

# Workers' fight

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## BENN'S INDUSTRY BILL

by JACK PRICE

WHEN Ralph Bateman, the president of the Confederation of British Industry, called Anthony Wedgwood Benn's new Industry Bill a piece of "Big brother style legislation", he was, of course, simply reaching for the nearest anti-communist clichés. The only thing that is "Big brother style" about this particular piece of legislation is that it looks after the likes of Ralph Bateman the way a big brother looks after his less wise kid brother.

Summarising the significance of the legislation on behalf of the more enlightened elements of the capitalist class, the "Observer" wisely reflected: "Despite the increase in State intervention and the horrors of disclosure, companies may be persuaded that he has provided a framework in which reformed capitalism can survive; there is also the tantalising prospect of shop-floor cooperation not known in modern times".

"It would be ironic, but by no means impossible", the paper continues, "that in switching Labour policy from outright nationalisation to something approaching a corporate industrial state, Mr Benn will be assailed more by the critics from the trade union left than by the country's beleaguered businessmen."

### "Power-sharing"

And why is this? Labour's manifesto promised broad extensions of "public ownership" (as nationalisation is misleadingly called; as if ordinary working people — the "public" — owned or controlled British Steel or the NCB). Benn has retreated from that promise, except in the case of shipbuilding, aircraft, and the ports. Instead, he has opted for the present course, which, instead of nationalisation outright, empowers the National Enterprise Board to take up to 30% of the holdings in any company.

In this way he hopes to create what he calls a "genuine tripartite exercise of power-sharing".

The manifesto promises would not mean socialism. They would, however, mean some considerable reforms, and some considerable bruising of the interests of numerous individual capitalists. In addition, they would raise the danger — for capitalism — of workers mobilised on the basis of so-called "public ownership" taking matters into their own

hands and going forward to workers' control of industry.

Thus Benn has opted for "power-sharing". But this "power-sharing" means not so much having a finger in every pie as having your hands trapped for good. Capitalists retain the power to exploit, and workers.. the power to be consulted on some details of how we are exploited.

This notion of "participation" rests on the assumption that all of us, workers and bosses, wage-slaves and capitalists, are working in the same interest, for the same aims. But every day shows us the opposite. Every day shows us the continuous struggle between profits and wages, between attempts to curb workers' organisation and defence of the right to organise, strike, and picket. Every day shows us the battle between bosses' attempts to assert their authority and workers' attempts to get some control over working conditions.

In reality, Benn's proposals point to a complete loss of the independence of trade unions from the employers and their state. And that loss of indepen-

ence must be opposed, as much under a Labour as under a Tory government: because Labour, as much as the Tories, runs capitalism and defends its interests rather than those of the working class.

Benn is part of such a Government, and this Bill shows clearly that he isn't out to kill or even wound the capitalist system, but to shore it up.

Unfortunately, the traditional misconceptions of the trade union and Labour left only serve to aid people like Benn. Their customary failure to see the Labour Government as essentially a capitalist one, and state intervention under its control as a positive benefit to big business, leaves them somewhat open to the thinly disguised conmanship of "participation".

The distress of the industrialists at having to open up their books is also misplaced. Benn has already said that he would protect their confidentiality. That means that the information gained will simply be used to streamline the operation of

state subsidy to private industry. The fact that this clashes with the interests and instincts of some elements of big business should not blind us to the fact that it poses no real threat to them.

Benn's plan is quite decisively a right wing conception. His leftist mask should not deceive us. That it is taken for real is an indication of how little a politician needs to do to receive the adulation of certain left MPs and trade union leaders.

This comes from the confusion and shallowness of left concepts the moment they are removed from their real driving force — class struggle.

Indeed, if state intervention is to be other than another weapon in the bosses' hands, workers' must take these issues into their own hands, bringing the class struggle into these tidy schemes.

We must demand complete nationalisation, with no compensation for the parasites that have been living off our backs.

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# IT'S NO THREAT TO THE BOSSES



DUBLIN PROTESTS LAST WEEK

## PORTLAOISE HUNGER STRIKERS CLOSE TO DEATH

FIVE more hunger strikers were this week moved to hospital from Ireland's Portlaoise Jail. They are now in the sixth week of hunger strike struggle for the demand to be treated as political prisoners. And yet, according to one released Provisional prisoner, Joe Cahill, as long ago as 3rd October 1973, a group of prisoners ended a hunger strike on the promise of political status. "The terms of the agreement were read to the assembled prisoners on October 3rd by the then governor, Mr. Frawley."

The Dublin government, a coalition of Labour with right wing Tories, seems determined to allow the hunger strikers to die rather than honour this 16-month old pledge. It is, says Justice Minister Mr. Patrick Cooney, 'an issue over who is running the country'. But, say the prisoners, they are not asking to run the country: they are merely fighting to better their own conditions. The hunger strike is their only weapon.

### REGIME

Even in the North, under British and Orange rule, republican prisoners are kept together as political prisoners. And in the South, as the Irish Republican Publicity Bureau claims, "such facilities already exist in relation to a number of non-Provisional prisoners."

Behind the Government's intransigence is the fact that it has been conducting an all-out offensive to break the Provisional prisoners at Portlaoise. This offensive is described by the Prisoners' Welfare Action Group - "Since December 29th" they say "the Government have step by step enforced a Nazi regime in Portlaoise jail.

"The first step was the action of the gardai, on the instructions of the highest authority, who wrecked the jail and destroyed prisoners' personal belongings, including clothes. The second step was the cessation of visits for four weeks. The third step was the harassment of visitors.

"The fourth step was the loss of remission of sentence. The fifth step is the authorities' refusal to inform relatives about the condition of the men on hunger strike.

"The sixth step is the Government's decision to allow men to die because they want two things; to associate with Republican political prisoners only; and to receive food parcels...

"The men are still sleeping on the floor; the Government refuse to replace the tables and chairs wrecked by the gardai, thus causing the men to eat their meals on the floor."

Clothes brought in for the prisoners had not been given to the men two weeks later.

The threats of reprisals by the Provisional IRA, and their attempt to link the issue with a possible ceasefire, are merely attempts to do what they can for men who are dying in the brutal grasp of a Government that is now debating what line to take when the hunger strikers start to die.

The real struggle is between that Government (backed up always in its repression and egged on by Britain) and the fifteen men facing death or irreversible bodily damage to vital organs and the nervous system.

The labour movement in this country must back them up. Send protests and resolutions supporting the prisoners' demands to the Irish Embassy, 17 Grosvenor Place, London S.W.1

FEW workers will shed tears of sorrow because Ted Heath has been kicked out as leader of the Tory party. We should however note the importance of the turmoil at the top of the Tory party.

Thatcher stands considerably to the right of Heath. The issue between Heath and Thatcher is one that could involve a marked shift in the Tory party.

Hitherto it has presented itself as a 'one nation' party — and with some truth in terms of being able to con millions of workers to vote for it.

In fact, both major British parties have attempted to appear as "the party of all the

## THE UGLIER FACE OF TORYISM

by JOHN O'MAHONY

nation", but the trade union-based Labour Party, less successfully.

The politics of confrontation between Government and Unions which spanned the whole three and a half years of Tory rule after 1970 only partly upset the picture. Now, victory for the Thatcher - Joseph brand of Toryism would taint the party even further with the stigma of being a "middle class" party.

The Heath government did

bring a sharp polarisation in British politics and society. Victory for milk-snatcher Thatcher would continue this process. For this reason the stop-Thatcher forces are rallying to William Whitelaw.

The crisis for the Tories comes certainly from two lost elections; but it is much more fundamental. They took on the working class head on — and were beaten to their knees and then kicked out of office.

The strength of the bed rock

Tory gut politics expressed by Thatcher and Joseph comes from that experience.

It comes also from watching the Labour leaders successfully — for now — defusing the situation with the working class. If the Thatcher forces win this can only help Labour project itself as the broad based party. Some Labour leaders must be dreaming of a long period ahead with Labour as the 'natural' party of 'broad

based' government, like the Democratic Party of the USA.

They leave the class struggle out of the picture — they forget the contradiction between Labour in power with soaring inflation and rising unemployment, trying to run capitalism, and Labour the party based on the trade unions.

From the point of view of socialists, who must fight to help sharpen those contradictions, to the point of breaking the working class from the politics of Labourism, the very best place for Labour to be just now is where it is — in power.

nature of the Labour leaderships in the battle over In Place of Strife in 1969 than had been convinced by socialist propaganda in decades, anything that keeps Labour in power — other than dampening or abandoning working class militancy — is therefore to be welcomed.

Heath the would-be bruiser who lost every one of his fights with the working class, is one thing. Milk snatcher Thatcher is a nastier, meaner, uglier, and therefore even more truthful and unacceptable face of Toryism. It is in our interests that the real soul of Toryism should show itself on its

THE GAY TEACHERS GROUP

# GOING TO THE HEART OF ANTI-GAY BIGOTRY

## WHAT special problems do gay teachers face?

Firstly, gay teachers do not enjoy the same job security as other teachers. The Department of Education and Science keeps a list called List 99, of teachers convicted of 'sexual offences'. As the legal age of consent for gays is still 21, as opposed to 16 for heterosexuals, gay teachers can be convicted for 'sexual offences' which would be perfectly legal between heterosexuals. Also, many gay teachers fear that their promotion prospects would suffer if it was known that they were gay.

This fear leads many gay teachers to live double lives, where they conceal their homosexuality at school. So when they hear anti-queer jokes, either in the staffroom or in the classroom, they feel unable to answer back. Many extend their pretence of being heterosexual into their social life, for fear of gossip getting back to school.

## HOW is the GTG aiming to tackle these problems? What are its aims?

We want teachers to feel free to be open about their sexuality in school. To be able to respond to taunts of 'pouf' or 'queer' by saying 'Yes, I am gay, what's wrong with that?' rather than feeling forced to hide by avoiding the issue. The effect on the kids must also be considered. Nowhere are they likely to have seen homosexuals as anything other than the image portrayed by the media and common prejudices. Never as real people.

Clearly the first step on the road to that goal would be to force our employers, the Local Education Authorities, to stop intimidating and sacking teachers for being gay. We are working towards a motion for the NUT and ATTI conferences to get full union support for any teacher so victimised.

We are also trying to get the question of homosexuality included in school sex education

We reported in WORKERS FIGHT last week on the case of JOHN WARBURTON, the London teacher who is being stopped from teaching after he talked frankly to his classes about homosexuality.

Although he has been offered a job in a West London school, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) will not permit him to be employed unless he gives an undertaking never to discuss homosexuality with a class "except in the course of a completely structured programme of sex education".

Though no teacher is supposed to have to give any undertaking on any subject outside his normal contract, Mr. Warburton generously offered not to initiate such discussion. "However", he wrote to the ILEA "I hope you will appreciate my position if events similar to the ones I was faced with in classes at St. Marylebone" (where kids jeered and mocked him after he'd been seen on a gay rights demonstration) "were to occur in any future teaching situation. I understand that homosexuality is a very emotive subject, but it is because of this that if I am faced with similar class hostility in the future, I must have the freedom to deal with the situation there and then without embarrassment. ... refusing to discuss the subject altogether ... would jeopardise my ability to maintain class control to an extent few teachers would tolerate"

To this honest and clearly reasoned statement, the ILEA gave no reply, other than to say they had 'understood him perfectly well the first time' at an interview, and that was that. Later, they refused to meet a deputation on his behalf.

That "homosexuality is an emotive subject" is certainly true. The ILEA, at the same time as depriving a young teacher of the right to work, totally ignored the rampant race prejudice betrayed in the letter about him from the headmistress of St. Marylebone, who wrote that Mr. Warburton was said to have told his class that "he had relationships with men ... including coloured men"...

The fact is that the equivalent in gay terms of the classic howler of the racist bigot — "would you let a black man marry your daughter" — would be "would you let a queer teach you kid". And it is the depth of this prejudice that makes the thousands of gay teachers around the country feel so hunted and insecure — probably more so than most other gay workers.

In response to this, a GAY TEACHERS GROUP was founded last June. The case of John Warburton is the first the Group has taken up. Workers Fight talked to TONY BROCKMAN, who helped to start GTG, about the Group.

political activity, and overrate the effect that liberal tactics such as petitions and 'phone-ins' are likely to have on Ashley Bramall. But there are many in the group who realise that the only way we are likely to get anywhere is by winning the support of other teachers, by arguing our case in the teaching unions. Rank and File in London has now agreed to take up John Warburton's case, and this could give the group more confidence in the possibilities of working through the unions.

## HOW crucial do you feel this case is?

To begin with, it raises a general point of principle, in that John has been asked to sign what is effectively an extra clause to his contract with the ILEA. If he is forced to do so, then so could any teacher, whether gay or straight, and involving other questions such as politics.

Secondly, it is a crucial case for all gay teachers. If John loses, then it is likely that many gay teachers will lose heart and think twice before they speak about homosexuality at school. But if ILEA can be made to back down, then apart from the boost that this will give to the GTG, individual teachers will feel far more confident when the question comes up.

I also feel that if we are to gain anything permanent from this struggle, then we must not be satisfied with John's reinstatement unless it is accompanied by an official statement from the ILEA that they will never again attack gay teachers.

## IS there anything that you'd like those supporting your aims to do about this struggle?

Firstly, they can pass motions of support in their local NUT Association. There will be a lobby of the next meeting of ILEA which of course we'd like to be well supported. And they can write for copies of a petition (and further information) to 11 Birnam Road, London N.4



- John Warburton -

programmes. All too often it is either ignored altogether or mentioned briefly as "something we all grow out of". Of course, that sort of thing has a very damaging effect on those who don't "grow out" of wanting

to be gay, and it perpetuates all the prejudices that lead to the persecution of gay people.

## IS John Warburton's case the first clear example of victimisation you've heard about?

This is the second case that has come to the group since we started about 6 months ago. The first involved a lecturer in Manchester who was failed her medical examination for the job because her GP had told the Medical Officer of Health that she was gay and therefore unsuitable for teaching girls. But she was not prepared to fight the case because she had managed to get a similar job and was afraid of losing that too.

It is not surprising that few actual cases have been publicised, as the teacher involved is often isolated, sees little hope of support, and unlike John Warburton, backs down to an ultimatum from either the Head or the LEA.

ILEA had given an assurance that no gay teacher would be victimised. What did

## the Group feel about that?

Many members of the Group did feel more secure after that, and saw the role of the Group as being to try to obtain similar statements from LEAs outside London. But really the statement only came from Ashley Bramall (Labour leader of ILEA) in a personal capacity and was couched in vague terms. Ashley Bramall could of course be removed from office and the 'pledge' would fall. In the event, the pledge has proved not to be very useful when it came to the crunch. Bramall even refused to discuss the case of John Warburton with a delegation from the GTG.

## HOW big is GTG? Do many teachers know about it?

There are about 150 teachers and student teachers in the group, with local groups functioning in London, Manchester and Bristol.

## WHAT sort of activities has the Group organised so far?

Most of the members are relatively new to any kind of

# WAITER, THERE'S A SQUADDIE IN MY SOUP...

Looking for a leak in his plumbing, Joseph McKearney, a cafe owner in the Falls Road, Belfast, opened a trap door leading to his attic. In the attic, he not only found the cause of the leak — an overflowing army latrine — but he found the army that had been using it too!

For in his attic, complete with pistols, a sub-machine gun, portable radio, airbeds, a camp cooker and a large selection of canned food, were three soldiers.

The squaddies had been squatting in Joe McKearney's attic for several days. They had knocked a hole in the wall to spy on the cafe's customers and passers by — there is a Provisional Sinn Fein office across the road — and to photograph them.

But while it was the army that was caught red-handed, it was Mr. McKearney and his staff who were arrested. First he was led out of the attic at gun-point and forced to cross several roofs. Then, when his staff saw this and raised the alarm, they were rounded up too.

At Hastings Street police station the arrested men were photographed and questioned. The episode would have made a

good Monty Python sketch: but it's not so funny for the people of Belfast who have to put up with this kind of thing.

Last week, while on a visit to the north of Ireland, T and GWU Gen. Sec. Jack Jones was given a dossier documenting the intervention of British occupation troops in a strike by milk industry workers.

The strikers had regularly to resist the intimidation of the RUC until they had finally gained their demands. On a number of occasions the RUC was backed up by the British Army.

BRISTOL police are holding Brendan Phelan, who has been served with an exclusion order under the 'Terrorism' Act pending his appeal to the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins.

Brendan Phelan is the branch secretary of the Bristol branch of Clann na hEireann, the Officials' movement in this country, and the

# finger prints ON IRELAND

fourth member of that branch to have been excluded, if the request is approved. The others were Jim Flynn, Danny Ryan and Adrian Gallacher.

If Mr. Phelan is deported he will be the seventeenth person to be uprooted from his home and family for nothing the police could charge him with and prove in court. Another ten are awaiting Jenkins' decision.

Another man, Paul McDonagh, a London TRANSPORT WORKER AND FORMER Long Kesh internee, was also arrested and served with an order. But after 3½ weeks in jail, he was released.



THE contrast between the rising pitch of demands for action to free the Shresbury 2 coming from the rank and file of the trade union movement and the stubborn refusal of the TUC tops to budge becomes more scandalous every day.

Every day the two jailed pickets, Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson, spend in jail, is one more day these "leaders" have added to their sentence. That is clearly

## AS WARREN AND TOMLINSON ARE SPLIT UP AND HAULED OFF TO CLOSED JAILS — T.U.C. IGNORES 'STRIKE TO FREE THE TWO' CALLS

understood by the many branches, districts, and other bodies which have passed resolutions calling on the TUC to call a one day general strike as a follow up to the well attended lobby on January 14th.

UCATT, the main building workers' union, is still sitting

on the movement instead of leading it. Yet their Scottish Regional Council has forwarded to the union's EC its recommendation that a one day stoppage be called. Three other regional committees, London, the North West, and Southern, have also sent in motions pressing for a one day

stoppage.

Support is continuing to come in, too, from other sections of the labour movement. CSEU districts no. 29 (Manchester) and no. 8 (London) have committed themselves to support of a one-day strike, as have South East Essex District Comm-

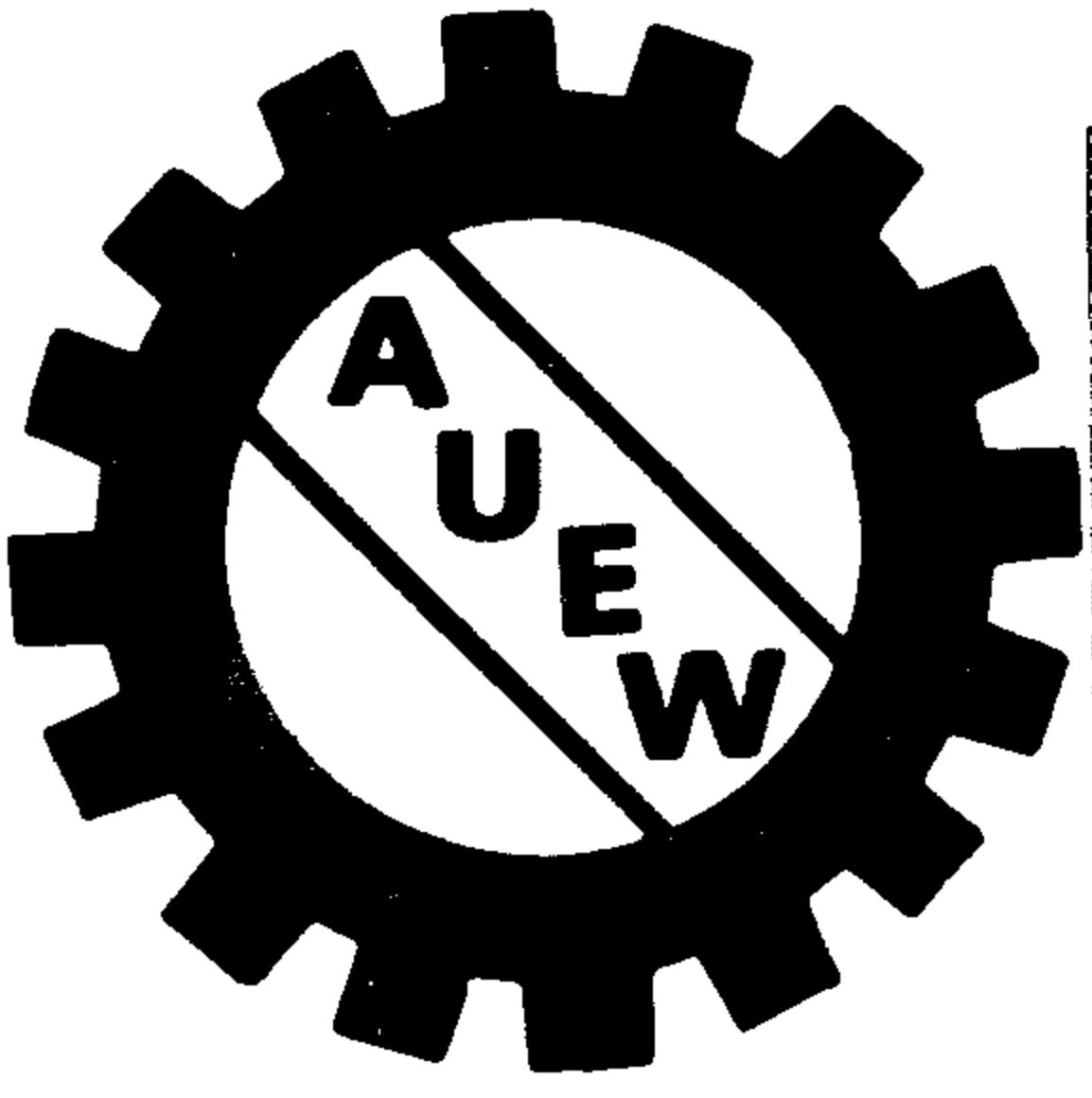
ittee of the AUEW and Blackpool Trades Council.

On Sunday 9th Liverpool Trades Council is holding a one day conference — its third — to publicise the Shresbury case.

At the same time a march has set off from Wigan bound for London, where it is due to

arrive on 19th February. It will call at a number of major industrial centres on the way to drum up support for the release of the jailed pickets. Despite being initiated by the 'Workers Revolutionary Party', this march has gained some trade union support, and we should certainly reject attempts by the Communist Party to refuse support to it simply on the grounds of the presence of the WRP.

# DIFFICULT QUESTIONS FOR THE BROAD LEFT



THOSE WHO do not subscribe to the Communist Party's trade union strategy will, according to Jon Bloomfield writing in the CP's fortnightly journal "Comment", be "unable to explain left trends as in the NUM and the AUEW..."

Now that the Broad Left, the CP-dominated reformist trend in the AUEW, has met with several reverses in the recent elections for officers of the engineering union, perhaps Mr. Bloomfield and his co-thinkers will "explain" what has happened. If they are able.

In the first round of the ballot for the general secretaryship of the union, the Broad Left's candidate was Bob Wright, until now seen as Hugh Scanlon's heir apparent for the presidency. Apart from a bunch of local 'favourite sons' standing no chance at all, Wright's opponent was Executive Committee member for Scotland, and Salvation Army Major, John Boyd.

## GAP

The Broad Left faced the ballot with confidence; after all, in certain key areas they had managed to organise large meetings to support their candidates, and there was a general myth in circulation that the Right had no organisation, no machine, and would therefore not be able to muster any real force.

In the event Bob Wright got 42,388 votes while Boyd received 89,514. The result was not sufficiently conclusive for Boyd to be declared elected — it is necessary to gain an overall majority — but with the final ballot not far away in March, the left will have to pull out all the stops to be able to make up this enormous gap.

This set-back was not the only one suffered by the left. Cyril Morton, a Communist Party member who is the convenor of Shardlows in Sheffield, failed to get into the second ballot for National Organiser. Likewise Pat Farrelly, another CPer who has been Divisional Organiser in the Reading/Basingstoke and Southampton areas for 20 years, was defeated by an unknown



Wright — losing

Southampton branch secretary, George Eley, by 4731 votes to 4301.

If this surprise result did not give the right wing a very big majority, it was different in the case of Len Brindle, BLMC convenor at Leyland and the candidate supported by the Broad Left, who polled only 36,247 votes against right winger John Weakley's 49,876. In another ballot for National Organiser, Phil Higgs, Rolls Royce convenor, polled only 82,608 votes against the present office-holder Bob Lloyd, who harvested 156,000 votes.

Right wingers also won in South Wales, where Bill John kept his seat, and district offices in Wolverhampton, Birmingham East and Blackpool went the same way.

The pattern was not, of course, uniform. In Oldham the Broad Left candidate, Ray Seddon, who gathered 693 votes, goes into the second ballot ahead of J.W. Jones by 96 votes. John Foster, another Communist Party member, also polled the highest number of votes in the ballot for the post he holds, though his majority was not enough to avoid a second round. District posts in Aberdeen, Guildford and Croydon stayed with the Broad Left, who also won West London from a Maoist.

Of all these results, the one that deserves closest attention is Len Brindle's defeat. Not because a right winger beat a left winger, but because the highest number of votes in this poll was gained not by the right wing's candidate, Weakley, but by Lawrie Smith (a member of the WRP) who stood

on a revolutionary platform. Smith, who comes from a small district, Erith, polled 51,092 votes with far less of a machine than any of the other candidates.

Unlike other candidates, his platform faced the issues of the day squarely. Looking through the Addresses of the candidates for both the Organisers' posts and Assistant General Secretary posts, you will find one after another without so much as a mention of the Social Contract, without so much as a word about redundancies. For most of the Broad Left candidates the big issue is the question of "amalgamation" and "integration". The Left is calling for a complete integration of the AEU with the CEU, TASS and the Foundry workers, instead of the present amalgamated status. The right opposes this.

The principle reason for this line-up is that full integration would give the left dominance within the Executive and over the union as a whole. This is not to say that the integration would not be a good thing in itself, strengthening the organisation of engineering workers. It certainly would be. But it is well known that the real motives are rather more bureaucratic than anything else.

Either way, the big issues like redundancies and short time, the CAS, the Social Contract, racialism, and equality for women, went virtually unmentioned.

## SHIFT

This doesn't entirely explain the shift to the right. But the Broad Left apologists like Bloomfield don't explain it either. They simply resort to the argument that it is the postal ballot that has made all the difference!

The right wing has benefited from the postal ballot, and they know it. Woodrow Wyatt, writing in the Sunday Mirror — a paper firmly behind John Boyd in the crucial General Secretary elections — called it "sanity by second class post": "The postal ballot" Wyatt points out "has opened up the voting to many more members. Previously in AUEW elections, 10% or less would vote. Now it is nearer to 30%. Instead of a minority of fanatical extremists dominating committees and

elections, the majority of common sense members are beginning to assert themselves."

It would of course be fair to ask Mr. Wyatt why these members do not give their fellow members the benefit of their "common sense" at such fanatical and extremist occasions as branch meetings. It is no doubt true that the postal ballot has meant an enormous increase in the voting of dead souls who take no interest in the union at all.

Nevertheless, this is not the end of the story. Socialists should never rest on a minority — even if it is the active minority — leaving the rest to stew in their apathy. If socialists want to fight for their ideas, they have to convince the rank and file.

## RULE

In fact, much of the success of the right wing has been by default. It is not that they have gone out and campaigned and won over the rank and file. It is that the left, once it has captured certain positions, has attempted to rule 'from on high'. For instance, the decision not to carry out work on war-ships bound for Chile — a decision which Workers Fight agrees with one hundred percent — was taken and imposed without patience, without explanation, on a group of workers who do not understand the need for the boycott.

The natural result was resentment and an increase in the support for the local right wing official who made it plain that he thought his members were being ridden over roughshod.

The important and courageous decision by the union to defy the Industrial Relations Act was, again, not accompanied by any real campaign to convince the members of the importance of this defiance.

The decisions made by *dictat* lowered the standing of the union in the eyes of the average members by just as much as they raised it in the eyes of the militants.

The bureaucratic 'position capturing' which the CP supports right down the line, works against itself in the long run. Workers are fed up enough with being dictated to every day by the boss and the foreman without having the union



Boyd — winning

behave in the same way.

Resorting to such bureaucratic means involves you in a fear of democracy, and in any case does not work. The most obvious example of this is the 1972 pay claim. The leadership asked the areas to take the initiative, but the areas — with the exception of Manchester — didn't. The whole pent-up anger of engineers at their falling living standards was punctured by the failure of the sit-ins in Manchester. And even there — and again the elections not long after testified to this — the workers felt let down.

The facts that the Broad Left must now face are these: by bureaucratic election seeking rather than campaigning, they have allowed the mass of the rank and file to become disaffected with the leftist leadership of the union; the leadership of the AUEW, which the Broad Left hailed as a new and progressive leadership, has done no better than any other leadership in getting improvements in wages, conditions, hours and benefits (in fact it has done a lot worse than many); a firm revolutionary socialist lead can attract more conviction and support than half-hearted platitudes about the issues that really count.

It is late in the day to change the situation, but not too late. If the lessons are learnt, then a militant leadership within the AUEW will be forged. To do this, the Broad Left would have to abandon its methods entirely and build a real rank and file movement of engineers, organised in every area, campaigning on all the important issues.

And not just at election times...

On February 11th, appeal proceedings are due to begin in Madrid for the ten Spanish trade unionists held in Carabanchel jail, and known as the Carabanchel Ten. The ten were imprisoned in June 1972 on charged of "unlawful association" but not brought to trial until December 1973.

These charges refer to their leading roles in the organisation of the Workers' Commissions, the genuine working class organs that are still illegal in Spain. The Workers' Commissions are increasingly becoming a focal point of workers' mobilisation, thus threatening the hold of the fascist state's "syndicates".

When the Ten came up for trial the whole of Spain was convulsed in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Admiral Carrero Blanco — not at all the atmosphere, the 10 are claiming in their appeal, where any trial could reasonably take place. Assuming any reasonable trial could take place in fascist Spain.

In this atmosphere, huge sentences were imposed, including 20 years for Marcellino Camacho and Eduardo Saborindo, 19 years for Francisco Garcia Salve and Niclos Sartorius, 18 years for Juan Marcos Muniz Zapico and 12 years for Francisco Acosta, Luis Fernandez Costilla, Pedro Santisteban and Miguel Angel Zamora.

The statement on the appeal points out that "The situation today is completely different from



Six of the trade unionists in Madrid's Carabanchel Jail

what it was a year ago during the judicial farce which sentenced these men. All the political and social forces in Spain are demanding a change of regime. The amnesty petition headed by the Church has become a national plebiscite.

"The struggle of the workers and other social sectors is showing that

the Government headed by Premier Arias Navarro is incapable of containing the Spanish people's desire for freedom and justice. In this situation, we are certain that an international mobilisation by the trade unions and democratic organisations will contribute in a decisive fashion to the quashing of these sentences and the liberation

of these ten trade unionists, authentic and genuine representatives of the Spanish workers."

The fascist government fears the potential of the Workers' Commissions, for they have proved in recent months the degree to which they command the support of the Spanish working

class. For instance last November the Workers' Commissions led a one-day general strike of 200,000 Basques demanding an amnesty for political prisoners.

When the Pamplona miners were recently locked-out, they responded by organising a daring stay-down occupation, taking down food and supplies for more than two weeks. The miners were then supported by an almost total local strike, and a group of priests went on hunger strike in solidarity.

Gradually the Workers' Commissions, although still illegal, are coming out of the underground. For instance recently SEAT car workers in Barcelona demanded that the company recognise members of the Workers' Commissions as the official workers' representatives.

The same demand is common in other factories, particularly in the Basque country.

The Workers' Commissions call for a mass of letters, telegrams and statements to be sent to: Presidente del Tribunal Supremo, Palacio de Justicia, Plaza de Las Salesas, Madrid. The address of the Spanish Embassy in London is 24 Belgrave Square, London SW1.

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In Pamplona, four priests have been jailed for failing to pay fines for having preached sermons in support of the local general strike.

THIS ANALYSIS OF ITALY'S POLITICAL CRISIS APPEARED FIRST IN THE

FRENCH JOURNAL LUTTE DE CLASSE. IT HAS BEEN VERY SLIGHTLY ABRIDGED AND

AMENDED FOR PUBLICATION IN WORKERS FIGHT.

# ITALY

FOR THE last few years, Italy has been in a state of permanent political crisis, a situation basically the same as that of the French Fourth Republic in the period just before its end in May 1958.

This political crisis is now being aggravated by an economic crisis which is mainly the consequence inside Italy of the general crisis of the monetary system and world inflation. The crisis in Italy is deeper and has more dramatic features than in any other country, partly because of the relative weakness of Italian imperialism and partly because of a number of political factors, for example the absence of a stable government.

Given its duration and the absence of any foreseeable short term solution, the Italian crisis stands out as an exception when compared to crises in other advanced countries — especially European ones. Despite a number of political difficulties, West Germany, UK and the countries of Benelux have been able to maintain more or less stable governments on the basis of existing political institutions. France was in a similar state of permanent crisis up to 1958 and the governmental crisis itself was being aggravated at the time by the political problems the French bourgeoisie had to solve in the course of its wars in Indochina and later in Algeria.

However, governmental stability was re-established after 1958 thanks to the constitution of the fifth Republic.

## Communist

The political crisis in Italy is mainly due to the existence of a very powerful Communist Party, in fact the most powerful of all Western CPs. Since the first parliamentary elections of the Republic, held in 1946, it has regularly increased its poll, growing from 19% of the votes to 17.2% in May 1973. And also, since 1963, the existence of centre-left governments including the Socialist Party ultimately favoured the CP — which was the only left wing party in the opposition.

With more than 9,000,000 votes and some 1,500,000 members (so it claims), the Italian CP represents a major force, which is reinforced by its overwhelming influence in the CGIL (General Confederation of Italian Labour — the main union). The CGIL is made up of Socialist and Communist workers and represents the fighting wing of the Italian working class.

The CP's electoral strength also means that it is at the head of numerous municipalities and even of an entire region, that of Emilia-Romania. The establishment of autonomous regions in 1970 was the opportunity for the Italian CP to prove its managerial skill not only at the municipal level but at that of a whole region, and its electoral success there put it in a position to do that.

## Electoral

But the strength of the Italian CP can also be seen on the parliamentary level. The Italian Constitution was drawn up by the 1946 Constituent Assembly, at a time when the CP, the SP and Christian Democracy were collaborating in a coalition government. Taking the interests of the parties into account, the Constituent Assembly established an electoral system based on proportional representation, with the weight of the parliament greater than that of the government.

The CP has 179 deputies out of 627 in the National Assembly, that is, almost one third. The fact that

# WILL THERE BE A COUP?

the CP is automatically excluded from any governmental coalition means that the government's majority can only be very small; and that is the reason behind the present governmental instability.

In order to have a majority, the Christian Democrats (38.8% of the votes, 267 deputies) must surround themselves with a number of groups of lesser importance such as the Republican party (2.9%) or the Social Democratic Party (5.1%), which are both centre-left, or the Liberal Party (3.9%) which is right wing.

On the left, the SP's share of the vote (9.6%) is an important addition to a centre-left majority; as for the MSI (the neo-fascist party) it has 8.7% of the votes and 56 deputies.

Under the present circumstances, the participation of either the CP or the MSI in the government is entirely out of the question. The two possible majorities are thus very narrow ones: the centre-left majority (CD, SP, RP, SDP) amounts to 56.4%; the centre-right majority (CD, LP, RP, SDP) adds up to 50.4%.

In both cases, the smaller groups have an importance that is out of proportion with their actual influence and because of this, regularly succeed in getting ministerial positions that otherwise they would not have had.

## Refusal

If there are problems when the time comes to set up a governmental majority, there are similar problems in Parliament when a Bill is being discussed. The key role played by the small centre-left parties or the Liberal Party enables them to force the government to alter its bills, according of course to the interests of their electoral clientele. In fact, any step taken by the government is compromise between the parties in the majority.

The refusal of any compromise by any one of them is enough to make the government fall.

The frequent ministerial crises in Italy are due to the fact that one party of the other will call into question the compromise previously arrived at, often for quite trivial reasons: the clientele of one of the parties in the coalition may be dissatisfied; or the party may think the time is ripe for it to have a better share of the portfolios. This is usually followed by several weeks of crises, talks and negotiations between party staffs in order to set up a new government, which is nothing but the old coalition with different ministers... or sometimes even the same ones.

Thus, the very existence of the government is based on compromises between various key parties. And this rules out governmental stability.

Of course, there exists a series of solutions, such as making the

government less dependent on Parliament, or giving increased power to the President and less power to the Chamber, or in modifying the electoral law so that the smaller parties are at a disadvantage and are forced to unite. The number of Communist Party deputies could be reduced by changing the voting system from a proportional one to a majority one.

Political 'solutions' like this would be completely suited to the Italian situation, and such constitutional reforms would correspond to the general interests of the bourgeoisie — especially the big industrial bourgeoisie of northern Italy which longs for a 'strong' government with steady policies. They want a government less tied to its electorate, and capable of carrying out policies that big business wants.

But the 'political caste' itself has everything to lose in this reform, as their present advantages are due to the relative freedom of action the system allows them now. Those small parties in a key position, for instance, could no longer play the game they are playing now. And this is why a reform is impossible on the basis of the existing constitution.

In the past when such a 'Gordian knot' has been cut through, as De Gaulle did in 1958, it has depended on the emergence of a powerful national figure who could play off

Amintore Fanfani



Giorgio Almirante

one arm of the state against another.

In Italy, too, such a move by the bourgeoisie would almost certainly meet with the opposition of the working class. This is because such a reform — whatever form it took — would mean a more authoritarian government and less representation for the main working class party (the CP) in Parliament.

Given the combativeness of the working class, a clash would be inevitable. In 1960, the mere attempt of the Tambroni government to lean on its right on the forces of the neo-Fascist party the MSI drew a general strike on 30th June 1960, violent demonstrations, and ultimately a ministerial crisis — which opened the way to a whole series of centre-left governments having the Italian CP's neutrality, if not its support.

If the governments of these last years (they were all centre-left with the exception of Andreotti's centre-right coalition in 1972-73) were somehow or other able to take economic measures necessary for the Italian bourgeoisie, it is due essentially to the neutrality, or at times the support, of the CP, which meant that a confrontation with the working class could be avoided. But any reform directed against the CP could lead to a



Police brutally attack a striker in Turin

confrontation, despite the CP's 'responsibility' and taste for respectable opposition.

The circumstances that enabled De Gaulle to inaugurate a stable, strong constitution for the French bourgeoisie are thus absent in Italy. First, the situation itself is different, and secondly, the 'strong man' capable of using the situation against both the political caste and the working class is nowhere to be found. No politician has enough prestige to try and play the role of a De Gaulle — that is, to appear as

'strategy of tension' that would enable him to appear as a 'man of order' castigating both left wing and right wing extremists. But these terrorist groupings have no real strength.

On the electoral level, the MSI has made no progress during the last two years. Almirante's double-dealing and the MSI's proven responsibility for most of the bloodshed of recent years have tarnished the party's image and have isolated it on the political scene.

Of course, there is yet another type of solution. If the situation or the present political forces of Italy prove incapable of creating the elements that would enable the bourgeoisie to impose the institutional reforms it needs, there remains as a last resort the possibility of imposing this reform through a military coup. And the number of people in the ruling class who are inclined toward such a solution is not negligible.

Fascist traditions have been kept alive in the police corps, among magistrates, in the army, and in the whole state apparatus. A number of abortive plots have even included members of the police corps and the army together with right wing militants. Up to now these plots have not got very far, as they lacked the support of at least a sizeable part of the bourgeoisie.

## Democracy

Such a solution is indeed a last resort. For first of all, the army would probably not limit its intervention to a re-modeling of present day bourgeois democracy and might go as far as suppressing democracy altogether, which is not what most of the bourgeoisie wants. Given the international situation and Italy's ties with the Common Market, the Italian bourgeoisie is not ready to accept a regime that could lead to a certain isolation on the international level.

The U.S. protector itself, which has always had a close eye on Italy's political life, did not support these plots. Rather, it has chosen to support those who were trying to re-orient the government toward the right within the existing political framework.

Most important of all, the launching of a coup d'etat and the coming to power of the military is a very risky solution. The coup itself if not followed by a rapid crushing of the working class, might meet with the opposition of the workers and end up in civil war.

This does not mean that a military coup is totally excluded. The army and the police might try and force the bourgeoisie to face a *fait accompli*, much in the same way as Pinochet did in Chile. In fact, that is one of the risks the present situation involves for the working class.

**NEXT WEEK: The Communist Party in Government?**

# BLOODY SUNDAY PROTEST SAYS TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW

**THE Bloody Sunday shootings were an act of deliberate policy, a capacity rally at the Conway Hall was told last Saturday.**

Bernadette MacAliskey, speaking at the rally organised by the Troops Out Movement, described the events of Bloody Sunday and the way in which the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment had very carefully fired at men of military age. This had been, she said, calculated murder of unarmed civilians, to break the organised strength of the Catholic people and terrorise them off the streets.

## EXPLOITATION

It had taken place shortly after secret meetings between Edward Heath, Brian Faulkner and army chiefs of staff. "The British Army are not 'your boys'", she said, "they are the armed wing of your ruling class."

All the speakers stressed the urgency of the working class in Britain actively supporting the fight for the withdrawal of troops and for Irish self determination. This was especially urgent since the Birmingham bombings because, as Bernadette said, after that, working class people had been on their knees begging the Labour government to take away many of the rights for which they had fought for centuries. Now the Jenkins laws were being used against known political activists and trade unionists of Irish origin.

Moreover, the British Army was gaining experience in Northern Ireland in how to enforce the will of the government against the will of the people. The Army in 1974 had invaded 71,500 homes in Northern Ireland — it was the single most violent organisation in Northern Ireland and more people had lost their lives at its hands than as victims of any other force. The so-called 'Irish problem' was the problem of how the Irish people were going to get rid of an imperialism that was trying to make itself look 'acceptable' for the purpose of continued exploitation of the Irish people.

She attacked the stupidity of the Communist Party's call for withdrawal of the troops to barracks. Everyone in the Catholic areas knew just how long it took to get from the barracks to the ghetto when the army thought necessary.

## BRUTALITY

MIKE KNOWLES, secretary of Hackney Trades Council, declared that the British trade union movement shared the guilt of British rule in Ireland because it had never taken a stand against it. He stressed that the British had imposed foreign rule in Ireland for 800 years, and that the outrages and crimes perpetrated by Britain over the centuries outdid the brutality of the Nazis. Whereas the British trade union movement had shown interest in Chile, it was indifferent to Ireland's suffering. Just to call for an end to internment was not enough: it was backward-looking and solved no basic problem.

Returning to the indifference of British trade unionists, he contrasted their concern at the Birmingham bombings.

Steve Jeffreys, speaking for IS, thought that the key to getting the troops withdrawn was the strike weapon, though he failed to suggest just which workers might strike, in a situation where the mass of workers either didn't care, or were hostile to the Irish republican cause.

There should be, he said, no

Bernadette MacAliskey at Conway Hall



compromise with those who called for a Bill of Rights — imposed by the British Army and in a state with built-in sectarianism.

NEIL DAVIES, a building worker who used to be a British soldier, attacked the way in which 'economic conscription' operated in Britain, with unemployment, insecurity and bad living conditions combining with a monotonous work routine to drive young kids into the army. Once in, they had to 'keep the peace' by terror, and obey orders like a

robot. These orders could include breaking strikes in Britain, too.

PAT HICKEY, of Birmingham Trades Council, emphasised also that the Irish issue was not just a matter of abstract solidarity, but a matter of life or death for the labour movement.

The situation in Ireland now was that the Loyalists were looking to the Constitutional Convention as their big chance to defeat all attempts at 'power sharing'. But, he thought, the Protestant workers could be won

over on the basis of being ordinary trade unionists.

The role of the troops, he said, was to keep the 6 County statelet in existence, to disarm the anti-imperialist forces, and give the Loyalists a free hand. This in itself would create the conditions for a bloodbath, and meant massive repression against the Catholics.

He called for a mass anti-imperialist campaign in the British labour movement to educate British trade unionists and work to change the balance of forces in the 6 Counties. The alternative would be a restoration of the Protestant Ascendancy, which would be "a dagger aimed at the heart of the British labour movement."

The rally, attended by about 700 people, and the 4,000 strong demonstration through London that followed it, were both held to commemorate Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972. They were certainly the most positive things to happen in Britain over Ireland since the Birmingham pub bombings last November — though both activities failed to take up an active stance against the legislation that followed the bombings.

J.W.HARDING

# GRASS ROOTS MUST GET TO GRIPS WITH IRISH QUESTION

A COUPLE of Labour MPs, four local councillors and a number of prominent trade unionists, mainly from the Birmingham and Wolverhampton area, have sent out an open letter to the labour movement for a trade union conference on Ireland.

It is time, the letter urges, that the grass roots of the labour movement "begins to come to grips with the problem, formulates a policy and, having done this, makes its voice

heard." The policy advocated is that "any solution will have to be within a 32 county context, based on the will of the majority of the people of Ireland".

The letter warns of the growth of the extreme right in the Tory Party and the National Front, who are, in the absence of a clear lead from the labour movement, taking up the issue and using it to gain support — which they will later use against the labour movement itself. The

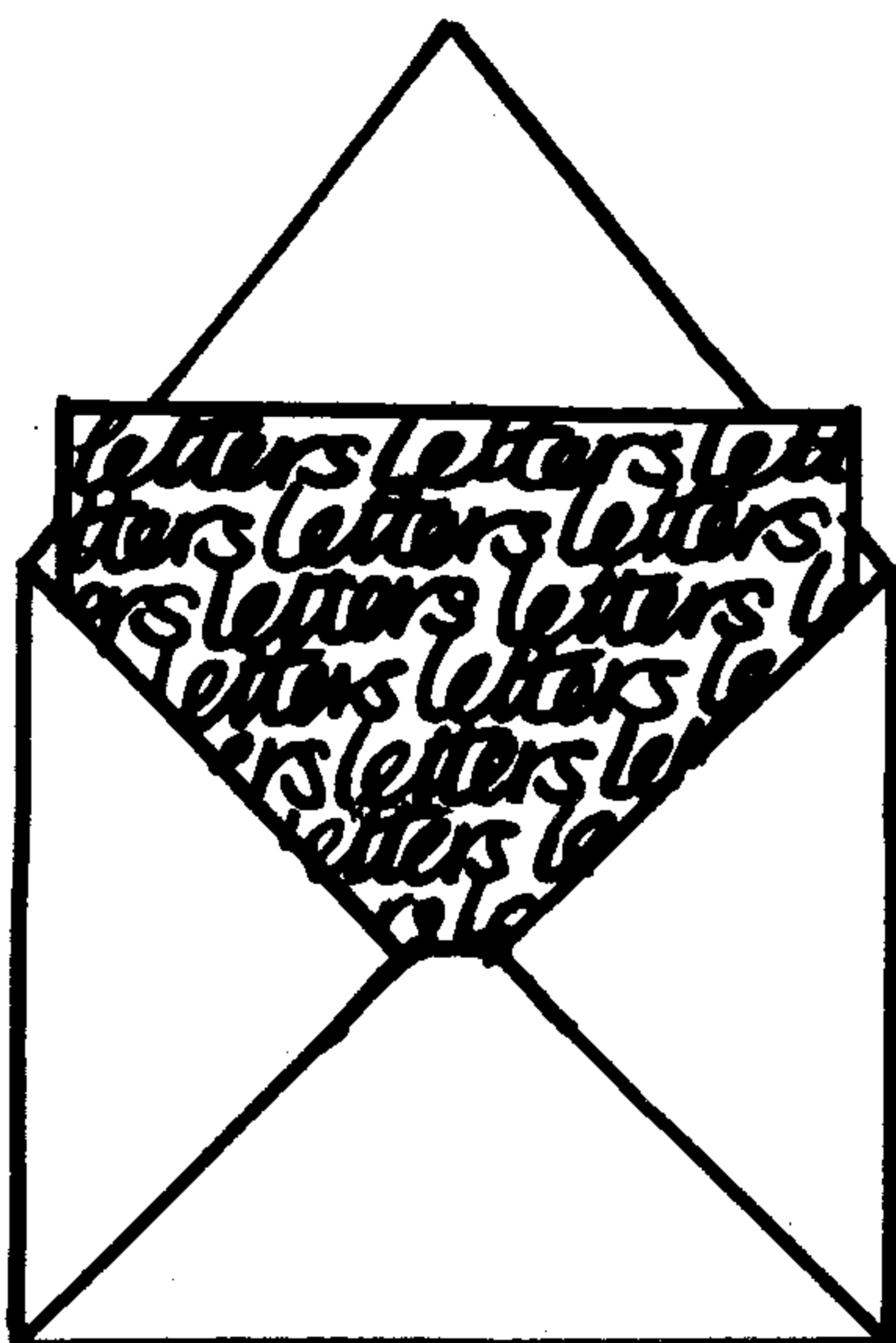
spreading of the war to Britain has brought more repression, with legislation "which makes inroads on civil liberties unequalled in peacetime."

The proposed Constitutional Convention, they say, will make things worse, and they quote the comments on it of six Labour MPs in a letter to the Times: "This solution will be a choice between handing over power to Messrs. Paisley, Craig and West, or

continuing with direct rule. Either way means continued violence and repression."

An initial Organising Meeting, to set up an Organising Committee and prepare the Conference, is scheduled for Monday 10th February at 7.30pm, at the Labour Club in Bristol Street, Birmingham. For further details, contact P.Hickey, 26 Durham Road, Birmingham 11.

# Under the shadow of the factory walls



comfortable in the crouching position.

"Their complexion becomes dirty yellow, they complain of pressure on the chest. Their voices become rough and hoarse, they cough loudly... From time to time they expectorate considerable quantities of dust... Spitting blood, inability to lie down, night sweat, diarrhoea, unusual loss of flesh and all the usual symptoms of consumption of the lungs finally carry them off..."

What a disgusting portrait of what workers have had to suffer so that the bosses can have their profits!

The Sheffield grinders had their own way of describing their situation. In a ballad sung in Sheffield in the 1860s, the grinders commented:

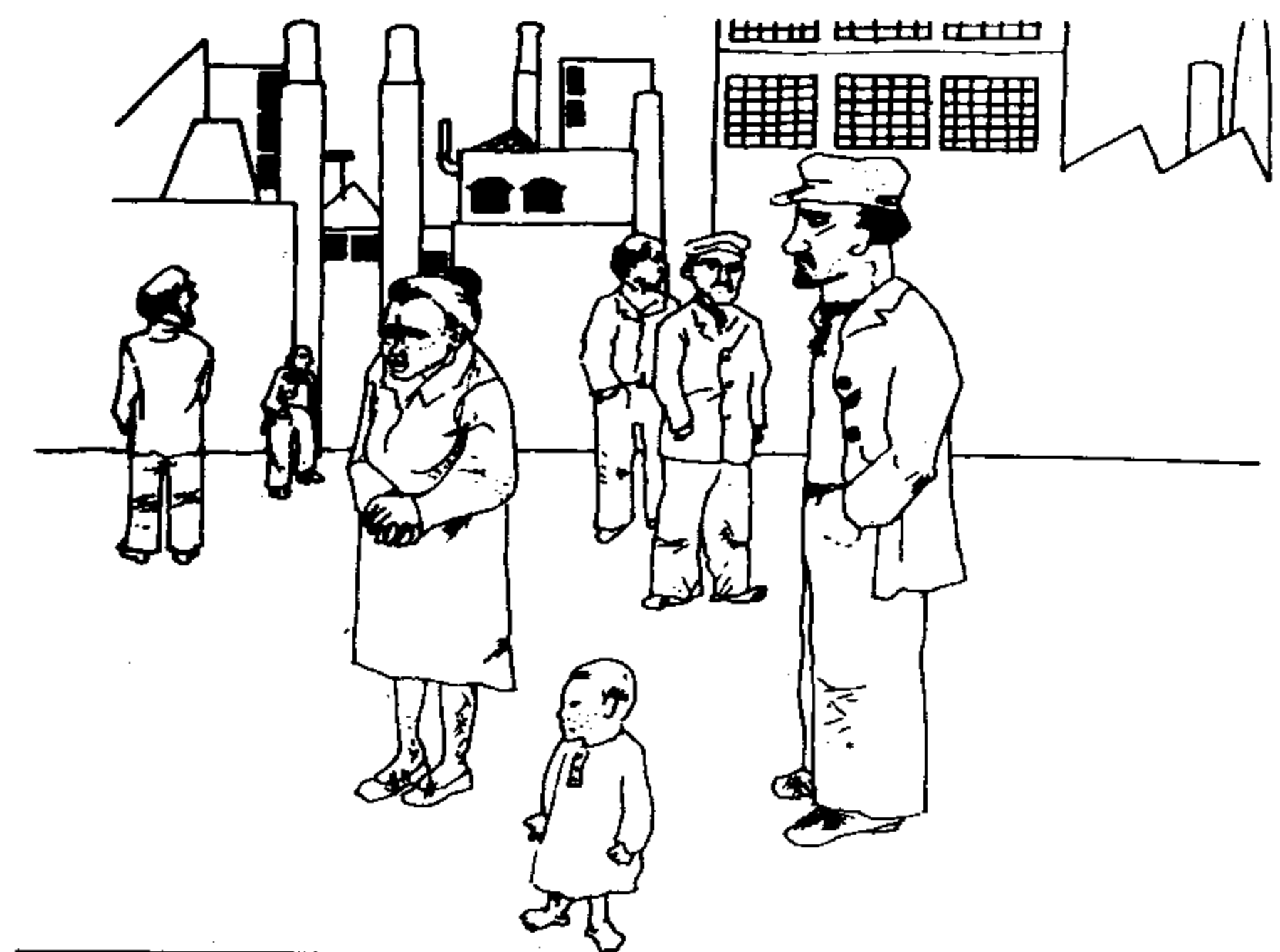
*He shortens his life and he hastens his death  
Will drink steel dust in every breath  
Won't use his fan as he turns his wheel  
Won't wash his hands as he eats his meal  
But dies as he lives, as hard as steel.  
At whose hands lies the blacker blame?  
Where rests the heavier weight of shame?  
On the famine-price contractor's head  
Or the workman's under-taught and fed  
Who grinds his bones and his child's for bread?*

Today the dangers to workers from dust still persist, particularly in the mines and in the foundries; and in addition grinders' asthma, there is a whole range of new diseases and dangers in modern industry which even the much-abused workers of the last century didn't have to face.

The struggle for healthy conditions of work goes on and will only be successful finally when the working class gets complete control of production. - Syd Morant, Manchester.

# THE LOGIC OF VOTING 'NO'

Comrades - John Latham in his letter on the Common Market (WF84) uses two words which I think make an obscure argument even more obscure. He says that: "...to avoid the danger of falling into the kind of chauvinism which the Communist Party intermittently stumbles into ... a fully rounded class position would ... regard



defense of Parliament as important in terms of defending bourgeois democracy against the trend towards authoritarianism, this time in institutionalised form, which Hobson and Lenin had exposed as characteristic of capitalism in the imperialist phase."

John Latham is thus saying that the CP 'intermittently' stumbles into chauvinism — without saying that chauvinism is the basis of the whole argument and is therefore always there.

And he says that we must defend bourgeois democracy against 'authoritarianism'. And what is the nature of this 'authoritarianism' as 'counterposed to bourgeois democracy?

By arguing in such a manner, Comrade Latham has made himself a trapdoor through which he can fall into the same chauvinistic reformism.

To back himself up, he summons Lenin and Hobson to his aid. But unfortunately for him, they do not help his argument. In fact, Lenin attacks precisely that opinion, and quotes Hilferding's Finance Capital (1912) while arguing against Kautsky's counter-position of 'peaceful democracy' to the 'unnecessary' violent imperialism:

"It is not the business of the proletariat", writes Hilferding 'to contrast the more progressive capitalist policy with that of the now bygone era of free trade and of hostility towards the state. The reply of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance capital cannot be free trade but socialism. The aim of proletarian policy cannot today be the ideal of restoring free competition — which has now become a reactionary ideal — but the complete elimination of competition by the abolition of capitalism.'

"Kautsky broke with Marxism by advocating in the epoch of finance capital 'a reactionary ideal',

'peaceful democracy', 'the mere operation of economic factors', for objectively (Lenin's emphasis) this ideal drags us back from monopoly capitalism to non-monopoly capitalism and is a reformist swindle." (Lenin: Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, p.108 Russian Edition.)

The thing that John Latham misses in his article is that the Yes/No argument to the Common Market is essentially a choice between two forms of imperialism — old sick British imperialism or new sick European imperialism. And objectively saying 'No' to the Common Market must mean that we are in favour of old sick British imperialism, in spite of any arguments for 'fully rounded class positions' because that is what it means from a historical viewpoint. It is no surprise that small shopkeepers and farmers should opt for this mirage of bourgeois democracy and free trade when there is no revolutionary party to expose the contradictions of capitalism. But when people who call themselves Marxists, such as the IMG and IS — and the CP, too, of course, though with less conviction — pander to such attitudes, it is astounding.

The logical outcome of such an attitude will be to hail a massive 'No' vote as a 'victory for the working class'. Of course it would be nothing of the kind.

John Latham conjures up a sort of 'permanent revolution in reverse': instead of the revolution breaking the bonds of feudalism, then bourgeois democracy and through to socialism, he sees the revolution breaking the bonds of 'authoritarianism', then smashing through bourgeois 'democracy to socialism!

This vain hope of going backwards to socialism through an idealised bourgeois democracy is truly obscurantist and can only mislead. - Ivan Wels, Nottingham.

## LEARNING FROM THE STALIN SCHOOL

THE Annual General Meeting of Lambeth Trades Council was held on 3rd February.

For many years the Trades Council has been a rump controlled by the 'Workers Revolutionary Party', with average attendance of 12 members. Many trade unionists in Lambeth hoped that if local union branches could be persuaded to take up their delegacies to the Trades Council then at long last a meaningful body could develop. The surprising number of 40 people were present at the beginning of the meeting.

It became apparent to the present officers of the Trades Council, who are all WRP members, that their dominance could be drawing to a close.

So they excluded six new NUT delegates on the grounds, since proved false, that fees had not been paid. (Ironically, the present treasurer, Cyril Smith of the WRP, has succeeded in getting the Trades Council suspended from the TUC for non payment of fees.)

The Chairman of Clapham UCATT was excluded because his name was not on his credentials, and an APEX delegate was excluded because her affiliation had not arrived through the post.

At no time could the secretary point to any rule or standing order which could be used to exclude these delegates. They claimed that unwritten conventions covered their manoeuvrings. When NALGO delegates asked for a copy of all unwritten standing orders and conventions to be produced, the secretary refused and a WRP delegate said that one would learn them after one had been on the Trades Council for 20 years!

Needless to say the whole meeting was conducted in uproar, but with eight non WRP delegates EXCLUDED THE MEETING ELECTED WRP members to the offices and the executive.

Such gross bureaucracy has been practised frequently by Stalinists and reformists; but never by Trotskyists. The experience of Lambeth Trades Council should be sufficient to prove that the WRP's claim to represent Trotskyism is a gross and shameless lie.

Ian Murray

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## CAMPAIGN FOR APRIL CLAIM GETS UNDERWAY

IN THE WAKE of the sell out on Houghton at the NUT Conference on 25th January, militant teachers met in London on 30th January to discuss the runup to the April Pay Claim.

Three important facts came out at the meeting. Firstly, NUT general secretary Britton had, at the special conference, officially denied that the NUT claim in April was as low as £90 for the bottom of Scale 1.

Secondly it was reported that Bob Richardson, general secretary of the Inner London Teachers' Association, and by no means a militant left winger, has, in his electoral address to Hackney NUT, actually defended the demand for £2500 starting salary, to be backed up by official strike action if necessary.

## MARCHING TO REMEMBER BLOODY SUNDAY

Workers Fight was the only British socialist group to support the Provisional Sinn Fein's Bloody Sunday commemoration march on 3rd February.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the Sinn Fein march was an obvious challenge to the Jenkins Act, and was surrounded by several cohorts of police, the rest of the British left was nowhere to be seen. Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)



## LPYS Conference resolutions

### - overkilling with a cure-all

FEBRUARY 14th is the deadline for amendments to the Easter conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

149 resolutions have been submitted from LPYS branches across the country.

Clearly the most heated debate will be over the question of Ireland. A series of resolutions, reflecting the line of the 'Militant' tendency which dominates the LPYS, work themselves into a fine fury against the Provisional IRA on the grounds of 'individual terrorism'.

The Birmingham bombings come in for far more vigorous condemnation than the Jenkins law, or indeed the whole history of British army brutality in Ireland. Instead of supporting those actually fighting to throw the British army out, the 'Militant' resolutions place all their hopes in a mythical 'Trade Union Defence Force'.

There are a few resolutions clearly affirming the right of the Irish people — on a 32 county basis — to determine their own future, and to fight to determine their own future. A resolution from Wokingham LPYS affirms solidarity with the "direct anti imperialist war of liberation". Easton LPYS calls for support for the Troops Out Movement and a campaign against the Jenkins law.

Other resolutions on the same general lines come from Southall LPYS and Rotherham LPYS.

On racialism, one resolution from Brent East, clearly opposing free speech for fascists and supporting black caucus in the trade unions, stands out from the numerous 'Militant' resolutions which hope to defeat fascism through the Labour Government carrying out a socialist programme and the LPYS carrying out a polite campaign of "black and white unite and fight" propaganda.

However, even Brent East's resolution confines itself to supporting "in principle (??)

mobilisations of the trade union movement to stop by peaceful mass action NF demonstrations".

That is, presumably, not supporting violent anti-fascist action, or action organised by non-trade union groups; in practice, not supporting most of the effective anti fascist action carried on at present.

The clearest expression of 'Militant's complacency in the face of racialism, indeed its capitulation to racialism, comes in a resolution from Worthing LPYS, no. 81. "Socialism", it says, "can only succeed when all the working class — black, white, and coloured — are united in their determination to overthrow the old order".

Very fine — except that this resolution is about SOUTH AFRICA! It is talking about a situation of apartheid, a situation where white workers get wages twenty times those of black workers. It is talking about white workers who in their most militant action raised the slogan "Workers of the world unite for a white South Africa".

It is saying that the doubly oppressed black workers should wait for those privileged white workers to consent to unite with them. On this issue 'Militant' is to the right even of the World Council of Churches.

One important issue which appears on first sight to be completely missing from the agenda is the question of the fight for equality for women. In fact there is one resolution on this question — stuck right at the end, under the heading "OTHERS"! It advocates support for the Working Women's Charter, but only as "demands for implementation by the Labour Government".

scale of wages.

Resolution no. 41, from Norwood LPYS, is also slightly different (reflecting the line of the 'Chartists'), but not much better. "Implement Clause 4", it says, "Labour's socialist contract with the trade unions".

Such a resolution can only sow illusions in the 'socialist' nature of the Fabian, state capitalist "Clause 4", and of the trade unions, and breed empty hopes of getting a 'socialist' contract through pressure to amend the present social contract.

Hopefully an amendment to one of the 'Militant' resolutions roundly denouncing the 'Parliamentary Road to Socialism', will lead to a vigorous debate at LPYS Conference.

Martin Thomas

## MINERS REJECT MEAGRE OFFER FROM NCB

THE unanimous rejection by the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers of the latest pay and conditions offer from the National Coal Board poses a major problem for the Labour Government.

If the NCB insists on this offer being the last one, then a major struggle will break out between the miners and the Labour government.

If, as seems more likely, the NCB return to the negotiating table with an improved offer, the Labour government's problem will be how to square stretching the Social Contract to accommodate that new offer with, at the same time, plans to push the Social Contract 'norm' below the present rate of inflation.

The NCB offer, besides granting free tools and protective clothing, gives £7, inclusive of £4.40 threshold money, to surface workers. That is about £2.60 new money, or 8% increase.

The top grade have been offered £10 increase on the basic, amounting to 12% more money.

The present offer therefore not only means an effective wage cut in the face of 20 to 25% price rises, it also widens differentials, thus aiming to sap miners' unity.

The NUM's rejection of the NCB offer does not exclude continuing the discussions on productivity dealing Through such talks, the NUM leaders hope to get more money for face workers without upsetting the Social Contract too much.

More money the NUM leaders have to get, especially after the news, on Monday 3rd February, that private, non-NUM opencast workers are to be paid £46 basic as from June 1975.

The NUM are pressing to get the NCB's maximum productivity payout offer of £3 increased. But this back door method of winning improvements is a false method — every penny is traded off against worsening conditions and jobs threatened. Better not to evade the issue, and to stand out firmly against the Social Contract.

CONTINUED FROM P.1

## BENN

We must demand to know, fully and completely, the facts, the figures and the secret deals, that are going to affect our lives: this means that shop floor workers must be able to nominate their own representatives and experts who will report back to them direct.

In those industries due for nationalisation, we must demand the right to real control at all levels; in such industries workers can start by taking matters into their own hands and getting together throughout the industry to set up bodies that can make decisions and that have the power to fight to enforce them.

## LANDLORD LOCK-OUT IN NOTTS.

In Nottingham the Landlords' Association, which between it owns a large part of all the rented accommodation in the city, has met in secret with the Polytechnic administration, in a bid to stop students from taking landlords to the rent tribunal.

This came out when they decided to push their luck a bit further and approached the Poly students union officials to get their help.

Behind these advances lay the clearly spelled out threat that no student would be let a flat unless there was some undertaking that students would be stopped from complaining about rent levels.

Students angered by this threat will be holding a Union meeting to decide policy on Tuesday 11th February. Sue Leigh

## MEETINGS

Mayday Theatre is performing a new play called *The Adventures of Jack Boot* on 14th, 15th and 16th February, at the Unity Theatre, London NW1. The play "exposes the myths of everyday life which are the breeding ground for fascism". After performing at the Unity, Mayday Theatre will tour trade union branches, colleges, etc, with the play, and will perform for workers anywhere until 7th March. Details: 8 Falcon Rd, London SW11.

Manchester Workers Fight public meeting: Unemployment and how to fight it. Speakers: Stephen Corbshley (WFEB) and Ian Heyes (Convenor, Pochins Manchester Poly site). 8pm, Thursday 13th February, at the Ducie Arms, Great Ducie St.

London Workers Fight forums. Sunday 9th February: Simon Temple on the EEC. Sunday 23rd Feb: Alan Haslam on *The Class Nature of the USSR*. Both meetings 8.30pm at the "George", Liverpool Road, NI.

## FASCISTS ROUTED AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE

by MARTIN THOMAS

AN ATTEMPT by the National Front to establish a foothold in London University was firmly stopped by 300 students and staff at Imperial College on Thursday 6th February.

The fascists had put adverts round all the London colleges for a meeting to be held at Imperial College at 1pm on Thursday. Among the promised attractions was "a chance to bash a lefty".

As soon as their leaflet was distributed in Imperial College, on the Tuesday, the NF's room booking was checked — and it was found that they had fraudulently booked a lecture hall in the name of the Young Socialist Student Society.

The lecture hall was promptly booked in the name of the Union External Affairs Committee. The NF continued to proclaim that their meeting would go on.

At 12.20 on Thursday the NF turned up — and half a dozen of them stood forlornly outside the college buildings trying to sell their paper while some fifty anti fascist demonstrators surrounded and barracked them.

300 people crammed into the lecture hall. Chris Harman of the International Socialists, Ted Fisher, secretary of IC NUPE branch, and Harry Fairbrother, chairman of IC ASTMS, spoke, and the meeting was chaired by

Students' Union president Trevor Phillips.

On the proposal of a supporter of *Workers Fight*, the meeting unanimously resolved to set up an anti fascist committee in IC.

The NF, though routed on this occasion, say they will be back; and it would be foolish for anti fascists to be complacent. On this occasion we had legality, the College security guards, and even the police, on our side. Next time it will not be so easy. The case against free speech for fascists must be argued forcefully and clearly, without relapsing into general wishy washy anti-racist "good will to all men" sentiments.