

Workers Power

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FORGET POLL PANIC MONGERS



Wipe the smiles off their faces

GET STUCK INTO THE TORIES!

THE BOSSES AND the press have been crowing with triumph over Labour's miserable ratings in the opinion polls and the rising fortunes of Messrs Steel and Owen. They do so not because they are scared of Kinnock, Hattersley or John Smith. Quite the opposite. What they sense is the possibility of robbing the organised labour movement of any political role and leaving it marginalised in what it sneeringly calls its tribal reserves in Scotland, the North of England and South Wales.

The millionaire press barons are themselves set on a ruthless drive to break the power of organised labour in their own empires. They are taking up the Alliance as the alternative to the Labour Party. Through a relentless succession of opinion polls they are rigging the agenda of the next election as being about who comes second, Labour or the Alliance.

The millionaire owned media is almost entirely at the service of Thatcher and the Tories. Her visit to Moscow, designed for maximum domestic media hype, had them drooling in admiration. Her raising of the human rights issue and her plugs for capitalism were hailed as proof she could taunt and tame the

Russian bear.

The bosses are willing to pull out all the stops to gain a third term for Thatcher. They are excited at the prospect of seeing Labour turned out into the political wilderness—what they call taking 'socialism' off the political map in Britain. But they are also aware that they must have at hand some political alternative should Thatcher or the Tories mess things up.

NO THREAT

The important thing for them is that such an alternative should never again be under pressure from organised labour even in the way that Labour governments have been in the past. That is where the Alliance comes in.

While it would imply no threat to the Tories, a second place for the vacuous Alliance would focus the minds of the Labour right and centre splendidly. It would sharply pose to them a future of either permanent opposition and electoral decline or of an anti-Tory realignment with the Alliance.

This is the path the Euro-communists of *Marxism Today* have long been advocating. And it is

the path that the *Economist*, for example is anticipating once Thatcher is returned to Number 10. It would also focus the minds of the trade union bureaucracy for whom the hope of a Labour government would now have disappeared. In a way that the laws on the political levy have failed to do it would force more trade union bosses to disentangle themselves from the Labour Party, to start to talk to the Alliance or to give up any concern for a political voice for organised workers.

The bosses sense that the tide is going their way right now. A Tory victory and a drubbing for Labour is their intention. They are confident that they've got the press and they've got the pollsters to dragoon the electorate their way. 'Thatcher's patriotism against Labour's treason', 'Thatcher's law and order against Labour's anti-police extremism', 'Thatcher's give away tax cuts against Labour's hand in your wage packet'. These are, and will be, the media's permanent tunes all written by Conservative Central Office. And the Alliance are necessarily talked up in the middle as the 'reasonable alternative'—to Labour now and to Thatcher in the 1990s.

Every step that Kinnock takes to

VOTE LABOUR - BUT FIGHT CUTS

IN THE RUN-UP to the coming local government elections in early May, working class people are faced with Labour councils currently proposing and carrying out budgets which will mean drastic cuts in jobs and service.

In order to bridge the financial gap between Tory-imposed cash limits and the needs of a 'stand-still' budget, such 'left-wing' Labour councils as Sheffield are proposing the cutting of 300 administrative town hall jobs, freezing all council vacancies and a 10% rent increase. David Blunkett, Sheffield City Council leader said: 'This is not a socialist budget'. What an understatement!

Manchester District Labour Party voted for a budget which includes rent increases of £1.50 and a rate rise. Edinburgh council is proposing to break its manifesto commitment of a rent freeze, by proposing a rent increase of £2 to £2.50.

Workers in Labour councils such as Strathclyde, Islington and Ealing have had to take strike action against their employers in order to defend their jobs, wages and working conditions.

The underlying reason for these attacks by Labour councils can be found in their favoured strategies for resisting the Tories' cuts. All the major Labour councils have relied on balancing their books through 'creative accounting'. This means borrowing money to meet the short fall between government cash limits and the councils' budgets.

Lurking behind this strategy lies the hope that a Labour government will get elected by the time the money has to be repaid. The problem is the next general election has not been called and the Labour councils have huge debts. For example Islington council has sustained debts totalling around £1 billion! Furthermore even if Labour does get elected at the general election—and at the moment that is a big if—Kinnock has said that he will not even reverse the Tories cuts in local government. At the local government conference in February Kinnock stated:

'I cannot and will not promise a supply of funds on a scale that compares with the level of cuts in support made in seven years of Tory government.'

Even so-called left-winger David

Blunkett said: 'No one is asking for blank cheques from a future Labour government.'

The conclusion which council workers and Labour Party activists must draw from this is clear. Labour councils are not prepared to fight for an effective strategy to reverse the Tories' savage cuts. Also they have run out of financial 'juggling tricks' to balance the books. Now they must be stopped from carrying through their anti-working class budgets.

Inside the Labour party this means following the example of Netherthorpe ward Labour Party in Sheffield, for example, which argued for a strategy of assistance to those resisting cuts and for standing Labour candidates in the May local elections on a manifesto of opposing all cuts. In the event Netherthorpe Labour Party was denounced for contravening DLP policy and therefore breaking its constitution.

They were also accused of 'providing ammunition for the right' and breaking 'unity'. It is a false 'unity' which unites supposed socialists around policies to attack the jobs and living standards of working-class people. And to put the Labour Party constitution above opposition to cuts is a betrayal of working class interests. Inside the unions council workers must organise now to fight cuts and every attack on jobs and services carried through in the name of realistic budgets. Strike action by council workers—and spread to workers in the private sector who, as part of the local community, are vitally affected by cuts too—can force the Labour councils to meet our needs even if it means breaking the law.

In place of 'creative accounting' we must fight for:

- No cuts or rate or rent increases
- No payment of debts to the banks and finance houses at the expense of working class needs
- No redundancies
- For growth budgets to meet working class needs

slap down the left, to prove his patriotism or promise that a Labour government will be so prudent and careful is simply grist to their mill. He both proves the point about the 'loony left' danger to middle class voters and gives the oppressed and exploited all that less a reason for voting Labour. He is playing the role of clownish fall guy in the media campaign for Thatcher's re-election and the Alliance's second place.

MEEKNESS

But Kinnock is not alone. The trade union bureaucracy is playing its part as it backs down from every major fight with the bosses, and sabotage those who want to fight. The TUC leaders delude themselves that somehow they are proving their meekness and respectability to the electorate. This will probably lose as many working class votes as it wins middle class ones. In fact they are convincing millions that the labour movement is powerless to defend itself. The very leaders of 'this great movement of ours' are in fact acting to silence and marginalise organised labour.

To its everlasting shame the

organised labour movement has no mass press to answer this whole campaign and organise with. At most it has looked to lock-out merchants like Robert Maxwell to be its friend. Print workers have concerned themselves with trade union organisations to defend their conditions and rarely ventured to challenge the anti-working class, sexist and racist filth their bosses spew out.

There is no objective reason why Thatcher, and the bosses should be able to marginalise the labour movement. Millions hate Thatcher and the capitalists she is serving. Millions want to fight against a system that pillages the welfare services and ransacks the jobs of whole communities for the sake of a get rich few. But as long as organised labour toes the line of Kinnock and the TUC, as long as it allows them to gag and marginalise it, it is incapable of mobilising that hatred and anger. If the plans of Thatcher, Owen and Steel are to be stopped, organised workers must become the visible champions of resistance to all sackings and cuts and of struggle alongside the oppressed victims of Thatcher's Britain. This is no time to sit on the side lines. Vote Labour when the election comes certainly. But step up the class struggle now! ■

editorial

DOGS THAT DO NOT BARK

'WE SUPPORT REAGAN'S Zero Option. Our position is closer to that of the President than Mrs Thatcher's.' With these words Dennis Healey completed the Labour leadership's unceremonious rubbishing of conference policy on defence.

Labour's commitment to getting rid of Cruise, Polaris and Trident missiles was re-affirmed by the Labour conference in October. The inevitable process of ditching this commitment under the pressure of the forthcoming election began the same night. Kinnock assured the media pundits that there would be no time limit set for negotiations with the US about shipping Cruise back home.

But this process took a long time to bear fruit. Less than two weeks after Callaghan's Commons speech attacking unilateral disarmament, which produced a bust-up in the all-day bar at Westminster, Kinnock brazenly announced that in the light of renewed talks between Gorbachev and Reagan, Labour would not be getting rid of Cruise after all, at least not until the talks were finished.

Kinnock and his 'advisors', reading the public opinion polls much as the ancients used to consult the entrails of chickens, came to the conclusion that they must on no account be cast in the role of being anti-American.

So Kinnock and Healey decided to pose in Washington as better Reaganites than Thatcher. This piece of 'clever politics' had of course about as much chance of winning Reagan to a gentlemanly neutrality in the British elections as Kinnock's previous sallies across the Atlantic. But it should have come as no surprise to those who have looked to Kinnock to rid Britain of its anti-Soviet arsenal.

£10,000,000,000

Labour's pledge to get rid of the independent British weapons—Polaris and the proposed Trident—was based on the argument that it cost too much. It is true that nothing better sums up the obscene logic of capitalism than spending £10,000,000,000 on new weapons whilst hospitals and schools are closed through lack of funds. But this did not seem to bother Kinnock and the writers of Labour's policy document, 'A Modern Britain in a Modern World'. All the money saved on Trident would be spent on strengthening Britain's conventional forces:

'We will cancel Trident, and we will de-commission the ageing Polaris. In doing so we will not only release money which we will devote to strengthening conventional defences, but we will also remove the imbalances and distortions that Trident has caused within our armed forces.' (p6)

Once again Labour is trying to out-patriot Thatcher. For Kinnock and Healey the confusion this sudden turn-around might create amongst loyal Labour voters is a poor second to the satisfaction it will generate amongst the militarists and bosses. As Healey commented in 1983 after spearheading a similar attempt to ditch unilateralism:

'The reason we were defeated in so far as defence played a role, is that people thought we were in favour of disarming ourselves. It wasn't the confusion, it was the unilateralism that was the dangerous thing.'

But if a turnaround on Cruise was to be expected from Healey, anyone who has any remaining faith in the Labour left should look closely at their response to these attacks on conference policy.

The strategy of the Tribunes and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee was summed up by the slogans of unity and realignment. This meant keeping quiet about Kinnock's policies on the economy, Ireland and the witch-hunt, at least until after a Labour election victory. Realignment was sold to the Labour rank and file on the grounds that it involved compromises from the right as well as the left. Hadn't conference overwhelmingly voted for getting rid of Cruise? Hadn't they voted by a two-thirds majority for lesbian and gay rights?

REALIGNMENT

As recently as mid-March one Nigel Stanley was extolling the virtues of this realignment in the pages of Tribune:

'A good example of this new concept of unity is provided by the new defence campaign. A polarised Labour Party would have precluded it. Instead both sides of the party have made compromises here, the right probably more than the left, reflecting the left's strength.'

Upbraiding the 'hard' left for pushing the 'Britain out of NATO' demand, Stanley wrote:

'Such a campaign would immediately result in internal party civil war and sabotage the defence campaign. The irresponsibility is awesome.'

Even the Campaign Group—the so-called hard left—went along with the view that nothing must be done to rock the boat. They gave Kinnock the promise that his leadership would not be challenged prior to an election. Now they are left impotently pleading with him to honour conference policies. But they will not organise to fight his retreat on Cruise.

As usual the right have shown that with the aid of the vicious Tory tabloids and their bought and paid for opinion polls, there is no compromise they cannot and will not bust as part of their loyal service to the bosses. Lose one, two, three general elections! Anything to save British capitalism from nuclear disarmament! That is how the right defend their class interests. How does the left defend the interests of the class they claim to stand for? By silence.

What lessons should Labour supporters learn from all this? That these people are good for nothing—watch-dogs that do not bark. If Labour loses again then doubtless the mouths will open and the pens will flow again—busy at their job of wooing the outraged and disillusioned membership back to the party, promising it will never, never happen again. This time don't be fooled!

NEEDED-THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE

IN 1967 IN Britain the Abortion Act was passed. It gave some women a highly limited access to abortions on the NHS. But its twenty years of existence have been marked by repeated attacks on its provisions.

A horrific recent example of such an attack was furnished by the Oxford graduate Robert Carver. He was prepared to drag his one-time lover through the courts and the House of Lords to force her to have 'his' child. And who paid the £40,000 legal bills? The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC). This outfit and its ally, LIFE, are always in the wings waiting to prosecute a doctor or woman for violating the 1967 Act or push another Bill through Parliament. They have never let up on their propaganda campaign—of glossy posters, leaflets, films and videos—aimed at impressionable youth.

Their latest film *Silent Scream II* produced to coincide with the 20th anniversary of legal abortion in Britain, shows an ultrasound recording of a 12 week old foetus being aborted. In the USA this foetus has almost become a star. In Britain the need for a sequel to *Silent Scream I* has not arisen from Box Office success—just that there have been more than enough teachers willing to push this reactionary propaganda in lesson time for free.

On top of this we have also seen the state intervening not to force women to have babies, but the reverse. The courts are ordering a 17 year old mentally handicapped ward of court to be sterilised for her own good. Is this a contradiction? No; the fight is on for women to win the positive right to choose whether to have a child or not.

The Abortion Act was an attempt to resolve the horrifying situation, pre-1967 of between 15,000 and 100,000 backstreet abortions a year. Twenty years on, backstreet abortions have stopped in Britain. However, less than 50% of all abortions performed are carried out on the NHS. All too often a woman is at the mercy of a doctor's whim or prejudice. And there are vast regional variations in availability.

In the West Midlands only 20% of

abortions are done on the NHS. In the Northern Regional Health Authority 85% are on the NHS. Nevertheless the Act obviously altered the lives of working class women. But the moral right have never been able to leave it alone because of what it represents. There have been no less than eight parliamentary campaigns to either repeal the act altogether, or to impose drastic restrictions on its availability.

The two most serious attacks however, came from the White Bill in 1975 and the Corrie Bill in 1979. Both were private member's Bills which tried to impose a more restrictive qualification of eligibility for abortion, introduce a 20 week time limit and impose severe licensing restrictions on referral agencies and nursing homes. The latest attack came from the Bishop of Birmingham who wanted to restrict the time-limit from 28 weeks to 24.

Abortion is a vital issue for working class women. Rich women have always had access to safer abortion, because they can pay. Working class women pre-1967 had to risk their own lives to get rid of a pregnancy they neither wanted nor could afford. Today there is still that class divide, because the NHS does not provide sufficient facilities, and because it remains a doctor's choice; so women still have to pay.

The other vital issue raised for working class women is their right to control their own fertility. Ruling class women can pay for the best abortion facilities and the artificial insemination treatments which cost thousands. That control is what the ruling class want to deny to working class women, so that they are condemned to a life as the 'carer' in the home. With the government withdrawing funding from NHS and Social Services women are vital to the care of the sick, the elderly and the young.

Nothing testifies to capitalism's reactionary nature more than these constant attacks on abortion and control of fertility. A system which has provided the most up to date technology and expertise in organ

transplants and hip replacements continually denies women the simplest of medical treatments that would give them real control over their own lives.

Labour have recently published their view of abortion in the *Women and Health* pamphlet. It argues that a Labour Government will by-pass doctors opposed to abortion. They will aim to increase the number of NHS abortions to 75% and to reduce the differences between areas. The report sums up:

'All women will be entitled to an abortion under the Act and will be able to obtain one easily.'

But they have emphasised that this will not mean abortion on demand. All the aims of Labour are within the confines of the 1967 Act, which is inadequate. It does not recognise the key democratic right to free abortion on demand. Of course we support the aim of increasing NHS abortions, but the aim should be nothing short of 100% and there should be a clear commitment to fund the necessary facilities.

Labour is not prepared to tackle two vital issues: first they would continue to allow doctors and nurses to object to abortions on grounds of conscience. This raises the moral objections of individual doctors and nurses above the interests of women. It should be opposed in any form. Neither will Labour impose a three-line whip on the issue of abortion. This indicates they also see it as a moral issue for the individual MP, not a right for half the population!

Our demand on Labour and the trade union movement is simple: they should defend the 1967 Act against the attacks of the moral right and fight to extend women's control of their own bodies through:

- Free abortion on demand
- Free access to safe contraception
- Free access to all methods of overcoming infertility
- Rejection of all forced sterilisation

by Jane Potter

ROME'S IMMACULATE CONCEPTIONS

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH has once again proved itself an entrenched enemy of women's emancipation. Almost twenty years on from the edict that forbade abortion and contraception, the Vatican has just dropped another load of papal bull on the subject of sex and reproduction.

This latest offering from the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (née Inquisition) targets surrogate motherhood, artificial insemination and test-tube fertilisation, and sex selection along with the old favourites of abortion, contraception and masturbation, as hi-tech cardinal sins. The document declares:

'Marriage does not confer upon the spouses the right to have a child but only the right to perform those natural rights which are, per se, ordered to procreation.'

Amazing, but true—if it's not natural, it's not on. But hang on, this criterion applies only to sex. Tampering with disorders to other parts of the body to get them functioning is fine. But tampering with the reproductive organs is a mortal sin. Why?

Let's face it, the right to control your own appendix is not likely to challenge women's oppression very much. But the right to control your own fertility certainly does. And there's the rub. For the Vatican—a prop of capitalist society—women's oppression needs to be maintained. Hence the absurd logical con-

tortions that the holy fathers have conducted to justify calling for all marriages to be blessed by children on the one hand, and now all marriages to be blessed by children only on condition that they are produced 'naturally'. On both counts the aim is to deny women control of their own bodies.

Amazingly the church has ruled that condoms can be used to catch sperm for use in artificial insemination providing partners are married. But there are conditions. To allow for the possibility of fertilisation the condom has to be punctured with little holes—a new form of holy communion perhaps?

Best of all though is the Holy Father's call to the faithful to help themselves get through moral difficulties by contemplating the Virgin Mary. The man is seriously telling infertile couples to solve their worries by contemplating a woman called by God to become the first surrogate mother.

Ordinary working class Catholics need to draw a lesson from this latest round of moral interference from the Vatican. The church is trying to rule your lives not in your interests but in its own and those of the capitalist society it supports. So when a copy of the Sacred Congregation's document arrives in your parish tell the priest to pulp it! ■

by Mark Hoskisson

FUND APPEAL

The 1987 Workers Power fighting fund has got off to a flying start. We set a target of £5,000 and have gone a good way to the first £1,000 of that. Lack of space in the previous paper prevented us from reporting the £220 we received in donations in February. This month though we can report that we have received a total of £334. We are very grateful to a

reader in Heme, West Germany, who sent us 50DM (handy given the strength of the mark against the pound) and to readers and supporters in South London, who kept up their regular flow to the fund, Cardiff, Stoke, Nottingham and Merseyside whose contributions made up the rest of the month's total. Please keep the money coming in fast. Send cheques and postal orders to Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

LABOUR'S RACIST RECORD



MAX MADDEN, LABOUR MP for Bradford, told the 1986 Labour Party Conference that he had dealt with 2,500 immigration cases in the preceding year.

With deportations averaging 250 a month it is little wonder that some Labour MPs, especially those who rely on a big immigrant vote, spend large amounts of time protesting and campaigning for the interests of individual constituents. But by the same token, the overwhelming silence of most Labour MPs on immigration and the lack of a prioritised national campaign against deportations, reflects Labour's cynical approach to the whole question.

This cynicism was illustrated perfectly by Shadow Home Secretary Gerald Kaufman when he attacked the Tories' recent visa requirements as racist. Racist they certainly are, excluding visitors only from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, India and Nigeria. But the whole history of Labour's policy on immigration is one of unbridled and unashamed racism. And as for their planned 'non-racist' immigration controls, immigration spokesman Alf Dubs spelt out what to expect:

'Douglas Hurd was talking about Labour having an open door policy on immigration. It's not true. We would knock-out the racial discriminatory aspects of legislation, but it would be pretty tight all the same.'

And who might these 'pretty tight' measures be aimed at? Alf Dubs speaking in Leicester in February gave a pretty clear answer. He said that Labour's immigration policy begins from the assumption that 'unemployment means that Britain is no longer a country of primary immigration'.

Dubs tries to justify immigration controls, but promoting immigration laws as an answer to racism, let alone linking them to unemployment, plays straight into the hands of those who say immigration causes racial violence and unemployment. It panders to the false idea that black people are to blame for the violent attacks carried out on them by racists and to the idea that unemployment is caused by the presence of too many black people.

The fact is that unemployment is as old as capitalism itself. It has nothing to do with how many people there are, but everything to do with the profits, or lack of them, of the bosses and their subsequent need

for labour or for getting rid of it. And the idea that black people are to blame for racial violence is as ludicrous as the argument that women who get raped have only themselves to blame.

Founded on the idea that no more primary immigration is possible, the supposed anti-racist content of Labour's proposed changes rests on removing the obstacles to spouses and other relatives of those already in Britain.

But there can be no such thing as an anti-racist immigration law under capitalism, implemented by Labour or anyone else. Capitalism needs racism, along with nationalism, sexism and sectional divisions, to divide workers in order to rule more easily. Britain's imperialist past has left the Indian sub-continent, and former colonies in Africa and the Caribbean in states of abject poverty. Immigration laws in Britain have always existed to control and stem the flow of cheap labour from these former colonies when capitalism no longer needs it. In other words immigration laws are inevitably aimed at black people whose labour, and therefore presence, is no longer wanted by the bosses.

Labour will keep the major elements of racist immigration laws that exist on the statute books at present. It should be no surprise, because successive Labour governments put them there in the first place.

RENEWED

In August 1965 Wilson's government renewed the 1962 Tory Commonwealth Immigrants Act, specifically adding a rule restricting 'coloured immigration'. In 1968 Labour brought in the Kenyan Asian Act which banned most of the Asians who held British passports via a work related voucher system. It left 150,000 Asians stateless for reasons Wilson laughably claimed were 'geographical' not racial.

In 1969 Callaghan, then Labour Home Secretary, bowed to Tory pressure and barred citizens from the 'new Commonwealth', the countries with predominantly black populations, from entering Britain to marry fiancées. In 1971 the Tories finished the job and banned all primary immigration, that is by men looking for work.

Back in office in 1974 Wilson and

Callaghan took up where the Tories had left off. Despite a Labour Party Conference decision to repeal the 1971 Act, it was left in place. Merlyn Rees admitted that the laws were designed to stop black people coming in and declared that they would be toughened. It was under the Labour Party that virginity tests began on Asian women arriving to marry fiancés.

In 1976 a Labour Green Paper on Nationality laid the groundwork for the Tories' 1981 Nationality Act. Michael Foot got in on the act, issuing a Department of Employment memorandum saying that work permits for blacks should

not be renewed if a white worker was available for the job. It was Labour too who stepped up the attacks of the Illegal Immigrants Intelligence Unit.

Given this record who can expect Labour to implement even the most minimal reforms? For every black vote there will be another five or ten votes Kinnock will want to win from the racist 'consensus' of British society. Kinnock wants to be seen as a respectable and reliable candidate for high office. His new attack on Black Sections and the black Labour candidates are the logical consequence of ridding Labour's public image of all 'fringe' causes.



Apartheid at Britain's door

For all but a few Labour MPs, the rights of black people to live, work and visit family in this country are definitely 'fringe issues'.

Labour's unwillingness to denounce all of Thatcher's racist laws leaves them unable to fight consistently against racism in general. So the deportations and visa controls continue whilst Labour MPs can muster nothing more than the occasional demand for Home Office Minister David Waddington's resignation, or individual 'case-work'. A deportation might be opposed. But the laws which allow such actions to be carried out are left unchallenged.

An organised fight to break Labour from this history of betrayal has to begin now. We must fight to make Labour honour its commitment to repeal the 1981 Nationality Act, and the Tory rules on visitors and refugees. But a consistent anti-racist struggle must aim at the removal of all immigration laws.

Reformist sceptics, even in the black community and Black Sections will laugh at this 'utopian demand'. But until 1904 Britain had neither real immigration laws nor an immigration service to enforce them. Only with the development of imperialism and the racist chauvinism it engendered did the first controls appear. They are a construction of racism and imperialism.

No-one in their right mind would rely on Labour to take the smallest step away from the apartheid system that operates in British ports and airports without mass working class strike action. That action has to begin now. Trade unions, black organisations and Labour Party branches should campaign around every deportation or refusal of entry. But we need a National Anti-Deportation Campaign to mobilise action against the laws as a whole. And we need it now! ■

by Laura Williams

BLACK SECTIONS CONFERENCE

ONE HUNDRED AND sixty members of some 40 Labour Party Black Sections met in Nottingham last month for the Black Sections' fourth Annual Conference. Outlawed by the Labour leadership and vilified in the press, the conference revealed a new determination to defend and extend Black Sections.

In contrast the official Labour Black and Asian Advisory Committee has stagnated. Unelected, unaccountable and undemocratic it has been labelled the 'bantustan committee' by Black Sections.

Many in the black communities are sick of being used as voting fodder by Labour. They are looking to Black Sections to give the necessary leadership in an organised fight against racism in general and Labour's racist immigration policy in particular. There was some reflection of this at the conference in the motions debated.

In four policy-papers on immigration, education, jobs and policing the Black Sections attempted to lay down the basis of a concerted fight against existing Labour policy. But the pull of electoral politics was present even in the conference itself. Whilst the conference voted for a position of no

The Black Sections Conference in March called forth a torrent of abuse from the Labour leadership; divisive, separatist, etc. Kinnock has swung the Labour NEC behind a policy of disciplinary action against any black parliamentary candidates who try to campaign on policies other than Labour's official line. Labour Party members and class fighters in the black community should scorn Kinnock's diatribes.

They should defend Black Sections by fighting in the party for:

- The boycott of the Black and Asian Advisory Committee.
- Opposition to all bans and expulsions of groups and individuals.
- The defence of the right of black people to caucus in all workers organisations.

immigration controls, a section based around the prospective black MPs argued that non-racist controls were possible.

If these sort of arguments triumph then no matter how progressive the policies adopted are, they will remain merely paper policies. Not only must the anti-racist policies adopted be formulated as clear demands on Labour that black MPs are forced to fight for, but the Black Sections must prioritise a campaign to win the whole rank and file of the Labour party and crucially, the trade unions, to consistent anti-racism.

The conference did not provide all the answers for black people faced with a barrage of attacks from the state, press and individual

racists. Despite the perspective of five or six black MPs after the election it was clear that these prospective MPs were by no means committed to accountability to the Black Sections, or to leading a campaign of direct action against a Labour government if it implemented racist policies. What the conference did reveal however was the enormous potential for a fight to break Labour from its racist past.

Black Sections should be built in every area. But they need to turn out to the community, in particular to workers in struggle and to the youth, with a programme of direct action against all racist attacks, capable of mobilising black workers inside and outside the Labour Party. ■

BROADWATER SHOW TRIAL

THE BLAKELOCK TRIAL will stand high in the list of legal crimes against Britain's black people. The Sun, the Star, the Mirror, the Mail strove, day after day, to outdo each other in the contest for the vilest racist headline. Before during and after the trial, witnesses, the defendants and their families were raided, harried and pilloried. Confessions were beaten out of kids and the estate was subjected to a brutal occupation.

A veritable dictatorship descended on Broadwater Farm. Reading the tabloid press you could be forgiven for thinking that the NF had taken them over. Even the killing of a policeman does not usually warrant such an outpouring of the sewers.

The reasons are not hard to find. The police and the press were launching a counterattack not only on the effective resistance of the youth of Broadwater Farm but on all the acts of resistance, all the uprisings of the past five years. This

trial was their revenge. With the aid of the press hysteria they got their convictions without any evidence.

For the press it was an opportunity to stoke up hatred and fear against the working class and unemployed Black communities of the inner city ghettos and to poison the white working class population with another dose of racism. They did so because they fear the links that were built up in the uprisings, in the miners' strike and in the various anti-deportation campaigns over the last few years.

We must redouble our efforts to stop them. We must start by demanding the quashing of these infamous verdicts. Winston Silcott, Egin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite must not rot in jail. They are victims of naked 'class' justice. They are class-war prisoners. We demand their immediate release. We must campaign for it including demanding that a future Labour Home Secretary will immediately carry this out. ■

The *Workers Press* of March 14 launched a sharp attack on Workers Power over our positions on the Simon Bolivar Brigade. Workers Power is accused of being part of a 'united front' with the 'imperialist press' and with 'bourgeois governments such as that of Argentina'. For good measure the same article, as well as a statement from the WRP political committee, throws in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, identifying its attacks on the Simon Bolivar Brigade with those of the MRCI.

Trotskyists have a term for this type of polemic. It is the amalgam. Stalinism brought this to perfection as a weapon against Trotsky, characterising his criticism of the bureaucratic regime in the USSR as a united front with the imperialist press and bourgeois governments. Gerry Healy, Alex Mitchel and co resorted habitually to this method. Now it seems the political committee of the WRP are hell bent on reviving it. This amalgam lumps our 'attacks' with those of the class enemy. It suggests that there is some sort of identity between Raul Alfonsin, Tomas Borge, etc and the positions of the MRCI. Such an impudent falsehood can only mean that the *Workers Press* polemic is relying on its readers' ignorance for its effect. For those who do not know what Workers Power actually said in 1979 we will repeat it.

Certainly we made criticisms of the Simon Bolivar Brigade (SBB). Those criticisms were in no way from the standpoint of the South American bourgeoisie or from that of the FSLN. On the contrary our criticisms were of the SBB's illusions in and concessions to the FSLN and 'Sandino-ism'. Naturally therefore we defended the SBB against

WRP AMALGAM

the attacks of the Sandinista government. The United Secretariat—both the SWP(US) and the Mandelites criticised the SBB from the right. Indeed the USFI delegation to Nicaragua endorsed the FSLN's expulsion and its attacks on the brigade. We said:

... while not supporting the initiative of the Simon Bolivar Brigade nor endorsing its policies we defend unconditionally the right for the Brigade to organise politically among the Nicaraguan masses for which it was expelled by the FSLN leadership.' (*Workers Power* 11 Dec/Jan 79/80)

In the same article we protested at the USFI's support of a bourgeois government's repression against its own members. We also described the SBB/PST positions on Nicaragua as 'a break with the centrist positions of the USFI to the left.'

We also characterised Morenoism's past record as 'deeply opportunist' and 'subject to wild vacillations of policy'. We expect to have sharp differences with the LIT over this. But when the WRP leaders enter the field to concoct amalgams they bring into the debate their own past positions.

The political committee statement on 'Slandering Against the Simon Bolivar Brigade' coyly remarks that the WRP

bore a major responsibility for 'blocking discussion about the Brigade' and did little more than 'pass wordy resolutions on Nicaragua'. Now that certainly is being 'economical with the truth!' The WRP did a whole lot more than 'block discussion', it cheered the expulsion of the Brigade from Nicaragua. *Newsline* (23 Aug 79) referred to the Brigade's 'reactionary attempts to create splits and divisions in order to undermine a successful revolution'. It quotes with implied agreement an FSLN denunciation of them as 'counter-revolutionaries'.

Yet despite (or was it because) of this filthy slandering of political opponents, the political positions of the WRP and the SWP(US) were in all essentials identical—slavish subordination to the FSLN as the embodiment of the world revolution! This abject submission to the bourgeois nationalists naturally led to denouncing anyone who defended the proletariat's elementary class interests (which the SBB, be it said, did!). The only shade of difference was the blood thirsty enthusiasm of the *Newsline*. We suggest to the comrades that they reprint their 1979 articles on Nicaragua and append to them a political assessment. Moreover we suggest they do it before they write any more articles accusing us of joint attacks with the bourgeoisie on subjective revolutionaries. ■

by Dave Stocking

Fake Trotskyists are expelled from Nicaragua

The revolutionary Sandinista government of Nicaragua has expelled all anti-proletarian Latin American Trotskyists from the country.

The USFI have been officially denounced as 'counter-revolutionaries' by the Sandinista leadership which has expelled them from the country.

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People in glass houses ...

THE BACKGROUND TO the controversy over the role of the Simon Bolivar Brigade lies in the political crisis that developed in the USFI in 1979 over the Nicaraguan Revolution. The vacillating character of centrism was demonstrated once again with the USFI leadership conducting a 180 degree turn in the political positions they argued for right up to the revolution in July 1979. (see *Workers Power* 10 for a full analysis of USFI's U-turn.)

Up to the very eve of the Sandinista victory the analysis of the Nicaraguan struggle was in the hands of one Fausto Amador, brother of one of the founders of the FSLN who was killed in 1976 by Somoza's troops. Fausto, unlike his brother, had broken from the FSLN in a politically dishonourable manner, making a public statement, which was used by Somoza, declaring that the guerilla struggle was doomed and calling on the guerillas to give themselves up under guarantees to Somoza's police. While later admitting this to be 'a grave political error', Amador went on to take a post as Cultural Attache at Somoza's Belgian Embassy. He still held this post when he became a sympathiser of the French LCR, though he gave up this 'formal' diplomatic position in 1973. By 1977 he was a member of the SWP(US) and thereafter wrote articles on Nicaragua for *Intercontinental Press* combined with *Inprecor* which, at that time, reflected both 'wings' Mandelites and Barnesite of the USFI.

'PRECIPITATE'

As late as June 1979 the line being put in this organ of the USFI was that the moves towards an insurrection against Somoza led by the FSLN were 'precipitate' and 'voluntaristic'. In an article by Amador and Sarah Santiago, *Intercontinental Press* declared;

'The FSLN's course runs counter to the mass movements possibility for recovery. In the short term and even on the military plane, this can only lead to social and political conditions in which great disasters will be imminent for the FSLN itself.' (*Intercontinental Press* 11 Jun 79)

Rarely can a political perspective have been proved so wrong in so short a time!

After the successful insurrection and consolidation of the FSLN/GNR Government Amador disappeared without trace or apology from the pages of *Intercontinental Press*. The USFI, operating its usual method that there was no arguing with a successful revolution, set about obliterating the memory of its lack of foresight by heaping praise on the Sandinistas. All efforts were bent to justifying the popular front government of the Government for National Reconstruction (GNR) and its policies. Naturally enough 'ultra left sectarians', that is any group which criticised the pro-bourgeois direction of the government, were viciously attacked in the pages of *Intercontinental Press*, especially the SBB.

The SBB was organised by the PST of

Columbia which was the Bolshevik Faction's supporting group in that country.

Many charges have been made against the SBB mainly emanating from the PSR of Columbia, the USFI supporting group. These charges have been taken up by other tendencies - the iSt (Spartacists) and the Argentine PO (Politica Obrera/Partido Obrero). The charges of malpractice and of bizarre adventurist actions by members of the Brigade are ultimately far less important than the political and strategic issues involved. The formation and sending of the Brigade had enormous political weaknesses from the outset. Of course Trotskyists cannot be opposed in principle to sending volunteers to fight on the revolutionary democratic or proletarian side in civil wars. Trotskyists from various countries fought in the POUM militias in Spain in the 1930s.

But the circumstances in June 1979 did not make this tactic a promising one. The

unwilling to integrate itself into the FSLN's military operations. It was raised in Columbia not as a workers and poor peasants' militia force but on a popular front basis. Special appeals were made to bourgeois and radical parties to support it. It was stated that the 'only programmatic point of the SBB was to support the struggle of the Sandinista people.' 'Sandino Bonds' were issued. Attempts were made to draw in Columbian Liberal Party leaders into a committee of 'Friends of Nicaragua', leaders involved in repression of workers and socialists in Columbia. Clearly a proletarian international brigade would have made clear its political basis and not cloaked itself in the colours of the petit-bourgeois nationalist FSLN. Indeed the decision to name the Brigade after a bourgeois nationalist, Simon Bolivar was obviously designed to further this image.

Nevertheless despite these opportunist manoeuvres the political positions developed by the PST/SBB

Socialista 27 July 79 No 163/164). This at a time when the USFI was denouncing all these demands as 'ultra-left' and justifying the pro-capitalist policies of the GNR/FSLN as necessary to gain 'a breathing space'.

Why did the SBB/PST take up positions clearly to the left of the USFI? In effect they held to the critical positions the latter had held in common with them prior to summer 1979. The SBB was moreover subject to the actual pressures of a revolutionary situation. It moved them to the left or rather it prevented them from moving to the right. These pressures were positive, the upsurge of the Nicaraguan workers and poor peasants amongst whom they helped to organise trade unions, and negative, the blows of the petty-bourgeois, rapidly turning bourgeois, nationalists of the FSLN.

Yet the SBB, despite its left opposition to the GRN and its support for pro-working class democratic and transitional demands, still, in our view,

The trouble with this formulation is that it could well describe the governmental solution that actually occurred in Nicaragua when the 'bourgeois ministers' defected. This did not result in a workers and peasants government but one which continued to defend capitalism in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas certainly 'support themselves' on these committees and militias but use this support to protect the mixed economy. But even if the FSLN had been forced by the combined pressures of the proletariat on the one side and the imperialists and Nicaraguan bourgeoisie on the other to 'take the Cuban road' it would have ended up reproducing the kind of workers state where the proletariat is deprived of political power. A revolutionary programme today has to include measures needed to avoid this outcome.

POWER

The measures should not seem new to Trotskyists. They were to call for workers and peasants councils and a militia to which any government should be accountable; to call for a workers and peasants government subordinate to them. The task was not to call for 'organs of dual power' as the SBB/PST did. Rather it was to call for the existing (and indeed developing) organs of workers and peasants power, which had already created a duality of power, to so constitute themselves and so act that this conflict of the powers (bourgeois and proletarian) would be resolved in the favour of the workers.

Above all it was necessary to call for, and fight to build a revolutionary workers party—a Trotskyist party. Part of the tactics to create it would certainly have been to call on the 'left' elements of the FSLN to break with the bourgeoisie, not only outside but also and most critically inside the FSLN itself. Certainly no revolutionary party worthy of the name could be built without winning the working class mass base away from the bourgeois and the proto-Stalinist and social democratic Sandinista leaders. To our knowledge the SBB never posed the question of building a Trotskyist workers party before it was expelled, nor did the PST raise this slogan.

WRONG

The SBB however never had the time to test out its erroneous slogans, as its activities in forming trade unions independent of the Sandinista's and encouraging land takeovers brought it into an immediate clash with the government. There was no question where revolutionaries should have stood on this class issue. The USFI and the IC/WRP sided with the repression of a bourgeois government defending its class interests. Workers Power stood and stands in defence of the PST/SBB on this issue, whatever our political disagreements with them. ■

by Stuart King

FSLN was engaged in its final victorious offensive. It was not so much short of trained fighters as time in which to train them. Rather it was calling for medical teams to come to Nicaragua from the solidarity committees throughout the continent. The SBB was not an effective military unit. Many of its members had no military training or experience. Consequently the Sandinista Southern front command kept it in Costa Rica until after the fall of Somoza. Some members who did have military training or experience joined FSLN units as individuals.

Far more serious than its tactical advisability was the political basis on which it was set up which combined extreme political amorphousness with a tight organisational grip by the PST. Thus it was neither a military 'anti-imperialist united front' nor a Trotskyist party militia. Ideologically it presented itself as 'Sandinista' whilst organisationally it was unable or

after the overthrow of Somoza were well to the left of the newly adopted USFI positions. The PST argued that the revolution should be pushed forward in a socialist direction. It called for the expropriation of the landowners without compensation and the distribution of land to the peasants. To combat the chaos after the war it called for production and distribution to be 'put in the hands of the masses and popular organisations', for an 'economic plan based on the nationalisation of the big companies'. It called for the renunciation of the foreign debt and demanded 'unconditional economic and technical assistance from the workers states'. It called for the 'immediate elections for a democratic constituent assembly' (*El*

A CRITIQUE

SEVENTY YEARS AGO in Russia the explosion of proletarian anger that swept aside the regime of Nicholas the Last led to a profoundly contradictory situation at the level of state power. Although they had not participated in, let alone led the uprising, conservative and liberal bourgeois politicians constituted themselves as a provisional government for fear of where the mass mobilisations and the workers' and soldiers' councils—the soviets—that had multiplied since February, would lead.

In turn, those who formed the executive of the Petrograd Soviet were desperate for a return to order. The Menshevik (reformist) leadership of the executive—Chkheidze and Skobelev—together with Kerensky were convinced that the Russian Revolution, as a bourgeois revolution, would logically find its expression in a bourgeois government. The executive actually urged the bourgeois parties to take power and pledged support to the Provisional Government.

SUPPORT

While the mass of soviet delegates agreed to support the Provisional Government they also resolved, independently of the executive, to establish an 'observation committee' to watch over the Provisional Government on behalf of the Soviet. This expressed both a profound proletarian mistrust of the Provisional Government and a belief that the Soviet's job was to pressure and watch over that government to ensure it kept its promises. As a mass meeting of the Petrograd cable workers declared on 3 March:

'We consider the most essential issue of the current moment to be the establishment of strict control over the ministers who are appointed by the State Duma and who do not enjoy popular confidence. This control must be constituted by representatives of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.'

The workers looked to the Soviet to exercise that control. Workers' resolutions were automatically sent to the Soviet not to the Provisional Government. What had emerged in Russia was a dual power situation. Power was divided between the representatives of two irreconcilable forces.

SOVEREIGNTY

The working masses saw the Soviet as the voice of their struggles. The bourgeoisie saw the Provisional Government as their bastion against those struggles. The arrangement within which the Soviet supported, yet watched over the Provisional Government, showed all too clearly that sovereignty in the state, was in reality, split. Yet the willingness of the majority of Soviet delegates to consciously endorse such an arrangement reflected profound illusions on the part of the majority of workers in the feasibility of a partnership with the bourgeoisie.

The leaders of the Soviet did not see dual power as an unstable moment in struggle, the outcome of which would be resolved on behalf of one or other of the contending classes. They saw it as a permanent agreement struck between partners. As Trotsky put it later:

'In the revolution of 1917, we see the official democracy consciously and intentionally creating a two power system, dodging with all its might the transfer of power into its own hands.'

In reality the dual power could only have been a prelude to either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat breaking the stalemate to their own final advantage. As Trotsky explained:



RE-ARMING THE PARTY

'Either the bourgeoisie will actually dominate the old state apparatus, altering it a little for its purpose, in which case the soviets will come to nothing, or the soviets will form the foundation of a new state, liquidating not only the old governmental apparatus, but also the domination of those classes which it served.'

The momentous events of the Russian Revolution found the Bolshevik Party both organisationally and programmatically unprepared. Prior to Lenin's return to Russia in April and the subsequent party conference the party was both confused and divided. In Petrograd the party took four distinctly different positions on the dual power situation. The Vyborg District Committee held to a programme of demands that combined both profound mistrust of the Provisional Government with a belief that the terms of the revolution were strictly democratic.

On 1 March they called for the soviets to form a Provisional Revolutionary Government in line with the Bolshevik demands of 1905. However the task of that government was to prepare the way for the convention of a democratic constituent assembly.

The Petersburg Committee was composed primarily of former political detainees, released by the February Revolution. They took a more conservative stance in line with the view that the tasks of the day were those of the democratic revolution. On 3 March they resolved to:

'not oppose the power of the Provisional Government in so far as its activities correspond to the interests of the proletariat and of the broad democratic masses of the people.'

This position implied no immediate challenge to the dominant line within the Soviet executive. It was evasive as to how 'far' the Provisional Government was actually serving the interests of the masses.

The Russian Bureau of the exiled Central Committee - comprising Shlyapnikov, Molotov and Zalutsky -

veered in several directions. At first they called for a Provisional Revolutionary Government to be formed, from above, by the parties represented on the Soviet executive. Its programmatic agenda was to be confined to implementing the 'three whales' of the Social Democratic minimum programme, the 8 hour day, the democratic republic and the confiscation of landed estates and their transfer to the peasantry, as well as preparing a constituent assembly.

Once again the perspective was of a purely democratic stage beyond which the revolution could not go. Indeed initially this perspective led them to ban leaflets issued by the more 'left' Vyborg district which were calling for the formation of a Soviet based government from below.

PERSPECTIVE

However this perspective of a pact with the other Soviet parties hit the snag that the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries did not want to share in a government with the Bolsheviks. The rapid realisation of this actually pushed the Russian Bureau left and by 22 March it was calling the soviets embryos of a new state power.

It was the editorial board of *Pravda* that occupied the most right-wing stance within Bolshevism. Edited by Stalin, Muranov and Kamenev the paper declared on 7 March:

'As far as we are concerned, what matters now is not the overthrow of capitalism but the overthrow of autocracy and feudalism.'

Perfectly consistently, Stalin followed this up with the reasoning that:

'the Provisional Government has, in fact, assumed the role of defender of the conquests of the revolutionary people. . . At present, it is not in our interest to force events by hastening the eviction of bourgeois strata who, inevitably, will one day detach themselves from us.'

On 15 March, Kamenev used

Pravda's pages to advocate conditional support for Russia's war effort now that the autocracy had been overthrown. Small wonder then that by mid-March rank and file worker Bolshevik cells in the Vyborg district were voting for calls to expel the *Pravda* leadership from the party.

This confusion reflected the inherent weaknesses and contradictions of Bolshevism's previously held programme for a thoroughgoing democratic revolution; it was to be made by the workers in alliance with the peasantry, yet it was to constitute a distinct and separate stage from the socialist revolution.

February 1917 saw the logic of the mobilised masses' demands going beyond the minimum programme of the democratic republic. Its soviets, militia and factory committees contained the embryo of a state of an entirely new sort whose proletarian democratic content transcended the forms and limits of bourgeois democracy.

In their own particular ways the contending factions were either attempting to limit the struggle to the terrain of democratic demands or they were striving to, but as yet programmatically incapable of, consistently going beyond it.

It was Lenin who was able to transcend the limitations of the old Bolshevik programme and perspective. And it is testimony to the vitality and strength of the historically constituted Bolshevik cadre, that open debate in the party led to its programmatic re-arming at the crucial hour.

Lenin's writings during the war, especially *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, led him to see that Russia was one, albeit exceptionally weak, link in the chain of world imperialism. Of necessity therefore the programme of the coming Russian Revolution could no longer be conceived in the terms of a national and democratic revolution but instead as a component of the international revolution against capitalism itself.

This realisation, coupled with a sharp recognition of the nature and potential of the soviets in February

and March 1917 made it possible for Lenin to re-elaborate and re-focus the Bolshevik programme in the face of Russia's social explosion. This was to pit him against each of the contending Bolshevik groupings in Petrograd and enable him to create a higher synthesis out of their most healthy reflexes, especially the reflexes of those closest to the rank and file insurgent workers.

Lenin's initial responses to the Russian Revolution were expressed in a series of articles submitted to *Pravda*, his *Letters from Afar*. Their political content was such a break with the 'old Bolshevism' beloved of Stalin that only a curtailed version of one of them was published by the editors.

Lenin immediately argued that the Soviet was 'an organisation of workers, the embryo of a workers' government', and that the only guarantee of the destruction of tsarism lay 'in arming the proletariat, in strengthening, extending and developing the role, significance and power of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies'.

SMASHING

In these writings Lenin is now concretely posing the Soviet as an embryo of a workers' government and not of a Provisional Revolutionary Government, as he had done in 1905 and 1906. While the Provisional Revolutionary Government had been ascribed the task of convening a constituent assembly the call for the latter does not appear in the *Letters* or in the codified *April Theses*. Lenin realised that what was now at stake was the smashing of the state machine of the exploiting classes and replacing it with a state of a new sort based on the workers' councils.

Lenin opposed the Petrograd Soviet's endorsement of the Provisional Government but saw real potential in the formation of the 'observation committee'. As he put it:

'Now, that's something real! It is worthy of the workers who have shed their blood for freedom, peace, bread for the people.'

It was, however, only 'a step along the right road' which must lead to the creation of workers' militias which would in turn make it possible to take the road to the 'Socialist Republics of all Countries'.

UNDERTAKEN

In the formation of the militia and the soviets the Russian workers had undertaken a course in which 'they themselves should constitute these organs of state power'. In his third letter Lenin announced:

'I said that the workers had smashed the old state machine. I would be more correct to say: have begun to smash it.'

The dual power outcome of the February Revolution necessitated either the transition to the workers' council (soviet) state or the triumph of bourgeois reaction. There could be no purely democratic stage of the Russian revolution.

Lenin's return from exile to the Finland Station allowed him to both intervene directly in the Bolshevik Party and further sharpen his programmatic armoury. At the head of the Soviet's official welcoming party a leading Menshevik urged Lenin to play his part in 'the closing of the democratic ranks'. Lenin promptly declined, declaring instead:

'The world-wide socialist revolution has already dawned...Any day now the whole of European capitalism may crash. The Russian Revolution accomplished by you has paved the way and opened a new epoch. Long live the world-wide socialist revolution.'

continued overleaf

DEFEND THE LPYS ... and why Militant

THE SINGLE MOST important issue facing the LPYS National Conference this year is the proposal of the Labour Party NEC to change the structure of its youth wing. The Labour leadership are proposing that the LPYS representative on the National Executive committee should be elected by a 'broader' franchise giving the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) and the Youth Trade Union Sections the right to participate in the election of the YS representative. Also the proposals would allow NOLS and the Youth Trades Union Sections to participate in the LPYS national conference. Therefore the NEC plans amount to a merger of the Labour youth organisations.

As they will most likely be taken at the next Labour Party conference it is vital that this LPYS conference discusses them and hammers out its own response. No YS member should be fooled by the Labour leadership's false sincerity when they talk of 'improving the position' of Labour's Youth. For years the Labour Party has starved the YS of funds, constantly cutting its miserly budget. In December 1983 the YS budget was cut from £13,000 a year to just £8,000.

Indeed, far from attempting to

improve the lot of the LPYS the Sawyer Proposals are specifically designed to stifle any left-wing opposition to Kinnock's leadership. Kinnock and Sawyer know very well that a merger of the YS with the much larger NOLS would snuff out the Militant leadership of the YS and replace it with the Kinnockite stooges of the so-called 'Democratic Left'. The NOLS leadership has become infamous for its corruption and bureaucratism. At NOLS conferences, Militant and other socialist delegates are regularly ruled out of order for no reason whatsoever so that the 'democratic left can keep control.

WELL POLICED

Kinnock would love such a well policed and loyal regime in the LPYS. Furthermore, the proposal to reduce the age limit from 26 to 21 years is merely a cynical manoeuvre by the Labour leadership to clear out the YS's most experienced membership leaving a younger less experienced membership which Kinnock can easily bully into submission.

Faced with this task of the LPYS is obvious. Labour's rotten witch-hunting proposals must be totally rejected. A national cam-

paign of resistance must be launched from the Blackpool Conference. YS branches must take the fight into ward parties, GMC's and trade union branches with resolutions committing them to oppose the proposals. There can only be one answer should Kinnock and company pass the proposals for mergers at the next Labour Party Conference without the agreement of the YS Conference.

The YS must defy the proposals. It should continue to function as a national and local organisation, seeking money from local affiliations to CLP's and trade union branches. It must demand of constituency GMC's that they allow voting delegates from YS branches, and that they defend this right up to and including disaffiliation from the party.

RESPONDED

Some groups such as Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), Socialist Organiser and Socialist Action have responded to the proposals with what they call a 'model response'. This holds that some of the proposals such as the idea of Youth Campaign Committees: 'would have a valuable role in co-ordinating campaigning'. Whether or not isolated positions in the NEC's proposals may be good, misses the point completely. The central principle at stake is the fight to defend the sovereignty of the YS Conference, and the right for it to decide its own policies, constitution and methods of operating without any interference from the Labour Party whatsoever.

For the above groupings to pick and choose between which NEC proposals are good and which are bad undermines that principle. It serves to legitimise the Labour leadership's interference in the affairs of the LPYS, the political aim of which is to witch-hunt the Militant leadership.

Revolution and convinced that the task was to achieve one. While *Pravda* published the *April Theses* Kamenef prefaced them with the remark:

'As for the general scheme of comrade Lenin, it seems to us unacceptable in that it starts from the assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is ended, and counts upon an immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution.'

Over a process of three weeks of argument and debate Lenin won the Party to his programmatic line of advance. After wavering and vacillating the party now set out to win the masses to a recognition of the potential power of the soviets and the fast-growing workers' militia, the Red Guards. After a period of confusion over the democratic character of the proletariat's tasks the party now embraced a programme of transition to workers' power. Breaking with a view of the Russian Revolution as an isolated national event the party now fought for the Russian workers to stand in the vanguard of the international revolution. As Lenin told the party conference that endorsed his line:

'The great honour of striking the first blow has fallen to the Russian proletariat but it should never forget that its progress and revolution are but part of a worldwide and growing revolutionary movement which is daily becoming more powerful. . . . We cannot see our task in any other light.' ■

by Dave Hughes

The 'model response' is an attempt by the rag bag of centrists and left-reformists who cobbled it together to avoid battle with the Labour leadership.

In their own way Militant and the LPYS National Committee that they dominate, have also capitulated. They have accepted the notion of a Youth Campaign Committee and the principle of minority participation of Trade Union Youth Sections.

But which YS national conference voted for it? Without first submitting to a conference, the 'Young Socialists' response—the '6.2 million for Labour' campaign—is simply buckling to the pressure of the Labour NEC.

Militant's response to the Sawyer proposals is also conciliatory in that it is designed to meet the Labour leaders half-way, being prepared to accept minimum participation of student and trade union sections in the YS rather than a full merger. Such a stance can please no-one and can only be a position from which further retreats are made.

Despite all Militant's huff and puff about being the 'Marxist' leadership of the YS they would not dream of fighting for the strategy which we in *Workers Power* outlined above to fight the Sawyer Proposals. Why not? Because a strategy which argues that we need to fight all the way to defend the independence and fighting capacity of the LPYS must mean being prepared to stand up against anything the Labour Party bureaucrats like Kinnock and Sawyer are going to throw at us even if that means being threatened with disaffiliation from the Labour Party.

INTERESTS

It would be far better to be outside the party but still able to fight to build a youth movement which can defend the interests of working-class youth than being snuffed out inside the party by the Kinnockite stooges. But Militant however will try to stay inside the Labour Party at any cost. They believe that the Labour Party, despite its pro-capitalist leadership, can and will inevitably be transformed into a revolutionary party. All that has to be done is to hang on in there, no matter what, and eventually 'Marxism's day will come!'

No matter what happens in the Labour Party, Militant argue that:

'the objective situation is moving in the direction of Marxism'. It is also true when witch-hunts are threatened:

'Whatever action is taken, the right-wing will fail. If they do not witch-hunt us we will gain influence. If they do witch-hunt us we will grow in influence.'

The reality is quite different. Last year when Militant supporters and other left-wingers were witch-hunted, Militant kept their heads down rather than stand up and fight attacks from Kinnock. Rather than fighting like real Marxists, Militant appeared as the tame left-wing in the Labour Party. Rather than mobilising other socialists to fight the witch-hunt and Kinnock's right-wing policies, the likes of Derek Hatton and Tony Mulhearn scurried off to the High Court.

Making compromises with the



Few young miners joined the LPYS

RE-ARMING THE PARTY

continued from page 5

It was in order to programmatically re-arm the Bolshevik Party for that struggle that Lenin presented his *April Theses - the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution*.

The task the theses set themselves was to advance from a stage of the revolution within which the insufficiently class conscious workers had needlessly ceded power to the bourgeoisie (that is, it was not a necessary, self-limiting bourgeois-democratic stage) to a second stage 'which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.'

The existing political regime in Russia made this possible not only because the masses were awakening to political life, but because the dual power regime, at least temporarily, was precluding repressive violence against the masses.

Of necessity this meant the Bolsheviks adopting a stance of no support for the Provisional Government and intransigent opposition to any talk of revolutionary defensism of the bourgeois government. But most importantly it meant recognising that the struggle had gone beyond the democratic programme, not because a democratic stage had been achieved and completed its useful life (as Stalinist historians have always claimed) but because the struggle for a parliamentary

republic would be a backward step compared with the struggle to realise the potential of the workers' council state that existed embryonically in the soviets. Only this outcome of the unresolved dual power could benefit the working masses. As Lenin put it:

'to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviet of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step.'

Instead the party must fight for the 'abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy', and for all these functions to be passed to the whole armed people.

Just as Lenin had rejected his previously held idea of a relatively distinct democratic stage in the revolution he was also clear that his programme did not envisage the immediate 'introduction' of socialism. In reality the revolution was to initiate the transition to socialism, as part of the international revolution, by establishing soviet control over a single national bank and bringing 'social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies'. At its very heart the *April Theses* contain a programme of transition from dual power (a state of affairs Lenin repeatedly cursed) to the proletarian dictatorship, the goal of the Marxist programme.

Lenin's struggle to re-arm the Bolsheviks met with bitter resistance from many of his comrades, still stuck in the rut of schematically expecting a democratic stage for the Russian

NUS - NO LEAD

THE NUS CONFERENCE failed to give a lead in the fight against the blows that are raining down on students. This should come as little surprise. Under NOLS leadership NUS has seen its role as a pressure group and not as a body that fights for its members. In this tradition conferences are times for 'hot air' opposition to the Tories. In election year that took on special importance for Vicky Phillips and her NOLS-ite colleagues on the NEC.

NOL's policy is to wait for a Labour government to save students from the wicked Tories. But what do students do about the attacks in the here and now? What do students do if Labour isn't elected? And what do Kinnock and Radice really have on offer? On all this the NUS executive were struck dumb.

There was, however, evidence at

Blackpool of a growing mood (amongst rank and file students) of impatience with the leadership's continuing inactivity and failure to respond to government attacks. A number of colleges have taken action, most notably Sussex in defence of student union autonomy, and the London School of Economics against their college's links with apartheid.

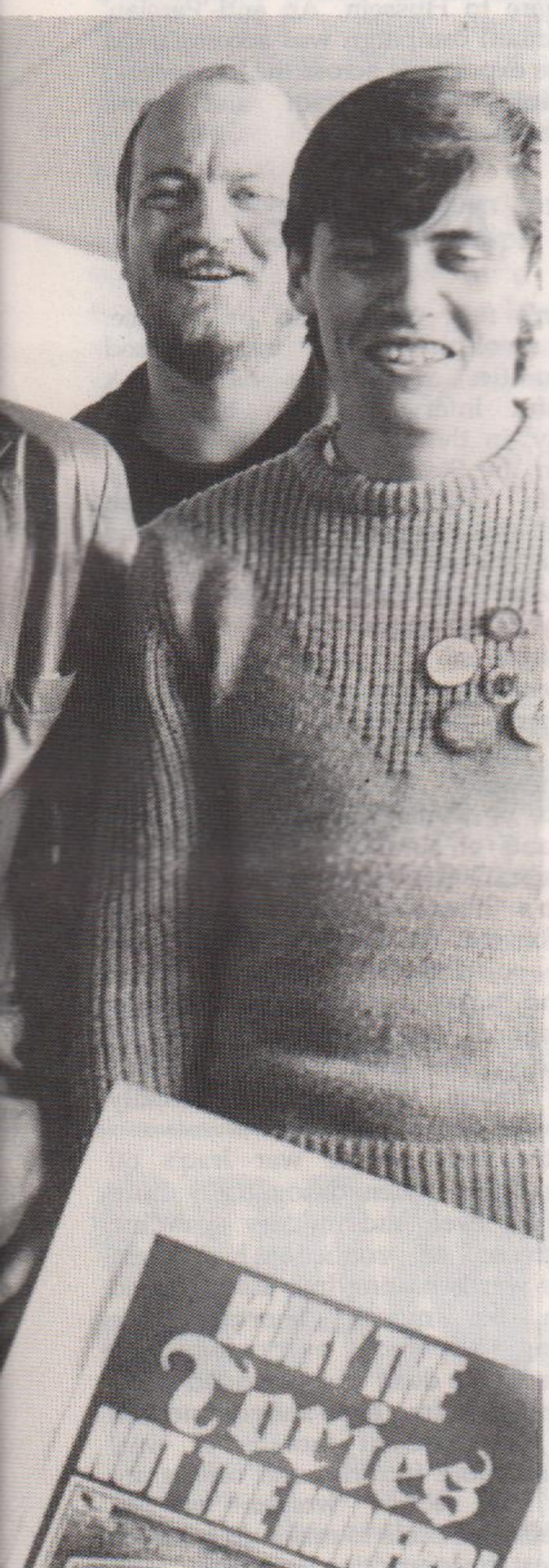
REFLECTED

The growing mood was reflected in the NUS election. Collette Williams, a Militant supporter from Further Education Labour Students (FELS), won a place on the executive, and Simon Pottinger, a Socialist Organiser supporter in Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), beat the NOLS candidate, Jo Bibbons, for the Vice-President

... can't

Labour leaders who are attacking the LPYS will allow them to press ahead with their attacks. If real Marxist politics mean anything it must mean standing at the forefront of the resistance to Kinnock's attacks and attempting to win those activists to the perspective of building a revolutionary Marxist tendency in the Labour Party, a revolutionary youth movement and revolutionary party armed with a programme to lead working-class people to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Militant's cringing loyalty to the Labour Party prevents them from doing this at every key juncture, and 'Marxism' is reduced to being the left-wing label to cover their tracks in retreat. ■

by Julian Scholefield
(Chesterfield LPYS)



VOTE GARY O'DONNELL

AFTER EIGHT YEARS of Thatcher, the Tories are still making the working class pay for the crisis of the bosses' profit system. Working class youth are still feeling the sharp end of Thatcher's vicious attacks.

On leaving school, young people have come to expect to face the option of either the dole or a YTS slave labour scheme. Last month the Tories threatened to rob youth of even that miserable choice. They plan to make YTS slavery compulsory for jobless school-leavers.

ATTACK

The choice is simple—either you go on a scheme and work for meagre benefit, or starve! The laughably named Restart scheme (most working class youth have never had a start in the first place), and the new Job Training Scheme, to be introduced this month, are all attempts by the Tories to attack the already paltry rights and benefits of working class youth and provide cheap labour for the bosses into the bargain.

With no jobs, little money and less chance of getting into further or higher education many working class youth in Thatcher's Britain are forced to remain at home in the prison-house of the family. If that's not bad enough, young gay men are now on the receiving end of the anti-gay hysteria whipped up by the government's AIDS campaign. Meanwhile on our TV screens we've had 'hip' DJs turned moralisers like Mike Smith and soap stars such as Mary from 'Eastenders' preaching to young people to have less sex, or preferably no sex before marriage.

OPPRESSION

Working class youth who try to resist Tory-imposed poverty and oppression have Thatcher's police thugs to contend with on the streets. Under the guise of fighting 'crime' and 'drug abuse' the 'thugs in blue' are constantly harassing, persecuting and intimidating black youth in the inner cities.

However, over the past eight

years of Tory rule, youth have fought back. During the miners' strike of 1984-5 the young miners and young women who supported them were among the bravest of class fighters.

Brixton, Bristol, Handsworth, Tottenham and Toxteth have all witnessed black youth taking to the streets against unemployment, slum living conditions and police repression. In 1985 250,000 school students took strike action against the infamous YTS. Indeed last month 700 school students demonstrated against the compulsory redeployment of 1300 teachers in London.

In this general election year what can we expect to get from the Labour Party in government? What are we promised by the party that claims to stand up for the interests of the working class and young people?

While the Tories have been in office Labour's record on fighting for the interests of working class youth has been nothing short of a disgrace.

Kinnock condemned the young miners during the Great Strike for breaking the law. He castigated the youth rebelling in the cities as a 'criminal minority'. The Labour NEC passed a resolution condemning the school student strikes.

REVERSE

For all his talk about Labour being the party of the youth Kinnock is promising little in the way of policies to reverse the last two terms of Tory attacks. Labour promise to reduce unemployment by one million in two years. What about the other three million? Kinnock has not committed a future Labour government to scrap the YTS and replace it with real jobs on trade union rates of pay. Instead he proposes a pathetic rise in the present paltry YTS wage. Giles Radice, the Shadow Education Secretary, has stated that Labour won't even restore the student grant to its 1979 level never mind giving all students a living grant.

Kinnock's concern for winning the votes of the 'law and order

brigade' by promising more 'bobbies on the beat' only promises more repression of youth in the inner cities. After the recently leaked letter claiming that lesbian and gay rights will be an electoral liability, lesbian and gay young people can expect nothing from a Kinnock-led Labour government.

The simple fact is that Kinnock and co have done nothing for youth and promise them nothing. This helps explain why Labour is still lagging behind the Tories in the polls. Given Kinnock's record Militant's continuous call for a 'socialist Labour government' has a very hollow ring to it. If Labour were to be the next government it has no intention of implementing policies that hit the capitalists. If working class youth are going to win any gains from a Labour government then we must organise ourselves to fight for our demands. We must try to force Labour to act. This is something which Militant constantly fail to do. In the last year the YS has only called one national demonstration, the main slogan of which was the abstract call 'For a Socialist Labour Government'.

NOTHING

No national campaign has been launched by the YS national leadership in the last year. There has been nothing on South Africa, nothing on AIDS, and no campaign to fight Kinnock's right-wing policies. This is why the election at this YS conference of a delegate to the NEC is so important. It is the only significant chance the YS conference gets to elect a leadership. *Workers Power* is standing a candidate, Gary O'Donnell, for the NEC because we want to see a different leadership in the YS. We think Militant have the wrong politics and run the YS bureaucratically.

Workers Power stand for immediately launching a campaign against the Sawyer proposals to strangle the LPYS. We must fight against further cuts in the YS budget and demand more money to finance our activities. In the trades unions the YS needs to fight for every union to provide facilities

and money to build active youth sections.

Most important of all, however, we need to build a Revolutionary Youth Movement. Such a movement would be very different from today's YS. It would not simply passively call for a 'socialist Labour government' and in reality fail to confront Kinnock and co. It would organise working class youth to fight for our most immediate needs from a Labour government, recognising that Kinnock won't deliver unless he is forced to by working class youth taking independent action.

ORGANISE

A Revolutionary Youth Movement would organise to force Labour to abolish the YTS and to replace it not with 75% of the minimum wage as the YS presently demands, but with the principle of equal pay for equal work. It would demand special subs rates and full rights for youth in the unions and the Labour Party. It would campaign to unionise all youth and build an unemployed workers' union.

A Revolutionary Youth Movement would not relegate the struggles of the specially oppressed because they 'disunite the workers'. It would recognise that, as well as super-exploitation in the factories, youth suffer oppression in the family, particularly if they are young lesbians, gay men or women.

The fight for legal and financial independence is a socialist fight. We would demand of the next Labour government that it abolish the age of consent, provide sex education for youth and free contraception and abortion on demand.

A Revolutionary Youth Movement would mobilise youth in the struggle against nuclear war; not with the pacifism of CND, but on a clear basis of defending Nicaragua, Libya and the USSR against the warmongering adventures of US imperialism.

IMPERIALISM

Against 'our own' imperialism too we would demand of the next Labour government to get rid of all its nuclear weapons, get all US bases out of Britain and Britain out of NATO and votes not a penny for 'conventional arms spending'. We would demand of Labour and fight for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from the Six Counties. It would also rally British youth to support nationalist youth in Ireland who face an army of occupation on the streets every day. We would fight to force Labour to withdraw British troops from the Malvinas. We fight to build that movement now.

But we also recognise that such a movement would not co-exist for long in the party of Kinnock and Whitty. That is why we don't duck a fight with them while fighting to break Militant's stranglehold in the LPYS. All those YS members who think this is the sort of programme of action needed in order to build a real Revolutionary Youth Movement, rallying young people to the forefront of the fight to smash capitalism, should vote Gary O'Donnell for the NEC and join us in that fight.

Gary is a young hosiery worker from Leicester. He is a delegate from Leicester South LPYS. ■

by Richard Gerard
(Sparkbrook LPYS)

FOR STUDENTS

Welfare position.

SSiN's 'Non Implementation strategy' fails to tie the NUS leadership down to doing anything. It is ambiguous as to whether fighting for colleges not to implement cuts means taking direct action or merely applying verbal pressure. For Vicky Phillips it obviously means the latter. SSiN, however, can still put a 'left' gloss on their own ambiguity.

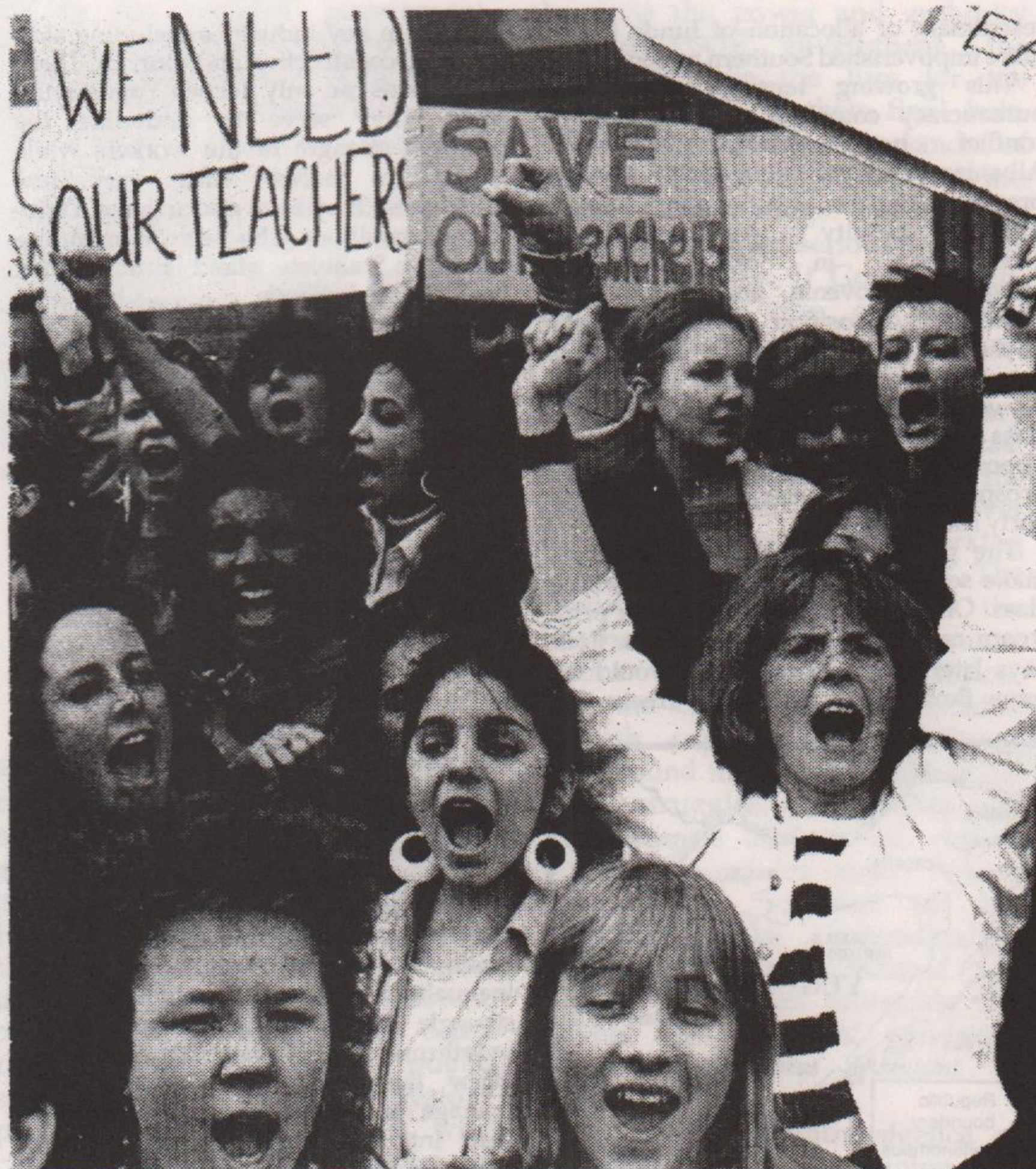
SSiN's electoral platform was especially opportunist on the question of anti-semitism. Throughout the conference they attacked 'anti-semitism on the left' while providing no evidence to substantiate such claims. Without such evidence we can only conclude that they were using the question to win votes by riding the current tide of pro-Zionist paranoia. Socialist Organiser, who politically lead SSiN, have disgracefully tried to paint socialist anti-Zionists as anti-

semites.

There can be no doubt that the pro-Zionist tide is very strong at the moment. One example is the fate of Tony Greenstein from the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, who is at present no-platformed by a number of NUS colleges for being anti-semitic. Greenstein is an anti-Zionist, he opposes Israel's policies in the Middle-East and is a defender of the oppressed Palestinians. He is *not* an anti-semite. His no-platforming should be immediately lifted.

At a time when Palestinians are being starved to death in refugee camps by Syrian troops supported by Israel, it is a disgrace that the Palestinian question was not even discussed at the Blackpool Conference. And it was a disgrace that SSiN failed to challenge the Zionists. ■

by Liz Woods



School students support striking teachers

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S IRAQ is a country in serious crisis. Its oil revenues, its manpower and its morale have been severely depleted by the long war with Iran. With victory increasingly less likely, and its imperialist backers hedging their bets with Iran, its future looks bleak indeed.

The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party has ruled Iraq continuously since 1968. During that time it has presided over an economy that boomed from exports of US\$575m (in 1972) to a peak of US\$25,500m in 1980—an increase of over 4,000%. It has also engaged in virtually continuous war with the Kurds who are fighting for self-determination. It has by turns formed an alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and savagely repressed it. It has nationalised its oil, verbally championed 'anti-imperialism', 'anti-zionism' and 'Arab nationalism', signed an Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Treaty and entered into a disastrous war with Iran in the hope of earning imperialism's approval and backing by overthrowing Khomeini, proving itself a capable gendarme and filling the vacuum left in the region since the fall of the Shah. Yet now it is a country on the verge of collapse. What has happened?

The Balkanisation of the Middle East after the first imperialist world war—largely carried through under the auspices of Britain—spawned widespread nationalist resistance. The ideology of an Arab Nation gained in strength as an answer to imperialism's cynical manipulation of the region that cost thousands of lives and deprived the Arab people of any share in the developing oil industry. In Syria a particular form of Arab nationalism, a 'socialist' form called Ba'athism, based on Arab technicians and skilled professional elements, developed. After the second imperialist world slaughter and the moves to replace the old colonial empires of Britain and France with semi-colonies dominated by the USA, the Ba'athist movement in Syria gained in strength and spread into Iraq. The apparent triumph of 'socialist' Arab nationalism in Egypt in 1952, when Nasser came to power, strengthened the influence of Ba'athism considerably. Although Nasser himself was not a Ba'athist he was quite happy, for a long period to maintain an alliance with the Ba'athist movements in Iraq and Syria. In fact Nasser's Egypt was a model of state capitalism presided over by anationalist Bonaparte. It was a model Syria and Iraq both sought to emulate. In both countries the national bourgeoisie was chronically weak. In the 1950s the manufacturing sector in Iraq was minuscule. The old semi-feudal ruling class was content with its role of being caretaker for imperialism. In this situation Nasserism, Arab nationalism and Ba'athism seemed to provide an answer for those sections of the national bourgeoisie who wanted desperately to



BA'ATHISM IN CRISIS

reap some rewards, even at the expense of imperialism to a certain degree, from the oil boom that was, by the 1950s, beginning to bring wealth into Iraq. Nationalism in its various guises furnished these elements with a means of rallying the masses behind them on the basis of anti-imperialist phrases. State capitalism provided them with the means of by-passing the impotent and unabashed pro-imperialist ruling class on the road to independent industrialisation. Moreover it enabled them to present to the Iraqi workers nationalised industry as some sort of socialist industry—a ploy that also helped them in keeping the Stalinists in check for a period of time. The history of Egypt (and indeed the state of Iraq's economy today) demonstrate just how short term a solution state capitalism is for the semi-colonial bourgeoisie. They inevitably and repeatedly have to open their doors to the imperialist multinational corporations and hock themselves to the imperialist banks to keep their state capitalist enterprises afloat. Nevertheless as a short term solution Arab nationalism and state capitalism

on the Nasserite model proved popular to elements of the Iraqi bourgeoisie, professional classes and military. Ba'athism was not the immediate beneficiary of this upsurge of nationalism. Iraq's 'national democratic revolution' of 1958 led by Qasim, produced a regime based almost exclusively on the military (though the ICP, in its historic role of tailing nationalism, did give the regime passive support). Like Nasser, Qasim distrusted organised parties and expelled the Ba'athists completely from every level of his regime. Unlike Nasser Qasim had neither the popular support nor the level of economic development to sustain a regime set against the principal nationalist parties. Increasingly isolated his regime fell to a Ba'athist coup d'etat in 1963. However, oil wealth had not yet created the conditions for the fulfilment of their state capitalist dream. Acute economic and political instability led to a regroupment within the armed forces, far from Ba'athised at that point, and another coup brought a military regime to power. It took five years for the Ba'athists to definitively install themselves in

power. Using the same mix of demagogic nationalism and socialism they identified with the rising tide of working class and student opposition to the military regime. By 1968 it was clear that the regime had become totally isolated and an object of hatred for virtually every section of Iraqi society. The Ba'athists capitalised on this launching the coup that installed the regime that has lasted to this day. Moreover the conditions were more favourable for the fulfillment of the state capitalist industrialisation drive. The regime's need to create and strengthen a material base for itself dictated a rapid programme of industrialisation. This in turn necessitated the exploitation of oil reserves outside the control of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC). The IPC—controlled jointly by British, Dutch, French and US interests—refused to help the Iraqi regime which had no expertise of its own. The regime thus was forced to turn to the USSR for help. The consequent Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1972 paved the way both for the nationalisation of the IPC and the rapprochement with the Stalinist ICP. The latter, despite its previous experiences at the hands of the Ba'athist 'National Guard' in 1963 and since 1968 entered into an 'agreement' in 1973 that was to last until 1978. The Ba'ath party, both before and after the 1973-78 agreement, carried out its programme of Ba'athisation. This amounted to complete Ba'ath control over all social, military, political and economic institutions. Non-Ba'ath parties were banned, membership of them carrying the death penalty; non-Ba'ath teachers, civil servants, army officers, etc were sacked or forced to join the party; all non-Ba'ath unions, cultural organisations and clubs were closed down. This was accompanied by ruthless purges within the Ba'ath political and military hierarchy. Saddam Hussein, by virtue of eliminating all opposition, was left undisputed leader of the party, the armed forces, the government and the state.

OIL MONEY

The oil money that enabled the Ba'ath regime to maintain itself in power during this bloodletting was, in the years 1973-80, almost an embarrassment of riches. The 1970-75 five year plan failed to meet its targets for investment in agriculture and industry, revised annually, because the money just couldn't be spent fast enough! Oil revenues in 1974 were more than ten times those in 1972. The OPEC price rises in 1973 and 1974 as a consequence of the Arab-Israeli war, coupled with increased production by the newly nationalised oil industry, gave new meaning to the expression booming economy. Needless to say these revenues were not used to alleviate the grinding poverty of the peasants and urban poor of Iraq. The regime used its wealth to 'tool-up', in every sense. The army and other state repressive apparatus benefitted, of course. So too did those with close contacts in the government. Despite the 'state capitalist' nature of Ba'athist Iraq (the state is the single biggest owner of capital, formally controlling about 80% of GDP) the private sector has mushroomed, employing over 75% of the labour force. The major construction boom, to both cope with the oil industry and soak up its fabulous revenues, has produced a whole crop of millionaires, industrialists and middle men who owe their fortunes to their contacts with the 'Takriti'. Takrit is the Iraqi province from which Hussein and a large proportion of the surviving Ba'ath leadership originate.

SUSTAIN

Having used the ICP and the USSR to bolster it internally and externally in its confrontation with the imperialist oil interests, by 1978 the Ba'ath regime recognised that in order to sustain its industrialisation drive it had to turn to the more technologically advanced imperialist countries for assistance, in particular France and West Germany. The ICP's influence was starting to pose a threat, however tentative, to the hegemony by which the Ba'ath set so much store. The ICP also presented a challenge to the regimes barbarous policies in Kurdistan (forced 'Arabisation' and Ba'athisation and the complete denial of any national rights to the Kurds) as well as its economic direction. Accordingly it was unceremoniously thrown out of the 'Patriotic Front'. The break up of the coalition was then followed by a terrible slaughter of ICP members and many working class



militants not in the party. The price of Stalinism's policy of popular frontism in the name of loyalty to the 'national democratic revolution' was once again the lives and blood of workers. From 1978 Ba'athisation carried on apace. Within the Ba'ath party the cult of Saddam gained ascendancy. As the instability in Iran matured into revolution, sending shudders through dictatorships throughout the region, Iraq took the opportunity to curry favour once again with imperialism. With its Shi'ite majority in the southern state of Basra and its recent record of friendship with the Shah Iraq felt it had plenty to fear from its revolutionary neighbour. As the fall of the Shah re-opened the border in Kurdistan the possibility of Kurdish insurrection in the north coinciding with Shi'ite rebellion in the south seemed all too possible a nightmare to Hussein. An anti-Persian' (i.e. Iranian) campaign was accompanied by mass expulsions across the border and increasingly shrill Iraqi and Arab chauvinism.

AVARICE

Hussein's fear was tinged by avarice. The revolution in Iran posed opportunities as well as dangers. A successful intervention on behalf of 'stability' in the region would establish Saddam the Statesman as imperialism's favourite and neutralise both the external and internal threat at the same time. To this end Saddam renounced the 1975 treaty with Iran, which had traded stability in Kurdistan for Iraq's claim to both sides of the disputed Shatt al-'Arab waterway to the gulf. Iraqi forces invaded in 1980 with the stated intention of 'liberating' the predominantly arab (and oil rich) province of Khuzistan. In fact the arab inhabitants of Khuzistan ('Arabistan' in Ba'ath-speak) showed no more taste for Hussein's liberation than have Iraqi Shi'is for the fundamentalism of their Iranian co-religionists. Both Hussein's fears and hopes of cross-border religious and national sympathy action proved unfounded. The Iraqi offensive slowed down, halted and was eventually thrown back across the border. Since the start of the war Iraq's oil revenues have fallen dramatically from their 1980 level, and military spending has increased as production has fallen-off. The war is costing Iraq an estimated US\$1bn per month. Shortages are becoming apparent everywhere. In addition to the dead and wounded (very few families in Iraq have suffered no loss in the seventy-eight months of war) more and more factories and offices are having to recruit women on an unprecedented scale to make up for male labour lost to conscription.

CRACKS

The unifying effect of 'a nation at war' combined with Ba'ath terror have served to offset the destabilising effects of defeats, civilian casualties and economic disruption. This balance cannot be maintained for ever. The Iranian price for peace (Saddam's head plus reparations) may seem cheaper and cheaper to the non-Takriti bourgeoisie which has grown in economic power, ironically, as a result of Saddam's Ba'athist state capitalism, as the war losses mount and the cracks open up around the increasingly isolated Hussein clique. Such divisions in the ruling class will be a welcome development. The Iraqi masses need to speed the date of their arrival by entering the road of revolutionary defeatism in the war that their rulers have foisted on them. The answer for the Iraqi workers need not be the victory of either Khomeini's reactionary Islamicism nor of the anti-Saddam wing of the Iraqi ruling class. Out of a revolutionary challenge to the war there can and must be a revolutionary socialist answer. This means forging a real revolutionary Trotskyist party in Iraq that is completely free from the taint of Ba'athist nationalism, Arab nationalism and Stalinist popular frontism. ■

by Chris Ramsey

YUGOSLAVIA

PAYING THE MARKET PRICE

YUGOSLAV WORKERS ARE reaping the bitter fruit of 'market socialism'. Years of openness to the world banks and independence for industrial enterprises has landed the country in deep economic trouble. By the beginning of the year unemployment was running at over 20%, inflation at 130%, while Yugoslavia's creditors were demanding tough austerity measures from the regime. In particular the IMF was demanding an expanded private sector and the closure of uneconomic plants as Yugoslavia's foreign debt topped \$20 billion. The OECD attacked the regime for what it called 'financial indiscipline'.

In February the government complied with the demands of the international banks. It announced a swingeing round of wage cuts coupled with a wage freeze and price increases. Wages are to be pegged at their average for the last quarter of 1986. This obliterates all wage increases secured at the end of last year and the beginning of this. The wage cut coincided with price increases for meat, sugar and oil of between 25 and 60%.

Yugoslav workers replied to the package with a series of strikes. The Government admits to at least 70 stoppages as well as several protest meetings. The strikes spread across most of Yugoslavia's six federal republics.

The strike wave has opened up very real splits in the party and state bureaucracy. The Party Central Committee in the Croatian republic publicly opposed the wage freeze. So too did the Croatian trade union chief. The crisis has deepened national conflicts within the federated bureaucracy centred on grievances against Serbian domination of the central apparatus and

resentment of allocation of funds to the more impoverished Southern regions.

This growing tension within the bureaucracy coincides with continuing conflict between the oppressed Albanians and the Serbs in the Kosovo province. There is also increased human rights activity amongst the intelligentsia in the relatively prosperous Slovenia, and liberal-social democratic opposition amongst sections of the Serbian intelligentsia. There is, as yet, little evidence of any direct link between the struggles of the working class and the activities of the oppositional intelligentsia, but that prospect clearly alarms the central party leadership.

The government has been forced to make some concessions to the working class. On 20 March it announced a price freeze on certain key commodities. Four days later it announced there would be some flexibility in the wage freeze for

workers in key industries including ship building, construction and tourism. These concessions can only deepen Yugoslavia's crisis. They serve to underline the potential strength of the workers while failing to redress their very real grievances. They have also angered Yugoslavia's creditors who were demanding that the Stalinists stand firm against the workers' demands.

In the face of working class protest and mounting national divisions the central bureaucracy is prepared to reply with increased repression by the state security forces and the army. Prime Minister Branko Mikulic recently told *Der Spiegel* that he was prepared to use the army to 'protect the constitutional order'. A top General, doubtless mindful of the job performed by General Jaruzelzki, has ominously stated that the army 'must not stand aside from the main social currents'.

The Yugoslav working class has moved into struggle against austerity, repression and bureaucratic privilege. Its struggle must not be diverted into national rivalries or purely democratic campaigns. It must organise itself as an independent force fighting for its class interests against the bureaucracy and its IMF overlords. That means opposing all bureaucratic repression, all national inequalities and oppressions in the struggle for a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and thus allow the workers to democratically manage an economy planned to meet their interests, not those of the International banks. ■

by John Hunt



DEBT CRISIS FUELS REPRESSION

BRAZIL'S LATEST ECONOMIC crisis brought a sharp reminder last month that the transition from Military rule to 'democratic government' was far from over, and could easily go into reverse. President José Sarney, faced with strikes by dockworkers, seamen and oilworkers, quickly brought into force draconian anti-working class legislation left in place by the military.

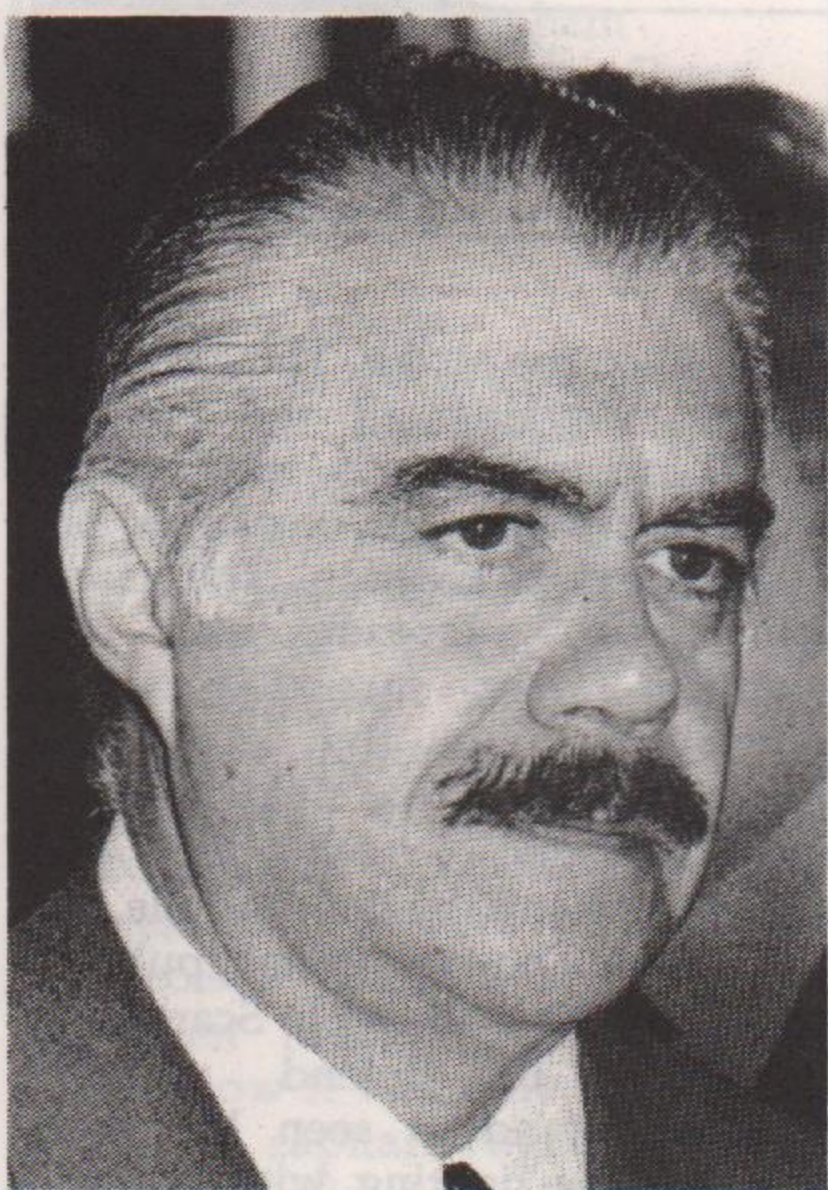
Declaring the strikes illegal, marines were sent in to occupy the 11 affected ports, while fully armed troops moved into the ten oil refineries run by the state owned oil company Petrosas.

With inflation variously estimated at heading for between 200-400% this year, 55,000 oil workers declared their intention to strike after rejecting a 38% increase. They would have joined 40,000 dockyard workers and seamen already on strike for wage increases of up to 186%. This was the first national dock strike for 25 years and has been completely solid.

Strike leaders have been forcibly removed from the ships and interrogated for hours at a time. Such is the severity of the law that workers charged with organising strike action face imprisonment for up to a year.

Unrest has been spreading throughout other sections of Brazilian society too, increasing pressure on the Government. Farmers have been holding militant protests demanding higher prices—tractors have been used to block roads and government banks blockaded. Even bus passengers have mobilised to try and prevent fare increases. In São Paulo such was the militancy of the protests that police were stationed at the bus stations to keep the busses running!

This rising tide of anger is a product of the mounting economic crisis besetting Brazil. Elected on a programme of reducing inflation, controlling prices and stimulating



Sarney

growth, known generally as the Cruzado Plan, President Sarney's Government now faces the collapse of this plan and growing disillusion among its big business backers.

Once again, the bosses are trying to make the workers pay for the crisis. As Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (The Brazilian TUC) president Jair Maneguella recently pointed out, workers 'are always the hardest hit by the economic errors committed in this country'.

Pressure from the bosses led the Government to abandon price controls soon after last November's elections, thereby viciously slashing overnight the already meagre real incomes of workers and the poor. The resulting spiral of price increases has in turn contributed to the threatened return of hyperinflation.

The country's once healthy trade surplus is declining rapidly—only \$127 million was registered this January as opposed to \$1,200 million a year ago. Foreign reserves have fallen from \$9 billion to \$3 billion over the same period.

With the growth rate declining as well, most economic observers agree that the 'boom' of the past

three years has finally run out of steam. Expressing what many Brazilian bosses fear, *The Economist* warned: 'Brazil's economy is going downhill so fast it may jump the rails.' (21 Feb 87)

It is this fear which has spurred Sarney's government to take on the working class at home on one hand and to try and pressure the bankers in the imperialist countries on the other. The decision in February to unilaterally suspend interest payments on the \$66 billion of its \$108 billion foreign debt held by commercial banks has set warning lights flashing throughout the international banking system.

Intended as a 90 day moratorium during which the government hopes to obtain better terms from the bankers, the suspension is an indication of the seriousness with which Sarney's administration views the domestic situation.

While Brazil has faced similar problems to other such American countries with regard to its foreign debt, it has been cushioned in the last few years by its dynamic growth and export performance. The enormous exploitation of the Brazilian people by the imperialists is revealed by the fact that Brazil has paid \$56 billion in foreign debt interest in the last five years to the big banks and finance corporations.

But while the militant trade unions are demanding immediate cancellation of the debt, Sarney has no such intention.

His 'suspension' of payments is merely a bargaining ploy, to which the imperialists are immediately responding by their normal methods of divide and rule. Suddenly Chile, Argentina and Venezuela are finding their previously resisted rescheduling demands granted overnight, in order to prevent a common front developing.

POPULARITY

Meanwhile the Secretary of the government in São Paulo, Luis Bresse Pereira is quoted as emphasising that 'It is of fundamental importance not to try and gain domestic popularity through aggressive attitudes towards foreign bankers.' (*Latin American Weekly Reports* 12 Mar 87)

Indeed the last thing Sarney wants is to stoke up expectations that he is going to really fight the imperialists and their bankers—he might risk encouraging the emergence of a movement that forces him to do it!

The room for manoeuvre of the Sarney government is becoming

severely restricted. In addition to the mounting opposition from the working class, the right-wing is making warning noises off-stage as well. Bosses, the millionaire landowners, and the military are all showing signs of disquiet with the performance of the Sarney administration. Concerned about the economic situation, they are particularly unhappy with the apparent inability of the Government to 'deal' with labour unrest.

Accustomed to military dictatorship and all this means for the labour movement, these reactionaries believe Sarney is moving too cautiously against the militancy of the working class. The use of the armed forces over the last few weeks is a warning to the labour movement of the danger which lies waiting in the wings. It serves as a reminder of where real power lies and who still controls it.

Brazilian workers are now facing the same guns, the same tanks and the same armoured cars as they did under the military. Some people thought such days were over. Yet in reality such days will only pass forever once the workers and peasants put an end to the present system and establish their own workers' state. ■

by Steve Foster



Tanks against strikers

SPANISH WORKERS SHAKE GONZALES

THE FIRST THREE months of 1987 have seen a massive escalation of working class resistance to the austerity plans of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) government of Felipe Gonzales.

In February a series of school strikes and demonstrations against plans to restrict access to higher education culminated with 200,000 school students demonstrating on the streets of Madrid. Immediately after the government conceded some of the students' demands coal



Militant miners - with staves!

miners in Asturias began an indefinite strike against pit closures. After a month, and several attempts at sell-out, this remains solid. At the end of March dockers, rail workers and hospital doctors staged one day strikes and demonstrations against government imposed pay restraint. As US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger flew in to re-negotiate the presence of US bases in Spain, 100,000 people marched on the strategic Torrejon US Air Force base outside Madrid.

Every one of the workers' actions has been met with the full armoury of repression the police have at their disposal, including plastic bullets. But workers and students responded to these attacks in kind, organising disciplined defence squads, armed with staves—an object lesson to workers in Britain in dealing with police picket-busting tactics. In the small town of Reinosa, where steelworkers are occupying to save their jobs, eight thousand demonstrators took a whole unit of the notorious Guardia Civil hostage after they ran out of plastic bullets. They had already captured the boss of the steel factory!

In contrast to this mood of determination amongst the rank and file, the union leaderships have responded by offering rotten compromises to Gonzales. Under the pressure of the rank and file the UGT (General Union of Labour) leaders put in claims for 6 or 7%

wage rises—breaching the 5% limit set by the 'socialist' government. But they have been quick to run to the negotiating table to settle within these limits. Meanwhile the Communist Party organised Workers' Commissions (CCOO) have gained strength from the upsurge. But their leaders too, have used the wave of struggle primarily to get themselves a place at the bargaining counter with Gonzales, not to win lasting gains for the workers. At the end of March they called a one-day general strike, only to cancel it due to 'public opinion'

CONSEQUENCES

So grave are the consequences for Spanish capitalism if Gonzales caves in, that the world's press has been full of rumours about the memory of the Civil War being invoked by the Spanish bosses. However the unbeaten militancy of the workers and youth means that under 'democracy' at the moment only a PSOE government can carry through the wage and public spending cuts needed to restore profitability. Only Gonzales, who came to power on the promise of quitting NATO, can sell staying in NATO and keeping the US bases to the Spanish workers.

But the more the strike wave threatens the power and authority of the PSOE government, the greater will be the lure for the Spanish bosses of their final bolt-hole, military rule. Thousands of strutting would-be Francos are waiting in the wings. The Spanish military was never seriously purged of the Francoites. If Gonzales cannot stem the tide of workers' resistance then the bourgeoisie and its 'democratic' King, Juan Carlos, will not hesitate to invite the military back onto the political stage. Last year's muted celebrations of the Spanish Civil War showed however that no existing party in the working class wants a re-run of 1936. The Spanish CP fragmented after the collapse of its Euro-communist dreams of an all-class coalition. Even the centrist Nuevo Claridad (Spanish supporters of Militant), which found itself at the head of the student struggles, was ready to sign a compromise deal on the eve of the Asturian miners strike. Nuevo Claridad then rounded on the unofficial strike co-ordinating committees which wanted to continue the action alongside the workers as 'poisoned toadstools after a thunderstorm' (*Militant* 13 Mar 87).

Faced with the intransigence of Gonzales the traditional union and party leaderships of the Spanish workers have no answers. With the strike movements now at a

crossroads the workers must move onto the offensive on a class-wide basis. Instead of the one-day strikes favoured by the UGT/CCOO and echoed by the centrists in their calls for 24 hour general strikes, there should be an all-out indefinite general strike which links the pay claims, the battles against health cuts and pit closures, the student demands etc.

Inter-union strike committees must be built, drawing in not only the rank and file of the two union federations, but the thousands of unorganised workers, women and youth. The defence squads should be extended on a national scale. These are the seeds of the power the Spanish bosses fear. But they also know from experience that the reformist, Stalinist and even centrist leaderships can be a reliable block on the road to working class power. This is the lesson not only of the Civil War but of the years immediately after the death of Franco, when revolutionary opportunities were shamelessly blocked by the Stalinists.

If the current defiant struggles are not to be followed by another period of retreat and reaction the vanguard of the Spanish working class must learn that lesson too. It must break with its Stalinist and centrist legacy and forge a revolutionary communist party in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

by Paul Mason

DUTFIELD & MARGAM

Comrades,
I wish to draw attention to some misleading statements in the article on the NUM in *Workers Power* 91.

Firstly the article mentions that there have been protest strikes in various pits and areas, including South Wales. Whilst there have been very occasional one-day strikes in South Wales, e.g. Nantgarw, none of these have been against closure or for reinstatement. The only significant 'protest' since the strike was the four-month long overtime ban on coal production last year, called largely on the issue of the backdated pay rise, during which both Cwm and Nantgarw were shut.

Secondly, the article refers to Des Dutfield as a 'supposed ally' of Arthur Scargill, i.e. it only suggests that Dutfield isn't a Scargill supporter. However, during his campaign in 1985 for the South Wales presidency, Dutfield openly rejected the 'Scargillite' tag he was given, after having had a reputation of being sympathetic to Scargill during the strike. The issue of six day working at Margam, together with the South Wales leadership's support for Eric Clarke in the Vice President election rather than 'Scargill's man', Sammy Thompson, once again shows the deep divisions between Dutfield and Scargill.

Finally, in relation to Margam, it should be pointed out that British Coal's offer does have significant benefits. Apart from the 780 mining jobs at the new pit, the four and a half year construction period will provide work for around another 1,000 people. Also, the shift patterns so far proposed by BC management would mean over 20 days extra holiday per year, whilst hours

worked per month would remain unchanged. There has also been no mention of compulsory nine hour shifts, as suggested in the article. These factors do not of course condone Dutfield for his sell-out of conditions for jobs, but I feel they are important considerations in the overall arguments for and against Margam.

yours fraternally

Pete Ashley (Cardiff)

We reply:

Your first point merely confirms what we said in the article, that there have been protests in many areas, South Wales included. What else was the action at Nantgarw if not a protest action. Indeed we can quote you a report we received for our miners' bulletin *Red Miner* from its South Wales correspondent:

'However the men at Nantgarw have not been taking management attacks lying down. They went on a one-day strike in August in protest over manning of faces.' (*Red Miner* No.12)

The scale of protest may not be what we want, but there are signs that a will to protest does exist.

On your second point, the reference to Dutfield as Scargill's 'supposed ally' is pointing out to miners outside of South Wales that this man is no longer an ally of Scargill at all. Until the Margam developments many miners outside of South Wales still thought of Dutfield as someone with a militant reputation. We were trying to scotch that myth.

As for your last point on Margam, it really does sound like a British

Coal advert. Not only is the Margam project an attempt to divide the NUM on competing regional grounds it is also the prelude to a massive attack on working conditions and hours. The nine hour shift has been cited in both *The Miner* and *The Yorkshire Miner* as part of the threat being posed at Margam. After all the continental shift pattern can and does include nine hour shifts. Robert Haslam is quite clear what is at stake:

'The current campaign to persuade the NUM to accept more flexible working hours extends beyond the immediate dispute over the £90 million Margam project, towards such things as the 1908 hours of work and the 40 year old five day week agreements.'

The 'benefits' you refer to really count for nothing when considered in this context.

THOMPSON - FOR AND AGAINST

Dear Comrades,

The position in *Workers Power* 91 on voting for Lippitt in the NUM elections was, I believe, a wrong one.

You point out that there is no difference between the political positions of Thompson and Eric Clarke and from this conclude that miners should vote for neither of these two main candidates and cast their vote for Eric Lippitt instead. This position is extremely formal and in the context of the current battle waging in the NUM is abstentionist.

At the moment the soft left in the NUM headed by the South Wales leadership are out to remove every vestige of fight and spirit left in the



NUM since the strike. They are also set on reversing all the positive moves made towards ending the federalism which has weakened the NUM since its creation. The recent fight over Margam and the argument over increased union contributions are the latest and sharpest signs of that fight which is being waged both in the bureaucracy and the rank and file.

Whereas Thompson has publicly associated himself with Scargill in the fight to defend working conditions (and is seen by many miners to be fighting with Scargill) Clarke has been content to sit on the fence. Clarke in fact has limited his utterances on the Margam development to saying he is against the 6 day week, but then even Dutfield and Rees have said they are against the 6 day week while they wage a campaign to get it introduced into the South Wales coalfield. Thompson's public speeches have been far more "left" than his manifesto. In addition Clarke's principal backers are the very people who were scrambling over one another to sell out the strike at the end of a year. Thompson's principal backers are Scargill and Heathfield.

I believe that many militants will have voted for Thompson and that therefore the correct tactic for revolutionaries should have been a vote for Thompson, critically while placing demands on him to: fight the introduction of the 6 day week, mobilise for strike action against attacks from the board, fight for the re-instatement of all sacked lads, the release of Hancock and Shankland and break with those who wish to bury the traditions of the strike.

As regards Lippitt, it is all very well for *Workers Power* to write down a list of demands which Eric Lippitt says he stands for, but where has been the campaign for those demands in the election. There has been no propaganda out in the areas and as far as I know Lippitt has only gone to speak to miners when he has been invited by branches such as Hatfield Main in Yorkshire. In short there has been no campaign and neither has Lippitt got the backing of a significant amount of the rank and file militants, or of any of the rank and file groupings in the NUM. While a small number of miners may vote for Lippitt as a protest vote against both Thompson and Clarke, most of the more class-conscious elements in the NUM will be voting for Thompson.

Workers Power should have argued for a vote for Thompson and used the campaign for that vote to rally those who wish to fight against the new realists in the NUM and agitate around demands which could break illusions in Thompson, and eventually Scargill himself.

communist greetings

Robert Millar (Yorkshire)

We reply:

Your argument is based on a very Yorkshire-eyed view of the contest. Militants in Yorkshire (including Scargill) support Thompson, therefore we should. This criterion would actually lead to an opposite conclusion in, say, the North East, where the majority of Scargillite militants support Eric Clarke!

We called for a vote for Lippitt in the context of the continuing plight

of the sacked miners, and the rightist drift of the Executive which neither Clarke nor Thompson are intending to stop. Eric Lippitt was the one candidate who did stand for the maintenance of the militant traditions of the great strike against this rightist drift. The fight for a vote for him was a fight to break militants from the passive acceptance of voting directives from their regional bureaucracies. True, his campaign was weak - the NUM regional machines saw to that. But it gave militants a clear opportunity to regroup around a rank and file candidate.

IS PASOK A WORKERS' PARTY?

Dear Comrades,

After reading the article on Greece in *Workers Power* 91 I am writing to ask you to explain your characterisation of PASOK further. Dave Hughes describes it as 'a petit-bourgeois populist party, not a reformist workers' party'. The reasons he gave seem to be its nationalist anti-Turkish demagoguery and the widespread expulsions of opponents of Papandreu.

If a Greek left party were to say the Labour Party wasn't a workers' party because it was pro-NATO, anti-Irish and attacked the left you would surely say that it was hopelessly ultra-left. Why does the same description not apply to *Workers Power's* attitude to PASOK?

yours fraternally

F F Rose

We reply:

The comrade has missed the point. The article pointed out that PASOK's original social base was to be found amongst the Greek petit bourgeoisie and that it has never been the organic party of the small organised Greek working class. Hence the difference between it and the SPD and British Labour Party. Our characterisation of PASOK flowed from that analysis and not particular features of its rhetoric.

If the comrade had read the article properly he or she would have realised why they should reject the view of Militant that PASOK is a reformist workers' party.

SEXIST HEADLINES?

Dear Comrades,

I am not suggesting that your paper is sexist but your headline and front-page photo in the March edition of *Workers Power* made me distinctly uncomfortable.

Don't you think that the picture of Thatcher in the kitchen next to the words 'Tories Cook up New Attacks' might have given comfort to those whose main criticism of the present government is the fact that it is headed by a woman? If the article underneath the photo had concentrated at all on exposing Thatcher's hypocritical pretence of being 'just-another working woman' then fair enough, the headline and photo may have had a purpose. As it was it seemed as if it had simply been tacked onto the top of your front page with no thought given to the offence it might cause to women activists and workers.

yours

Dave Cohen (Wolverhampton)

We reply:

The intention of the front-page layout and headline was to expose the hypocrisy of Thatcher's claim to be an ordinary working woman and housewife. If it failed in this respect or caused any offence to women activists, then we apologise.

FREE ELEUTERIO

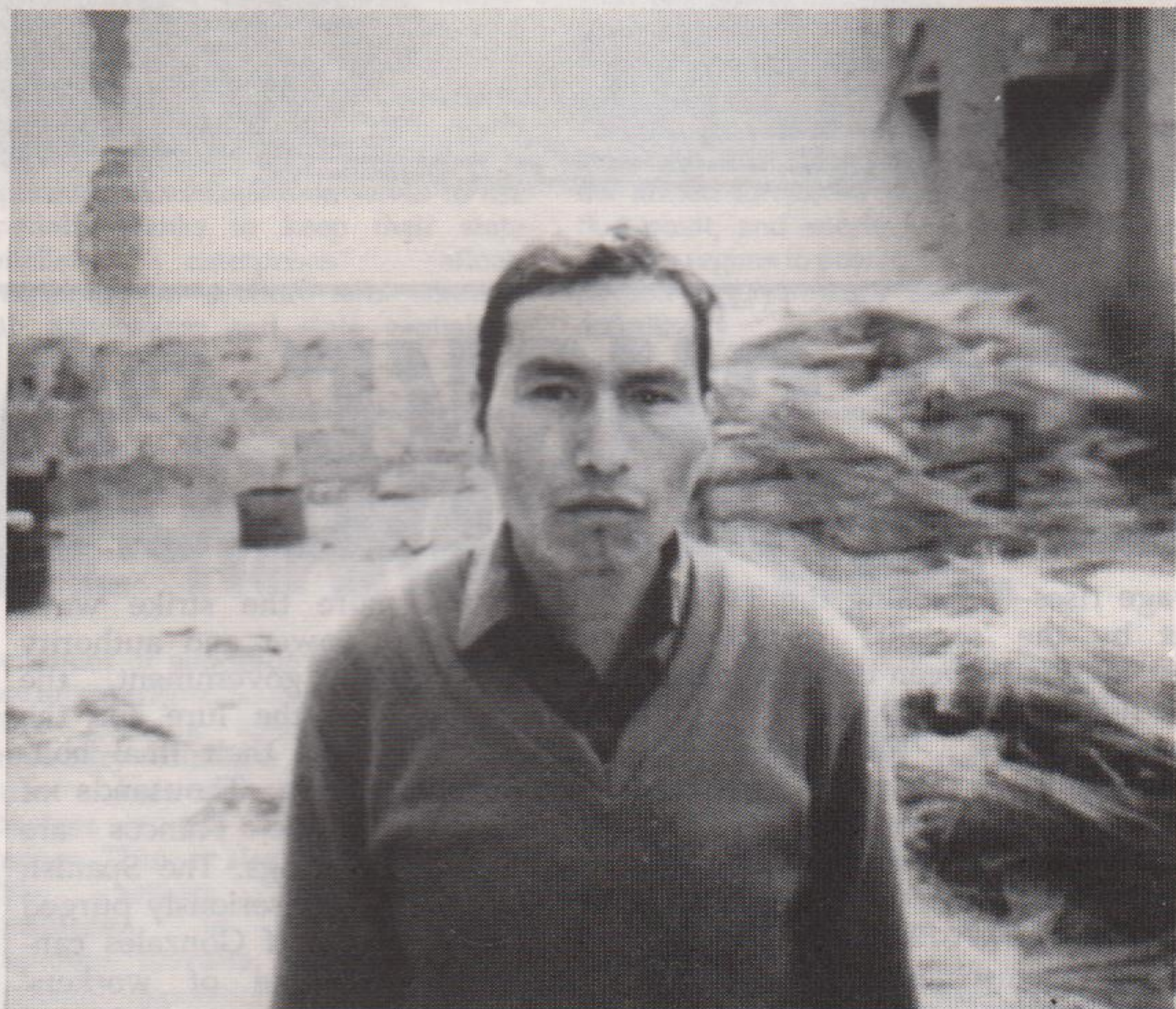
We print here a letter from Eleuterio Gutierrez who is at present still in gaol with his trial in 'recess'. It is now 18 months since he was arrested in the midst of a general strike against the government's austerity programme in Bolivia. Despite the case against Eleuterio falling apart at the seams, with the main witness against him admitting his statements were untrue and made at the instigation of the mining police of the State Mining Corporation, Eleuterio remains in prison and in danger of being given a gaol sentence.

The campaign in Britain has been hampered by misinformation from a 'human rights organisation in Bolivia'. Baroness Young, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, used this to incorrectly claim that Gutierrez had only been arrested in May 1986 and had been caught 'red-handed', with five others, stealing from his pit. None of this is true and evidence from official records in Bolivia exposing this misinformation has been given to the Labour MPs who have taken up the case. Unfortunately the NUM using the same source has refused a request from the NUM Group No.1 Area to take up the case. This is also being contested.

We call again on Trade Union and Labour Party bodies to take up this case and once again protest to the Bolivian Embassy in Britain at 106, Eaton Square, London SW1.

Financial assistance is still desperately needed for Eleuterio's family. All donations and further information from Free Eleuterio Gutierrez Campaign.

c/o Steve Masterson,
14 Dennington House,
Dennington Park Road,
London NW6.



Comrade Workers of Britain,

With this letter I have the honour to send you revolutionary greetings from all my worker comrades here. I know about the considerable economic help being organised and about the many mobilisations and pressures against the Bolivian Embassy in London and about the publication of my case in many newspapers, and how you are fighting for my immediate release. I am sending you my sincere thanks and also in the name of my family, which are at this moment in a state of abandonment.

As a mineworker for the Bolivian Mining Corporation in the mining site of Bolivar, I must tell you again that I have been falsely accused through slander, under pressure of the Government and the Company where I used to work. They have been using a well known criminal and anti-social element to accuse me of something I never committed at any moment. This is only because

of my participation and because I am a leading member in the union over many years and I have been known as a 'dangerous element' for the managers of that company. At this time I am detained in the public gaol of Oruro since 30 September 1985. Until now no solution has been produced for resolving my problems, because the whole judicial system is very slow and because of the incapacity of the judge.

As you can see, comrades, I am totally innocent of the crime of which I am accused. Comibol and the Government are involved in a manoeuvre against me and they are trying to cover and obscure the political meaning of these problems.

Without more details I again send you my high regards and I think with proletarian unity we will go forward to a victory for a better future for the workers.

Eleuterio Gutierrez M.

UNDERSTANDING FASCISM

Marxists in Face of Fascism is an invaluable collection of documents and essays on fascism from the twenties and thirties. Three quarters of these writings have never been published before.

Beginning with Italy we are able to see the strivings of early Marxists to get to grips with a phenomenon new to the imperialist epoch.

However the pioneering analysis of fascism by Gramsci and Togliatti in the young Italian Communist Party (PCI) did not win the PCI to the tactics necessary to avert the subsequent victory of Mussolini.

DEBATING

The PCI was still in the process of debating the nature of fascism when it chalked up its first victory. Bordiga, for example, took the view that fascism was merely the military or terrorist wing of capitalism. He argued there was no reason to expect a *coup d'état* and besides, as parliament was merely a fig leaf for the bourgeois dictatorship, it would make no difference! The ensuing triumph of Mussolini and his march into Rome was to cut no ice later in 1924, at the 5th Congress of the Comintern, which accepted elements of Bordiga's simplistic and stupid view.

Zetkin and Togliatti, in refuting Bordiga's simplistic approach contrasted fascism with the terrorism of the Horthy regime in Hungary. Whereas the Horthy regime was imposed from above, by a small caste of feudal officers, fascism in Italy had based itself on a mass movement of petit-bourgeois and de-classed lumpen elements. Togliatti recognised however that once in power fascism purged its original staff and assumed the characteristics of a Bonapartist regime even at the expense of the mass base that originally brought it to power. That is, despite its mass base, fascism existed for the service of the bourgeoisie.

Fascism triumphed in Italy not merely because of the failure of the PCI to develop an analysis and tactics in time. Also crucial was the historical defeat of the Italian working class—thanks to the centrist misleadership of Serrati's Socialist Party (PSI)—in the 1920 factory occupation movement. The failure to seize power emboldened the fascists.

FAILURE

Setting the tone for exactly the opposite point of view was the social democrat Zibordi. For him it was not the failure to carry out the social revolution but rather that it was attempted at all that led to the fascist victory!

Beetham's book reveals well the way in which Stalinism—in fact influenced by Bordiga—equated fascism with reaction, pure and simple. Therefore, as Stalin himself put it in his article *The Period of Bourgeois - Democratic Pacifism*, social democracy and fascism were twins. This line, dominant during the 'Third Period' (1928-1933) in the Comintern was ultra-left in form, but opportunist in content, leading the German KPD to greatly underestimate the Hitlerite threat. Hitler's triumph in 1933 proved to the KPD—whose members were now in the concentration camps—that it was not to be *'their turn next'*, as they had foolishly hoped.

The German tragedy did cause a rethink in the Comintern. The fascist beast was a threat to Stalin's borders. A new foreign policy was required to counterbalance this threat. In a piece of breathtaking cynicism the Popular Front was

Pat Spackman reviews
Marxists in Face of Fascism
by David Beetham
(Manchester University Press
£9.95 pbk)

ushered in in France.

The turn to the popular front did require a theoretical fig-leaf. Comintern leader, Dimitrov, in justifying the class collaborationist popular front, defined fascism as an *'open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist element of finance capital'*, thereby allowing for the building of a popular front with progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie. Where once 'everyone' had been fascist, albeit a 'social fascist', now it was only one section of finance capital. Togliatti, now a hardened Stalinist flunkey, reneged on his past definition of fascism based on his own experience in Italy and blindly supported Stalin's line.

Social democracy, represented in the collection by such worthies as Kautsky, Hilferding, Seydenwitz, Bauer and others also has a history of criminal betrayal of the working class, based on its craven prostration to bourgeois democracy.

In contrast to the Stalinist 'third period' analogy of fascism as the normal form of capitalism in decay, social democracy with its theory of 'organised capitalism' (leading to a



Mussolini

gradual evolution, via parliament, to socialism) saw fascism as an aberration, an abnormal interruption in the onward march of technical progress and political democracy.

For the pacifist Kautsky, who considered the use of political

violence an historical deviation, that is as a futile attempt to force the pace of history—fascism was a historical throwback (to violence) supported by *'reckless and short-sighted capitalist elements'*.

Following from this social democracy argued for an alliance with *'far-sighted capitalists'* in defence of parliamentary democracy or, if the alliance failed, to wait for the storm to 'blow over' and the

fascists to prove their economic incompetence.

The section on social democracy also covers the Austrian defeat—the Dolfuss coup—through the writings of Otto Bauer. His ditherings and complete lack of programme left him whining after the defeat of the spontaneous Linz uprising:

'We offered greater and greater concessions with a view to making a peaceful solution . . . All in vain—Dolfuss refused to enter into negotiations.'

Trotskyists will be more familiar with the section on communists in opposition to both the Comintern and social democracy. Here we see the revolutionary continuation of the work pioneered by Zetkin, Radek and Gramsci in defining fascism. Thalheimer and Trotsky used Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* to illustrate the similarities between fascism and Bonapartism.

More important was their common standpoint of the need for a workers' united front against fascism as being the practical Marxist tactic to defeat fascism. For Trotsky this united front was a step along the road to the proletarian dictatorship. Alas in Germany Stalinism and social democracy sealed the mass of the working class from even hearing Trotsky's message. ■

REVIEWS

UTOPIAN FEMINISM

THE EARLY DAYS of the women's liberation movement witnessed militant women fighting for real equality. Against the notion that they were 'inferior' to men, women struggled to smash the barriers that stood in the way of equality. The failure of feminism to link the struggle for emancipation with the struggle of the working class led to real defeats. Equality was not achieved and under Thatcher gains were reversed.

In response to this period of reaction, large sections of a by now disunited feminist movement shifted their emphasis away from struggle and turned towards a celebration of the 'superior' qualities of womanhood. These qualities such as 'natural' pacifism, caring and loving nature, non-competitiveness, and a reliance on emotion instead of reason have been posed by many feminists as the necessary characteristics for everyone if we are to overcome war and oppression. Hence the spectacle of thousands of women hanging 'women's' symbols—nappies and toys—on the perimeter fence at Greenham Common.

ONE-SIDED

In fact these supposed virtues are products of the one-sided development of our characters that capitalism requires. Women are carers, men are fighters. This outlook may reflect elements of present day reality. It blinds women to the need for struggle. It glorifies the passive role that capitalism deliberately assigns women. Of course, caring is important. Of course men must learn to care as well. But not at the cost of giving up the struggle against an uncaring society.

The extreme version of the glorification of female 'virtues' is the preserve of radical feminism. Lynn Segal, in her book, *Is The Future*

Breda Concannon reviews
Is the Future Female?
Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism
by Lynne Segal
(Virago £4.95 pbk)

IS THE FUTURE FEMALE?

Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism
LYNNE SEGAL



Female, rejects this view. She rightly recognises the 'new idealised image of women', as the *'politics of despair and retreat'*.

Segal's concern is that focusing on sexual differences denies *'the political project of feminism'* which seeks to raise more general questions about the nature of human needs, work and politics and the type of society socialists and feminists are trying to create.

But Segal herself is unable to answer the more general questions posed for 'socialists and feminists' since she has not rejected that which is common to socialist feminism and radical feminism alike. She argues: *we should not be looking for the primacy of sex, class or race'* but rather should *'begin by asserting the very different*

problems of diverse groups of women and stress the contradictory changes which have taken place in women's lives'.

Because Segal still accepts that *'patriarchy (is) at least as basic a structure as capitalism'*, and sees patriarchy in terms of individual power relationships between men and women, she is unable to develop a materialist understanding of oppression based on social forces. The unifying feature of feminism is that it rejects such a materialist understanding, always preferring to rely on, as Segal says: *'politics of experience'* where *'people can speak only from their own experience of oppression and that white women have no right to attempt to theorise the situation of black women.'*

INDIVIDUAL

But it was precisely the politics of individual experience that came to dominate the women's movement in the mid 1970s and pave the way for its collapse and fragmentation. Individual experience is no substitute for the analysis of society as a whole based on the fundamental antagonism of classes. A class analysis, on the other hand, has at its core the belief that *unity of action* is the best means of eradicating oppression.

As a socialist feminist, Segal does believe that women in the workplace are important. But women's position in work is seen as significant primarily as further proof of the power relations between men and women. Sexual harassment at work is important as an issue because it confirms the sexual hierarchy at the workplace as a way of keeping women subordinate:

'Until men more readily agree to sharing the caring and swapping the mopping with women in the home, we will not begin to equalise women's situation in the workplace.'

This statement demonstrates clearly the political programme Segal favours—a mere propaganda battle for equality at work within the framework of capitalist society. Her favoured vehicles for the fulfillment of this programme are the left Labour councils that have taken on board feminist policies. And yet she accepts that while in propaganda terms the GLC made the greatest impact on the question of women's rights it did little to counter the major setbacks women suffered during its existence under Livingstone over privatisation, part-time work and wages.

EXPERIENCE

The experience of local government clearly shows that reliance on the reformist structures and politics of the existing labour movement is no solution to the problems facing working class women. Propaganda victories and anti-sexist literature are useful weapons, but can only radically transform women's lives if linked to a wider struggle against class exploitation and oppression. Segal rejects such a strategy for mobilising the organised strength of the working class and oppressed.

She sees Marxism as a tendency to conflate the problems of male domination with the problems of a capitalist class system. The solutions to the problems of the left are to be found in a re-thinking of a *'new vision of socialism'* which takes on board the *'feminist vision which concerns itself with the nature of human relationships'*.

Segal's 'socialism' has much in common with the old utopian socialism of the pre-Marxist period. It is a socialism which takes as its starting point the *'emancipation not of a particular class (to begin with) but all humanity (at once)'* (Engels *Anti-Dühring*). As such it takes nobody any further forward towards real emancipation. ■

workers power

NO TO THE SIX DAY WEEK

THE ATTEMPTS TO isolate Arthur Scargill in the NUM leadership are proving all too successful. While 'Scargill's man', Sammy Thompson, looks set to win the Vice Presidency, this will prove cold comfort for Scargill. Thompson is, in reality, closer to compromisers like Yorkshire's Jack Taylor—a key saboteur of the Orgreave picket—and will prove an unreliable ally.

More significant, is the fact that in recent executive elections lefts like Billy Etherington, Dave Hopper and Jim Colgan have lost their seats to the right. Now the right and the 'new realist left' (the Communist Party and their allies in the Labour Party like Eric Clarke) command a majority on the executive, committed to burying the militant legacy of the great strike which Scargill, despite his faults, still represents. The key question facing militants in the NUM is how to organise to stop this right-wing advance.



He says wrong!

Leading the charge of the right brigade is South Wales. Its chosen issue is the question of Margam and the six-day working week. Nothing illustrates the potential fate of the NUM, if those committed to class collaboration win out, than this enormous betrayal of working conditions.

Following the vote in South Wales of thirteen lodges to seven to go it alone and negotiate six-day

working in clear contravention of NUM policy, there is to be a new delegate conference and a national ballot.

Writing in the April edition of the South Wales miners' journal Des Dutfield had the following to say about Scargill's opposition to his betrayal of conditions for 780 jobs:

'Certain irresponsible and sometimes vicious statements made by the National President, accusing the South Wales miners of being collaborators, also accusing us of being mischievous and of misleading the coalfield.'

AGREEMENT

Dutfield has found an ally in George Wright, the regional officer of TGWU in South Wales. Wright has made it clear that if the national NUM reverse the Margam decision, he would do an EETPU and sign an agreement with British Coal himself to get 800 TGWU members at Margam instead. In

defence of Wright's Hammond-like stance Dutfield declared the following:

'I don't regard Mr Wright's initiative as unwelcome. Obviously our TGWU colleagues are as concerned as we are about South Wales and the unemployed.'

Scargill responded to this threat to scab:

'Apparently Mr Wright has said that if the NUM will not work at Margam his members will. I thought that the trade union movement had made its position clear on issues like this at Wapping ... My advice to George Wright is to keep his nose out of it.'

Dutfield in league with Wright is doing the Tories' dirty work and they are cheering him on. The Board are also delighted—because as soon as they get six-day working in one area they can proceed apace in other areas to push for attacks on other working practices and conditions.

Dutfield and his supporters must be stopped. The forthcoming ballot

should be used by rank and file militants as a launching pad not only to halt Dutfield but to stop the retreat in the NUM leadership as a whole.

Scargill cannot be relied upon to lead such a fight. He is still refusing to break with the 'collaborators' on the NEC and appeal over their heads directly to the rank and file.

In practice, Scargill still prefers the methods of diplomacy and bureaucratic alliances rather than building a fighting rank and file movement based in the pits.

In the weeks ahead it will be for militants, like those who supported Eric Lippitt, and those rank and file networks that continue to exist in the areas, including the women's groups, to get organised. A campaign must be built to defeat Dutfield and the other collaborators and begin the task of building a rank and file movement in the NUM capable of fighting for the leadership of all the miners. ■

by Andy Smith



Dutfield says right!

LAMBETH'S CUTS BUDGET

Workers Power spoke to Lambeth councillor Rachael Webb, one of the eight Labour councillors who voted against the cuts budget strategy recently agreed by Lambeth.

Workers Power: Rachael, you were elected as a Labour councillor in the May elections last year. Can you explain the manifesto on which you were elected?

Rachael Webb: Yes, the manifesto was quite unambiguous. We were elected on the same platform as the surcharged 31 councillors. The Local Government Committee shortlisted all potential candidates. Candidates were asked to state their position on Equal Opportunities, on total opposition to cuts in jobs and services, to rent or rate increases, and to a preparedness to pass an illegal budget and be surcharged if necessary in pursuit of those objectives.

WP: Recently, in the rate making Council meeting, we saw the leadership of the Lambeth Labour Group putting forward a cuts budget which was voted through by a majority of one. Can you explain why it is that the Labour Group has retreated so far from its manifesto?

RW: I believe that there are a large number of people in the Labour Group who take a managerial approach to the problems we experience in Lambeth rather than a political approach. Hence a lot of comrades are tragically moving to the right. A lot of comrades failed to analyse the situation from a class perspective.

I think it is significant that a number of the eight of us who voted

against the budget do have a trade union background as semi-skilled, skilled or unskilled workers. I believe that this has given us a trade union perspective, which unfortunately does appear to be lacking in many comrades in the Labour Group.

WP: Our view of the cuts budget strategy was that it was an attempt on the part of the Labour Group to stay within the law. Do you accept that?

RW: Yes. I believe the reasons that the Labour Group attempted to pass a legal budget was that the leadership saw no way out of the seeming contradictions which we are in. There is no way out if we are to remain within the terms of a legal budget. Our only option is to honour our manifesto commitment, to mobilise the trade unions, the community and the Labour parties to fight against the Tory cuts and to fight for our share of the money which the Government has taken from us—to fight for a bigger block grant.

WP: Can you explain what exactly the cuts are which are envisaged in this budget strategy which was passed last night?

RW: I believe the cuts are in three main areas. The leadership dispute that this is in fact a cuts budget. The reason that the eight of us voted as we did was that we believe that the raid on the Superannuation fund is in fact a cut [the Labour Group intend to make no employer's contribution into the fund for two years thereby saving £12.6 million - WP]. It prevents the Superannuation Fund being adjusted to

take account of a proper Equal Opportunities Policy. This is vital.

We believe that the cut of £240,000 in the Directorate of Construction Service cannot be considered to be anything other than a cut. It is a cut in a really vital area of Council service delivery which will directly affect the working class of Lambeth.

Although others of the seven who voted with me disagree on this particular point, it is my opinion that the £6.23 million 'slippage' does in fact represent a cut in services because it is in fact a recruitment delay, if not a freeze.

WP: Local Authority workers are under attack up and down the country. Our ultimate goal must be the repeal of the Rates Act, and to force more money out of central government, which must involve a massive fight. Workers Power believes that workers must link up across the boroughs to take co-ordinated industrial action and to plan together their strategy against local authorities and central government. We also believe that local government workers should link up with workers in the private sector who have industrial muscle. What do you feel about this?

RW: Yes, I entirely support that. It is obvious to me that the struggle cannot take place only within the Council Chamber. Either the struggle takes place at all levels of the Labour Party, in the Labour Group, in the Council Chamber, in the community and in the trade unions or the Tories will continue to impose their cuts upon us.

WP: As I'm sure you're aware, Neil Kinnock and leading members of the Labour Party have recently attacked the

so-called 'loony left' councils. How do you situate what's happening in Lambeth in that national context?

RW: I believe that the stand of the Labour leadership in this instance has had a very damaging effect on morale in the labour movement. Locally it has damaged our chances of winning elections. We are just about to embark on an ILEA election in the Streatham part of Lambeth. I believe the national Labour leadership represents a block on us being able to win this vital marginal seat which we must win if the Labour Party is to form a government.

I believe that the remarks made by the national Labour leadership

about so-called 'loony left' councils alienating voters by giving too much emphasis to Lesbian and Gay rights are absolutely disgraceful. Speaking as a trans-sexual I find the remarks made by the leadership of the Labour Party about too much emphasis on Lesbian and Gay issues totally irresponsible. Such remarks legitimise prejudice. By making the remarks that certain leaders of the Labour Party have done, they have quite simply increased the likelihood that transsexuals like me, or lesbians or gay men will be attacked on the street. I do hope they realise what they have done and that in future they adopt a more responsible attitude. ■

EALING COUNCIL STRIKE

ON 2 MARCH, 2,300 Ealing Nalگو workers began taking industrial action over their fight to achieve comparability with manual and teaching staff in the borough who receive inner London weighting. The action was to include non co-operation with councillors, non-collection of council monies (including rent and rates) and a series of monthly one day strikes.

However, because of the ruling Labour group's hard nosed tactics the action quickly escalated. Only a few minutes after workers in the Finance department began to carry out union instructions 30 staff were suspended. By Thursday, when the first of the one day strikes was scheduled, 800 workers across the borough had walked out in sympathy demanding their reinstatement and an end to the victimisations.

Workers Power argued at the special branch meeting for an

immediate escalation of the dispute to an indefinite all out strike. In a brilliant display of solidarity, and against the expectations of the cynics in the union who had argued that the workers would never agree to such 'extreme action', an overwhelming majority voted in favour. However the National Executive insisted on a secret ballot if the strike was to be made official. Again, despite all expectations, the ballot result showed an increase in the numbers in favour of taking all out action!

Ealing Nalگو workers have shown immense strength and solidarity, and proved wrong the many people who doubt the ability or willingness of workers to take action. However a key task for the strikers is to escalate the action and build the pressure. Workers Power will be arguing at the next branch meeting for such a course. ■

by an Ealing striker