example, legislating a sliding scale of wages — agitation round a demand directed at the government can help to draw into struggle new groups of workers with illusions in the Labour leaders, to test those illusions in practice, and, by this and by focusing the demands of the working class around a clear programme, to raise political consciousness. Thus it can advance, not cut across, the rank and file struggle.

Against every new example of the Labour government bowing to the wishes of the City and the CBI, the general watchword is — "Labour, break with the bankers and the bosses". In that way, we raise at every stage the fact of the Labour government's consistent commitment to upholding capitalism, and the need for government measures in the interests of the working class, without implying that socialism can be achieved by a little more pressure on the Labour government and thus distorting the basic meaning of socialism as the self liberation of the working class.

Within that overall framework we can focus on the Labour 'lefts'. We call on them to break with the right wing leadership and to build organised opposition in the labour movement. In fundamental terms people like the Tribune MPs are no better than Wilson, Healey, or Jenkins. The leading demand in their economic programme is the reactionary proposal for import controls, and they have supported the social contract. Nevertheless, many of them have spoken against any statutory pay curbs, and some will take their words into limited action. The Labour left simply could not play their role in maintaining the overall Labour Party establishment if they did exactly the same as the Labour right, if they did not from time to time respond to working class pressure.

They will strive as hard as they can to keep any grass roots left wing groups tightly controlled, as a roadblock, rather than a bridge, to an active rank and file left wing movement in the Labour Party. But we should not concede them that victory in advance; in place of narrow Tribune groups, we can advocate an open left wing movement in the Labour Party in which there is free internal debate and which is not frightened of united action with movements outside the Labour Party.

IS, IMG and the LABOUR LEFT

FROM PAGE FOUR

Necessarily the IMG's approach pushes to one side an independent working class political programme. In the editorial of Red Weekly (10th July) they have a list of demands, curiously suspended in the middle of the article, as if they know that all good Trotskyists should have a programme, but aren't quite sure what to do with it. Apart from omitting — presumably through oversight — the demand for a sliding scale of wages, this list of demands contains a number of points which are merely attempts to find a 'left' version of 'Tribune' policies.

"Abolition of capitalist defence expenditure", it says, trying to out-Tribune Tribune and ending up with a revamped version of the Kautskian slogan of 'disarmament'. (If you think about it, the IMG's slogan is logically equivalent to 'abolition of the capitalist state' — a totally utopian slogan to direct at a capitalist government).

Soak up

"A massive programme of public works to soak up inflation" — again trying to outdo Tribune and again getting it wrong: a "massive programme of public works" under capitalism would actually increase inflation, and anyway what interest have socialists in choosing between the hacksaw of inflation and the razor of deflation?

"Development of an economic plan to expand production". As with the other demands, it's not quite clear who is supposed to carry out the demand — but the TUC did develop such a plan a year ago and then stood by while even this very modest set of suggestions linked to the Industry Bill was trampled underfoot. Not to mention the fact that the chief reason for putting forward that plan was to evade any fight against existing attacks on the working class by promising plenty for all in a booming capitalism.

Drift

Within the general rightist drift of the IMG, we occasionally find the ultra leftism of 1972 (when the very word "Tory" was considered by the IMG to be somehow vulgar and social democratic). A leaflet put out by the IMG on Healey's 10% plan calls for kicking out all Labour MPs who vote for the Healey plan (which is not a bad idea — but, like the "sack Wilson" line, it is bizarre to have it come from people outside the Labour Party!) Then it adds: "Where this is not done, the local working class should run an independent workers' candidate against the Labour traitor". Boil it down, and the IMG are attempting to terrify Labour MPs with the threat of IMG candidates standing against them at the next election!

And tagged on in the small print we find the inevitable: "A serious attempt to roll back the [Healey] measures must involve the call for a general strike".

Indeed, one could say that the whole of the IMG's policy was determined by an attempt to come as near as possible to repeating their "general strike to kick out the Tories" line without having a Tory government — as the IS's line is an attempt to return to the halcyon days of simple, straightforward, anti Tory industrial struggle.

MARTIN THOMAS

It's not so long ago that people used to boast about the National Health Service being the 'envy of the world'. How often do you hear that nowadays? Not very often. In fact hardly a day goes by without articles appearing in the press such as the one in the Daily Mirror recently bewailing the failings of the NHS.

For once, the Mirror was right. There is a crisis in the NHS. Starved of funds by successive governments, milked by the drug firms, leached on by the parasite of private practice, the NHS, like a chronically sick man, is slowly stumbling towards complete collapse.

There are now less beds than there were in 1948; 75% of beds are in pre-1918 hospitals; there are over half a million people on waiting lists. These are the stark facts behind the crisis in the NHS which the Mirror talks about. And as if things weren't bad enough already, Labour is planning to unleash further attacks on the Health Service.

Not content with the £111 million slashed off the NHS budget by the Tories in 1973, Labour has threatened further cuts in public expenditure if their pay curb proposals are breached in any way. So much for all the promises made under the Social Contract — that if pay claims were moderated then more money would be made available for the social services.

For the NHS, Labour's latest policies can only mean one thing — a further deterioration in standards of health care. The cuts will mean: more wards having to be closed down, even longer waiting

N.H.S. workers organise fight against cuts

BY JACK SUTTON
(UMH NUPE)



lists, more cancellations of new building projects, further exploitation of already over-worked hospital workers. When Dr. David Owen (Under Secretary at the DHSS) stated recently that "the idea of a comprehensive 24-hour hospital service is increasingly becoming an unrealistic luxury", he wasn't joking. One of the penny pinching economies Owen has planned is the 'out-patient operation', where a lot of the diagnostic tests are carried out before admission — and no doubt the post-op patient gets slung out on his ear just about as soon as he comes round.

In Labour's scale of priorities, a sick capitalist system is a more worthy cause

than sick people. The Government's version of the 'Hypocratic Oath' has capitalism as the privileged patient whose life must at all costs be saved.

Socialists and trade unionists must organise to reject the idea that working people should pay the price of the bosses' crisis. Good health care can't be had on the cheap. It demands that resources be allocated to suit the needs of patients and hospital workers, not those of big business.

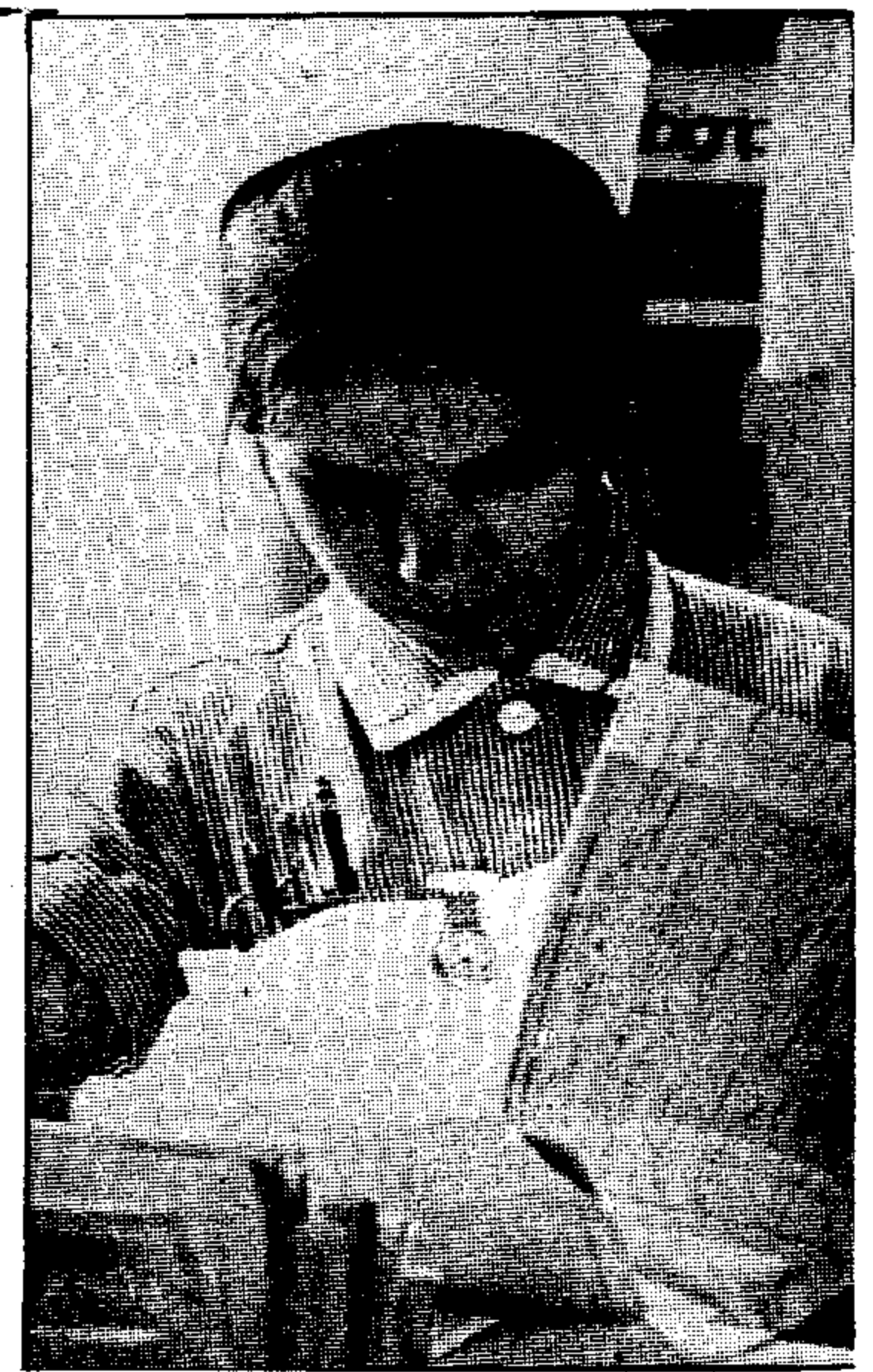
The cuts must be opposed all along the line.

picket

In the Manchester area, action against the cuts is already under way. In the Manchester Royal Infirmary, where plans to build a new hospital have been indefinitely postponed by the North West Regional Health Authority because of 'financial restrictions', NUPE has invited all other trade unions who have membership in the hospital to a meeting to discuss action against the RHA decision. Supporters of the paper Manchester Hospital Worker, the local rank and file Health Service workers' paper, have organised a picket of the Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital on Monday July 28th at 6pm, to protest at the cuts — because of staff shortage, up to half the wards in this children's hospital will be closed down over the summer holiday period.

Initiatives such as this by hospital workers must be supported by all trade unionists. Hospital workers have shown by their actions over the past couple of years that they aren't prepared to sit back and see the NHS go down the drain. But the defence of the NHS mustn't be seen as a job just for health workers.

The decision therefore of the Medical Committee against Private Practice to hold a conference on the defence of the NHS open to all trade unionists is of particular importance. The conference, which is to be held in London on October 11th, aims to establish the maximum unity in the trade union movement



More work for less staff — longer hours, worse care

around demands adopted at this year's National Conference of the ASTMS.

These demands were for an immediate injection into the NHS of £1000 million; a sliding scale of expenditure for the NHS to combat the effects of inflation; and the abolition of private practice both inside and outside the NHS. They also include the call for the nationalisation of the drug and other NHS supply industries: a timely move when some products like Librium pills have been known to bring in profits of 5,000% at the NHS's expense!

The conference organisers say they want to discuss how these demands can be made the official policy of as many trade unions as possible, and furthermore, how to fight to get them implemented.

The conference has already attracted support from a number of trade union bodies. More is needed. As an article in the latest edition of the Manchester Hospital Worker states, "if the NHS is to be restored to its rightful place to serve the needs of the community, it is clear that it won't be done by Denis Healey, David Owen or Barbara Castle, or their Tory counterparts. It can only be saved by the combined efforts of all NHS workers and other workers throughout the country."

So get your union branch to support the conference, and send delegates. For more details, contact the Medical Ctee against Private Practice, Dr.P.Stern, 55 Bridge Lane, London NW11.

Amnesty: cautious in challenge to N.I. police state

THE MAZE prison, Northern Ireland's largest concentration camp, does not even come up to the United Nations' standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, according to a recently published report on civil rights, or rather the lack of them, issued by Amnesty International.

The Amnesty report has come out at a time when the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) (Amendment) Bill is going through its Committee stage in Parliament. The Bill is an attempt to 'liberalise' the Northern Ireland police state apparatus in the most limited and mealy mouthed way possible, in an attempt to appease public opinion abroad — whilst at the same time maintaining the army's 'right' to do what it likes in the Six Counties.

The recommendations made in the Bill and those made by the Amnesty report stand in striking contrast to one another. Amnesty proposes the abolition of internment without trial, while the Bill before parliament reduces from six to three months the legal span for confirming releases or continuing detention of persons arrested, but maintains the power of the authorities to detain people indefinitely without trial.

Amnesty wants to make confessions or statements made unacceptable as evidence unless they are made in the presence of a lawyer chosen by the person arrested. The Bill allows for such evidence unless there is a cast iron case to be made that the accused was subject to "inhuman or degrading treatment". (In more honest language — torture). Neither does the Bill give the arrested person the right to choose a lawyer.

The government's bill comes nowhere near to providing basic human rights for Northern Ireland, and the Amnesty proposals have shown that quite clearly. However, the Amnesty report does not go far enough itself. "It is vital", concludes Amnesty, "to

maintain a balance between emergency legislation and the minimum protection of human rights in Northern Ireland". The whole point is that the one rules out the other. The oppression of a foreign army over the Irish people has always meant the elimination of democratic rights. Civil liberty can only come to Ireland when its people are free to determine their own future, and that means getting the troops out.

LETTER

ABORTION - Where does W. F. stand?

Dear Comrades—I would like to comment on the letter on abortion by Maureen Tolman in Workers Fight No.102, and the reply from Rachel Lever. The reply not only misses the point of what Ms. Tolman is obviously getting at, as well as being factually incorrect, but (if it represents the editorial policy of WF) marks a very grave step backwards from the positions taken to date by your paper.

1.Presumably out of ignorance, the reply states that the National Abortion Campaign's policy is that "abortion should be an automatic right up to 12 weeks, and thereafter only refused if it's a danger to the woman's health." In fact, the policy on which NAC was set up, which remains its only agreed policy, is that of a fight against restrictive legislation on the basis of a woman's right to choose. The Abortion Law Reform Association, which is on the right wing of the Campaign, interprets a woman's right to choose in the way comrade Lever does — a right cut off at 12 weeks and handed over to the medical profession. Many of us, however, (including comrades from your group) argue that the condition for exercising this right is free abortion on demand — and therefore that doctors should, at all times, have only an advisory role in the decision.

We face a situation where, despite the increasing strength with which the call for free abortion on demand is being taken up within the labour movement, the Abortion Law

Reform Association is considering putting a Bill to Parliament which will go further than the 1967 Act now in force, but which will not embody an end to all restrictions. Support for such a Bill would represent a serious step backwards for the campaign — a step which Workers Fight appears to be taking.

2.Comrade Lever completely misunderstands the points made about the limitations of the slogan 'A Woman's Right to Choose', and the question of 'real' choice, and ends up shadow boxing at an imaginary anti-women's liberationist opponent. In fact, comrade Tolman appears to have a more revolutionary understanding of what women's liberation is all about. 'Real' choice in determining our own

fertility and sexuality rests not only on the right not to bear children, but also on the right to bear children if we wish, in a society which takes social responsibility for their welfare and ours, and in which women are not materially and ideologically forced into the oppressive relations of the bourgeois family.

In my view, this means not that we should throw out the slogan 'A Woman's Right to Choose' but that, on the contrary, we should clarify its meaning by backing it up with unequivocal demands around these issues, particularly free abortion and contraception on demand.

Where does Workers Fight stand on these questions? — fraternally, Fiona Fredenburgh, London.

REPLY

RACHEL LEVER replies: 1.Thanks for the clarification. Of course WF does support the slogan 'A Woman's Right to Choose'. The confusion arose for obvious reasons: ALRA, also having that slogan (in fact having set up a campaign (I think just before NAC) called the Woman's Right to Choose Campaign), it appeared that their formulation about the mother's safety after 12 weeks was merely an advisory, and not a legally prohibitive, definition. I would not, and WF does not, support the latter definition. It would seem that adopting such a definition alongside the slogan 'A Woman's Right to Choose' a somewhat tricky practice on ALRA's part.

2.I entirely agree that choices are limited. What I said in reply was that abortion may not be the ideal choice (meaning, that the right to abortion doesn't give us all the choices we need) but that nevertheless it is a real choice. Where WF stands on the wider social questions is not in doubt: we are for liberating women (and men and children) from the fetters of the bourgeois family; we do support the Working Women's Charter, and amendments to make it more comprehensive. However, I felt in the case of Ms.Tolman's letter that she was indeed using the need for wider choices in a way that decried the present demand for free abortion.

SOCIALIST TEACHERS ADOPT WRONG TACTICS

ABOUT 150 teachers attended the first Socialist Teachers Conference held in London on Saturday 12th July. The underlying currents were epitomised by the presence on the door of International Socialist supporters of the Rank and File teachers' group warning against the dangers of a split among left wing teachers if the conference decided to work in competition with Rank and File.

As it was, the IS comrades refused to attend the conference and it was left to Workers Fight supporters to argue for conference to take its policies into Rank and File and fight around them in an organised way to break the bureaucratic stranglehold of IS.

Refusal

In the event, this approach was defeated, and although many of the policies adopted by the conference were sound enough, the refusal to place emphasis on work inside an ongoing rank and file movement is a definite step backwards.

At the end of the conference, Bernie Regan of the Inter-

national Marxist Group, which was the main driving force behind the conference, argued that the problem facing conference was not an organisational one (i.e. working in or out of Rank and File) but rather what politics to adopt and how to fight for them. But how you fight is not separate from where you fight, so the argument is vacuous.

Thrown out

What were the policies eventually decided by conference? The resolution on salaries was a definite improvement on the one currently being canvassed by the Rank and File group, in that it demanded automatic cost of living increases.

The motion on union democracy made some useful additions to current Rank and File policy, including the demand (put by WF supporters) that full time officials of the NUT should earn no more than the average teachers' wage. Oddly enough, another WF amendment, proposing proportional representation of women on leading bodies of the union, was thrown out, in spite of a very healthy discussion on

women only a few minutes before. Conference pledged active support to the Working Womens Charter Campaign and to the National Abortion Campaign, including work to build the Autumn conference on teachers and the Working Womens Charter, which is being sponsored by the Working Womens Charter Campaign. A WF amendment calling on Conference to fight for the establishment of a national WWC caucus inside the NUT was passed.

Affiliation

Again on union democracy, another WF amendment was defeated, calling for a reorganisation of NUT branches so that each one is based on a secondary school plus linked feeder primaries, instead of on a whole borough basis as at present. The purpose was to help make the union a militant 'shop floor' organisation, thus promoting

the rank and file involvement which is the heart of any union democracy.

The debate on the Labour Party was confused. A WF motion advocated a political fight against the Labour Party leadership in terms of directing specific demands at them, with the general watchword "Labour, break with the bosses and the bankers", while always recognising the primacy of rank and file direct action. It urged socialist teachers to join those fighting inside the Labour Party and LPYS on that basis, and supported NUT affiliation to the Labour Party as an aid to that struggle.

Muddy

The IMG advocated a campaign (no less) for NUT affiliation to the Labour Party; this would apparently be "a step towards the closer integration of teachers with the whole trade union and labour movement", despite the fact

that the IMG generally reject work inside the Labour Party and LPYS for themselves! Dave Finch also advocated a campaign for affiliation on a similar basis, from a standpoint close to the Workers' Revolutionary Party, with their "Labour to Power on a Socialist Programme" position. All these three proposals were accepted - reflecting a muddy ending to a complex debate which had not been given enough time.

Run away

The tactical approach finally adopted by conference was that proposed by the IMG, i.e. an emphasis on united front ad hoc action committees (embracing Labour Party left, Communist Party etc.) While united front ad hoc committees are certainly often useful, to elevate this tactic into a principle has some problems: it builds no ongoing movement, and it can lead to opportunist shopping around for minimal platforms in order to secure partners for united fronts. The crisis of Rank and File is indeed acute, but at this point in time it is the best there is, and the IS bureaucratic stranglehold remains a road block to smash through, not to run away from as the IMG would have us do.

A further conference is planned for the autumn.
IAN HOLLINGWORTH

7 months is a long time in the NUB

The Blastfurnacemen's Union has shown up the recent farcical "24%" pay agreement (13% real money) plus of course the secret inflation proofing agreement. The agreement, which the craftsmen believe to be a seven month agreement to allow manual workers' negotiations to fall in line with staff negotiations on the 1st January as opposed to 1st June, is in fact a 19 month agreement!

They will not be allowed to negotiate again until January

1st 1977, apart from an interim agreement in January 1976 to allow for the cost of living increase difference between the staff agreement date and the manual workers' agreement, separated by seven months.

The craftsmen aren't the only ones saddled with this 19 month agreement as the ISTC are also in on it.

The Blastfurnacemen's Conference voted to oppose the agreement and are forcing their leadership to take a militant stance.
Tony Duffy

THE QUIET AXE AT BSC HARTLEPOOL

THE BRITISH STEEL Corporation at Hartlepool Works, Cleveland, is to reduce its coke output by about 50%. This will affect about 200 operatives, all members of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, who will be found alternative employment, according to a BSC spokesman.

What will actually happen is that these men will have to take massive cut in wages because of their dependence on overtime to make their money, and being taken off shift work and put onto a 40 hour week. These workers will then leave the job to look for better paid work, thereby causing undermanning. This

will give BSC the chance to close down the Hartlepool works (as they originally planned) "because of the recession".

The ISTC has taken no lead in fighting unemployment or improving their members' wages to stop their dependence on overtime. The workers at Hartlepool should beware undermanning, and the way to combat it is to demand work or full pay, an end to overtime with no reduction in wages, and to build links with other areas in BSC. Above all do not depend on your leadership to help you out, you are the only ones who can do that.
Lol Duffy

Labour and Ireland meeting defies ban

OVER 40 PEOPLE attended a meeting on "The British Labour Movement and Ireland", called by Carlton LPYS on Tuesday July 17th and open to all members of the labour movement in the Nottingham area.

The speakers were Arthur Palmer (Carlton CLP), Gerry Birch (North Nottingham LPYS) and Tom Cashman (student organiser of the Troops Out Movement). They were followed by a number of contributions from the floor stressing the need to build support for the Troops Out Movement within the trade unions and the LPYS.

John Richardson of Carlton LPYS urged all those at the meeting to affiliate to TOM and get their organisations affiliated. The need for TOM to take serious account of the threat of civil war in Ireland and to prepare for organising relief committees to support the Catholic nationalist popul-

ation in such an event was also stressed.

Ivan Wels of Long Eaton Labour Party drew attention to the fact that the meeting could be held in breach of the Labour Party NEC's recent ruling banning campaign activity on the Irish question in the LPYS. In practice it was possible for local LPYSs simply to ignore the ban, but the undemocratic nature of the ruling and the danger it presents should not on that account be ignored. The meeting decided to try to organise a meeting of local LPYSs to discuss the ban and ways of fighting it.
Keith Bennett

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Liverpool MP calls for big meeting against £6 limit

ON FRIDAY night 11th July there was an open meeting of the Garston Constituency Labour Party (Liverpool), called on the suggestion of the MP, Eddie Loyden, to discuss "the recent record of the Labour Government". All CLP members could attend the meeting and put resolutions, but voting was confined to GMC delegates.

To give added point to the meeting, it happened on the same day as the Government

announced its statutory wages policy.

Eddie Loyden led off. He talked about the need to have a frank and open discussion, and then outlined his own view. The Government, under the pressure of big business, was adopting orthodox capitalist policies, and had renounced its own minimum reform programme, the election manifesto. This course was not only working

government in the future, but could also lead to the break-up of the Labour Party "as we know it".

The movement, he said, was in a 1966 position, and possibly heading for a 1931. The defence of the Manifesto had to be our first concern.

However, he said, the situation had to be assessed carefully, particularly in view of the fact that the majority of the TUC had supported the government.

He finished off by proposing a city wide Labour Party meeting to find out the pulse of the movement and to map out ways to pressure the Labour Government "back on course".

There was time for short questions at the end. One Workers Fight supporter asked Eddie Loyden whether he thought there was a need to organise a militant left-wing movement at grass roots level in the Labour Party; whether there was not a need

to go beyond the policies of the Manifesto to deal with the present crisis; and whether he would support workers striking against the £6 norm. Loyden agreed that the question of the organisation of the left was "crucial", but felt we should stick to unity on the basis of the Manifesto - "we've united the movement round a minimum programme". On strikes against the £6 norm, he said we should not be "adventurist" and should not "forget that many people support the Government".

At the end, the meeting overwhelmingly passed a resolution from the Garston LPYS delegate, rejecting the Government's wage curbs, urging it to fight for "socialist policies", and echoing Eddie Loyden's call for a city-wide Labour Party meeting. This resolution has now gone forward to the borough Labour Party.
John Bloxam

From front page

Portugal

The demand to "dissolve the Constituent Assembly" is even more problematic. True, it was a shadowy and insubstantial assembly which accepted gross limitations on its own powers, and tutelage to the AFM for a whole period ahead - despite the authority of an electorate 92% of which voted; it thus showed and continues to show the feebleness of the forces driving for even bourgeois democracy in Portugal.

But the establishment of the Assembly, as a step towards formal democracy based on freely organised parties, was a progressive step against the background of Portugal's 50-year police state. Its survival even in its presently emasculated form is also preferable to a modified - perhaps "Nasserite" or "Ba'athist" - military dictatorship being imposed on the country.

However, measured against the development of workers' councils, the Constituent

Assembly is to be seen in a different light again. It is absolutely against the interests of the working class for the situation to be stabilised under the slogan of preserving or defending the Assembly, when the present ferment in the working class could lead to genuine workers' councils.

Though a Constituent Assembly and workers' councils can grow and develop in parallel, ultimately there will be a choice to be made between workers' power based on councils, and bourgeois democracy centred on the Assembly (or formulated by it). But making that choice light mindedly now and campaigning for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly can easily be used to build up anti-party feeling, which far from aiding the political development of workers' councils, would simply strengthen the existing state, and the line of development of the AFM.

So slogans cannot in such a situation be decided once-for-all. In the event of workers' councils being firmly established, and workers' militias set up and armed, the call for the dissolution of an increasingly irrelevant Constituent Assembly could safely be made.

GLATC Exec. confirm expulsion

Last week we reported on the Greater London Association of Trades Councils' rigging of a fact finding delegation to Northern Ireland, and their attempts to silence three dissident members of the delegation who tried to expose the rigging.

On Saturday July 12th, the full Association met and considered the issue. The Executive Committee of the GLATC, at a special meeting - and without hearing any of the three delegates involved - had decided to recommend that the GLATC support the chairman's action in expelling the three from the delegation; and that they suspend the three from representing GLATC on outside bodies or any sub committees until a

further EC meeting at which they would summon the three.

Only one of the three - Mike Knowles of Hackney Trades Council - was allowed to be present at the GLATC meeting, and the EC's recommendation was approved by 26 votes to 10. This decision was not unexpected, but it is nonetheless a setback. It is vital that London trades councils should discuss the issue properly, with all the facts and points of view presented. On Hackney Trades Council, the EC has decided to invite the chairman of the GLATC and Jack Dromey, secretary of the Northern Ireland sub committee, to come to the Trades Council to present their case.

Over 300 tenants from the Vauxhall area of Liverpool attended a meeting on Wednesday July 16th to discuss action against the rent increases coming in August. The rent increases affect all Liverpool corporation tenants and are up to £2 for many, the biggest single rent increase they have ever had.

The meeting overwhelmingly decided to withhold the increases; to set up their own action committee to coordinate the fight and contact other areas, with a view to developing united action on the issue; and to call a city wide demonstration for Wednesday July 23rd to march on the Town Hall. (Assemble Limekiln Lane, 1.30pm).

The meeting was attended by representatives from other areas including West Everton, Speke, and the Southern Neighbourhood Council. There were also representatives from Portland Gardens and Gerrard Gardens, both of which have already agreed to withhold the increase.
J.B.

Knowsley plumbers went back to work on Tuesday morning, having won their 4½ week strike against management's attempt to transfer two of their members without consultation. (See recent issues of WF). The transfers have been withdrawn.
J.B.

"Portugal: the situation now": with speakers from the Portuguese textile union and from Plessey, - Lisbon. 7.30pm, Monday 21 July, at the Wheatsheaf, High St, Manchester 4. Organised by the Trade Union Action Committee, c/o Union Office, St Mary's Hospital, and sponsored by the PWCC and by Stretford TASS

Islington council - backed up by the GLC - intends to sue gas and electricity boards for trespass if they connect up squatters' houses - making use of a recent ruling that there is no longer a legal obligation to provide these services. Squatters and their supporters will be mounting a protest picket at the Islington council meeting on Tuesday 29th July. (Assemble outside the Town Hall, 6pm).
P.B.

LIVERPOOL Workers Fight Socialist Forum: "Why Workers Fight" 8pm, Wednesday July 30th, at Stanley House, Upper Parliament St, Liverpool 8.

MANCHESTER Workers Fight meeting: "No Pay Curbs". Speakers: Martin Thomas (WF EB) and Jack Sutton (NUPE Branch secretary). 8pm, Thursday 24th July, at the Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St, Manchester.