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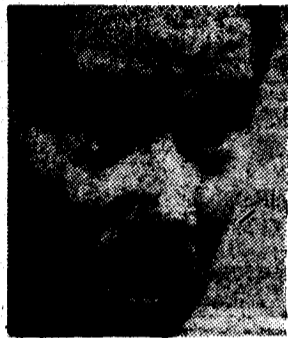
Fighting for a
General Strike
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Affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

BL convenors must call strike on pay!



Edwardes

BL convenors meet this Friday at the Radford plant in Coventry to make a crucial decision on the annual wage review.

After four months of vacillation, and a secret ballot in which BL workers voted by a large majority to reject management's 5% pay offer with 102 pages of strings, they are to decide

what action to take.

The Joint Negotiating Committee are to make a recommendation to the convenors—but they are not revealing beforehand what that recommendation is to be.

But it seems likely they will recommend no action. Edwardes has laid off 15,000 workers in various plants precisely to ensure that the leadership of the

BL unions remain paralysed.

Tied politically to defending the "viability" of BL, the convenors are vulnerable to this tactic.

The outcome of the meeting will have repercussions far beyond BL itself.

The steelworkers are locked in battle with the Tories in which they have become increasingly isolated.

**If the JNC refuse to*

give a lead or recommend no action the decision will rest with the convenors. They must reject the vacillation of the JNC and vote for strike action in line with the mandate from the membership.

A strike now by the 100,000 workers in BL Cars would break that isolation and open a new phase in the struggle against the Tory government.

A united strike would be a major step towards building a general strike to bring down the Tories.

If the BL convenors vote for no action or for partial action the Tories will be greatly strengthened.

The Leyland Action Committee is calling for a lobby of the convenors conference and are calling steel workers to join them in that lobby.

1-day protests won't

Tens of thousands of workers from all over the country will march in protest at Tory policies this weekend. The huge demonstrations will reflect mounting anger at the endless barrage of public spending cuts, anti-union laws, runaway price increases, closures, sackings, speed-up and attacks on benefits and basic rights unleashed by the Thatcher government in the nine months since they were elected.

But even as they march behind their trade union banners many workers will be wondering about the next step in the fight. Bitter experience has time and again proven that mass demonstrations alone—however impressive and representative of the working class—cannot defeat governments.

And the Tory government has not embarked upon its savage policies by accident or mistake.

Everyone of their attacks on the working class has one aim in view: to weaken and divide the organised labour movement and to increase the rate of exploitation of workers throughout industry in order to raise the profits of private employers and bankers.

Mounting evidence of a runaway recession in British industry, that the course is set for 2 million unemployed and that production this year will actually fall comes as no surprise to the Tories: it is precisely through such measures that they hope to force the least profitable sections of private industry to the wall, close down "loss making" sections of nationalised industry, and sell off profitable operations such as the Post Office—in order to provide a profits bonanza for the strongest elements of the capitalist class.

This is why the confrontation now taking place in the steel industry is so crucial for the working class. Steelworkers, who have seen jobs by the thousand axed with the collaboration of their union leaders, recognise that unless a stand is taken now they face a further 50,000 sackings combined with a massive cut in real wages and a wholesale attack on hard-won working conditions.

An unprecedented wave of revolt from the ranks forced the steel union leaders to take a stand on wages—while trying to keep the jobs issue separate. The steelworkers have now been out nearly ten weeks in the forefront of the fight to defeat the Tories. Their national strike offers the perfect rallying point for joint action by the millions of public sector and other workers seeking a means of defending jobs, wages and services.

UNION LEADERS

Yet what have the union leaders done? NUM and NUR leaders—whose members face mass sackings through steel closures—have joined with TUC General Secretary Len Murray to sabotage the struggle for General Strike action against the steel closures in Wales, and the calls for such action to be extended nationwide.

Leaders of unions in British Leyland have stalled for over three months on calling the necessary strike action against their insulting 5%-with-strings pay offer. And elsewhere in the public sector, leaders of manual and white collar unions have sat back tamely as Thatcher's axe crumbles into vital services, without attempting to mobilise strike action alongside the steelworkers.

Even the Tories' new anti-union bill, with its far-reaching moves against the closed shop, picketing rights and workers' democracy have failed to stir the slightest fight from the TUC leaders: instead they have merely voted not to accept money to run postal ballots—after the law is passed!

But the Tories are not invincible. Determined strike action by other sections alongside the steelworkers could defeat this government and force it from office. Such a fight would also create conditions for workers to take on and defeat the right wing Labour leaders whose anti-working class policies allowed Thatcher in in the first place. The fight could be pressed home for a genuine workers government, prepared to implement the socialist policies needed to defend jobs and services.

Callaghan knows this: that is why he is opposed to any such action. Murray and his fellow bureaucrats know it too: that is why the TUC protests are restricted to token one-day action—one on a weekend and one which they hope to confine to a "lunchtime" in two months' time!

But given a lead, workers are prepared to fight the government. In each area delegates from trade union and labour movement bodies should take steps now to form local councils of action, to support the steelworkers and take forward the fight for General Strike action to bring down the Tories. And those trade union and Labour leaders who oppose such a fight must be removed.

beat Tories GENERAL STRIKE NOW!



Mass resistance to Soviet invaders

The Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy has received a body-blow from the mass strikes and protest actions which took place last week in Kabul.

The masses of the petty bourgeoisie and working class of Kabul showed themselves to be almost unanimously unconvinced by the Soviet bureaucracy's self-proclaimed defence of the national interests of Afghanistan against reactionary forces.

To the contrary, they are showing growing militant hostility to the actions of the Soviet army.

The Moscow bureaucracy has been forced to admit the intensity of this opposition, desperately but unconvincingly trying to blame it all on "terrorists and bandits" paid by the CIA or China or Pakistan.

To believe that last week in Kabul it would be necessary to accept that most of the population were imperialist agents.



CIA-backed Afghan rightist rebels

Imperialist agents

There is no doubt imperialist agents of all kinds are active in Kabul, and throughout Afghanistan; but it is not necessary to discover imperialist agents to find the sources of opposition to the Kremlin's tanks.

The repressive policies of the Moscow Stalinists and their puppet government in Kabul create that opposition every day on a growing scale.

It is not a communist or a proletarian-led opposition. Its most coherent section is clearly animated by profoundly reactionary Islamic ideas.

Its leaflets call for "Holy War" against Soviet imperialism. The demonstrators shouted "God is great!"

And the fact that Soviet tanks and helicopter gunships fire on unarmed crowds in the name of "Communism" and "the Afghan revolution" inevitably fuels such reactionary ideas within the mass opposition.

But revolutionaries must see behind the verbal clothing in which the opposition to the Soviet occupation is covered.

In fact Radio Kabul speaks, like the opposition, in the name of Islam.

Good Moslems

"We are good Moslems", the Stalinist radio declared last week. "We are not against the masses".

The masses can hardly be blamed for finding this hard to believe.

The first mass demonstrations against the Soviet Union and a strike of the petty bourgeois shopkeepers of the bazaar were reacted to by the Soviet authorities by a wave of hundreds of arrests (500 according to official figures including small children). This was followed by the shooting of demonstrators, which reportedly left 300 dead and thousands wounded.

The declaration of martial law on Friday February 22 did not control the situation.



Karmal

It was followed by the growth of the demonstrations until hundreds of thousands were involved. And the strike of the shopkeepers was joined by the majority of workers in Kabul, especially government employees.

For all its reactionary rhetoric this movement expresses the active striving of the petty bourgeois and even proletarian masses of Kabul for their basic democratic and material interests to which they rightly see the Stalinist bureaucracy as being totally hostile.

Against repression

Trotskyists side with the masses against the reactionary repression by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

And within the mass movement they fight for a programme of democratic and transitional demands which can win workers, peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie from reactionary, religious misleadership.

Socialist Press has condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from the outset. But in analysing the way forward we have also taken account of the after-effects of any withdrawal of Soviet troops in the face of a mounting imperialist backed guerrilla struggle by extreme right wing forces.

The only likely outcome would be the consolidation of a vicious pro-imperialist regime which would perpetuate oppression and exploitation in Afghanistan, and from which vantage point the CIA could and would seek to foster interventions across the border into the Soviet Union itself, in the hopes of whipping up the Muslim peoples of Soviet Central Asia into anti-communist struggles.

It is for this reason that we do not join the clamour for "troops out of Afghanistan".

We call instead upon the Afghan workers and peasants to organise in their own committees and soviets to fight alongside the Russian troops against the right wing guerrilla

bands, and for the complete expropriation of remaining landholdings and private enterprise, without compensation under the control of elected committees.

At the same time it is necessary to demand full political rights including the right of assembly and free speech for both the anti-imperialist Afghan masses and the Red Army soldiers.

A programme of agitation should be taken up among the Red Army rank and file—many of whom come themselves from Soviet Central Asia—to press for maximum links with the Afghan masses; the formation of soldiers committees and soviets; and the election of officers.

Such an appeal could begin the struggle to mobilise Red Army resistance to the counter-revolutionary directives received from their bureaucratic leaders and commanders, and to win the support of rank and file soldiers for the fight for political revolution in the Soviet Union.

NATO forces put onto war footing

The war-mongering of the imperialists is not just empty, sabre-rattling threats. The imperialist leaders and NATO generals have launched a concerted campaign to put their military forces on a war footing.

British and US fleet movements in the Indian Ocean have taken place at the same time as intense diplomatic activity among the pro-imperialist states on its shores.

Beyond deals with the 'Islamic' military dictatorship of General Zia in Pakistan, the US imperialists now propose to trade \$100 million of 'aid' in exchange for military facilities in Kenya, Somalia and Oman.

Increase aid

Vance's recent visit to Western Europe has also resulted in agreements from the French and West German imperialists in particular that they will greatly increase their 'aid' to these three states as well as to Pakistan and Turkey, while they consider deployment of military forces in the air.

In an attempt to rival the military presence of the Soviet bureaucracy in Ethiopia, occupied Eritrea and South Yemen at the mouth of the Red Sea, the US imperialists are looking to greater facilities at the port of Djibouti (lying opposite Aden, in the tiny Republic of the Afars and the Issars—formerly a French colony, now independent but still a vassal of the French state).

Baltic Sea

But the imperialists have not stopped short with threats directed against the oil-producing states of the Middle East, and the Soviet Union beyond them. NATO has surged forward with renewed vigour towards the Baltic Sea and north-west frontier of the Soviet Union.

While capitalist Sweden steadfastly preserves its 'neutrality' (preferring to approach war on the highly profitable basis of supplying arms to other belligerents), both Denmark and Norway have been members of NATO since 1949. (*Socialist Press* 188 wrongly referred to "neutral Norway"—apologies, Ed.)

Yet both these states are

members of NATO with the specific agreement that no atomic weapons or foreign military bases would be allowed on their territory in peace-time—a concession to genuine Soviet fears of encirclement.

But now moves have been announced to provide new and modern facilities for other NATO powers—above all to facilitate an air-borne strike across the Soviet border—while a major NATO exercise is taking place in the sub-Arctic regions of northern Norway.

The Soviet bureaucracy has responded to these threatening developments with alarm and anger that has caused consternation among the Finnish bourgeoisie, which has successfully struggled since the second imperialist world war to maintain detente with its powerful eastern neighbours in the degenerated workers' state.

Vigorous statements of Finnish neutrality and concern have found little echo amongst other Scandinavian sections of the bourgeoisie.

The new coalition government in Iceland has specifically stated that it will not take any action to close the NATO base at Keflavik, despite the floods

Trotskyists defend the USSR against imperialism. But, as the events in Afghanistan make every day more clear, the Stalinist bureaucracy—far from being an adequate defender of the property relations of the Soviet Union puts them into peril by its policy of bloody repression.

That is why today the tasks of fighting for democratic rights and the material needs of the masses in Afghanistan and the fight to defend the property relations of the USSR from imperialism are both inseparable, against imperialism but also from the task of political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracies in Moscow and everywhere else where they rule.

It is possible to agree with the letter, if not the spirit, of one of Radio Moscow's pronouncements of the week: "The most reactionary forces in the world have joined in a campaign against the Afghan people".

One of those forces is Moscow Stalinism itself.

But there was evidence last week that the Soviet bureaucracy was profoundly frightened by its inability to control the Afghan people.

Brezhnev clearly began in his statements to open the door at least gingerly to Carrington's proposal for an agreed carve-up ("guaranteed neutrality") of Afghanistan in an agreement between Moscow and the imperialists.

Under such a scheme they must hope Moscow's troops could withdraw not in an undignified retreat before an uncontrollable mass movement but as part of a new reactionary deal between Stalinism and imperialism to divide the world and trample on the democratic rights and material interests of the oppressed masses.

Such a deal is still only on the horizon and it is undoubtedly true that the forces driving towards a renewal of full scale cold war have received a massive boost in the last two months.

Still, despite the war moves, both Washington and Moscow continue in public to declare their belief in detente.

Guerrillas capture Colombia embassy

Last week's capture of the Dominican embassy, together with the US envoy and diplomats of lesser standing, by the M-19 guerrillas has greatly upset the Colombian regime of President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala.

This is in part because the influx of the press corps has begun to yield reports that give the lie to Colombia's much vaunted 'parliamentary democracy' and reflect the escalating class conflict in this important South American state.

Between 1975 and 1978 real wages declined by 22% and, according to official statistics, in 1977 93% of the labour force (7 millions) received only 44% of national income—leaving 56% for the other 7%.

1977 saw the first national strike in Colombia's history and the establishment of the National Trade Union Confederation (CNS) uniting the four major union bodies, but mass action has been continually repressed and the working class remains organisationally very weak.

The M-19 guerrillas do not, however, come from the proletariat.

The group is largely composed of disenchanted members of Colombia's rapidly expanding professional middle class.

M-19 is an odd amalgam of dissident Conservative and Communist Party members formed in 1974.

Scores of its militants were captured last year, and M-19 is now bargaining for the release of their comrades.

But in 1979 over 60,000 people passed through Colombia's jails with the government admitting to at least 4,000 political prisoners.

It is clear that only organised mass action on the part of the working class can halt the consolidation of Colombia's 'Constitutional Dictatorship'.



Pakistan's General Zia of rhetoric from one coalition partner—the Stalinist 'People's Alliance'.

For their part, the Danish Social-Democrats, in their minority government, have merely protested against increasing 'defence' spending in real terms. Their arguments are not of course based on principle, but on the political difficulty of boosting military spending when they are about to impose further cuts in social services.

This difficulty has highlighted the long-term planning of the latest NATO manoeuvres. It was in 1978 that the imperialists agreed to increase 'defence' spending by 3% in real terms annually, but it is only now that these measures are having a visible impact, which is emphasised by their anti-Soviet tub-thumping in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan.

The imperialist strategy is directed quite clearly towards maintaining a military threat against the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states.

Its significance cannot be ignored, and the fight to defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack must be taken up by workers in all capitalist states to demand withdrawal from NATO and unilateral disarmament.

Last week's rehabilitation of Liu Shaoqi—the once-reviled "capitalist roader" former state president—and the unleashing of a new wave of purges against the "left" marks an important step in the consolidation of power of right wing Stalinist Deng Xiaoping.

TITO: THE STALINIST WHO 'BROKE' WITH STALIN

By Rosemary Hardwick

Tito was undoubtedly a major figure in world Stalinism—one whose development was in some ways unique.

His life, and the role he played in the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) and the Yugoslav 'revolution' also had an impact on the Trotskyist movement.

Wholesale revisions of Marxism, which still survive to this day in the fractured remains of the post-war Fourth International, were originally based on Tito and the YCP's apparent ability to 'break from Stalinism' and lead a successful revolution.

Peasant family

These events, and the superficially plausible 'explanation' of them by forces within the Trotskyist movement who abandoned its basic principles, called for a theoretical development from those Trotskyists who continued to uphold the view of Stalinism as unequivocally counter-revolutionary, and that the events in Yugoslavia (as in the other buffer states) were entirely in keeping with the reactionary role that Stalinism plays internationally.

Josip Broz Tito came from a poor peasant family—a background which worked to his advantage in his career in the apparatus of Stalin's Comintern, where there was suspicion of anyone of middle class or intellectual origins.

He joined the Communist Party in 1920, after returning from the Soviet Union where he had experienced the 1917 revolution as a prisoner of war.

From the mid-1930s, he worked as a Comintern agent, building up the organisation of the YCP, which was in total disarray as a result of Stalin's purges, faction fighting, police repression and the disastrous ultra-leftism of the "Third Period".

Pro-Moscow

Until 1948, Tito was loyally pro-Moscow, completely committed to the USSR as the first country of 'socialism'.

It is important to stress this point because of the revisionist theories that portray Tito as a revolutionary opponent of Stalin.

Tito was always a firm advocate of the Popular Front, the Comintern strategy from the mid-1930s onwards.

His loyalty to this counter-revolutionary policy was particularly evident during the war, when he built up a huge Partisan



Tito with Churchill and Eden



Tito with Brezhnev

army based entirely on a Popular Frontist all-class alliance—"The Yugoslav nation"—united against the foreign Nazi invader.

For all this later display of patriotism, the initial reaction of the YCP to the Nazi invasion in April 1941 had in fact been even more blatantly treacherous.

Because of the Stalin-Hitler non-aggression pact, the YCP were obliged to argue against any uprising against the German occupation.

Fortunately for them, this pact was broken two months later when Germany invaded the USSR.

The cross-class character of the Partisan movement and their political wing the National Liberation Committee was made plain in numerous declarations. Take this one for example:

"The National Liberation Movement . . . endeavoured to

unite all the national forces. The leaders of this movement always placed the cause of the liberation of the country from the barbarous Fascist invaders above all other interests of particular political and social groups and classes . . .

" . . . we must emphasise once more that the leaders of the Movement of National Liberation of Yugoslavia have before them one single important aim: to fight against the occupiers and their lackeys and build up a federative democratic Yugoslavia, and not—as our enemies accuse us—the aim of introducing Communism."

The reactionary argument that the interests of the "nation" must be put above the interests of the working class will be familiar to anyone who comes into conflict with reformist and Stalinist bureaucrats today.

Much has been made of the



Tito signing 'Treaty of Friendship' with Stalin in 1945

disagreements that Tito had with Stalin during the war period.

It is true that Stalin and his immediate cronies wanted Tito and the Partisans to go even further with the Popular Front.

500 guns

In particular, they wanted unity between the Partisans and the Cetniks, the so-called resistance army of the exiled bourgeois government.

Tito obediently made numerous efforts to link up with the Cetniks, and was very keen to follow Stalin's instructions. At one point, he sent 500 guns to their leader, Draza Mihailovic, as a gesture of good will.

The problem he faced, which the Soviet bureaucracy couldn't fully comprehend, was the hostility that the Cetniks displayed towards the YCP.

Mihailovic, Minister of War in the emigre government, considered the Communists—regardless of their denials of Communist aims—as a far greater enemy than the Nazis!

Civil War

They therefore collaborated with the Nazis and the quisling Yugoslav government against the Partisans.

The guns Tito sent to Mihailovic were turned against the Partisans, and the "national liberation" struggle became, despite the Stalinists' efforts, a civil war.

The actual process of transforming Yugoslavia into a deformed workers' state, far from being a "revolution" led by non-Stalinist forces, as the Pabloites of the USFI claim, was, in fact, based on demobilising the working class and resurrecting the bourgeois state forms which had been undermined by the establishment of "Liberation Committees" throughout the country.

This process is described and analysed in Tim Wohlforth's essay *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*. The period of reconstruction of the bourgeois state, begun with the pact between Tito and the emigre bourgeois government, was much shorter than in other buffer countries, where the process was similar.

The overturn of property relations was carried out much more quickly than Stalin was happy about—but it was carried out from above under the control of the Stalinist leaders—in the way that Stalin wanted throughout the buffer zone.

The subsequent 1948 split between the Yugoslav bureaucracy and the USSR is often cited as further evidence that Tito was not a Stalinist, but had already become a revolutionary.

In fact, it was an expression of the nationalist pressures which continually threaten the superficially monolithic Stalinist block.

Once the "theory" of "socialism in one country" is applied in several countries simultaneously, the particular interests of national bureaucracies are bound to come into conflict.

The extent to which that conflict breaks out into open splits and defiance of the authority of the USSR, depends on the economic, political and, ultimately, military pressure a rival national bureaucracy can bring to bear.

Tito's YCP had a strong, independent base, and it was this which enabled him to remain in power in defiance of the Soviet Union.

The success of the Partisan movement and the early consolidation of the YCP's state power gave them a firm base of control.

The regime was also popular—it was seen as the liberator of the country from foreign domination and fascism.

Whatever the bureaucratic stifling of democracy that took place in the 1940s and 1950s, this was minimal compared with the state repression of the war years and the pre-war monarchy.

Mass mobilisations played no part in the overturn of property relations, but a limited mobilisation after 1948 was useful as protection against military intervention by the Soviet bureaucracy.

The development of Yugoslav communism since 1948 would require a separate article to be fully analysed.

The Yugoslav bureaucracy were forced to criticise the defects of 'socialism' in the USSR, in order to rationalise

and counter the Kremlin's virulent attacks made on themselves.

Yugoslavia, however, from 1948 onwards has increasingly come to rely on the imperialists for economic aid. This has been a major factor in the gradual abandonment of planning and economic controls and the introduction of foreign capitalist investment.

The results are to be seen in raging inflation and chronic balance of payments deficits, aggravated by debt charges.

The intervention of the capitalists into this socialised economy is an important part of their strategy of undermining the property relations throughout the Eastern European bloc.

Internationally, Tito has cherished a role as a grand statesman, an ambition which was fulfilled in the establishment of the non-aligned movement.

Of course, the whole concept of 'non-alignment' is a utopian dream, and the development of this "Third World" movement has confirmed that it cannot hover independently between the two systems of imperialism and Stalinism.

Under Castro's leadership it hovers towards Stalinism while under Tito's influence it accommodated with imperialism.

The very fact that this movement contains such clearly aligned countries as Singapore is an expression of the bankruptcy of the whole project.

Tito leaves behind a country in dire economic straits, whose introduction of capitalist influence is reaching new depths with the conclusion of new deals with the EEC.

The tensions of nationalism in this federal state could be a major contribution to instability in the months after Tito's final departure.

The eyes of both the imperialist and the Stalinist worlds are fixed on Yugoslavia because of the uncertainty surrounding its future after the death of the man who has dominated its history for nearly 40 years.

The development which both most want to avoid is any mobilisation of the working class and peasantry independent of the bureaucracy, the state and the imperialists.

TILC International Summer School

Eight days of classes and discussion on basic questions of Marxism and the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

Sunday July 20—Sunday July 27

The Summer School will be attended by delegations from the organisations affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, and is open to WSL members and supporters.

More details available from:

WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX

NEC retreat strengthens

Callaghan

By John Lister



Mason in the firing line

The extreme right wing politics of Roy Mason, Labour's former torture chief in Ireland, have plainly been an increasing embarrassment to Arthur Scargill in recent years.

Mason is an NUM sponsored MP, whose impregnable Labour seat is Scargill's headquarters town of Barnsley.

Vulnerable

So no matter how left wing and militant a stance Scargill himself might choose to adopt in the NUM and wider labour movement, he knows that wherever he goes he is vulnerable to the obvious and embarrassing question—what are you doing to get rid of Butcher Mason?

Socialist Press and WSL supporters have been among those who have repeatedly raised precisely this issue. And finally Scargill has made a concerted and thorough move against the Mason gang in Barnsley.

Conspicuously, Scargill has not resorted to bureaucratic manoeuvre but to mobilisation of broad support in his preparations for last Friday's Labour Party AGM, at which the right wing were all but obliterated.

The AGM saw not the usual 50 or so delegates, but a turnout

approaching 200 as the full strength of the NUM and Scargill's mass base of support was brought to bear against Mason's backers.

And though NUM spokesmen have talked simply of "bringing Mason to heel" and denied attempting to remove him as local MP, it is clear that Mason and the new political leadership in Barnsley are already set on a collision course.

There must be no retreat from the fight to oust this brazen defender of British imperialism and staunch supporter of the Callaghan-Healey leadership.

There is now talk of further possible moves by Yorkshire NUM against the notorious gang of right wing MPs in the area that continue to feed off the solid Labour vote and trade union sponsorship.

Such moves—though long overdue—must be welcomed and supported by socialists. It is correct to mobilise the rank and file of the Labour Party and the unions in the struggle against their so-called leaders and representatives.

Yet at the same time it is essential to fight to ensure that those who replace the right wing base themselves on consistent defence of the independent class interests of the working class—and opposition to all forms of nationalism and class collaboration.

As the bureaucratic machinery of the Labour Party inquiry lumbers into action, it is increasingly plain that the right wing Callaghan leadership have been able to regain the upper hand against a confused and divided 'left' wing.

Indeed the growing prospect of an all-out fight between left and right within the Labour Party, and warnings from the right wing that they will not shrink from splitting the Party sooner than tolerate a socialist programme or democratic control by the membership, have brought a retreat by a number of NEC members who have previously voted with the 'left'.

Key among these is shadow Education spokesman Neil Kinnock, whose sudden promotion to the front bench by Callaghan last year can now be seen as a shrewd master-stroke.

It is now Kinnock who most ably combines sturdy defence of a succession of right wing policies in the PLP—in particular a refusal to pledge Tories' vicious education cuts—with a brand of tub-thumping 'left' rhetoric designed to gull unwary members into believing that he really wants a fight.

And it was Kinnock who last Wednesday moved to split the left vote on the Party's NEC, and secured the defeat of a move to bring Tribune Les Huckfield onto the Party's inquiry, following the enforced "resignation" of TGWU Deputy General Secretary Alex Kitson.

The proposal, made by Eric Heffer, was defeated by 15 votes to 9. And though this still leaves a nominal left wing



Confused and divided—Labour 'lefts'

majority on the inquiry commission as a whole, the inquiry is being run in such a way as to swamp every aspect of its work with platoons of hardened right wingers co-opted from the trade union and Labour bureaucracy and from the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Notorious

Callaghan's satisfaction at this outcome will be matched by his pleasure at the NEC decision to scrap plans to investigate the "entryism" into the Party of agents of "bankers, industrialists, the CIA and other enemies of the Labour movement."

Such an investigation would obviously have incriminated and embarrassed dozens of prominent Labour right wingers, including of course Dennis Healey, whose connections with CIA-funded outfits are

notorious.

While abandoning this venture also meant abandoning the planned investigation and witch-hunt of the Militant tendency, the right wing are plainly hoping to achieve this purpose through urging Lord Underhill to publish his now notorious and ageing report and other alleged "documents".

A "nice polite" letter will also be sent to inner-party groups to invite them to publish details of their aims, organisation, finance and membership.

In the meantime the NEC has performed yet another about-face on the long drawn-out moves to expel Socialist Press supporter Ted Heslin from Oxford City Labour Party.

Witch-hunting

At its last meeting the NEC voted 15-8 to reject a proposal from its Organisation

Committee to uphold the expulsion and referred the matter back for reconsideration.

The Organisation Committee then switched position—and submitted a proposal that Heslin's appeal be upheld.

But in the meantime right wingers in the Oxford CLP were launching frenzied witch-hunting appeals to the NEC, reportedly claiming that Heslin—who has always declared himself to be a Trotskyist and a supporter of Socialist Press—was actually a member of the Workers Socialist League.

Deprived

It appears to have been on the basis of these fresh allegations—not raised in the initial expulsion—that the NEC last Wednesday voted once more to refer the case back to the organisation committee for them to think again.

Ted Heslin thus remains deprived of his rights within the Party, to which he was a delegate from his union branch.

Needless to say such harassment is reserved exclusively for socialist opponents of the Callaghan leadership—while the most extreme right wingers are allowed to peddle their reactionary views without let or hindrance.

Labour Parties should take up the fight to defend the right of Ted Heslin and all socialists to remain within the Party and to fight for their views without fear of witchhunts, expulsions, bans or proscriptions.

Steamroller

If this fight is not pressed home in the period between now and the Conference in October, it seems increasingly likely that a combination of union block votes, right wing pressure and Kinnock-style opportunism will steamroller in a whole battery of measures to restrict still further the limited democracy within the Labour Party, in a desperate attempt to preserve the stranglehold of the right wing leadership over the rank and file.

PRESS GANG



The two most potent symbols of imperialism are probably a B52 bomber and Coca Cola.

In Zimbabwe—where even the name has been changed to protect the guilty—B52s have been conspicuous by their absence. Coke has however been working overtime.

The elections have not proved happy for British imperialism or for the white Rhodesian state. Some of their best advertising campaigns have proved expensive flops.

For example one golden rule when bombing churches and leaving messages from your opponents is not to blow yourself up in the process.

Forgotten

Another rule is that if you do blow yourself up you should do so in such a way as to obliterate the evidence—and incriminate your opponents.

Both these simple rules were forgotten by the security forces which allowed their crack forces to be recognised as the architects of the bombing campaign.

This has a tendency to produce the opposite effect to the one you were trying to

create. The British press did not ignore this incident. Yet the leader columns, in their apparently careful evaluation of whether this was a "free and fair election" were concerned only with whether Mugabe was intimidating the supporters of their puppet Muzorewa.



Muzorewa

Control of the elections, both the campaign and the voting, was firmly in the hands of the white Rhodesians and their British Tory surrogates.

"Independence"

The press build up of the 'friendly British bobbies' who stood so incongruously at the entrance to the polls did a little to divert attention from the armed soldiers inside the polls.

(The call for police volunteers saw almost 50% of the entire British police force volunteer for the job. A high proportion of those selected were from the various "special" forces).

With all editorial signals set for "free and fair" the Coca Cola handwashing saga was eagerly broken to show a little independence and to bring a sense of suspense into the elections.

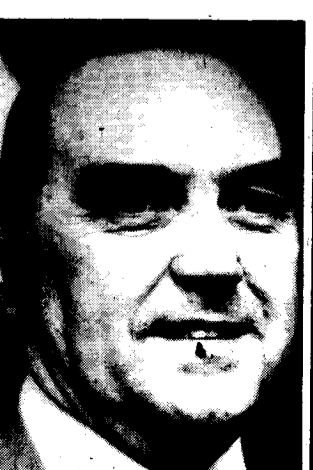
Of all the corruption, double voting and intimidation the state organised for the elections Coca Cola double voting must be the least relevant issue of the lot. It does however lend verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative.



Kinnock



Scargill



Mason

PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

PHOTO: Derek Spiers, IFL



Sartre



Sta

MAKERS OF MODERN MARXISM 5. Jean-Paul Sartre

Jean-Paul Sartre is probably everyone's identikit picture of a Left intellectual.

Philosopher, critic, novelist, playwright and political theorist, Sartre dominated French intellectual life for over two decades; almost single-handedly, he invented a whole philosophical movement—existentialism—which swept through Europe in the post-war years.

In 1960, now a convinced Marxist, Sartre published his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, a massive contribution to Marxist theory which, whatever its glaring faults, reveals all his formidable originality.

Experience

Sartre's first political experience came with the French resistance during the Second World War; but there is little evidence that he was particularly active, and his main response to the war can be found in his major philosophical work *Being and Nothingness* (1943), the founding document of existentialism.

The philosophy of *Being and Nothingness* is almost unrelievedly tragic. Between human consciousness and the material world intervenes a fatal gap or 'nothingness': individuals strive for the self-completion of things, but their freedom lies in their inability to attain it.

Man, in a famous Sartrean phrase, is 'condemned to be free', thrown into an absurd, meaningless world where he must assume a crushing responsibility for all his action.

To act in accordance with anything but one's own authentic self—to pass responsibility for one's actions to God, the state, moral or political codes—is to be convicted of 'bad faith'.

Cancelled out

But one individual's freedom tragically cancels out another: human relationships are deathly power struggles, in which each tries to dominate the other as an object.

Being and Nothingness says nothing directly about the crisis of fascism and imperialism; but there can be no doubt that the tragic vision it projects belongs to a disillusioned petty-bourgeois intelligentsia who convert an *historical* catastrophe into a *metaphysical* condition.

Existentialism was in part the philosophical death throes of the bourgeoisie—the final collapse of its grand rationalism, which detected order everywhere in the universe, into an agonised, nauseated vision of the isolated subject adrift in a purposeless world.

(Sartre's early novel, *Nausea* (1938) is a powerful dramatisation of this condition).

Progressive features

But existentialism must also be viewed dialectically. To dismiss it as mere petty-bourgeois decadence ignores its *progressive* features—its radical rejection of religious illusions, its scorn for the idea of a fixed 'human nature', its humanistic belief in the autonomy and responsibility of mankind in



French resistance forces march 1944

making history.

The title 'existentialism' signifies a belief in 'existence' rather than 'essence': man has no given, unalterable essence to which he must be faithful, but is ceaselessly engaged in the historical project of producing, and transforming, his own existence.

It is above all by *action* that this is achieved: existentialism marks a break with the passive speculations of traditional bourgeois idealism, vehemently asserting the need for man to 'define' himself through active engagement with the world.

This view, developed by Sartre in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, (1946) is still radically unhistorical, and so idealist.

It remains the dream of action of an historically impotent intelligentsia, represented by the protagonist of Sartre's impressive trilogy of novels *Roads to Freedom* (1945-49). 'Freedom', the obsessive theme of all Sartre's work, is still conceived of individualistically: it demands commitment, but commitment in an absurd world can only be arbitrary, without rational basis.

Heroism

It can thus easily degenerate into a form of romantic heroism, an academic fantasy of engagement.

Sartre's concern for action, however, propelled him out of the study into an unholy alliance with

causes of the proletariat and the Soviet Union were 'indissolubly linked'.

Sartre's political dilemma was the classical one of the petty-bourgeois 'left' intellectual. Full commitment to Stalinist discipline was unthinkable, not least for a philosopher who treasured individual freedom above all, and who saw literature as a supreme affirmation of individual autonomy.

Audience

But for a writer to write at all, he needed an audience; and since that could no longer be the despicable bourgeoisie, it must be the working class.

But the working class were captivated by Stalinism; so the free-wheeling intellectual must embark on his fellow-travelling.

For their part, of course, the PCF welcomed the support, and could occasionally swallow the criticism, of such an apparently 'independent', august intellectual as Jean-Paul Sartre.

Sartre's courtship of the CP did not materialise in marriage. Revolted by the crushing of the Hungarian uprising, Sartre turned sharply against Stalinism, even though he had been silent on the 1953 Berlin insurrection and deeply ambiguous on Korea.

Maoism

In recent years he has been embroiled in the Maoist flirtations fashionable on the French intellectual 'left'; but in an interview a few months ago he announced that he no longer considered himself a Marxist.



Soviet troops in Budapest, 1956



August 1945: French Stalinists entered the post-war bourgeois government.

From the 1920s to the present day, major contributions to Marxist theory have been made by thinkers indifferent or implacably opposed to the revolutionary heritage of Trotskyism.

From George Lukacs to Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci to Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Korsch to Herbert Marcuse, a powerful body of 'Western Marxist' theory has been developed, which has yet to receive full critical assessment by Trotskyists themselves.

How are the Stalinist or revisionist politics of these writers to be weighed against their theoretical contributions to Marxist theory?

In this series, Terry Eagleton examines the work of the theorists named above, as an introduction to a full evaluation of their work.

RN

Paul Sartre

Sartre's renegacy is part of a wearily familiar story. But the true tragedy of Jean-Paul Sartre is not the visions of absurdity of *Being and Nothingness*.

It is the tragedy of an important Marxist theoretician who, while at his best fiercely hostile to Stalinism, could find no alternative to counterrevolution except Maoist delusions or a regression to bourgeois individualism and idealism.

The genuine alternative—Trotskyism—is merely dismissed in *The Communists and Peace* as a species of 'idealism'.

Nevertheless, Sartre provided Marxism with some crucially significant ammunition in its struggle against Stalinist dogmatism.

The whole thrust of his Marxist theory is directed against the dead, sclerotic abstractions which pass for 'Marxist philosophy' under Stalinism, and towards a recovery of concrete revolutionary practice.

Concrete

It is here that Sartre's existentialism, for all its individualism and idealism, is relevant.

For existentialism is above all a practical, concrete, activist philosophy, concerned not with abstractions like 'human nature' but with the living situation of men and women in history.

It is for this reason that it lends itself so easily to art; Sartre's plays and novels are in this sense an integral part of his theoretical work.

In the introductory volume to his massive *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre attempts to

combine Marxist and existentialist methods—to grasp history by the analytic methods of historical materialism, but also to recreate it as a 'lived' reality, as a concrete process of human transformation rather than as a mere movement of abstract laws.

Antagonistic

Any such synthesis between Marxism and existentialism is in the fullest sense impossible. The basic assumptions of the two philosophies are in many ways mutually antagonistic.

But if 'existentialism' is taken in a broader sense, to mean a concern with lived, concrete experience, it can play a vital role in revolutionary theory and practice.

In a famous phrase, Sartre commented of the French poet Paul Valery that 'Valery is a petty bourgeois, no doubt about it; but not every petty bourgeois is Valery'. For Stalinism, nothing needs to be said about Valery other than that he was a petty bourgeois; it is enough to mechanically reduce his work to a mere 'expression' of the class struggle, or of the mode of production.

Unique

Sartre, while endorsing the overall judgement, wants to examine what is unique and specific to Valery, or indeed to any cultural product, which is never just a 'symptom' or 'expression' of the class struggle.

It is for this reason that one of his latest works has been nothing less than a three thousand page study of the French novelist

Gustav Flaubert (*L'Idiot de la Famille*, 1970-72), which (judging by the pages I have managed to plough through) tries to unite within a single analysis an account of the class struggle in Flaubert's time, a psychoanalytic exploration of Flaubert himself, and a densely detailed criticism of his fiction.

This ingenious energy might well have been put to better use elsewhere; but it is a useful example of Sartre's method.

The strengths and errors of that method can best be seen in Sartre's most important theoretical work, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960).

Blocked

With astonishing originality, Sartre examines here the very structures of social practice, the formation of classes and groups, the dialectic whereby individuals 'totalise' nature and history into a 'project', only to discover their free development blocked by the alien products they create.

In some ways, the book is a kind of materialist version of the early *Being and Nothingness*; the isolated consciousness has now become subjective practice, the absurd world is now seen as the society of violence, scarcity and alienation produced by capitalism.

Whereas, in the earlier book, consciousness and reality were eternally separated, the link can now be made. It is nothing less than the revolutionary process itself, by which human practice transforms history into the realm of freedom.

Yet that freedom, for

Sartre, is still a brief, precarious moment.

At points of historical crisis, a class which was previously 'serialised' (negatively bound together) can become what Sartre calls 'fused'—positively united by revolutionary struggle.

But it is a moment only: the chances are that such freedom will petrify into a new inertia and enslavement.

Obvious

Sartre's remaining petty-bourgeois tendencies are nowhere more obvious than in this.

The endless dialectic of freedom-through-practice and consequent alienation is seen almost as a law of nature.

The concrete historical causes of bureaucratisation are mainly ignored. For Sartre, it is just somehow in the nature of the material world that it gets in your way, frustrates your drive to 'pure' freedom; all of his work rests upon a profound duality between consciousness and matter which is inherited from bourgeois philosophy, and is simply unacceptable to Marxism.

Moreover, brilliant as the *Critique's* analysis of social processes are, they remain for the most part interpersonal processes: the transactions between individuals in football crowds or at bus-stops beloved of bourgeois sociology.

Overlooked

They are not analyses of the fundamentally determining laws and structures of class society.

Sartre, as a 'Marxist humanist', is able to illuminate the ways in which individuals act, produce and transform reality; but he largely overlooks the central Marxist insight that class society operates by laws independent of such action, laws which, as Marx pointed out, go on 'behind the backs' of individuals. It was this insight, in greatly distorted form, which the so-called 'structuralist' Marxists of the 1960s tried to develop; and the rise of structuralist Marxism signalled the waning of Sartre's influence.

Trotskyist revolutionaries can feel content neither with the 'Marxist humanism' of a Sartre or Georg Lukacs, or with the 'Marxist structuralism' of a Louis Althusser.

It remains to develop a Marxist theory rich and rigorous enough to analyse the laws of class society in an objective way, yet to incorporate also Sartre's crucial concern with the 'lived experience' of history.

Whatever other value his work may have, it at least has the value of alerting us to that as yet unsolved problem.

Letter:

Lukacs and the party

Dear Comrade,

Your series of articles on the 'Founders of Modern Marxism' will prove very valuable if it prompts further discussion among Trotskyists on Marxist theory and philosophy in the context of the revolutionary action of which they are a part.

In the light of this I would like to comment on Cde. Eagleton's article on Lukacs, believing it important that we arrive at a correct understanding of the political/philosophical writings of his all too few years as a Bolshevik.

This understanding is all the more important—and difficult—because of the contradictory attacks that have been made on Lukacs.

We have, for example, ultra-leftists accusing *History and Class Consciousness* of justifying the Stalinist party, while others (most notably, of late, the Althusserian Stalinists) suggest that it argues 'Luxembourism' and voluntarism!

This latter argument is one which Cde. Eagleton, though a Trotskyist, seems to support.

And while this was undoubtedly Lukacs' position until about 1921, in *History and Class Consciousness* (the final two essays, for example), *Lenin* and other works of the early twenties he specifically argues against it, stressing the need for a Leninist party.

This is a vital counterpart to a dominant theme of *History and Class Consciousness*: that the proletariat, and only it, is a revolutionary class; the emergence of proletarian class consciousness—i.e. revolutionary consciousness—though, requires conscious Marxist leadership.

The stress on the 'subjective factor' is part of Lukacs' fight against Second International orthodoxy which saw socialism emerging through the development of iron 'laws', and hence saw Marxism as merely the theory of those 'laws'.

Lukacs saw that historical laws are social, not natural laws and that the revolution has to be made by men and women—the working class.

Nonetheless it is not correct to say as Cde. Eagleton does that:

"One result of Lukacs' idealism is his refusal to acknowledge the scientific status of Marxism... he regards Marxism as little more than the 'expression' of revolutionary working class consciousness. Its value lies not in its objective, cognitive power, it lies simply in its ability to further the historical interests of the proletariat".

Certainly Lukacs sees Marxist theory as the expression

of the needs and consciousness of the revolutionary class, as the counterpart of revolutionary action, and not as a tool for 'value-free', 'scientific' academic research.

Certainly he saw its value as being in its ability to lead the working class to revolution.

But that is surely not idealism—it is the reason for the WSL, for *Socialist Press*, and for Cde. Eagleton's articles.

It is precisely because Marxism is the 'expression' of the revolutionary class that it has 'scientific status'—though not in the Second International's sense of 'science'.

Lukacs acknowledges this status: he says, for example, that historical materialism:

"is no doubt a scientific method by which to comprehend the events of the past and to grasp their true nature.

"In contrast to the historical methods of the bourgeoisie, however, it also permits us to view the present historically and hence scientifically so that we can penetrate beneath the surface and perceive the profounder historical forces which in reality control events.

"Historical materialism has, therefore, a much greater value for the proletariat than that of a method of historical research. It is one of the most important of all its weapons." (p.224).

Comrade Eagleton correctly points out the presence of Hegel in *History and Class Consciousness*—but rather oversimplifies matters when he suggests that the book is a 'rewriting' of Hegel's 'scheme'.

What Lukacs got from Hegel he was largely inspired to get by his reading of Marx. And he got what Marx himself repeatedly claimed to get from Hegel—the dialectic, although that dialectic becomes (for both Marx and Lukacs) materialist rather than idealist.

It is partly for the stress which Lukacs placed on the dialectical nature of historical reality and on the analytical importance of the Marxist dialectic, that *History and Class Consciousness* remains an important weapon of the proletariat in its struggle for human liberation.

For this reason, and for its development of the Marxist theory of alienation and reification, for its theoretical understanding of the revolutionary nature of the proletariat and the role of the party, for its stress on Marxism as a revolutionary theory and practice, *History and Class Consciousness* deserves and demands the attention of the Trotskyist movement.

Yours fraternally,
L.D.
London



Lukacs



Topped by mass action—Heath in 1974

FIGHTING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

John Lister looks at the situation in which the Workers Socialist League argues for a General Strike, and the very different attitudes of other groups on the left.

How can the Tory offensive be stopped?

This question, arising time and again since the Thatcher government was elected with a hefty Parliamentary majority last May, has come right to the forefront with the development of the steel strike.

Tory offensive

Embodied in this class battle are so many fundamental questions: the Tory offensive against workers living standards; the particular cutbacks in the public sector; their plans to "hive off" profitable state industries; the general threat to jobs arising from their asset-stripping policies; the moves towards savage new anti-union legislation, enforced by police violence, and, above all, the crippling crisis of working class leadership as TUC leaders have attempted at each stage to restrict and shackle the fight against these attacks.

From the moment Thatcher was elected the Workers Socialist League and *Socialist Press* have spelled out a general line of 'No Compromise with the Tories' and 'Prepare to Bring Down Thatcher'.

We have focussed on the long-term necessity to prepare a generalised, mass mobilisation of the working class in strike action if this Tory government, with its gamut of reactionary and repressive policies, are to be defeated.

So deep is the economic crisis of British capitalism, and so drastic are the steps necessary if the employers are to hope to resolve it, we have stressed, there is no prospect that token actions or protests—no matter how sincerely motivated or on how large a scale—will deflect this bosses' government from its course.

Serious campaign

But of course Callaghan's right wing Labour government driven on by the same galloping crisis of capitalism, persevered to the last in its efforts to ram home a fourth phase of wage controls, and further rounds of public spending cuts against a militant working class.

Even now the Labour leaders are refusing to pledge to restore Tory spending cuts or to immediately repeal anti-working class legislation.

The answer is not therefore simply to call for the replacement of Thatcher by another Callaghan-Healey government.

Socialist Press has consistently argued that neither the 'left' nor the right wing of the present Labour leadership is able to offer a socialist programme that can meet the requirements of the working class.

For this reason we have called for a political struggle to be waged both in the trade unions and in the Labour Party to reveal the true political character of the existing leaders and create conditions for build-



2,000,000 public sector workers stopped work for one day against Callaghan: this did not win their pay demands

ing of a revolutionary leadership.

In the unions we have raised demands to expose and fought for the removal of officials and convenors who start not from the defence of the jobs and living standards of the members they are supposed to represent but from the problems and "viability" of the employers.

And in the Labour Party we have called upon workers to demand that those 'lefts' that profess to oppose the Callaghan-Healey leadership mount a serious campaign for their removal throughout the Labour and trade union movement, and to lend their weight to the call for mass action to bring down the Tories.

At the same time we have fought to expose the vacillation and inadequacy of the stand taken by these 'lefts'; their refusal to launch such a fight; and their lack of any serious alternative programme as a challenge to that of Callaghan and the right wing.

But while such policies and perspectives have at times appeared to be far ahead of the level of struggle and consciousness in the working class, the steel strike has shown the kind of conditions in which they could become a material factor in advancing workers' struggles.

Material possibility

From being simply a part of our strategy for combatting the Tory government, and as such an objective to be worked towards, the General Strike has become very clearly a material possibility in recent weeks.

We have for this reason brought the demand to the forefront of our political work around the steel strike.

The possibility of a General Strike has been recognised at

once by reformist trade union and Labour leaders—who see such a development as a profound threat to their position of power and privilege within the labour movement.

It has been only more slowly and partially recognised however by "Marxist" groups of the British Left.

On the agenda

Yet as the Welsh TUC—under particularly strong pressure from steelworkers, miners and other sections threatened by BSC's programme of closures and sackings—called for an indefinite General Strike beginning on January 21, the issue of mass mobilisation to bring down the Tories was placed firmly on the agenda.

South Wales miners voted 9 to 1 to back the strike and at once the full weight of the TUC bureaucracy was mobilised—to crush this threatened action.

Even Bill Sirs and Sid Weighell—frightened at the prospect of escalating struggle—joined the chorus of dire warnings that a General Strike was imminent.

As Denning ruled it illegal for the ISTC to call out its members in private steelworks, Labour 'lefts' emerged calling for the law to be defied, and making militant anti-Tory speeches—all of which stopped short of fighting for general strike action to bring down the government.

But the forward movement by the working class brought immediate problems for the TUC bureaucracy in their struggle to control the membership.

After the House of Lords reversed the Denning ruling, Bill Sirs was voted down by his executive in his bid to give private steel firms a "stay of

execution", and his instructions were ignored by the mass picket that closed down Hadfields.

BSC's craft union leaders were voted down in their efforts to impose a 14%-with-strings sell out settlement; and elsewhere in the public sector GMWU leaders have been rebuffed on pay deals by delegates from water workers, gas workers and shipyards.

Again and again in recent weeks conditions have been created to drive a wedge between the membership and their reactionary leaders, and to raise within the steel strike the prospect of generalised, class action to defeat the Tories and thus combine the issue of pay with the defence of the 50,000 threatened jobs, and the fight against the cuts and other Tory attacks.

Yet in the midst of this situation other groups on the left have found themselves floundering and confused—often trailing far behind the level of consciousness developed by steel workers in the course of their struggle.

Placards

Such for instance has been the case with the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP in a number of towns has joined mass demonstrations sporting placards calling for a General Strike; but this is not a policy seriously advocated in their weekly paper *Socialist Worker*.

The nearest the SWP have come to arguing for such a policy was in the *Socialist Worker* of January 26, in which (on an inside page) John Deason takes up the warning statements made by Sid Weighell and Bill Sirs:

"Instead of one-off, one-day stoppages we could stop the Tories for good if all workers

struck together. And what better time to do it than NOW when the steel plants in South Wales are shut down and hundreds of flying pickets are blocking the movement of steel?"

Different time

This generally correct statement was combined with a correct criticism of the delays of the Welsh TUC General Strike to March 10 "by which time anything could have happened."

Deason argues that: "Every effort needs to be made to bring the March date forward. We will have to fight within our unions to force our leaders to fight—every inch of the way."

Yet even while SWP members were selling this on the streets, Deason, as the head of the SWP's "Rank and File Defend Our Unions Committee" was involved in fighting for a completely different line at the January 26 conference called by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

Far from arguing for the March 10 General Strike to be brought forward; far from arguing against "one-off, one-day stoppages; far from calling for "all workers to strike together" to stop the Tories for good, Deason meekly endorsed the CP's appeal to the TUC to call "a one day general stoppage against the anti-union laws" on May 14—more than three months later!

"Protest"

And the Rank and File resolution called simply for: "a campaign of protest and defiance against the new laws".

The 1000-strong LCDTU Conference itself, bureaucratic-

ally managed by veteran Stalinist Kevin Halpin, proved to be, in Deason's words, a "debacle". But this brought no political lessons to the SWP, who failed to resume Deason's call for a General Strike, even in the wake of the Denning judgement.

Instead the *Socialist Worker* lead article (Feb. 2) carefully avoided any call for generalised action by other unions now to defy the courts and defend the steel unions:

"The last time the Tories tried to crush the unions in the courts was during the Heath government in the early seventies.

"Five dockers' leaders were thrown into jail. Mass strike action freed them.

"The power to defy Denning lies with the rank and file."

[emphasis added]

The same attitude was echoed in the following *Socialist Worker* which headlined on the TUC's March 9 Sunday demonstration, declaring that:

"This, of course, won't stop the Tories. But it is better than nothing." (SW, Feb. 9).

Inside, on-page 3, was buried a short article correctly condemning the "treachery and cowardice of many of our trade union leaders" whose manoeuvres were directed to forcing the cancellation of the March 10 Welsh general strike call, and making the valid point that:

"... the enthusiasm for a Welsh General Strike against the closures and against the Tories is not mere propaganda. It is the obvious aim—how else can we shake any Tory government..."

But such a General Strike—whether in Wales or across Britain—has been far from the "obvious aim" of the SWP.

Indeed *Socialist Worker* has since shifted its sights to the far more distant target of May 14—and on February 23 the paper carried a report on a Dundee shop stewards' vote for strike action on that day, pointing out that:

"It should now be possible to raise this kind of action in every other city. If that happens then the TUC General Council may well find a General Strike in their hands".

Far from "stopping the Tories for good", *Socialist Worker* now appears to be intent on stopping Dundee and other cities for one day!

Inconsistency

A similar inconsistency has been shown however by the International Marxist Group and their paper *Socialist Challenge*:

The IMG has always been an organisation whose impressionist method of analysis leaves them struggling along behind and seeking to "fuse" with movements of the working class.

From such a position, no matter how sincere the intentions of IMG members, they must invariably fail to offer a consistent political lead to workers in struggle.

Thus, while the growing currency of the term 'General



Thatcher: will only be stopped by general strike action

Strike' has rubbed off more easily on the IMG than on the SWP, they seem unable to work out whether they favour a General Strike to "Kick out the Tories" (headlines on 10, 17 January) or simply to "halt the Tory offensive" (headline Jan. 31, Editorial Feb. 7).

A more extended article on January 3 argued the need to "Prepare for confrontation with the Tories", and balanced delicately between the two perspectives, while tending towards the notion of a general strike to bring down the Tory government.

"The steelworkers' strike is a defensive struggle, but it can be turned into a movement to pave the way for removing this government . . ."

"The lesson is that the trade union leaders are terrified of centralising a movement against Tory policies that would threaten the existence of Thatcher's government and take on a socialist direction.

"That sort of movement has to be fought for . . ."

"The logic is towards unified and generalised strikes against the Tories." (Emphasis added).

But so keen are the IMG to prove to themselves that the necessary policy somehow arises automatically out of the "logic" of the developing struggle that the article refrains from actually calling for a general strike.

Central question

The IMG appears unable satisfactorily to resolve a central question in the raising of the General Strike demand.

Should the General Strike call be taken up casually in the manner of the SWP, and used to refer to "one-off, one-day" token actions designed simply to pressurise Thatcher's Cabinet into changing course?

Or should it be recognised that the call for a General Strike is in effect a call upon the working class to mobilise its full strength in confrontation with the government representing the class enemy: a call that must be linked therefore to the demand that the government be brought down, and that the representatives of the class enemy in the leadership of the Labour Party be rooted out?

The dilemma of course is a real one for a movement like the IMG that always tends towards a protest, propagandist perspective.

The IMG continues to vacillate between the two stools, with a particularly crass lapse into protest politics in the February 23 *Socialist Challenge*:

"Only when a Sunday demonstration is followed by one on Monday, and then Tuesday and then Wednesday and then Thursday and then Friday—and every day of the week until the Tory offensive is smashed—will Jim Prior's law be no more than a bad dream."

Exhausting

This exhausting view of the way the IMG feel a government can be beaten back is not improved by the confusion of

The ability of any future elected government—Labour or Tory—to impose similar attacks on the working class would be immeasurably weakened. The crisis of the labour bureaucracy would reach new heights.

As *Workers Action* itself admits:

"A general strike, once underway, would challenge not only particular policies or a particular government, but capitalist class power itself . . . which is why, of course, the TUC is so specially anxious to avoid a general strike."

Indeed, to refuse to call for general strike action to topple a reactionary government until such time as the working class has developed sufficient extra-parliamentary organs of power to be able to dispense with bourgeois elections is—however 'left' the arguments used—effectively to accept a long-term reformist perspective.

Reformist fashion

The same *Workers Action* article actually goes on in true reformist fashion to argue for Labour to launch "a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction", and for the TUC to "start organising to stop the Tories!"

And, elsewhere, *Workers Action*, to justify its own stance parodies those who call for a General Strike to bring down the Tories, by effectively accusing them of calling for a general election:

"But if a general strike, however it starts, begins to reach even some of its revolutionary potential, then calling a general election or replacing a Tory government by a Callaghanite Labour administration would be a prime capitalist tactic to forestall the progress of the strike."

Unlike specific demands like "smash the Industrial Relations Act" (in 1972) or "stop the steel closures" (now), "Kick the Tories out", as an objective posed for a general strike, limits it in advance."

(*Workers Action* 163 Jan 12) Is *Workers Action* seriously arguing that the more limited the central demands of a General Strike, the more sweeping its outcome?

Tactical concession

Can its authors not recognise that, sooner than politically collapse and resign in front of the working class a capitalist government (Labour or Tory) would make almost any tactical concession on specific demands—as with the victory of the 1972 miners' strike, the release of the Pentonville dockers, and, of course, the wage concessions that ended the 1968 French General Strike?

But though they might be (temporarily) checked on this or that single issue—such as even steel closures—by mass action, there is no prospect that the attacks of the Tory government can be halted without its defeat at the hands of the mass strength of the working class.

To this end the Workers Socialist League will continue to press for the development of the steel strike into a general strike to bring down the hated Thatcher government and open up entirely new conditions for the removal of the right and 'left' wing traitors in the labour movement.

the final paragraph: "Organise for 9 March, but organise demands to be shouted at the TUC leaders . . . One demand in particular should be in the forefront—a general strike against the Tory offensive."

Here the General Strike call has clearly become completely detached from the mass struggle actually underway at this moment: it has become an empty, propaganda demand, clearly aimed not at bringing down the Tories but at "killing the bill".

And this is made worse by an editorial article which completely fails to grasp the scale of the treachery of TUC leaders.

"The role of the TUC in the last few months has been negligible . . . True they have called a national demonstration against Prior for 9 March, but that being a Sunday it will have nothing like the effect a national demonstration during a working day would have."

Far from being "negligible", the role played by the TUC leaders in the previous seven weeks has been the major factor in isolating and weakening the steel strike.

Murray, together with Gormley, Weighell, Sirs, Basnett, other steel union leaders, and top union negotiators in BL in particular, have worked might and main to prevent other struggles erupting alongside the steel strike, and to forestall moves to a General Strike.

Any assessment which, like *Socialist Challenge*, fails to start from this must end up spreading confusion, and, however unconsciously, tail-ending the reformist, protest politics peddled by the TUC leaders themselves.

But while the IMG and the SWP toy with the call for a General Strike and ponder its objectives, *Workers Action* at least has worked out—if wrong headed—position.

Workers Action has consistently argued for a General Strike: but equally consistently argued against it being a strike designed to topple the Tory government. This, they claim, would "restrict" the development of the strike.

The rather tortured argument required to defend this point of view is spelled out in *Workers Action* 166 (Feb. 9):

"A general strike could stop the steel cutbacks and the public service cuts, and kill the Employment Bill.

It would also probably topple the Government, though a focus on kicking out the Tories as the main aim of a general strike would be a snare, making it easier for the ruling class to sap the energy of the strike by promising elections and shifting the terrain from the factories and streets to the ballot box—as in France 1968."

Workers Action here shows an inability to recognise the enormous development of class consciousness that would be brought about by a General Strike that successfully set out to remove an elected government from office. Within such a movement, the fight for soviet-type bodies to advance the struggle could take rapid strides forward.

French CP joins 'human rights' bandwagon

A new hero has stepped forward to champion the cause of human rights, and this newcomer in a competitive field is no less than Georges Marchais, general secretary of the French Communist Party.

As the leading upholder of Stalinist politics in France, Marchais may not seem an obvious candidate for this part at first glance.

But of course he does possess, like most prominent Stalinists, the two essential qualities which are needed to play out this virtuoso role: an apparently limitless capacity for hypocrisy, and a sound professional ability to exploit human suffering to further his own narrow political ends.

With this firm grounding in technique, Marchais could go far in his new post.

But how does this latest sideshow mounted by the French Stalinists fit in with the international human rights circus launched by the imperialist Carter?

The answer is, in one sense, that it doesn't fit in at all: Marchais' initiative is in competition with Carter's more spectacular venture, and is designed to draw away the attention of crowds.

Unsuspecting

The 'defence committee for human rights and liberties in France and the whole world' was sprung on the unsuspecting French bourgeoisie by Marchais at a press conference last Wednesday.

As Marchais' announcement, and the accompanying literature made plain, the French CP is far from associating itself directly with the anti-Soviet thrust of Carter's 'human rights' crusade.

On the contrary, Marchais claimed that the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states (the 'socialist countries') were the best defenders of human rights.

This implausible claim is partly explained by

Marchais' argument that 'the communists' (meaning the French CP and its allies in counter-revolutionary Stalinism) have always been the true defenders of 'human rights', but that they have a different conception of these rights from the imperialists, one which includes 'economic and social rights'.

It is with this truly 'communist' conception that the French Stalinists survey 'human rights' throughout the world.

Indignation

And they emerge with the startling discovery that imperialism has violated human rights far more widely, thoroughly and bloodily than 'communism' (i.e. the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies and their immediate allies).

The French bourgeoisie trembling with indignation, has pointed its finger at the omission from this survey of Syria, Ethiopia and Cambodia. But allowing for even major adjustments, Marchais knows very well that he can beat the imperialists at a numbers' game based on tallies of workers and peasants killed, tortured or imprisoned by the forces of imperialism and the forces of Stalinism.

But the political reality beneath these calculations is of course a different matter entirely and one ignored altogether by the French Stalinists. In all their talk of outrages and atrocities committed by imperialism, they never once mention the decades of counter-revolutionary activities practised by international Stalinism across the globe.

Any political assessment of the fate of these workers and peasants must look beyond the hands which pulled the trigger or locked the prison door to examine the forces that created these developments—in particular it must examine the political leadership offered to the revolutionary proletariat.

It is here that the true record of the Stalinists on 'human rights' is revealed.

The international proletariat and its allies within the peasantry have found

themselves betrayed time and again by the counter-revolutionary policies of Stalinist leaderships into the bloody defeats and mass repression of military dictatorships, imperialist reaction and fascist regimes.

Sometimes pursuing ultra-left sectarianism, more often insisting on the treachery of class-collaboration with the bourgeoisie, Stalinism played a crucial role in paving the way for the triumph of fascism in Germany and the imperialist organised coup in Chile amongst its multitude of crimes against the interests of the revolutionary proletariat.

Today, sections of world Stalinism are seeking to build an alliance with the most reactionary forces from the Islamic clergy in Iran, struggling to achieve the 'historic compromise' with the Italian bourgeoisie and in Turkey, as fascists rises and the generals prepare a new coup, they refuse to build a united front of workers parties but turn instead to support bourgeois 'socialist' Ecevit and his RPP.

Stable relationship

These betrayals are not random mistakes. They flow from the conscious, counter-revolutionary needs of the Kremlin bureaucracy, source and organising centre of world Stalinism.

To preserve its own parasitic interests, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union needs to preserve a stable relationship of global compromise with imperialism at the expense of the revolutionary interests of the proletariat, both inside the Soviet Union and internationally.

The initiative of the French CP has its place in this world strategy of Stalinism. Although the 'human rights' campaign has been launched entirely within the control of the CP leadership, it is not just the appeal to 'progressives' (i.e. bourgeois liberals) which marks out the class collaborationist character of the exercise.

Political revolution

The French Stalinists merely echo the imperialists' hunting cries when they prate about the abuses of 'human rights' within the Soviet Union.

We completely condemn the suppression of Soviet democracy and the repression of opposition by the political dictatorship of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy in the Kremlin, but we unconditionally defend the degenerated workers' state of the Soviet Union against any and every attack from the imperialists.

It is not Helsinki agreements that will end that vicious and corrupt dictatorship, but the struggle that will be waged by Trotskyists for political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy and restore the dictatorship of the proletariat to its full revolutionary power.



French Communist Party workers on May Day parade



2,000 support Leicester lobby

ASLEF leaders run from fight



Buckton

JOIN THE WSL!

With workers by the thousand taking to the streets to oppose Tory policies there is plainly no lack of militancy in the organised working class.

Yet the existing trade union bureaucrats and Labour leaders—whether right or left—have no perspective to offer those workers prepared to fight in defence of jobs, living standards, social services and democratic rights.

These can only be defended through policies which start from the independent interests of the working class, which, as an international class, has nothing to gain and everything to lose from attempts to restore the profitability of their "own" employing class.

In a period where the contradictions of the anarchic capitalist system force the wholesale closure and destruction of the productive forces of society, only a socialist planned economy on a world scale offers a way forward.

To achieve such a perspective a leadership is needed which, in today's struggles fights

to advance workers beyond trade union militancy, protest politics and illusions that capitalism can be abolished through parliament.

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist movement fighting day in and day out to build such a principled leadership in the working class in Britain.

Internationally, we are affiliated to the newly-formed Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, which fights for the reconstruction of the Fourth International and the building of revolutionary parties in every country to lead the struggle against imperialism and against the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

We invite all readers of Socialist Press to seek more details of the WSL and its work, and to join us in the struggle for socialism.

RED YOUTH 19

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Plans for the reorganisation of British Rail, published in the BR document "Into the Eighties", reveal a grim future for the country's 25,000 footplate workers.

BR management has submitted contract proposals for the forthcoming negotiations which include single man operation of all trains; flexible working and the abolition of mileage bonuses.

Redundancies

Single man operation, on its own would mean redundancies for guards and driver's assistants (firemen). But with the introduction of flexible working, tasks formerly the responsibility of shunters would be taken up by drivers themselves and would result in layoffs among maintenance staff as well as added responsibility for the driver.

Without mileage bonuses, money paid for longer train journeys, there will be a marked decline in present wage levels.

BR are not even prepared to talk about wage increases until the rest of its contract demands are met.

Any increase would be conditional on improved productivity—i.e. redundancies.

Faced with these proposals from management, the executive of ASLEF felt compelled to call a mass meeting of London area members.

The meeting, attended by over two hundred, was addressed by the assistant general secretary of the union, Don Pullen.

Pullen, after a lengthy historical outline of the past restructuring of the railways declared that the executive would stand firm and that BR's proposals were totally unacceptable.

After 1½ hours of talk from Pullen, the chairman duly opened up the meeting for dis-

Three months ago, when public sector trade unionists arrived to lobby the Tory County Council in Leicestershire over the cuts,

their efforts were jeered at by Council leader Geoffrey Gibson.

On February 27, the same Gibson had to be ushered, obviously shaken, back into his palace of glass and rubber plants after housewives, teachers, nursery nurses and school students surged forward to halt his prepared statement to Independent Television.

Two hundred police were on duty to hold back more than 2,000 demonstrators who laid siege to County Hall demanding the abandoning of the cuts and the resignation of the Tory Council leader.

The doors were barred at 12 noon, over two hours before the scheduled time for the council meeting, and the public gallery was declared 'open' only to ticket holders!

Angry parents and teachers responded with chants of 'Public In-Tories Out' and proceeded to block the underground car park entrance in an effort to stop councillors from sneaking into the building.

120 schools hit

The bulk of the crowd was made up of parents, who had organised two large demonstrations to County Hall from different parts of the City, and

striking teachers who had travelled up from a mass rally at a city centre cinema [although the local NUT leadership was notable by its absence!]

All told, over 120 schools were hit by the one-day strike as teachers voted for once with their feet.

In fact, but for a last minute ban on picketing by the Executive of the NUT, it is probable that most of the union's nearly 4,000 members in the county would have been out.

"Paralysis"

NUSS members, however, did succeed in picketing one school and bringing students out.

Yet, despite this massive response, the strike and lobby failed to stir Leicester Trades Council into action.

Having held a Conference on February 9 which laid down a programme to fight the cuts and launched an anti-cuts committee which could draw in exactly the sort of spontaneous movements which sprung up around the February 27 strike, the Trades Council appears to have been afflicted by some strange "paralysis".

No attempt was made to publicise either the programme or the committee on the day.

The immediate conclusion must be that the majority of the so-called 'left' executive of the Trades Council, having satisfied their taste for 'left' demagoguery from selected Labour MPs on 9 February, and having satisfied their consciences by the passing of a suitably 'left' programme, have now proceeded to do what all 'lefts' do when the struggle actually develops: left it!

Despite this retreat, WSL members continued to campaign for the Anti-Cuts Committee and in a special 'Public Sector' Bulletin issued for the day carried a detailed report of the programme and of how trade unions and action groups could join.

The Bulletin also argued out what the next steps in the struggle should be, advocating the occupation of teachers centres, the stepping up of strike action and the need for a labour movement enquiry into public spending. The Bulletin also carried an explanation of why rate rises are not the answer to the cuts.

Mass action

The task now for public sector militants in Leicester must be to build action around the Trades Council Programme, broaden the anti-cuts campaign, and demand that both the Trades Council and the Public Sector Action Group get off the fence and begin a fight to mobilise mass action to defeat the Tory government.

May 14 will be a major test for both.

cussion of the contract—for only 15 minutes!

Pullen was immediately reminded by speaker after speaker that the EC had not stood firm in the past and that members had little confidence in them doing so in the future.

One speaker pointed out that Pullen's verbal condemnation of productivity deals was worthless as he had already agreed to one for ASLEF members on London Transport.

Another speaker referred to the need for "strong leadership in the eighties, which we have by no means had in the past".

There is certainly a willingness to fight BR's plans on the part of ASLEF members.

But what is also clear is that Ray Buckton and co. are incapable of providing the necessary leadership.

The objectives of Sir Peter Parker and the BR Board, driven as they are by the Thatcher government, are so far-reaching that without hardline resistance, ASLEF is in danger of disappearing as a union.

Pullen, in his speech, declared that ASLEF were alone in the trade union movement in urging the TUC to "pull its finger out and support the action called by the Welsh TUC".

It is time for the ASLEF leadership to pull its finger out and mobilise strike action against BR and the Tories.

SAFETY FIGHT

258 Bollermakers and 220 GMWU members building an oil rig at Hunterstoun Ayrshire have been suspended from work without pay by their employers, the Chicago Bridge Company.

The men are receiving no unemployment benefit, but a test case on this has now been taken up.

The immediate issue at stake is inadequate safety arrangements—particularly unsafe staging for men working at heights, which they are refusing to use.

The other issue raised by the stewards on the site is that ship-

yard workers at Cammell Laird and Fairfield Govan are doing construction work for the same American company but are being paid a good deal less than the £2.90 an hour earned by the men on the site.

The stewards are also pressing for a further £1 per hour rise—they want at least parity with workers doing similar jobs on sites like Nigg Bay and Kishorn.

An important step forward in this struggle would be the formation of a Joint Shop Stewards Committee embracing stewards from all the rig-building sites with a common programme on wages and conditions.

WOMAN WORKER 5

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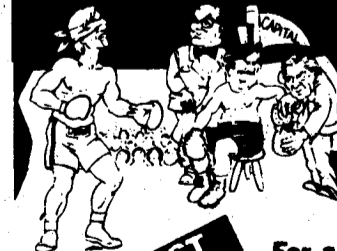
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Cuts struggles united

A conference this coming Saturday called by the Oxfordshire Campaign Against the Cuts and sponsored by Oxford and Witney Trades Councils offers the possibilities of developing a united struggle against a host of attacks launched by the Tory government and local authorities.

The general declaration against the cuts that has attracted backing from local bodies of ASTMS, AUPW/TASS, CPSA, COHSE, NATFHE, NUT and TGWU as well as student unions, hospital support campaigns and the Save Our Nurseries Campaign.

And workshop discussions covering aspects of the political

trade union and community fight against the cuts should offer an opportunity to work through the necessary programme and demands for a coordinated fight.

But past experience has shown that the chief obstacle to an all-out struggle against the cuts is not any inability of campaigners to recognise and adopt correct policies—but the determination of right wing and Communist Party bureaucrats in the trade union bureaucracy at local and national level to block action on such policies.

The practical results of Saturday's conference, therefore, like those of other cuts conferences elsewhere, will depend on the extent to which the fight is successfully taken up in the trade unions against such bureaucrats.

NUPE fights climbdown

Trade unionists in Camden have responded sharply to the ignominious climbdown on the cuts by the borough's Labour council, which is planning to raise rents and rates, and to deprive two-thirds of the Council workforce of the second half of their Clegg "comparability" pay award—leaving them far short of NUPE's claim for a £75 minimum wage.

The retreat took place in the face of an alleged threat of a Tory surcharge on the council's overspending. Councillors in favour of the rent increase, in particular, argue that they must "keep their heads down" and wait for the "right" issue on which to confront the Tories.

Refuse to fight

But Camden workers can legitimately ask if there will ever be a "right" time for such councillors, who refuse to fight what amount to direct wage cuts for every worker, council tenant and ratepayer in the area.

Holding fire now in the struggle against the Tories must inevitably lead the same councillors into extensive cuts in the services they now claim they are dedicated to protect.

These points were raised last week in a motion to St Pancras North Labour Party GMC from Camden's large NUPE General Branch, which declared that:

"This GMC is shocked and

disgusted at the Labour Group's decision to back down on its commitment to fight low pay among its employees and not to grant the Union's claim of £75. This decision means that Labour Councillors are leaving their low paid employees at the mercy of rapidly mounting inflation.

This GMC strongly opposes the retreat of the Labour Group in the face of legal threats of surcharge and feel that unless the Labour Group reverses its stand then a question mark is placed over the Council's preparedness to stand by its 'no cuts' policy when it comes under Tory attack. Accordingly we call on the Labour Group to reconsider its decision and agree to grant its low paid workers an increase which at the least protects them from inflation.

Furthermore, this GMC calls on those Labour Councillors who under threat of surcharge are not prepared to stand by their commitments on rents and on cuts and to the low paid to resign and make way for Councillors who are prepared to stand up and be counted."

A similar resolution has also been passed in the St. Pancras South GMC, and one ward has removed right wing councillors Bethal and Comley from the GMC for supporting rent rises and pay cuts.

This struggle to drive out those Labour leaders who refuse to fight in defence of the interests of the working class and for full scale mobilisation of resistance to the Tory offensive must be taken forward in the next period.

ACT NOW TO STOP STEEL SCABBING!

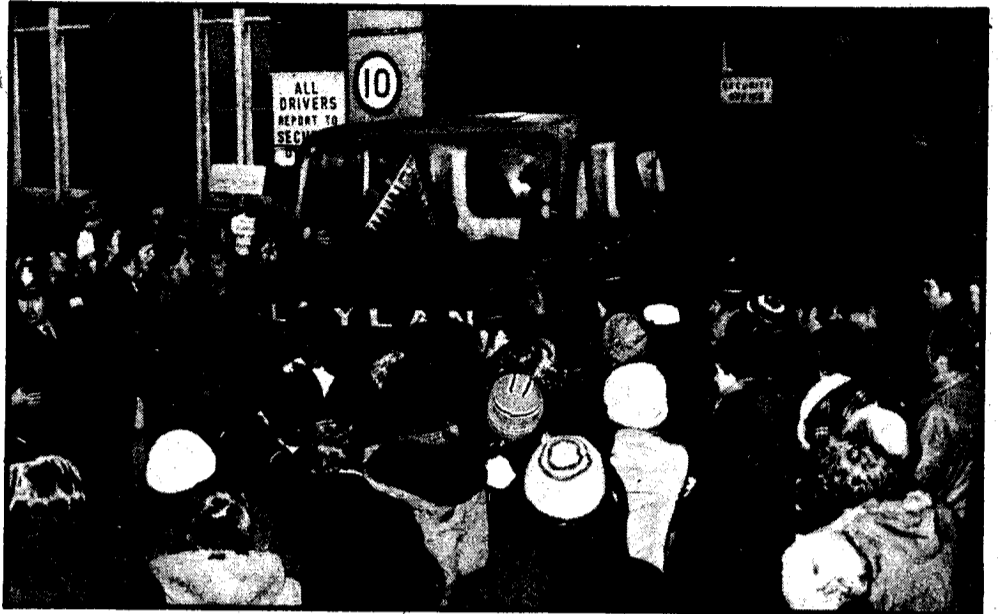
Nine weeks into the National steel strike—and after weeks of bitter clashes as pickets have battled to stop strikebreaking supplies of steel moving in and out of stockholders and major steel users—London dockers last week finally decided to block steel shipments!

This is a fair example of the way in which the steel strike has been left to soldier on without any serious attempt by union officials to use the colossal power that they have to seal off scab supplies on a local and a national level.

After the initial fanfare about international solidarity from metalworkers' and transport unions, the utmost confusion has been allowed to fester over the shipment and handling of steel by TGWU and other union members within Britain itself.

In some areas lorry drivers have eventually extracted official TGWU instructions not to cross picket lines: elsewhere matters are nowhere near so clear-cut. And so diverse is the huge network of steel stockholders that to picket them all effectively is nigh on impossible for the steel strikers.

In addition the failure of the dock unions to seal off imported steel has clearly contributed to a situation where, after nine weeks of strike action and picketing, scarcely any workers in manufacturing industry are laid off as a result of the dispute, stocks in many areas have been replenished and production has scarcely been affected.



The scale of the scabbing on this vital dispute is clearly enormous—and extends even to the NUM, whose members' jobs are also at risk from BSC closures.

There are widespread angry claims that scab steel is being used by Yorkshire miners: and in the absence of any firm official directives this is no doubt also true in almost every industry.

Such cases must be publicised and the union leaders responsible forced to answer for their failure to block scab steel.

Leaders of the main striking unions are due to meet tomorrow (Tuesday), supposedly to discuss further measures to halt the movement of steel.

Such steps, however belated, should of course be welcomed.

But steel workers should also be suspicious of such a gathering: these leaders, who have done so little to strengthen the strike and so much to stop it spreading to other sections in a General Strike against the Tories, must now be examining the prospects for a new and more determined move to bring this embarrassing dispute to an end—no matter what the cost.

To combat such tendencies and give renewed impetus to the strike, steelworkers should send urgent resolutions and mobilise a mass lobby of the BL convenors' meeting at Radford in Coventry on Friday calling for strike action by BL workers alongside the steel strike.

And other public sector unions fighting Tory attacks must also be called upon to mobilise in strike action.

Even BSC's latest ploy to weaken the strike has been met by a ludicrously inept response from ISTC leaders.

The management "ballot about a ballot" is a transparent fraud, since it is obvious that workers who do not think there should be a ballot on the 14% with-strings-and-redundancies offer will simply throw away the form.

But instead of simply calling on members not to vote, the ISTC leaders have asked them to spoil their ballot papers by writing "pay the steel workers" on the bottom.

When only a small number of trade unionists respond to this pathetic call, this will undoubtedly be exploited by BSC management as "proof" that the union bureaucracy are "unrepresentative".

Fords on the warpath

The spate of sackings at Fords' Langley—as reported in *Socialist Press* in recent weeks—continued with the sacking last week of a steward from the body-in-white section of the plant.

Dismissed for 'sabotage', the accusation was only laid three days after the alleged incident, immediately after the section superintendent was grilled at a management meeting for not reaching production levels.

The move is part of a national efficiency drive at Fords following disastrous profits in America and agree-

ments' made in last year's pay deal.

Reports at a National Ford Workers Group meeting confirmed management offensives at all the plants.

Walk out

The sacking of the steward at Langley was followed by a walk-out by both shifts of his section.

Management immediately laid off the entire plant—at five minutes notice—in a clear act of provocation, designed to direct anger at the striking section.

The move backfired on management, but an opportu-

ity was missed to build organised opposition to the lay off.

The next day, however, many lines refused to start work without guarantees of pay, and it took threats of instant dismissal in some cases to get a return to work.

The stewards' committee, meeting that same morning, decided with only three votes against, to recommend to a mass meeting in two days' time—a Friday—strike action of the entire plant to demand reinstatement of the sacked steward.

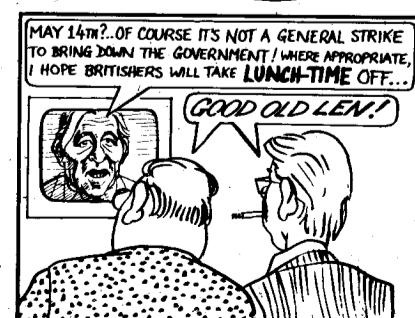
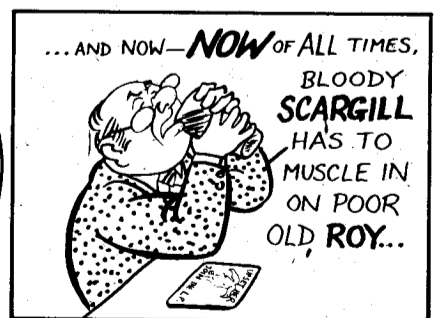
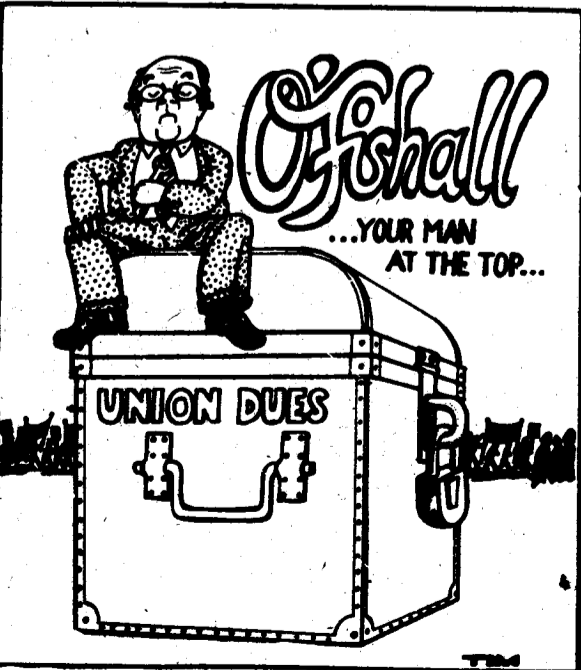
The committee's position was undermined, however, by right wing stewards who cam-

aigned against the recommendation, seeing it as an opportunity to undermine the growing strength of the left in the plant.

Two-to-one vote

The vote of both shifts at the mass meetings went 2-1 against strike action and has dealt a blow to the authority of the stewards committee and trade unionism at Langley.

Threats by militant stewards to resign following the vote have now to be opposed. The effect of such a step would be to weaken the workers and thus play entirely into the hands of management.





Defenders of women's rights seem on the point of witnessing the gratifying spectacle of John Corrie's reactionary anti-abortion Bill sinking with all clauses in the House of Commons.

Corrie's initial bigoted insistence on retaining the whole of his vicious Bill—which would have made up to two-thirds of existing abortions illegal—has been a major factor in its undoing. It enabled sufficient amendments to be tabled for the measure to be talked out of the time available in the Commons timetable.

The only lingering hope for the anti-abortionists is that time might be found by hurried treatment of a short private member's Bill on updating child maintenance payments.

The foundering of the Bill is clearly related to the overwhelming evidence of hostility to it among an overall majority of adults, and surveys that showed that one in three women of child bearing age would be prepared to defy the Corrie restrictions if faced with an unwanted pregnancy.

It is plainly little to do with any organised or principled stand against the Bill by the right-wing led Parliamentary Labour Party, which has consistently refused to put down a three-line whip on MPs to vote in line with Party conference policy on abortion and against Corrie.

The Parliamentary fight in defence of abortion rights has been carried on by a small handful of Tribune left MPs.

Indeed only 346 out of 656 MPs were present in the Commons last Friday for the debate on the Corrie Bill.

The absence of large numbers of Labour MPs on this crucial issue must be challenged by trade unionists and Party members in their constituencies and those that support Corrie or fail to vote against anti-abortion measures must be removed.

MECCANO LEADS JOBS FIGHT

As we go to press the giant Airfix Industries seems likely to approach the High Court for an injunction to enforce the eviction of occupying workers from the closed Meccano factory on Merseyside.

This move follows a vote last Thursday by nearly a quarter of the original 1,000-strong workforce to reject the company's redundancy payments and fight on in defence of their jobs.

The occupation has lasted right through the 90-day statutory notice period—which was itself only forced upon an arrogant Airfix management, who at first attempted to sack the entire workforce with only hours' notice on a Friday afternoon.

No backing

But the action has taken place without any official backing from the major union concerned—the GMWU—which has offered not a penny piece of strike pay.

In this contemptuous stance towards members fighting to defend jobs in an area of huge unemployment the GMWU was followed by the AUEW, APEX, which paid out hardship money, is now demanding it back from those demoralised members who have accepted redundancy payments!

The GMWU official—former Meccano convenor Mike Egan—spoke demagogically to the press after the mass meeting, declaring that "They will have to carry us out!", and promising "We will go down fighting".

But as part of the GMWU bureaucracy, Egan must know full well that the struggle has been cold-shouldered by the country's third largest union, and that his display of militancy is solely for local consumption.

He has never attempted to direct the solid determination of the occupying workers into the fight to force Bassett and the national leadership to declare the struggle official, or to mobilise supporting action against other Airfix plants and operations.

New employer

Instead, attention has been focussed on the utopian search for a new capitalist employer to buy up the discarded factory, as time has ticked by and the struggle has been left isolated.

Yet the Meccano occupation has been the one ray of hope in the midst of a spate of factory closures carried through

on Merseyside with scarcely a finger lifted in opposition: everywhere else the role of convenors and union bureaucrats has been to head workers away from mounting the challenge to the "rights" of the employer that is involved in seizing threatened factories, plant and equipment.

An appeal from the Meccano occupation to the Merseyside labour movement, to public sector unions fighting Tory cuts, and to the broader trade union movement nationally could have had a dramatic effect in mobilising solidarity action.

Yet Egan has failed even to mount a tangible appeal to other TGWU members on Merseyside: there has been no attempt even to raise a local financial levy to support the Meccano struggle!

But for all the time that has been lost, as long as the occupation remains unbroken it is still possible to mount such an initiative.

Win support

If Egan is serious about the fight to defend jobs he must break from his past record and take up the struggle to win official backing from the GMWU nationally and mobilise GMWU workers in the area.

Failure to do so on his part will confirm the clear impression that he is no more than a left talking bureaucrat.



Meccano workers have given a lead: they must now go all out to mobilise the maximum possible support. This means they must:

*Maintain the occupation! Defy the bosses' courts!

*Demand official GMWU support—full strike pay and full-scale national blacking of Airfix goods and suppliers!

*Open the books of Airfix! Elected trade union committees must probe the financial juggling that produced the "losses" at Meccano! Show the need for the nationalisation of Airfix without compensation, under workers management!

*Join the fight for General Strike action to bring down the job-slashing Tory government!

*Build a council of action drawing delegates from the whole Merseyside labour movement to defend and strengthen the occupation against court rulings, bailiffs and police!

*No surrender! Defend all jobs!



No peace in Zimbabwe

As we go to press, reports are predicting that ZANU(PF) leader Robert Mugabe will emerge from the Rhodesian elections with the largest number of seats in the new 100-seat Assembly.

If this is true, it will be a remarkable outcome from an election in which the whole weight of capitalist propaganda has been thrown into a concerted effort to discredit Mugabe as a violent "Marxist" extremist and establish the "respectability" of Nkomo and the gangsterish Muzorewa.

Provocations

Muzorewa's Rhodesian state security forces engaged in an elaborate campaign of bombings and provocations to frame Mugabe and ZANU(PF).

And armed members of Muzorewa's "auxiliaries" were allowed a free hand to terrorise and intimidate political opponents, while guerrilla forces loyal to Mugabe and Nkomo were herded into assembly points and thus effectively neutralised.

Such was the evident bias of Governor Soames and the witch-hunt against Mugabe that there seemed little doubt that, if the imperialists had felt able, they would have gone further and rigged the ballot itself to produce a victory for their chosen alliance of Muzorewa and Nkomo. Yet so sweeping is Mugabe's support that this option appears to have been discarded.

But moves by Mugabe in the last few days underline the fact that, though perhaps not as reliable as the imperialists would

wish, he has no intention of mobilising the black masses of Zimbabwe in the kind of struggles necessary to secure their basic demands.

Even before the count got underway, Mugabe was proclaiming his wish, if elected, to retain Lt. General Peter Walls as supreme military commander.

And he has spent the last several weeks denying any "Marxist" persuasion, and refuting claims that he proposes a programme of nationalisations.

So while South African

capitalist leaders implement a call-up of their Citizen Force and "leak" warnings of a possible invasion of Zimbabwe, therefore, it appears increasingly likely that Mugabe's commitment to stabilising a capitalist regime will make such an invasion unnecessary.

The imperialists and their allies may grin and rub their hands with relief at these developments: but Mugabe will not find it so easy to impress his mass of supporters, who have plainly voted for him hoping

that he will press through an extreme, Marxist programme.

With crisis-wracked imperialist firms aching to move in and exploit the vast resources and untapped labour force in Zimbabwe, Mugabe's 'honeymoon' period with his followers will not be unduly prolonged.

As he emerges exposed in their eyes as an agent of capitalist exploitation he could well need to call quite soon on the services of General Walls to save his skin.



Some of the group of fascist youth who took part in the National Front demonstration that marched under massive police protection through Brixton last weekend.

CASH NEEDED!

The Special Fund is giving us some cause for concern. With less than £800 in so far we have to raise £700 in the next month if we are to keep on target and raise half the £3,000 fund by Easter as planned.

This calls for a very special effort by our readers and supporters. With the development of our international work and the purchase of a small printing press we urgently need to raise this fund to enable us to carry out our work in fighting for the reconstruction of the Fourth International through the establishment of our own international tendency.

All donations should be sent to:

Socialist Press Fund
BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX