

workers' ACTION

No.1 January 14th - 21st 1976

8p

"A Protestant state for a Protestant people" — that's a fair summary of the demands which the Loyalist Orange politicians led by the notorious bigot Ian Paisley have put to the Labour Government.

The report of the Northern Ireland Convention arrogantly says that the 60% Protestant population in Northern Ireland are the majority and should rule — and too bad on the 40% Catholics, who will be treated as second class citizens by the Orange bigots.

Big threats of a new general strike backed up by the Protestant paramilitary organisations have been made by the politicians to pressurise the British Government, though on this the Orange camp is divided. Some, like the spokesman for the main Protestant paramilitary group the UDA, are being more reserved.

Bluff

Probably there is a great deal of bluff on the part of Paisley and Co., who feel they can bluff safely so long as the paramilitaries are playing it relatively cool.

They may, however, miscalculate. The Northern Ireland situation is enormously volatile and an escalation of sectarian violence to civil war level remains a constant possibility.

The savage and outrageous slaughter of ten workers, shot in the largely Catholic area of South Armagh, has shocked and horrified people in Ireland and in Britain. Rightly so. But this is only an especially frightful incident in the tit-for-tat slaughter that has been escalating for months. Catholics have usually been the victims of sectarian assassination, not the perpetrators of it.

While in no sense endorsing, approving or in any way justifying or condoning this incident, it is only too easy to understand the logic that has led Catholics to attempt to fight sectarian assassination with sectarian assassination.

STEEL The fight for pay and jobs

DESPITE a threat to lay off 9,000 workers at the site, steel workers at BSC's Port Talbot works decided at a mass meeting on Saturday January 10th to continue their strike against the management's attacks.

The situation at Port Talbot is mirrored in different ways throughout the country where steel workers have been taking action against the British Steel Corporation's unilateral imposition of wage cuts, short time working and lay-offs.

What has particularly angered the men — and even the usually docile trade union leaders — is the way the Corporation is simply ripping up national agreements.

CONTINUED ON P.7

LABOUR SENDS IN THE ASSASSINS

Locked against their will for 50 years inside a state that should never have come into existence and is totally artificial, (having been carved out of Ireland by the British Army), they are terrorised, oppressed and subject to the bullets of assassins. Time and again they have seen these assassins protected and helped by the British Army.

What is remarkable is the restraint of the Catholic population in the face of all this. In fact the Republican movement has condemned anti-Protestant actions. While the Protestant bigots regard the

Catholic minority as alien beings, the Republicans continue to look upon the Protestant population as misguided Irish compatriots.

The British Government bears the major responsibility for the escalation of sectarian violence in South Armagh. Just before Christmas they announced that they were mobilising the Ulster Defence Regiment to 'help the Army' in South Armagh. This largely Protestant 'home guard' body is known to contain many people who also belong to the UDA, 'Red Hand of Ulster', 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' and other murderous Protestant terrorist outfits. Many of its members used to be in the dreaded B-Special force, which started off the pogroms of the Catholic ghettos in 1969.

No less outrageous is the publicly announced use of the SAS wing of the British army in South Armagh.

These 'peacekeepers' have of course been operational in

Northern Ireland for years, despite official denials. For example, the SAS was responsible for shooting dead Paddy McVeigh while on vigilante duty in 1972. There are many other examples known of the undercover dirty work of the sort the SAS specialise in, though by its nature it is difficult to trace.

Most damning has been the evidence that they actually stoked sectarian violence, passing off killings as the work of the Republicans or Loyalists to produce an escalation.

Strife

These people are assassins, not counter-assassins. The British Army in Northern Ireland — depicted as peacekeepers — is a joker in the role because its real job is to maintain the partition of Ireland: and while that partition exists, there will never be peace. And the SAS as 'peacekeeper' is a stroke of quite appallingly black

More troops on their way to Ireland — creating problems, not solving them



humour, given its special role in fomenting strife between the communities, and certainly, in the view of all informed opinion in Northern Ireland, in sectarian assassinations that add up to a great deal more than the 10 dead last week in South Armagh.

Even if the sending in of the SAS is more of a public relations exercise than anything else, the open deployment of the SAS in South Armagh is a declaration of war on its population — a licence to kill Catholics. And if some respond in the same way as did the killers of the ten workers shot last week, a large measure of the responsibility will lie on Harold Wilson's head.

The British labour movement must say to this Government — Get out of Ireland; don't accept the report of Convention. Admit that Britain has no right in Ireland, never has had and never can have. Admit that it has caused more strife than it can ever solve, that the role of its army is to maintain the 6-County artificial state which has institutionalised the sectarianism which generates incidents like the shooting of the ten Bessborough workers (and of the hundreds of previous Catholic victims).

We must say: only the Irish people can solve their own problems. British presence is one of the major problems. Just get out. NOW!

Inside

Angola p2

1975 Review of the Year pp4&5

Chrysler p8

The Shock Horror Probe Mole Sensation

"The Mole has broken cover — in a dramatic bid to grasp power at British Leyland plant". That was the Daily Mirror for January 7th, offering a synthesis of what the bosses' press stands for: character assassination, union bashing, trivialisation, sensationalism and slander.

In this way the press tried to affect the outcome of the election of the Transport Union stewards at the Cowley plant in favour of a slate backed by management. The press's main target was Alan Thornett, a revolutionary trade union militant. Their

stalking-horse was Reg Parsons, former steward at the plant.

WORKERS ACTION has no personal connection with Alan Thornett (who is a leading member of the Workers' Socialist League) nor does it have detailed knowledge of his record at the plant. But this much is obvious: he is the victim of a vicious witchhunt in which the capitalist press, Leyland management, trade union officers, right-wing Labour Party members and the Workers Revolutionary Party are, each in their own way, accomplices. Leyland management has

already once refused to recognise Alan Thornett's credentials. As The Times admits, "Victory for Mr. Thornett on Monday could provoke another confrontation with management on the lines of the 18-day stoppage which cost £18m and resulted in the lay-off of 12,000 workers in April".

This is a basic trade union issue. Management, their Labour Government backers and all their accomplices reveal their basic contempt for workers' democracy in their refusal to

recognise the possible — and we believe most desirable — outcome of the election.

Why do we want Alan Thornett to win? Because on one matter we believe the shameless stool-pigeon of the witchhunters, Reg Parsons: "The aim of Thornett and his friends is to occupy the plant. A complete takeover. Workers' control. Nationalisation without compensation."

That's exactly the policy that strikes fear and panic into the hearts of the bosses; it is exactly the outlines of a workers' answer to the attacks of people like the Leyland management.

UNEMPLOYMENT, '76

IT'S TIME TO START FIGHTING TO WIN

THE NEW YEAR of 1976 opens with the directors of Chrysler demanding the sacking of over 8,000 out of a work-force of 25,000. Eager to get in on the act Sir Kenneth Keith, the chairman of Rolls Royce, went to the Government with a carbon copy of the Chrysler directors' demand: millions in cash and thousands in redundancies.

The British Steel Corporation has outdone both by demanding within two years the loss of 44,000 jobs — not to mention a pay cut, loss of the guaranteed week agreement, and more besides.

The war against these bosses and others like them hasn't just started, of course. But now they've put away the rifles and come out with the artillery.

The TUC and the Labour Government claim to serve the working class. But they offer workers no support and no lead. On the contrary the Labour Government is heading the attack on the working class and the TUC is busy passing the Government the ammunition and disrupting any working class defence.

At the same time many 'lefts' have proved themselves incapable of coming forward with a socialist alternative and organising on that basis. AUEW Broad Left leader Bob Wright, for instance, is the very man leading the retreat at Chrysler.

This year the war against unemployment will to a large extent decide the future of the class struggle in other areas. despair, demoralisation, disunity and degradation: these are the wounds that the casualties on our side will bear if we lose.

Isn't it time WE got the big guns out and started fighting to WIN!

FOLLOWING the Portuguese decision to pull out of Africa, it was clear that independence would come more painfully to Angola than to Mozambique and Guine Bissau, the other two former colonies.

Vast quantities of mineral wealth, exploited mainly by German, British and American big business, have attracted the vultures to Angola. To keep Angola's gold, oil and diamonds out of Angolan hands, the multinational companies and their governments have been supporting and promoting those forces in Angola who have no desire to end foreign domination over the country's economy.

There are three rival guerilla organisations in Angola with a substantial following among the population.

These organisations are the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), led by Agostinho Neto; the Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto; and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita), led by Jonas Savimbi.

national

Of these, the only one which can be regarded as a truly national movement is the MPLA. Although most of its support comes from the Mbundu tribe of central and coastal Angola, MPLA includes Angolans from other tribes, races and regions within its ranks, and encourages a policy of anti-tribalism and anti-racism.

The same cannot be said for the other two groups. FNLA is almost exclusively based on the northern Bakongo tribe and Unita on the Ovimbundu in the south. Roberto and Savimbi play on tribal prejudices in order to maintain their following.

Unita and FNLA are also totally under the thumb of big business.



Setbacks in Portugal make Solidarity Conference vital

THE Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese Working Class will be holding its first conference in London on Saturday March 13. The conference, whose sponsors include Mick McGahey and Emlyn Williams (NUM), Alan Sapper (ACTT) and Ray Buckton (ASLEF) as well as four Labour MPs, will discuss the political situation in Portugal, the aid given by international capitalism to its supporters there, and the building of the campaign itself.

Recent events have underlined the urgency of building an effective solidarity movement with the Portuguese workers.

On 25th November, paratroopers occupied air force bases in protest against purges of left wing units, and demanded the dismissal of the air force commander, General Morais e Silva. The events were portrayed as an attempted coup, and the Sixth Provisional Government, having put down the paratroopers' action, proceeded to launch a major assault against gains won by workers and rank and file soldiers since the overthrow of Caetano in April 1974.

The rank and file organisations in the army, which had achieved great influence during the Autumn, were quickly smashed, with the disbanding of radical units and the arrest of several hundred left-wing soldiers and the transfer of others. The Government has continued to demonstrate the seriousness of its repressive intent: on New Year's Day Republican Guards shot dead three people in a crowd of several hundred demanding the release

ANGOLA

S. Africa-US intervention runs into problems

Savimbi does most of his travelling in an executive jet supplied with the compliments of Lonrho. His movement gets military aid from South Africa and financial aid from a number of EEC countries.

FNLA has been supplied by the USA via Zaire, whose President Mobutu Sese Seko is the major representative for US interests in Africa. Holden Roberto is Mobutu's agent, as well as being his brother in law.

A number of US officials have criticised Washington's policy of supporting FNLA and Unita against the MPLA. Kissinger has in fact sacked members of the State Department's Africa Bureau who felt that an MPLA victory was inevitable in the long run and that Kissinger's anti-MPLA stance could only push MPLA into nationalising American businesses.

Gulf Oil also shared this view, and continued to pay revenues from profits of its Cabinda oilfields to the MPLA government in Luanda. (Since the Ford administration wanted a 'united front' on Angola, it forced Gulf to discontinue this practice in the last week of 1975.)

Frequent declarations made by the MPLA leadership that they would ensure protection of foreign investments in Angola produced, in their own words, this "very friendly" relationship with Gulf. MPLA

mistakenly hopes that by conciliating foreign companies it will prevent them and their governments from acting against it.

But while the MPLA has said that it won't nationalise its own resources, the USA is not prepared to take the risk. They fear that when the MPLA in power comes up against the choice of promoting Angola's economic development, or remaining tied to the US monopolies, they would in fact nationalise.

There would be no such trouble were Angola governed by one or both of MPLA's rivals. Unita and FNLA are thoroughly anti-working class formations, as was evidenced by Unita's suppression of the Lobito dockers' strike and the murder and torture of trade union militants by FNLA when it was controlling suburbs of Luanda.

MPLA has itself made attempts to stop workers from striking for higher wages and occupying factories, but they met with little success. The MPLA has, in fact, a large working class base in and around Luanda.

Even more alarming for the US was that when the MPLA faced extinction during the FNLA offensive against Luanda last summer, it was forced to arm the capital's working population. Popular power committees of workers and tenants also sprang up along the lines of those in Portugal. This development was independent from

and outside the calculations of the MPLA leaders.

South Africa is mainly concerned to oppose the MPLA for its own political reasons. South Africa has 125 miles of border with black Africa before the Portuguese Empire folded up. Following the independence of Angola and Mozambique, another thousand miles were added, and 750 of these were along the Angola/Namibia border. SWAPO, the Namibian liberation organisation, dramatically increased its operations last year against the South African forces occupying Namibia, using Angola as a fairly secure base for guerilla operations.

One of the first acts of South African forces invading Angola was to seek out and try to destroy SWAPO units operating there.

A leftist regime in Angola would add impetus to the struggle of black workers in South Africa itself, and to the militant wing of the black movement in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia).

However, South Africa's intervention has done FNLA and Unita more harm than good. Thirteen African states have already joined the 35 nations who recognise the MPLA regime. Not a single country has so far recognised the FNLA/Unita government in Huambo.

'negotiated'

Although the official position of the Organisation for African Unity remains a 'negotiated settlement' and a coalition government in which all three organisations have representation, a continued South African presence may force them to support MPLA.

Soviet and Cuban military assistance has undoubtedly been important in reversing the setbacks the MPLA suffered last November. Kissinger can't intervene to alter this state of affairs because his hands are tied by Congress. However, the Christian Science Monitor has reported that some 300 American mercenaries, recruited by the CIA, are in fact operating in Angola.

The only option Kissinger has at present is to apply the diplomatic screws on the USSR. He can do this in two ways. First, he can threaten to halt the agreement which is being reached on strategic arms limitation. (Last week the Kremlin press criticised "reactionary circles in the United States" for holding up the SALT talks.) Secondly, Kissinger can refuse to sell wheat to the USSR, and this would really hit hard because of the particularly bad harvest in the Soviet Union in 1975.

It is not certain that such pressure would actually make the USSR pull out.

The attitude of revolutionary socialists towards Angola is, however, in no way determined by the diplomatic intrigues of either the Soviet bureaucracy or the American capitalist class. We want an MPLA victory because the MPLA is the genuine national liberation movement fighting imperialism.

But what attitude should socialists take towards Soviet aid? Should we be against all foreign intervention in Angola?

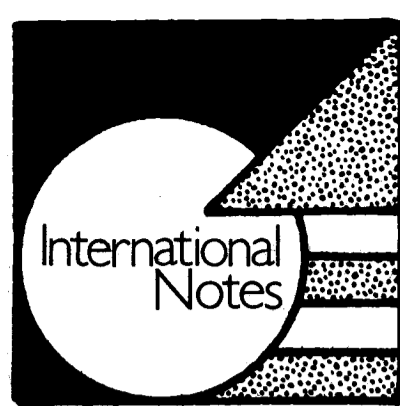
influence

While the USSR undoubtedly seeks political influence in Angola, it is not seeking imperialist domination there. Thus we are in favour of the USSR giving military aid to Angola — though we completely oppose any political conditions being made on that aid. We must state clearly too that the MPLA has the right to obtain arms from whatever source it wishes.

There is a strong Stalinist influence in the MPLA. MPLA dissident have already been arrested and charged with the 'crime' of "leftism". Clearly in any clash between the MPLA and Angolan workers, we support the workers.

But right now our full support should be given to the MPLA's efforts to win national liberation to Angola and defeat imperialism and its stooges. And we must demand that the British Labour Government gives immediate recognition to the MPLA government and abandons its attempts to push for a coalition of the opposing forces in Angola.

Bas Hardy



SPAIN

METRO WORKERS WIN FIRST ROUND

THE first major confrontation between Spanish workers and the Juan Carlos regime has ended with a victory for the working class, after a resounding show of solidarity with the Madrid Metro workers in reply to a big show of force by the regime.

The strike, for a 21% pay rise and a cut in working hours, triggered off mass strikes and made a laughing stock of the Spanish government's wage freeze and anti-strike laws. Though the Government sent in troops to run the Underground and riot police with tear gas and rubber bullets to dislodge 2,000 strikers from a depot terminal — and threatened to bring the strikers under military discipline with courts marshal for disobedience — anti-Government pressure was so great that the Madrid Metro management was allowed to concede the major demands of the strikers.

Over 20,000 workers struck in solidarity with the 4,300 Underground workers and against police repression. Representatives of telephone, aviation, railway, taxi and bus workers besieged the Union offices and forced the government-controlled Transport and Communications Union officials to sign a declaration publicly supporting the Metro workers' struggle and protesting against the use of force to break up workers' demonstrations — and threatening to call 100,000 workers out in support.

The primary demand on pay was won completely and there is to be negotiation on pay and fringe benefits. There has been a pledge that no punitive action will be taken against any striker. And the workers have stated that any demand not conceded or any promise not fulfilled by January 19th will precipitate an immediate resumption of the strike.



LEAKS from a US Senate sub-committee have shown the enormity of American under-cover aid to right wing politicians in countries where the Left has been making ground. On top of the now well known contributions to the Chilean Right in Allende's time, we now hear of similar payments in Italy. Just in the last MONTH \$6m have been donated to various right wingers. This has been only one element of a huge financing operation against the Left in that country. The same sub-committee heard that one company alone, Exxon, gave between \$46m and \$49m dollars in the years 1963-72. This is another example of the kind of operation that ITT carried out in Chile. It is clear that the transfer of such vast sums was not made without government approval. No doubt in time we will hear that they and other companies got tax relief on the money.



IN Queensland, Australia, the charges have been dropped against three militants (Denis Walker, Lionel Lacey and John Garcia) who had been framed up and faced prison sentences of up to 14 years because of their activities in opposing the racist Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Acts. Lionel Lacey was only 16 at the time the charges were first brought: he was acquitted in a Children's Court, and as soon as he turned 17, charged again on the same offence.

The charges against the Brisbane Three, as they were known, in fact backfired on the police; instead of demobilising the campaign against these Acts, they focused the attention of the Australian Left and the Trade Unions on the issue, and finally the charges were thrown out on a 'legal technicality'.



RIVAL NAZIS AT DAGGERS DRAWN

AFTER AN internal dispute lasting over a year, the National Front has suffered an open split. One faction, the so-called 'populists' led by Kingsley Read and Roy Painter, now describes itself as the 'National Party of Great Britain', while the group around ex-Nazi John Tyndall and Martin Webster carries on as the NF. This is the culmination of a series of attempted takeovers and expulsions by both sides.

Before the Annual General Meeting in October, the Tyndallites occupied the NF office in an unsuccessful attempt to get hold of the membership files. They were further defeated at the AGM in their manoeuvre to keep power in the NF by pushing through a new constitution.

The 'Populists' then tried to expel Tyndall and Webster but were eventually prevented from doing so by a High Court ruling. Read and Painter then used their contingency plan to set up the new party about two weeks ago. Tyndall has kept the printing press, while the others have got the head office.

The political differences between the group around Tyndall and the 'populists' should not be exaggerated. The 'Populists' are not, as some people think (and as they will be doing their best to declare) any less fascist. They share all the NF's racialist policies as well as their obsession with 'the international conspiracy of high finance and communism'. As Kingsley Read ("proud to be a racialist and an imperialist") put it "we are nationalist to the hilt but appalled at Hitler birthday parties and quasi-Nazi ceremonial".

The split does not have its origins in disputes over the fundamental doctrines of the NF, but from several different factors.

Firstly, there is a strong personal element involved. Until men such as Painter and Read were recruited from the Tories in 1972, Tyndall and his 'old Guard' were in more or less undisputed control of the Front. Tyndall was then removed from his post as Chairman to be replaced by the less obviously

disreputable Read. His faction's resentment of this was a major factor in the dispute.

Secondly, the NF has lost much momentum since its period of peak recruitment following the admission to Britain of some of the Asians expelled from Uganda in 1972. Its paper membership vastly exceeds the number of real activists, and on national mobilisations it has nearly always been outnumbered by the Left. To prevent demoralisation the NF has had to look for new ways to bring in and hold members.

The 'Populists' favour a consistent appeal to the unemployed, small businessmen feeling the recession, and to trade unionists. This must mean dropping embarrassing allies such as the known Nazis Tyndall and Webster and also, increasingly, the UDA, and emphasising above all the pseudo-radical aspects of their politics. (A leading populist, Lawson, is an admirer of Strasser's 'left' Nazis, who were purged by Hitler in 1934.)

The activity of the Left has been another factor in this, constantly dogging their steps with reminders of the Nazi history they'd like to keep quiet, publicising their violence, and making it almost impossible for them to mount important meetings without physical opposition or the denial of public meeting facilities. Despite their boasts that the publicity has helped rather than hindered them, the Left's activities have undoubtedly demoralised a substantial section of the membership and hindered recruitment. The split in the NF certainly vindicates the policy of constant physical confrontation.

Though the Left has every reason to be pleased at the split, which has in the short run left the rump NF with £2500 debts and in much disarray, this should not be a reason to become less vigilant. The last few months have seen increasingly vicious attacks by the NF on left meetings, especially those on Ireland, and we should expect these to continue and prepare ourselves accordingly. The 'populists' are no less willing to use violence against the left

Why we publish WORKERS ACTION

Why do we publish WORKERS' ACTION? There is one very simple answer. The bosses' press lies, distorts and conceals. It says unemployment is due to "excessive wage demands" and inflation is caused by workers. It says that the IRA are just trigger-happy terrorists. It says that strikes are "ruining the economy".

The working class needs papers which put our side of the news. Papers which show that it is low wages that go together with unemployment; which show that strikes are in fact the only way to save our economy, that is, our wages and our conditions; papers which show that the IRA have got every right to fight against troops imposing a police state on Ireland.

organise

But the purpose of our paper is not just to give facts and explanations. It is to be an **organiser** and a **campaigner**. In the first few issues we will be concentrating on the struggle against unemployment and the attacks on our living standards. We will be assessing experiences and trying to point a way forward.

Our paper is meant to be a call to action, not just a commentary on the world.

With an ordinary paper, the situation is this: **they** produce the paper, **we** pay our money and **we** take our choice. (And it isn't much choice, either!) But if you think this paper is any good, if you think the ideas in it are basically right, then don't **just** decide to buy another one next time you happen to see someone selling it. We don't publish the paper just in order to sell as many copies as we can. We produce it as a **weapon** in the workers' struggle.

If you agree that we need to start **acting** on the socialist ideas put forward in this paper, then: take some extra copies of the paper to sell to your workmates. Think how you can apply the ideas in your own workplace. If you have a group of people reading the paper regularly, organise a meeting among yourselves to **discuss** the paper. **Write** to us — letters, comments, reports.

We want our paper to be a workers' paper. We call it WORKERS' ACTION because we believe only the working class can create the socialist society which is the solution to our present problems. And that only by

direct action can the working class liberate itself, mankind in general.

We would prefer a paper which is a bit scrappy, bit rough and ready, but which reflects the experience of the working class, to a paper which is very fluent, very smooth, very professional — tasting and smelling of an editorial office.

Workers' Action is not only a workers' paper, but a **socialist** paper. Our aim is not just to improve the lot of the working class within the capitalist big business system, but to overthrow the system. So the paper is not simply hold up a mirror to the labour movement — it is at present.

The established labour movement, from Tom Jackson to Len Murray to Jack Jones, is committed to working **within** the capitalist system. The Labour Government, elected when working class direct action had driven Heath from office, has successfully carried through attacks on working class living standards which a Tory government wouldn't have had a chance of getting away with.

And the Labour Left are unable to fight effectively. The most prominent and longstanding 'Lefts' like Foot are pillars of the Labour Government. They leave workers in the lurch, compromise with the Right, refuse to exploit their chances. They retreat when they should advance and keep silent when they should speak out to mobilise workers to fight back.

future

Workers' Action will, we hope, represent the **future** as well as the present of the working class. Capitalism deprives workers of a proper education and feeds them with mindless pap through the Press and TV. We have no intention of bowing down to capitalism on the score. The paper won't just be concerned with bread-and-butter issues.

We believe that it is necessary for the working class to control society. And a class that is going to control society needs to know about more than bread-and-butter matters. It needs to know its own history, needs to know about the struggles of the working class and oppressed people all over the world. It needs **its own** system of ideas — **Marxism**.

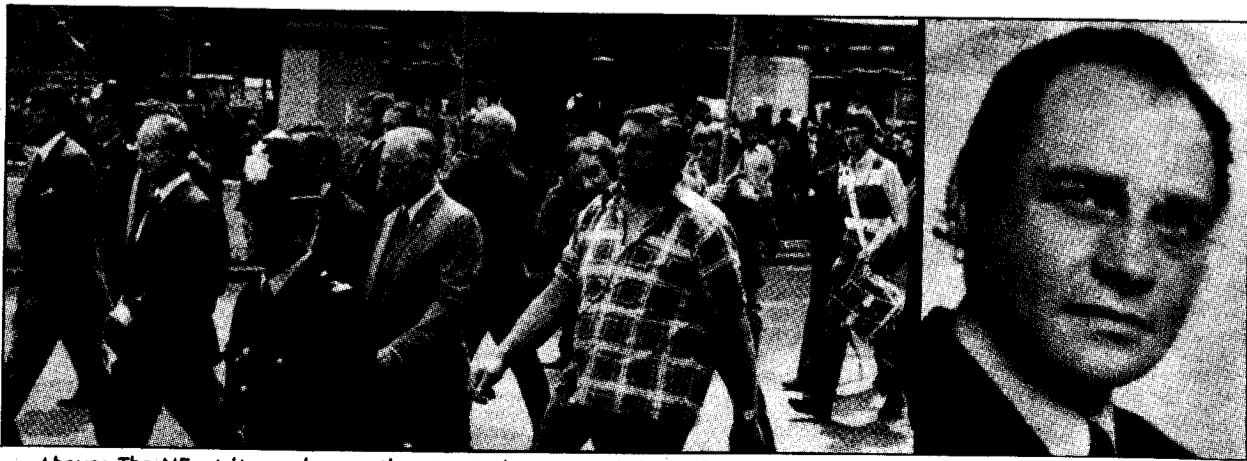
Above all, the paper will be what we, and you, make of it in the coming struggles that face the **whole** of the working class.

than are the Tyndallites; and if they succeed in establishing a respectable image they could rapidly gain wide support as the crisis deepens.

Meanwhile it is rumoured that Tyndall and Webster, finding themselves virtually back at square one, are linking up again with their old 'Fuehrer' Colin Jordan. Vicious racialist attacks could come from this quarter.

Thus though the NF split has had an important disruptive effect on the fascists in Britain, the Left cannot afford to be complacent. Anti-fascist work must go on unabated, and clear political analysis must take the place of the old reliance on the personal exposure propaganda which too often failed to take up the politics of fascism.

Bruce Robinson



Above: The NF at its peak — on the streets in 1974. On the left are Andrew Fontaine and John Tyndall, both staunch Nazis since the 1950s. Now Tyndall heads the remains of the NF, while Kingsley Read (right) leads the new National Party for the smoother type of thug.

workers' ACTION

**supporters' groups
are being formed in the
following places:**

Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Bristol,
Cambridge, Cardiff, Chelmsford,
Chester, Coventry, Crawley, Durham
Edinburgh, Leicester, Liverpool, London,
Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle,
Newtown, Northampton, Nottingham,
Oxford, Reading, Rochdale, Sheffield,
Stafford, Stoke

**Write for details of meetings & activities to:
WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27**

1975

A worker's diary

JANUARY

10,000 support trade union lobby of Parliament demanding freedom for Warren and Tomlinson.

Imperial Typewriters announce 3,000 redundancies in Leicester and Hull; this is followed in February by an occupation in the Hull factory.

Campaign succeeds in lifting threat of deportation under the 1971 Immigration Act of Franco Caprino, a militant in the catering industry.

FEBRUARY

Provisional IRA cease-fire in Northern Ireland.

Labour Government's Industry Bill announced.

Thatcher replaces Heath as leader of the Tory Party.

Right winger John Boyd defeats Broad Left candidate Bob Wright in election for general secretary of the AUEW Engineering Section.

'Abortion (Amendment) Bill' proposed by James White, Labour MP for Glasgow Pollock, gets its second reading in Parliament.

Miners settle for 23% wage increase.

MARCH

National Abortion Campaign set up to fight James White's Bill.

Triumph motorcycle factory in Meriden formally transferred to workers' cooperative.

Labour government sends troops against Glasgow dustcart drivers' strike.

NLF launches decisive offensive in Vietnam.

Big shift to the left in Portugal following failed right wing coup of March 11th.

APRIL

Healey's Budget includes tax increases and social service cuts.

Khmer Rouge takes power in Cambodia.

Eric Heffer sacked from the Labour Government.

Special Labour Party conference votes in favour of British withdrawal from EEC.

National Liberation Front takes power in Vietnam.

MAY

Convention elections in Northern Ireland: massive victory for hard-line Loyalists.

20,000 redundancies announced for British Steel Corporation, and then withdrawn in favour of a more gradual job-cutting plan.

Portuguese paper 'Republica' closed down by troops called in by management against workers protesting at right-wing editorial policy.

JUNE

Referendum on the EEC: 43% vote for Britain staying in, 22% for getting out, 35% abstain.

Wedgwood Benn moved from Department of Industry to Energy

Ministry in government reshuffle.

Court rules against AUEW President Hugh Scanlon's casting vote on the postal ballot.

Railwaymen accept eleventh-hour wage offer amounting to 30% increase.

40,000 marchers in London and Glasgow on National Abortion Campaign demonstrations against the James White Bill.

Mozambique becomes independent.

Indira Gandhi orders mass arrests and clamp-down in India.

JULY

Healey announces 10% ceiling for wage increases, later legislated as the £6 limit.

Two day general strike in Argentina smashes government's wage control plans.

Newham NE Labour Party votes to kick out Reg Prentice.

AUGUST

Miners' Union votes 60-40 to support Executive recommendations to back £6 limit.

TUC Congress votes to back £6 limit, with AUEW, UCATT, ASLEF, CPUSA, NUB, ASTMS, SCS and Firemen's Union in opposition.

Council workers go for and get £6 increase.

Northern Ireland — Craig breaks from hard-line Loyalist bloc. Convention extended.

World wide protests against executions of anti-fascist militants in Spain.

Blasfurnacemen and farm workers submit claims over £6.

8,000 on Portugal solidarity demonstration in London.

OCTOBER

Labour Party Conference backs government policies, but Healey is replaced on NEC by Heffer.

10,000 lobby Parliament against education cuts.

Government accepts recommendations of Select Committee set up to consider James White Bill.

TUC issues circular condemning 26th November unemployment lobby.

NOVEMBER

Angola becomes independent as fighting continues between the MPLA and the Unita-FNLA bloc, who are backed by the South African army

20,000 on unemployment demonstration in London.

New 'cod war' between Britain and Iceland begins.

Australia: Labour government 'sacked' by Governor General.

Portugal: Right wing offensive follows abortive paratroopers' uprising.

Spain: Franco dies.

DECEMBER

AUEW National Committee votes to accept £6 limit.

Parliament accepts Chrysler deal: £162m. subsidy and 8,000 sackings.

"ARE we sitting at the sickbed of capitalism" asked a German trade union leader in 1931, "not only as doctors who want to cure the patient, but also as prospective heirs who cannot wait for the end and would like to hasten it by administering poison. This double role, doctor and heir, is a damned difficult task!"

Faced with this "damned difficult task" in 1975 the British trade union leaders rushed medicine, not poison, to the sick-bed patient. Together with the Labour leaders they managed, despite the early failures, to hold back a significant amount of direct action struggle and give the patient at least a little breathing space.

In the aftermath of the Tory phases and their continuation under the first Labour Government of 1974, workers' militancy rose dramatically, pushing up wages and tearing to shreds the notional limits of the so-called 'Social Contract'.

Scotland and the Midlands formed the front line in this upsurge: from the massive strike movement of 40,000 Scottish workers in late 1974 to the final victory after five months' dispute of the local authority electricians there in May.

The intervention of the army in the Glasgow dustcart drivers' strike was a clear sign that whatever the particular personnel of this Labour Government, it was to be no less a strike-breaking, pro-capitalist one than any other.

Blow

The final blow to the 'Social Contract' was delivered by the railwaymen. Their wage claim went to the brink of national strike action — their first since 1926 — although they had as a union voted for the 'Contract'. From the Government and the British Rail bosses came protests of "ruin" and the usual poverty pleadings. Nevertheless at the eleventh hour the Government conceded the claim.

The unremitting rise in unemployment over this period looked like being the big stick the bosses and their Labour Government would use against the working class.

The bosses themselves were clearly not just in an economic crisis, but in a political crisis: the Tory Party for the moment was a torn and useless write-off and the Labour Government had proved unable to contain working class struggle.

After the rail settlement in June, the panic in the ruling class found its ridiculous expression in the daily statements of Chancellor Denis Healey, "We will not be panicked", "We will not be rushed", "We will not be stampeded"...

Meanwhile, the trade union leaders were in a double panic. As far as they saw it, if the trend in wage rises continued, the Government would fall. Having no confidence in their members, only a fear of a new Tory ice-age with themselves frozen out as negotiators, they decided by a majority of the TUC General Council to advance a pay cut formula of their own.

Shift

This formula, the £6 ceiling, was the idea of Jack Jones, leader of the T&GWU. His shift from the left to the right in the spectrum of the TUC leaders was not only significant in itself (small though that spectrum is) but it reflected a more general shift in this direction by many workers.

This shift, at the base of the trade union movement, had its contradictions. For example, one shop at Chrysler had posters on the wall one week backing John Boyd (the right winger who won the election for general secretary of the AUEW) and the next week ones demanding "Nationalise Chrysler — No Compensation".

What 1975 showed, particularly with the combination of the £6 limit and rising unemployment, was this contradictory element. There was no great defeat for the working class, there was a development of shop floor strength and direct action methods, and at the same time, when confronted with questions of the general administration of society like unemployment, participation,

Anti Abortion challenge

THE two biggest demonstrations of 1975 were both on the issue of abortion. In June 40,000 marched for Free Abortion on Demand and A Woman's Right to Choose. In October the Catholic church and the right wing brought together up to 100,000 in support of the James White Amendment, then before Parliament, which sought to limit the availability of abortions.

Despite the size of the right wing mobilisation, a serious victory was gained when the TUC Congress voted for a resolution opposing restrictions on abortion. Several unions have also

adopted the Working Women's Charter, which includes a clause for freely available abortion.

In the labour movement, the argument was getting through that the right of women to control their own bodies must rank above mystical or religious arguments about whether an undeveloped foetus, without social consciousness or human identity, can be said to be an "unborn child". Many were also seeing the need to link the fight against legal restrictions on abortion with the fight for improved health facilities — since the miserable, and worsening, state of NHS facilities

inflation and social service cut-backs, a large section of the same locally militant workers looked to the 'moderate' right for its solutions.

As Trotsky once commented to the German Communists when faced with a big vote for the German Labour Party, this shift did not so much show a conviction that the Labourites were right, but that the left failed to inspire any confidence and failed to supply the much needed answers to the crisis.

Factory occupations — a far-out idea just five years ago — became almost commonplace in 1975: Imperial Typewriters at Hull, Cammell Laird's at Birkenhead, Crosfields in North London, Balfour Darwin in Sheffield, Personna near Glasgow and many others. The

is an important restriction on women's freedom above and beyond any laws.

The government, however, bowed to the right wing mobilisation. James White's Bill expired automatically at the end of the Parliamentary session, but the Government said it would implement many of the restrictions demanded by that Bill through Government decree — despite the weight of medical evidence given against the Bill to the Select Committee. The struggle continues, and the next demonstration against the restrictions on abortion is scheduled for April 3rd.



1975

... and Des Warren stayed in jail

IN March 1975, the North Wales 24 Charter Defence Committee, under the leadership of the Communist Party, shut up shop. And the TUC and UCATT stopped even pretending to be doing anything further about the Shrewsbury pickets. But Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson were still in jail, serving the long sentences handed down at the end of a farcical trial.

Ricky Tomlinson has since been released — but Des Warren remains in jail. Four important struggles in 1975 showed how foolish the labour movement is to forget picketing and the build-up of special police anti-picket squads.

At Intex, near Manchester, the National Front attacked pickets with razor blades. The strikers were mainly Asians, striking against the victimisation of their (white) convenor. The police intervened — with charges against the pickets!

Another struggle against victimisation — by scaffolders on the Eldon Square site in Newcastle on Tyne — ended in victory in September. Ten men, arrested when police heavies attacked the picket line, were acquitted in court. Plain-clothes policemen also attacked the journalists' picket line at the Birmingham Post and Mail.

In the most far-reaching legal case, Prebbles estate agents in Islington secured a writ against militant tenants picketing their office in protest against Prebbles' abuses. The writ alleged "conspiracy, nuisance and defamation". The implication of the court ruling is to deny any right of picketing except directly on industrial disputes.

IRELAND ANOTHER YEAR OF REPRESSION

THE 'Prevention of Terrorism Act', hastily pushed through after the Birmingham bombings in December 1974, was twice renewed by Parliament during 1975. One man was sentenced to six months in jail under the Act — for selling a poster! — dozens were carted off to Ireland under an exclusion order, and hundreds were held in jail for up to a week with prolonged questioning, for the flimsiest reasons.

There were, however, also cases like that of Joe Gallagher, arrested under the Act, but released after protests from Bletchley Trades Council, Gallagher's UCATT branch, and other local labour movement bodies.

The majority of people in Britain continued to accept the bosses' press story that the armed action of Irish people fighting military occupation of part of their country is 'terrorism' — and to favour Government action such as 'hang the terrorists'.

In fact, if one takes Roy Jenkins' definition of 'terrorism' as "the use of violence for political ends", the British state is one of the greatest terrorist forces in history. The bloody history of British colonialism and imperialism, from India, through Africa, Malaya, Cyprus, Aden and in Ireland (where it's been going on for 7 centuries) is nothing other than "violence for political ends" of a specially brutal and callous sort.

As against this 'terrorism', Marxists cannot fail to support the 'terror' or the violence of the oppressed who fight for freedom. Violence will not be ended except in a just and equal society — and justice and equality can only be won in battle against the present 'masters of war'.

Our attitude must include support for the military actions of Irish Republican or Socialist forces against the British state in Britain (though we may express the opinion that those actions are not tactically advisable). Britain, with its whole army of terrorists in the north of Ireland who have committed hundreds of murders in cold blood and terrorised a whole population, has no right to place republicans on trial and treat them as criminals.

There is a Marxist argument — cruelly mis-used by most 'Marxists' — against 'terrorism' defined as a strategy centred around individual, isolated acts of violence against individual police chiefs, prime ministers, army commanders and suchlike targets. The mis-use of this argument in relation to Ireland lies in the fact that the individual Republican sniper or bomb-planter is part of a movement based on the mass support of a whole community.

Marxists are also quite clearly opposed to acts of violence against

civilians, acts of no possible military or political value — such as the Birmingham pub bombings. However, when we criticise Irish Republicans for carrying out such acts, we must be sure our criticism is clearly in the context of recognising the overall justice of the fight for a united and independent 32-county Ireland.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act is the most obvious index of the price the British labour movement is paying for its failure to see that the first necessity for a solution in Ireland is to GET BRITAIN OUT and break down the sectarian Six County statelet created by Britain.

In 1975, in addition to the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act as a political gag, other laws — some quite archaic, including the increasingly used Conspiracy charge — were used to bring 14 people to trial for communicating information to British soldiers. The 14 were eventually freed by an Old Bailey jury AFTER ONE OF THE MOST REPRESSIVE TRIALS IN RECENT HISTORY — mounted by a Labour Government.

Also in 1975 we saw the first major use of troops against a strike for several years — against the Glasgow dustcart drivers. The failure of socialists to explain the troops' role in Ireland can only help ease the way for further use of troops against strikes in future.

1975

FROM SOCIAL CONTRACT TO £6 LIMIT

75 AL TRACT

series of right wing election victories in the unions.

Right wingers in the Labour Party, acutely aware of this development, have counter-attacked promptly with witchhunts against the 'Militant' tendency, against the so-called 'Red Letter' (a model resolution opposing the £6 limit circulated among Labour Party activists), and even against supposedly "pro-Communist" MPs.

In the unions, however, it was a different story. Kate Losinska, a right winger, won the Presidential election of the Civil and Public Services Association. The November elections in the AUEW gave the right a majority on the Executive; the AUEW National Committee voted 32 to 20 to go back on its previous policy and support the £6 limit. In December, the EPTU, the electricians' union, saw the return of all but one of the right wing candidates in the election.

There was, too, a sharp drop in the number of days lost by strikes — 60% down on last year, and the lowest number since 1968 — with a steep downturn after August when the £6 limit was brought in.

Dam

But the forms of struggle of the last year, and the growing anger over eroding standards, are still evidence of a vast potential for struggle over the coming year.

Behind the dam-wall of the £6 limit are the resentments of a class whose living standards and real wages are falling; behind this dam are the accumulating protests of craft workers whose relative position is declining; behind this wall there is the pent up force of a class that has not been defeated decisively for half a century.

The biggest danger to the working class at the moment is that of the false solutions. The strongest asset of the right wing in 1975 was nationalism — the idea that workers should look to a supposed 'national interest' common to British bosses and British workers, instead of the common interest of workers of all nationalities.

In March, 3000 textile workers from

all over the north of England came down to London to protest against unemployment. Their banners were a strange and sad sight. Asian workers marched alongside fellow demonstrators who chanted 'Buy British' slogans and carried banners demanding an end to the import of Asian goods.

At a rally these workers voted for cooperation with the employers who threatened to cut their jobs — cooperation in seeking cuts in textile imports.

Game

The centrepiece of this nationalist agitation was the Common Market referendum in June. Yet here it was the left wing who played the game of the right. While Roy Jenkins spoke of 'socialist internationalism', Michael Foot, Wedgwood Benn and others spoke in the tones of 19th century Tories.

We should not, they said, let 'this great country of ours' get mixed up with foreigners; we should defend our glorious Parliament against the horrors of nameless Brussels bureaucracy; we should avoid the evils of the 'capitalist conspiracy' of the EEC. One of the reasons why the Tribune left proved so incapable of a fight against the real 'capitalist conspiracy' of the £6 limit was that they were demoralised and disorientated after their defeat in the shadow fight to defend little Britain against the EEC 'conspiracy'.

The fact that most of the left gave way to nationalism was doubly criminal in 1975 because of the really inspiring lessons to be learnt by British workers from struggles in other countries.

The workers and peasants of Vietnam finally threw out the American imperialists, together with the corrupt landlord, capitalist and bureaucrat class which the Americans had sustained. Popular will and determination, backed by solidarity, triumphed over the greatest military machine in history.

Martin Thomas

occupation tactic was also used in wages struggles including at Fords at Dagenham and Massey Ferguson, Coventry.

Against this there was as 1975 wore on an increased sense of isolation, of the difficulties of waging any local fight and an increased tendency to focus attention on the Labour Party and the union leaders, in particular the uncritically pro-government ones.

Once again this was reflected in two apparently opposite trends: the growth of rank and file left wing activity in the Labour Party (leading to the defeat of Prentice in the Newham North East confrontation and the defeat of Healey for the Labour Party NEC); and also a whole



1975 LEFT HITS ROCK BOTTOM OVER E.E.C.

The papers of the revolutionary left, naturally, made a good deal of the revolutionary events in Portugal and Indochina in 1975. However, most of them lacked the necessary critical intelligence to draw any lessons clearly.

'Socialist Worker' endorsed the "25th August platform" of the left parties in Portugal as a "historic" united front. In fact it was a platform which explicitly supported the bourgeois Fifth Provisional Government.

'Socialist Worker', 'Red Weekly', and 'Workers Press' all celebrated the victory in Vietnam without pointing out that the new regime, even though an advance on Thieu, is nevertheless an anti-working-class regime.

When internationalism was a matter of standing against the tide, rather than celebrating the joys and beauties of revolution somewhere else, the revolutionary left collapsed. 'Red Weekly', 'Socialist Worker' and 'Workers Press' all found their more-or-less plausible 'Marxist' arguments to go along with the 'Get Britain Out' hullabaloo. Only 'Workers Fight', among the papers of the revolutionary left, took a clear internationalist position, saying it was no business of workers to take sides on whether capitalist Britain should be in or out of the capitalist EEC.

'Red Weekly' has taken opportunism further still. With a caricature version of the 'bad King John' theory

of history, they have started attributing all the right wing policies of the Labour Government to a few evil men — the "Wilson-Healey clique". The battle-cry is "the Left must unite against Wilson" — and if that means revolutionaries adapting to the nationalistic politics of the 'Tribune' left, too bad!

'Socialist Worker' was different. It combined essentially social-democratic politics (for example, one of its arguments against the EEC was that it would stop nationalisations!) with childish organisational belligerence. Its advice to militants engaged in struggle in the Labour Party was: cease your fight and instead join the "Socialist Worker" bandwagon. "Get out and join IS" was the headline.

'Workers Press' had a crazier version of the same approach: a great noise about their own ventures being the only revolutionary way to struggle — but with reformist politics under the 'revolutionary' proclamations. They campaigned for the Labour Government to resign. Instead of Wilson, they wanted socialism. And socialism would come ... through a Labour Government: but this time a new one, elected on a "socialist programme"!

Thus, at the end of 1975, all the 'revolutionary' papers were far from adequate to the big tasks and big opportunities coming up. It falls to us to make 'Workers Action' a paper which will be adequate in 1976.

BLEAK FUTURE FOR CAR INDUSTRY

MOST of us will remember the days when there were 10 or 20 car firms in Britain. Now there is one wholly-owned British car firm in the mass production league (Leyland) and 3 American-owned firms, General Motors (Vauxhall) Ford and Chrysler.

The trend to giant monopolies has of course taken place in all capitalist countries and in all industries. Most of these giant firms have spread to the far corners of the earth in their search for cheap labour, increased profits and a way of outdoing their competitors.

One reason for the Common Market is that — with tariff barriers down in Europe — cut-throat competition can be given a boost. Logically, the result of this competition must be the survival of only one or two of Fiat, Volkswagen, Renault, Leyland, etc, and the closure of the rest.

If one projects this rat-race onto an international scale with 30 million cars produced each year (compare 3 million a year in 1930), competition in the USA with Chrysler being the weakest of the Big 3, the Japanese firms coming up strongly on the outside, the shrinking world market (25% down last year), one begins to get some idea of the crisis in the motor industry.

Mess

Add to this the anti-social nature of car production — built-in obsolescence, pollution, break-up of public transport, as against the social need for tractors, electric cars etc, and you have a capitalist mess writ large.

Already in Europe, Volvo and Daf have joined forces and Peugeot have merged with Citroen. In Japan, Mazda are on the rocks, while Ford have links with Honda, Chrysler with Mitsubishi and GM with Isuzu trucks.

It is in this context that the Central Policy Review Staff ('Think Tank') document *The Future of the Car Industry* stresses "the serious competitive weaknesses of UK car firms".

The UK motor industry employs 300,000 workers directly, with 1 million in the components industry — that is, 5% of the UK workforce; of these, there is a heavy concentration in the West Midlands.

The industry is the UK's biggest single export earner — £1,300 million a year. In 1955 the UK produced 25% of world cars outside the USA; in 1975, it produced 10%. In 1965, of all cars bought in the UK, 95% were UK produced; in 1974 this was down to 72% (Leyland 33%, Ford 23%, Chrysler 9%, Vauxhall 7%, with imports accounting for 28%).

The position must get worse as competition heats up. Firstly, the prospects for exports from Western Europe are poor. At the moment, Western Europe supplies 60% of world exports but not only have Japanese firms become more competitive, but

the trend is for local assembly in the 3rd World. Brazil, for example, now produces 600,000 cars a year (mainly VW and Ford) and recently Iran, South Korea and Nigeria have set up local car plants. The advantages to the multi-nationals of cheaper labour and transport costs are obvious.

Secondly, many firms have deliberately set about moving money and plant out of car production. Fiat, for example, are now only 64% dependent on cars, and aim to be only 50% so by 1985. Renault have adopted a similar policy.

Thirdly, all firms will be forced to improve cost structures — to close plants and to cut down on models. The cost of producing a new model is reckoned to be well over £200 million, and if the new model is not popular, that's a hell of an investment to throw away!

This is less of a problem for the giant multi-nationals — GM, Ford and Chrysler will adopt a total European approach to their products, for example.

The CPRS report draws five conclusions:

* There will be very tough competition for at least the next ten years.

* The UK industry has serious competitive weaknesses — too many firms, too many models, too many plants.

* Other weaknesses are poor quality of product, bad labour relations, unsatisfactory delivery record, low productivity and overmanning.

* If these weaknesses are not corrected, employment could fall by 275,000 by 1985 and the balance of trade in cars deteriorate by over £1 billion a year at 1975 prices.

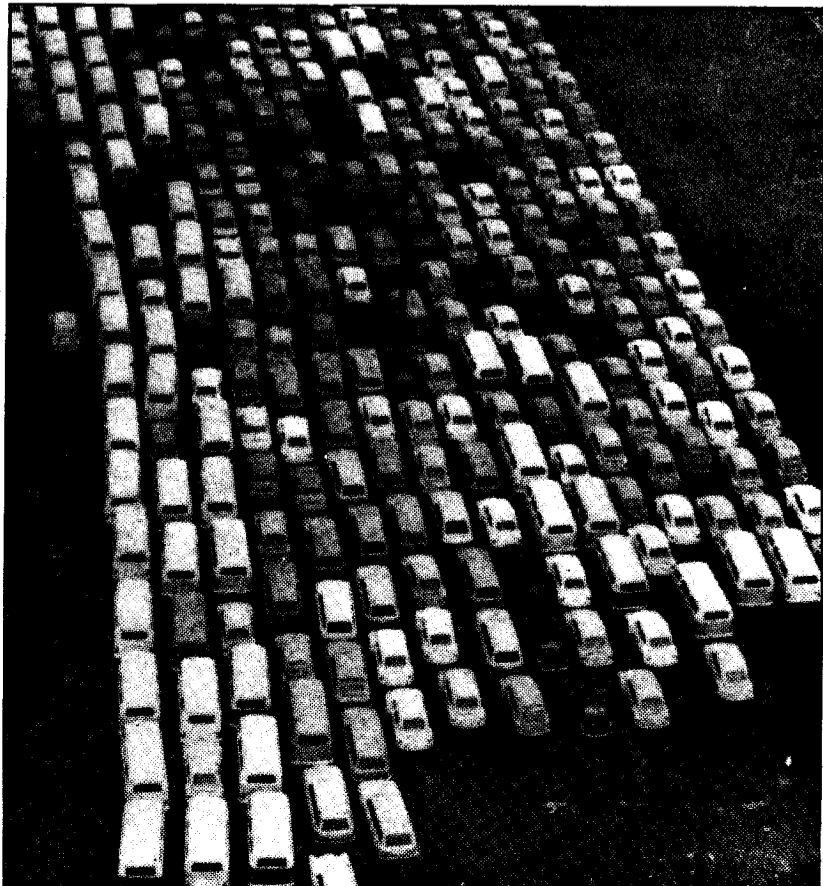
* Attitudes have to be changed; since the government owns half the car industry, the government must take a lead.

Deal

It can be said that the Chrysler deal, hatched by Chrysler (USA) and the Wilson Government, fits in neatly with these conclusions. There is a serious attempt to break the back of Chrysler workers as an example to other car workers — and to the British working class in general, since the CPRS conclusions could just as easily apply to other British industries!

The message is clear. The employers are out for the kill and the Labour government is giving a lead. And their toadies in the TUC will not lift a finger. The more obvious the decay of capitalism, the more the Labour leaders crawl and bow and scrape before the people who should have been consigned to the waste disposal unit of history long ago — a permanent "Upstairs Downstairs" with butler Wilson waiting on in a nauseating display of how to be a good lackey.

DAVE SPENCER



Did Trotsky get it all wrong?

FOR workers and socialists interested in discovering the history of the working class movement there is little in the way of cheap, easily available books from a Marxist standpoint. Of no period is this more true than that of the early years of the British Communist Party — from 1920 to 1926.

The appearance of two books covering this period in the last two months of 1975 from Pluto Press and New Park Publications, (publishing houses associated with the IS and the WRP respectively) is therefore a welcome event.

James Hinton and Richard Hyman's *Trade Unions and Revolution: The Industrial Politics of the Early British Communist Party* (Pluto) is a fairly

short essay (67 pages of text) and is in the form of a polemic against the traditional Trotskyist assessment of the British CP around the period of the General Strike.

This 'traditional' view is of course based upon Trotsky's writings on Britain of the mid-twenties, and is represented in articles by Brian Pearce in the book published by New Park, *Essays on the History of Communism in Britain*, Woodhouse & Pearce.

Hyman and Hinton attack a number of the pre-suppositions of Trotsky and later Trotskyists. Firstly, in their assessment of the 1920s as a period, they see it as one of retreat and demoralisation for the working class movement following the slump of 1920/21, the associated defeats ('Black Friday' and the collapse of the Triple Alliance), and the crushing of the shop stewards movement in engineering.

They see the great battles of the

1920s, culminating in the General Strike, as basically defensive.

In these circumstances — a working class reacting to massive capitalist attacks — even the rank and file militants fell increasingly under the influence of reformist political and trade union leaders.

Given this, the young CP's attempt to build a mass party or to relate to these defensive struggles via a rank and file movement — the Minority Movement — was in Hyman and Hinton's view a fundamental mistake.

This over-optimism was partly the fault of the Communist International's pressure (in its earliest period) and prevented the CP concentrating on raising its political level and carrying on limited propaganda work, thus "sustaining the British revolutionary tradition in such unfavourable circumstances". Hinton and Hyman attempt to exonerate the post 1924 Comintern from the charge of having pulled the CPGB's policy disastrously to the right in the period immediately before and during the General Strike.

'few lessons'

Lastly and most Quixotically, they conclude that "there are few lessons of direct relevance to our position that we can learn from the 1920s".

Briefly, a number of arguments can be levelled at this analysis. Firstly it fetishises the "offensive" wage struggles of a period of capitalist boom. Hyman and Hinton explicitly identify working class militancy and political consciousness with large numbers of sectional strikes lead by rank and file shop stewards. Collapse of the boom and the inevitably defensive and concentrated 'national strikes', which come under the leadership of 'national' trade union officials, spells doom for revolutionaries.

Unfortunately if this is the case, then unless history rewards us with a revolutionary situation which coincides with a boom, the outlook is bleak indeed!

In fact of course, massive defensive struggles, like a general strike to defend the miners, pose the question of the class having to transform the defence into offence to win.

This objectively poses the question of **who rules** (in the words of the famous Punch cartoon, "Under which flag?"). It is not clear from their book what Hyman and Hinton's CP would have done in the General Strike — a general strike limited to defence is nonsense. Would they have argued against it as adventurist, a provocation, etc? Would they have let Baldwin defeat the miners?

Hyman and Hinton's position raises far more questions than it answers — questions concerning fundamentals of revolutionary strategy and tactics. Though they have failed to come up with any convincing answers, they have by raising the questions demonstrated the absolute falsity of their final point that there are few lessons to be learned from the 1920s.

If of course they mean direct equivalent situations — 'they did that in 1924, we in 1976 do the same' — then of course they are right. But serious debate amongst socialists and militants on the politics of this period can yield a wealth of guidance to us in the crises of the 1970s.

DAVESTOCKING



Government propaganda onslaught against the miners. But defence of the miners led to offensive actions culminating in General Strike

REVIEW

OUR POLITICS

● **CAPITALISM** is inseparable from the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class 'at home' and (and since 'advanced' capitalism became imperialist) of the workers and peasants in the neo-colonies and colonies abroad.

It is a vicious system geared to buttressing the strong against the weak, to serving the handful of capitalists against the millions of workers, and to keeping many millions in poverty so that a few may prosper. Capitalism exalts property and degrades life. It is at the root of the racialism which poisons and divides worker against worker. It is a system of massive waste and social disorganisation, and at the same time it forces the working class to fight every inch of the way to better or even maintain its wages and conditions.

Having once been progressive, in that it at least developed, in the only way then possible, the productive resources of mankind, it is now a totally reactionary force in history. Its expansion after World War 2 gave it merely the appearance of health. By the late '60s the boom had given way to creeping stagnation, followed in the early '70s by the biggest crisis since the '30s.

● **TODAY** the ruling class can keep their system going only at the cost of large scale unemployment and attempts to cut the living standards of workers in the 'rich' parts of the world; of massive starvation and bloodshed in the 'poor' two thirds of the world; and of the ever present threat of the destruction of humanity through nuclear war.

● **THE ONLY WAY OUT** is for the working class to take power and bring the resources of the modern economy under a rational working class plan. Having overthrown capitalism and established social ownership of the means of production, the working class will build towards a truly communist society, in which at last the principle will be "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs".

● The working class has created political parties for this purpose — **LABOUR PARTIES, COMMUNIST PARTIES, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES**. But in country after country these parties have joined capitalist governments and managed capitalism. They have betrayed the socialist aspirations of their working class supporters, tied the labour movement to the bosses' state, interest and ideology, and destroyed the political independence of the working class.

In certain areas, so-called Communist Parties have taken power, overthrown capitalism, and have established, with the degenerate USSR as a model, totalitarian police states which oppress the working class and serve a parasitic anti-working-class bureaucracy.

● The task is therefore to build a socialist **PARTY** which will stand firmly for the interests of the working class; a party which is democratically controlled by an active working class membership, which preserves its political independence, and fights the ideological domination of the ruling class.

● The basis of our activity is the scientific theory of **MARXISM**, the only theory which gives a clear understanding of present day society and of the necessity of revolutionary change. Marxism is not a series of texts from the past, but in its essence a scientific method, which allows for permanent development and regeneration of our understanding of the world and for definition and yet sharper re-definition of our goals in the light of experience.

● Although they cannot organise the struggle for workers' power, the **TRADE UNIONS** are indispensable for the defence of workers' interests. We fight for the independence of the unions from all state control, and within the unions for militant policies and for democracy.

We see the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct stratum which acts as a broker between workers and bosses. Lacking a direct, necessary allegiance to working class interests, or any fundamental interests of its own, its general tendency is to work with the bosses and their state against the working class.

Only a mass national rank and file movement, linking up the different industries and guided by the ideas of revolutionary Marxism can, in this period, turn the trade unions into reliable instruments of working class interests, independent of the bosses' state.

● We fight against any **INCOMES POLICY** under capitalism, and against any legal restrictions on trade unionism.

● We fight against **UNEMPLOYMENT**; for a national minimum wage; for work or full pay; against productivity bargaining. We fight for hours to be cut without loss of pay, instead of even a single job being lost; and for direct action to implement this demand. In case of closure or large-scale redundancies, we support and advocate factory occupations, which should force nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control.

● We fight to extend the power of workers to control their own lives in industry here and now, understanding, however, that **WORKERS' CONTROL** can be made a serious and stable reality only in a workers' state. We are against any workers' "participation" in managing their own exploitation under capitalism.

● We believe that the '**PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM**' is a crippling illusion. The capitalist class will not leave the stage peacefully; no ruling class ever has. Socialism can be built only by smashing the capitalist state machine (army, police, civil service) which is the ultimate defence of the bosses' power in society, and replacing it with a state based on democratic Workers' Councils.

● **THE LABOUR PARTY** — in its ideas, its policies, its relation to the bourgeois state, and its record in government over 50 years — has shown itself to be inextricably tied and integrated into the established system. At the same time, the bedrock organisations of the working class, the trade unions, support and finance the Labour Party. It is a party which serves capitalism, but which can only do so because it is based on the organised working class movement, many elements of which want to bury capitalism. In that contradiction lies the potential of transcending Labourism.

The 'open valve' connection between the Labour Party and the Unions allows for the possibility of large scale working class participation in the party.

Labour in Government can be a strong party when, together with the trade union bureaucracy, it induces workers to patiently bear the cost of capitalism's problems. Or it can be a weak party for capitalism when, as with 'In Place of Strife', its working class base rises up against it.

We relate to the Labour Party, not simply by denouncing it, but by attempting to advance the working class towards outgrowing and breaking through the particular stage in its development represented by Labourism.

The Labour Party should exist to serve the working class, and socialists should fight to make it do so. In no sense does the working class exist to serve the reformist Labour Party which serves capitalism.

We defend the right of all varieties of socialist thought to exist and organise within the Labour Party — the mass party based on the trade unions — without bans or proscriptions.

● We fight for full and equal rights for **WOMEN**, for female emancipation from the male domination which throughout history has co-existed with class society and which has its roots in class society. We fight, in particular, for the emancipation of women of our class, suffering a double and triple exploitation, who have been most accurately described as the "slaves of the slaves".

Women's liberation presupposes the root-and-branch reorganisation of society; it thus demands a proletarian revolution. Women's liberation is necessarily linked to the proletarian revolution — or else it is either utopian, reformist, or both. In history mass working women's movements were built in association with the early Second International and the Communist International. They were destroyed by fascism and Stalinism, and vanished.

Today a movement is being re-born, in ideological chaos — because it has to re-discover so much, and because no mass revolutionary movement exists to help it. Yet it is a healthy ferment, this chaos.

We explicitly support the idea of an **autonomous women's movement**; but we believe that the women's movement must be firmly linked to the working class struggle for power, and ideologically educated to make that link. A revolutionary working class based women's movement must be built. For the first time in history it is possible to build it at a time when a mass female industrial proletariat exists. We fight to build it, keeping in mind an imperative need for a sensitive approach to the movement, recently re-born, of a doubly-oppressed section of humanity.

● We give unconditional support to the struggles of the oppressed peoples everywhere fighting against **IMPERIALISM**, and to their organisations leading that fight, irrespective of political differences we have with them and which would lead to sharp conflict were we working on the same political and geographical terrain.

We support the struggle for a united and independent **IRELAND**, and for an end to the military and political interference in Ireland by British imperialism.

British workers have — fundamentally — more in common with every single worker throughout the globe, irrespective of race, religion, language or colour, than with the whole of the British ruling class. We oppose all immigration controls, and fight for the repeal of the oppressive and racist 1971 Immigration Act and other such curbs to free movement. We see the fight for socialism as a **WORLD WIDE STRUGGLE**, necessitating the creation of a world revolutionary party.

The 'Great Debate' on the **COMMON MARKET** is a bosses' debate on how to run their system. The labour movement shouldn't have got involved in it. In or out, the **working class struggle goes on**. We denounce the agitation for withdrawal as a reactionary diversion. The British labour movement must establish links of cooperation and solidarity with the working class of the rest of the EEC. The retrograde Little Britain-ism of the anti-marketters in the labour movement sums up only too accurately the crippling insularity which still besets the British working class.

● **FASCIST MOVEMENTS** express the reactionary fury of people frustrated by capitalism — fury expressed through violence against militant workers, against socialists and against oppressed minorities. They can be used as the shock troops of a moribund capitalism to smash up the labour movement. We must destroy fascism or it will destroy the labour movement: fascists should be driven out of the unions; they should have no right of way to march or speak or organise. Workers' defence squads must protect meetings of the labour movement, and massive mobilisations must drive the fascists off the streets.

● We stand for a political revolution of the working class against the bureaucracies of **the USSR and the other countries called 'communist'**, which we consider to be degenerated and deformed workers' states. The social and political regime of the different bureaucracies has nothing in common with socialism, let alone real communism — unless one believes in a police state socialism! At the same time, we defend the nationalised economies of these countries against capitalism and imperialism, unconditionally; that is, irrespective of the self-serving, usually anti-working class and reactionary policies of the ruling bureaucrats, and against those policies. In any clash, or apparent clash, between this 'defencism' and support for working class revolt against the bureaucratic tyranny, we stand entirely with the working class against the bureaucratic parasites who oppress them with police state terror.

What is the political revolution? While the degree of resistance by the bureaucracy and by the state machine will vary from country to country (in Hungary in 1956 the ruling party itself fragmented, sections joining with the proletarian revolutionaries), the political revolution means:

a) The smashing, through revolutionary direct action under the leadership of a revolutionary party, of the bureaucratic state apparatus. Its dismantling and the assumption of direct power by the working class masses through a network of workers' councils (the historically established form of proletarian democracy).

b) The simultaneous assumption of direct control in industry by the working class — control in which factory and area organisations will interact creatively with the central state power, and organise the economy according to a democratically arrived at, and democratically controlled and implemented, working class plan.

c) The complete destruction of the bureaucracy as a social stratum by removing all material privileges, as well as destroying its totalitarian monopoly of control and power in society.

● There are other political tendencies which have generally similar aims, but methods differing from ours, or differing conceptions about what needs to be done here and now. We consider these tendencies to be seriously — sometimes grossly — inadequate in theory and practice. We favour unity in action with these tendencies where possible, and a serious dialogue about our differences. ■

BSC COWBOYS' PLAN FOR STEEL

'Cut the pay and they won't want the jobs'

Where the fightback starts

THE British Steel Corporation has now upped its appetite for redundancies from 40,000 to 44,000 out of a workforce of 220,000. And even this new figure was, according to BSC executives, "just for starters".

But nationally the ISTC leadership (which also heads the TUC Steel Industry Committee) have adopted quite a different approach. In fact ISTC leader Bill Sirs' most recent brainwave to repulse this attack on his members was a plan by which "the steel worker would purchase some sort of share — perhaps worth £1 every week — which would show the contribution which the workers are prepared to make to save the industry."

Make a workforce sweat and you'll make it slim! That seems to have been the motto of the BSC at least for the last few years. These years have been filled with threats of redundancy, plans for closure, withdrawal of the threats, new plans... in short, everything to breed an atmosphere of chronic uncertainty. The uncertainty leads itself to thousands leaving the industry,

and the "slimming" of the workforce takes place.

In fact, the turnover in labour because of this, together with the appalling conditions and bad pay in the industry, can be gauged from a statement by BSC's chief executive Bob Scholey. He says that getting rid of 44,000 jobs in two years can be done without sacking anyone: "the Corporation wastage was 24,000 a year, surely it is not beyond us to achieve 44,000 in two years."

Quota

The new rise in the BSC's quota for the chop came, the Corporation claimed, when it realised that they would have to bear some £26m of increased costs over the next three months on top of the estimated yearly loss of £420m.

It comes combined with three further attacks on the workforce: the elimination of premium shift working, thus cutting workers' wages; a scrapping of the existing guaranteed week agreements in cases of workers

SURVEY by Andrew Hornung

with less than five years with the BSC; and a refusal to pay out on the already agreed cost-of-living linked pay deal.

Despite the arrogance of these demands, there has been no determined reply from the steel unions. Indeed, although there has been no acceptance, there has been talk of a commitment to "streamlining" the industry.

BSC have structured their approach so as to draw the unions into negotiations on the guaranteed week agreement first — no doubt hoping this will prove divisive. They have put forward a plan for "saving the guaranteed week agreement" which would, if accepted, commit the unions to all that BSC want and at the same time meet the unions, pathetic face-saving formula of refusing to discuss the redundancies document.

The BSC "plan" to save the guaranteed week involves four points:

- * the unions must crack down on unofficial strikes;
- * there must be a flexibility agreement, allowing management to transfer workers to any job in any part of a plant without consultation;
- * Forgoing the money due on the cost-of-living pay rise;
- * "general voluntary help in relaxing the guaranteed week"!

Toying

Apart from withdrawing his "new idea I've been toying with" of the workers buying £1 shares within a couple of days suggesting it, Bill Sirs has managed no more aggressive comment than that "the Corporation's behaviour indicates the need for more workers on the board".

Of course, "the Corporation's behaviour" indicates exactly the opposite. The steel industry nationalisation pioneered the co-opting of worker-directors, and where has it got the workers? The workers don't need directorships, they need real control while refusing to accept any

financial responsibility for the Corporation's losses.

This real control will be less visible in the board rooms than on the shop floor. It is therefore absolutely vital as a precondition both to successful struggle against the present BSC plans and to imposing shop floor control in the future to build really strong works committees uniting both craft and non-craft workers.

A re-call of the National Steel Action Committee could form the basis for national unity in the industry. (The TUC Steel Committee is certainly not providing this lead.)

Square

But only if the Action Committee decides this time to stand squarely on the ground of a policy taking up all the issues facing workers in the industry — something which so far it has resisted. Whether national unity can be based on this committee or has to be built anew, it must turn its back on purely local situations like "save Shotton" or "save East Moors".

So far these 'solutions' have resulted in a paper unity masking the reality of cut-throat dog-eat-dog policies.

Instead the key demands that must be fought for are:

- * work-sharing without loss of pay and under shop floor control. This means NO redundancies and NO RETREAT on the question of the guaranteed week.
- * no to so-called 'natural wastage'. If anyone takes severance or leaves, his job WILL REMAIN, and will NOT BE COVERED except by the employment of new labour.
- * No flexibility! All shop floor organisation to be under the control of factory committees of trade unionists.
- * No retreat on the pay-deal!
- * Nationalisation without compensation of those sectors still 'in private hands'.
- * For strike action and workers' occupations to enforce these demands and prevent removal of any plant.



POEU

Rank & file revolt over climbdown

IN SPITE of the total capitulation of the NEC of the Post Office Engineers' Union to the Post Office cutback on capital expenditure and their complete grovelling to the Labour government's attack on the working class, the rank and file are fighting back.

The Metropolitan West Branch called a special meeting to discuss the situation and plan a fight back. The meeting was ruled out of order by the NEC.

In the light of this the Met. West Branch has now called for the reconvening of Conference, and has circulated all POEU branches to that effect.

The main points contained in the Met. West circular are that

- * Prices have not been restrained; they have climbed to fantastic heights, and by July '76 when the POEU wage claim is due for settlement, £6 will be derisory.
- * All letters from the NEC to branches indicate that, quite clearly, they think the workers will have to pay.
- * The accelerated wastage programme is a redundancy exercise.

The Met. West branch further proposes that if the NEC does not accept the demand for an emergency conference, then branches will have to organise a deputation to the Union HQ.

This view has already been endorsed by other branches in London.

DAVE WARD, POEU

Boilermakers: 'Support Portuguese workers'

Middlesbrough No.2 branch of the Boilermakers Society have sent the following resolution to the Executive: "This branch of the Boilermakers' Society fully supports the struggle of the Portuguese working class against reaction and pledges solidarity with the organisations of 'Popular Power' in Portugal (Popular Assemblies,

THE UNIONS



THIS COLUMN will appear regularly, carrying news from trade union militants. USE IT to publicise YOUR activities, resolutions, requests for solidarity and contact, problems and ideas.

workers' committees, neighbourhood commissions, etc).

We reject any attempt to disarm the working class, or return firms under workers' control to their previous capitalist owners; we particularly support the struggle of the workers at Radio Renascence and the newspaper Republica.

We oppose any intervention in Portugal by international capitalist forces. This branch condemns the campaign of support for Mario Soares and the reactionary leadership of the Portuguese Socialist Party, being organised by the leadership of the British Labour Party.

This branch asks the Executive of the Boilermakers Society to campaign on the above points and to organise support for the conference called by the Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese Working Class. We call on all organisations of the working class to support that conference.

This branch will conduct a campaign among its members to win support for the Portuguese working class, and to this end will affiliate to the Campaign."

£200 A MONTH FIGHTING FUND

MOST of the costs of capitalist papers are met by advertisements. Obviously, this can't apply to WORKERS ACTION. That's why the cover price might seem high. But even so, the paper's future is precarious.

To put it bluntly — we need your money. We've set a fund-raising target of £200 a month. It is vital that we make that target.

We are confident that readers will understand how important it is that the politics of WORKERS ACTION continue to be put across. So let's go out for every penny of the £200!

SEND your donation to Fighting Fund, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27. Make cheques payable to Workers Action.

EVENTS

Small ads for labour movement events are free. Write to 'Events', Workers Action, 49 Carnac St, London SE27. Ads should arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee demonstration on 1st February, under the slogans: an end to British involvement in Ireland; self-determination for the Irish people. The BSCC meets every Tuesday, 7.30pm, at the University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1.

Gay Workers National Conference planning meeting at the International Community Centre, 61b Mansfield Rd, Nottingham. 10am, Saturday 10th January.

Women and the Cuts London conference: Saturday 28th February. Credentials and details from Michele Ryan, 39 Parkholme Rd, London E8.

Working Women's Charter national conference: 10th-11th April, Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry. Two delegates each from all labour movement organisations. Credentials from H.Gurdon, Flat 4, 39 New Bold Terrace East, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Solidarity with the Portuguese Working Class: conference 10am, 13th March, at Conway Hall, Red Lion

Square, London WC1. All labour movement organisations may send delegates. Details from PWCC, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2.

Stop implementing the cuts! mass lobby of Camden Council, 6.30pm, January 14th, Camden Town Hall. Organised by Central London Right to Work Committee.

'For a Workers Answer to the Crisis: public rally to launch the International-Communist League': 8pm, Tuesday 13th January, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. "For the first time since 1944, a major fusion — the merger of Workers Fight, Workers Power (ex-Left Faction of IS) and a group of comrades from the Workers Revolutionary Party, to form the I-CL — promises to break the logjam on the revolutionary left".

'What is the International-Communist League?': public meeting on the politics of the newly-formed International-Communist League, 7.30pm, Thursday 22nd January, at Davenport's pub, Hurst St, Birmingham.

'What is the International Communist League?' Public meeting in Rochdale Sunday January 18th, 8pm at 'The Two Ships', Hope Street.

March 6th: International Women's Day march. More details of venue etc. later, but start mobilising for it now.

Published by Workers Action, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27. Printed by Prestagate of Reading (TU)

FROM FRONT PAGE

John Foley, Divisional Organiser of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) admitted "Llanwern and Port Talbot Steelworkers are in turmoil — men are just not cooperating with management because of the way BSC are tearing up agreements." Bill Sirs, ISTC General Secretary, expressed his fear of this in an article in the January edition of 'Man and Metal': "The issues raised by employers in a nationalised industry repudiating a collective agreement are too important to be ignored: their repercussions are too far-reaching."

And John Cowling, a local ISTC Executive member, said at Corby that there would be no negotiations with BSC on economies while the job-and-pay cutting ultimatum was on the table. Behind the anger lies an unmistakable note of panic as union officials see the BSC's cowboy tactics as forcing them into leading 220,000 men in industrial action.

In a number of steelworks resolutions have been passed to meet the new situation.

An Allied Crafts mass meeting at Lackenby Works (South Teesside) called on the shop stewards to convene a meeting of all BSC shop stewards' committees so that a joint national struggle can be taken up. In South Yorkshire, trades councils are convening a meeting covering steel complexes in Rotherham, Sheffield and Stocksbridge with MPs, union leaders and steel convenors. While at Shotton in North Wales the possibility of a re-call meeting of the National Action Committee is being discussed.

Faced by large scale opposition at Corby (Northants), BSC management were forced to give up their plan to cut weekend working immediately, and agreed to 're-deploy' 400 men who refused to be sent home. "It shows that militancy has paid off and that management has backed down. Other plants should take note" warned ISTC South Midlands Executive member John Cowling.

Elsewhere the same tactic of refusing to accept management's cut of the weekend premium shift meant a mixture of 'work-ins', 'work-ons' and 'walk-outs'. At Port Talbot, 1,200 workers walked out when management told 100 men that they were not needed. At Trostre and Velindre works in South Wales 500 workers ignored "go home" orders and made themselves available for work.

At the other main tin-plate producing works, Ebbw Vale, 1,000 men 'worked' the shift although there were no jobs. A spokesman for the Ebbw Vale Joint Association of Trade Unions summed up the situation saying "We cannot have a position in the steel industry where some workers are to lose between 15% and 20% of their wage."

At Shotton and at Shelton (Stoke on Trent) workers refused to accept BSC's ultimatum and turned up for work as usual.

In some works, steelmen countered management plans by going onto a 40-hour week, refusing to cover unattended jobs, and preparing to fight for full financial compensation. At Llanwern where an overtime ban was imposed, Blastfurnacemen's regional officer Bill Booth emphasised "We will work the new work rotas, but as a result, if a man does not turn up in the power plant, that job will not be worked. This will threaten two blast furnaces in operation at Llanwern and many other parts of the plant."

"We have the ridiculous situation of some of our members having to work overtime because there is inadequate cover, and others are having to accept cuts. Some men are taking home as much as £25 overtime pay, while others are facing cuts of £17."

Craft workers elsewhere have also revolted. The Port Talbot EEUU men are out on strike over management's refusal to pay Boxing Day workers at premium rates; at Llanwern 60 bricklayers are on strike over cuts in weekend working, and at Port Talbot, 3,500 AUEW members held a one-hour sit-in over the same issue.

At Lackenby the allied crafts mass meeting accepted the move to a 40-hour week without overtime and without covering for absence.

Certainly the acceptance of new work rotas is a step backward. Militants will have to make sure that it is used to fuel the next leap forward: the struggle for FULL MAKE-UP MONEY. When the £17 hole in wage packets becomes a reality next week, this should be the slogan. There is every sign that such a fight could win: the ore plant shop at Cleveland walked out at the reduction, and there is high feeling that the old system of making up the loss (when the 21 shifts were reduced to 15) by using a multiplying factor should be re-instituted.

WORKERS IN ACTION

CHRYSLER — THERE IS

STILL TIME TO FIGHT



THE CHRYSLER workers have voted to accept the so-called "rescue plan". Only the ASTMS members as a union voted to reject this plan to "rescue", with a massive £162m. transfusion, the profits of the Chrysler investors and the fast dwindling credit of the Labour Government.

The press was overjoyed. Yesterday's "unrepresentative" and "irresponsible" trade unionists became today's "moderate" and "sensible" men — now that they had accepted over 8,000 redundancies without a fight.

In fact the acceptance does not include any guarantees whatsoever that more short time working and redundancy will not follow. At present the proposal is to cut production by 25% and the labour force by 35%. This can only mean harsher conditions and faster speeds for those workers remaining. At Stoke, for instance, three foundry shifts will be cut down to two.

whole class

The situation, however, is not yet lost: it must be taken in hand before it becomes not only a resounding defeat for the Chrysler workers, but a defeat for the whole of the working class.

The Combine Committee must be recalled. And enlarged: after all, the sackings are likely to affect a further 20,000 workers in ancillary industries at Dunlop, Lucas, the machine tool industry, etc.

The Combine Committee must call the tune, not the national officials. And they must ensure that they adopt a policy that every plant can organise around.

To save the jobs, the Chrysler workers will have to demand: nationalise the company, lock, stock and barrel without a penny compensation. Riccardo has claimed the assets are valueless. For once, let's take him at his word.

But nationalisation will not save jobs unless the workers control the company. That's the lesson from the steel industry right now. This doesn't mean 'participation' with a few workers' "representatives" combining with management to run the workforce down and the track speeds up. It means the organised shop floor workers will take control of manning levels, track speeds and the number of hours worked.

This means a policy of work-sharing organised and controlled by the shop floor trade unionists, with no loss of pay being accepted for the necessary cut in hours.

Company-produced nameplates on convenors' desks won't help this policy. What will be vital, however, is a struggle for the unconditional right of the workers to inspect the books, plans and files of the firm. The old 'consultation' methods won't do: we need the power to enforce the right to

implement or not implement the proposals of the management, whether the firm is in private hands or nationalised.

In fact Chrysler workers should start right now with an enquiry into where the £162 million is going. A fight should be begun right away to block any spending of the £162m which will not save jobs.

But who will take these proposals

seriously without a struggle to implement them? The first vital step in that struggle will come the moment management attempt to implement the now accepted plan. It must be resisted in every plant, which must retaliate by imposing its own work-sharing schemes the minute management begins to dismiss workers. If management either attempt a lock-out at this stage or refuse to pay out the full wage, the plants should be occupied.

REPORT by Dave Hughes

DIVIDE AND RULE AT CHRYSLER

THE Chrysler management has waged a consistent campaign to break the power of trade union organisation — to split and demoralise the workforce.

Their first method was the replacement of piecework by Measured Day Work (described by its introducer Cattell as 'a modern form of slavery'). The local bargaining and strong shop organisation that had grown up with piecework was to be replaced, as much as possible, by plant and national bargaining with trade union officials. In this way the management hoped to squeeze out and by pass the shop stewards.

To do this, an enormous increase in the number of purely disciplinary foremen was necessary. This has meant ratios of 1 to 5 and 1 to 10 foremen to workers are common in the Coventry plants.

But this is not all. Deliberately provoked disputes — like the 'shoddy work' dispute and the electricians' dispute — have led to regular lay-offs and short-time working. Assembly track workers have always been the first to suffer.

Deliberate under-investment has meant Chrysler workers have perpetually to deal with dangerous or collapsing machinery and regular breakdowns causing stoppages. 80% of the machinery in the Stoke plant is over 14 years old, and 3% is over 33 years old.

Management has encouraged what

remains of the old piece-work sectional mentality to increase disunity. The experience of working for Chrysler has led many workers to suggest that the whole bloody place should be closed down.

Ryton has been closed for so long over Christmas already that the rats have eaten the foundry cat...

Management have well developed plans for their sackings. Staff members, for example, have been asked to fill in their personal histories and job profiles on computerised cards to assist in a speedy sacking operation.

Disunity in the workforce helps the management. Behind the talk of 'voluntary redundancies' some Stoke plant workers have been arguing that transfers from Ryton and Auto-Machine should be the first to go.

Women workers have had to face the brunt of these arguments. Supervisors and foremen have been raising the argument: 'like a sinking ship ... women and children first', and telling the women that they are selfish to keep their jobs. They use all the nonsense about women working just for 'pin money' to isolate women and persuade them to accept voluntary redundancy. Many male workers support the arguments of the supervisors and foremen.

Such disunity has made a united fight difficult and the management's sacking exercise all the easier.

DISTRICT General Hospitals in Inner London could be cut to 20 if a 'discussion document' from the Department of Health and Social Security is put into action. The document doesn't name the hospitals considered for closure since "Inclusion in such a list would have a depressing effect on staff morale". The only clue is that they're all considered "out-dated"...

THE real world will be still more remote for patients in the psychiatric section at Whitchurch Hospital, near Cardiff, thanks to the decision to cancel all newspapers for the patients — at a grand saving of £9 a week.

THE BBC has announced a £10 million economy drive. Leaders of the Musicians' Union and the actors' union, Equity, are calling for a Government grant "sufficient to meet the costs of maintaining TV and Radio at their present level and standard" in face of the prospect of their members being first to suffer.

THE Coventry stewards' case, The Workers Answer — which effectively demolishes the plea of the Chrysler management for Government cash and wholesale sackings — has not been widely circulated amongst Chrysler workers, who have all of course been bombarded with the squeals of the media about "sackings or bust". We print here a section of the leaflet, which clearly states the questions which Coventry Chrysler workers are asking and which the Labour Government has refused to answer. It is in fact only a breakdown of a much longer document the stewards have produced. For fuller information on the Chrysler stewards' case, send a stamped addressed foolscap envelope to Coventry Workshop, 40 Binley Road, Coventry.

The plan is based on some kind of 'contract' between the Government and Chrysler, over which the workers haven't been consulted in any way. For the Government it involves spending a great deal of money; for Chrysler it involves a 'declaration of intent' which is in no way legally binding; and a planning agreement which concentrates far more on increasing productivity than accountability.

ABOUT THE PLAN

THE Government gives Chrysler Corporation £162.5m of taxpayers' money, and nearly half of this is to cover the private company's losses over the next 4 years.

- How much is the US company putting up in total?
- what guarantee is there that our money will be invested in this country?
- What is to stop the US shareholders benefitting most from the investment?

MODELS

Chrysler promises to build 5 new models in the UK by 1979.

- Why should we believe this promise when they broke the one they gave in 1970, to produce one new model every year, and produced nothing?
- How can we take Chrysler seriously when the Bristol Group calculates that it would take £210m to produce only 3 new models by 1980 (the C6 Alpine, an Avenger replacement and the C2 small car). This figure is way above the £90m earmarked for all 5 models...

ACCOUNTABILITY

The only accountability the government have asked for is the appointment of two UK directors on the UK Board of Chrysler.

- What will be their terms of reference?
- To whom will they report? (In 1964 a UK director was appointed to the Board, but never once made a report. When Chrysler took over the rest of Rootes he said he felt no further obligation to the government as he was now a Chrysler director.)

There will also be, apparently, accountability through a planning agreement. All this involves so far is agreement about capacity and productivity. It says nothing about accountability, the giving of information, rights of workers, etc. It speaks of:

- a decrease in capacity of 25%
- a decrease in workforce of 35%

And at the same time all the public statements demand an increase in productivity.

- How can this possibly be achieved with less capacity and fewer workers?
- Is this the extent of Chrysler's accountability to the government and workers?

LOSS OF JOBS

8,000 to be lost immediately within Chrysler, and others in supply firms. The company says the numbers are not negotiable by the unions; but it has also said "these numbers could be adjusted as detailed plans develop". By the company, of course.

- Up or down? Company and government intend to save money by operating the 'last in, first out' principle on redundancies. The company says it will pay the minimum possible redundancy rates. George Park says the average will be only £750.
- How long would that keep us going?
- Is this a good enough price for losing our jobs for ever?
- Where would we find other jobs, when there are already 14 unemployed men for each vacancy in the West Midlands?

It's time we said what WE want. We are a highly skilled workforce; we have an expert design and development team; some of the plant and machinery is good. We want to work and are capable of working IF we have a say in what we do and how we do it.

BUT Chrysler can't be trusted. We think the Government is being hoodwinked. We have the knowledge to save all the jobs and do useful work. We have the right to gather together that knowledge and get it discussed widely.

How the unions sold the 'rescue' plan

WHILE accepting the terms of Chrysler, the Labour Government has not even listened to the case of the Chrysler stewards and workers.

Lobbying Chrysler stewards had to struggle for a day to even meet Varley, the Minister for Trade and Industry. While Chrysler boss Riccardo was able to get both discussions and acceptance of his terms at the drop of a hat the stewards were at first told they could not see Varley at all. Only after threatening to sit-in in the House of Commons were they allowed to meet Varley at 10 o'clock at night as he passed through the division lobby.

Gerald Kauffman of the DTI tried to prevent them seeing Varley — he offered himself instead. And he was only prepared to meet them at the DTI if they came in through the back door to avoid any trouble.

Dennis Healey is reported to have said to Audrey Wise (MP for Coventry South) that at least the Chrysler workers were "getting unemployment benefit, not being sent down the saltmines"!

Not surprisingly, there is a mood of bitterness amongst Chrysler workers at this treatment from a government they helped to vote into power. The success of the Chrysler Corporation shows clearly the real sources of power in our society.

Some Chrysler workers have been arguing that if Wedgwood Benn had still been at the DTI things would have been different. But they should remember that it was Benn who presided over the closure of Imperial Typewriters — even while the workers there were putting their faith in him. And Benn has kept silent as a mouse in public about the Chrysler deal, which can only mean either that he has no answer, or that he puts the niceties of ministerial protocol before his claimed ambition of fighting for workers' interests.

But Chrysler workers are not only bitter at the role of the Labour Government. Their bitterness extends to the performance and record of the trade union leaders.

An overwhelming majority of trade

union officials argued for the government proposals. To get their way they even suggested that full-time officials should have a vote on the Combine Committee.

The Combine Committee accepted the package by only one vote. We can see why the officials — whose jobs and livelihoods were not threatened by the deal — were anxious to vote too.

Roy Grantham of APEX is even reported as arguing that Chrysler workers "should be grateful" for the package!

This has not just been a conspiracy of right wing union leaders. Bob Wright of the AUEW 'Broad Left', for instance, pushed forcefully for acceptance.

All Labour leaders and most trade union officials have shown their colours in the Chrysler deal. They have no alternative to propping up this asset-stripping, anti-union corporation. And they accept that workers must pay the price for this either by losing their jobs or by accepting even more intolerable work speeds.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

STANDARD SUB:

50 issues - £7.50
25 issues - £3.75

Special Offer

UNTIL APRIL 1st:

50 issues - £6
25 issues - £3

TO: Subscriptions, 49 Carnac St., SE27

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

Cheques payable to Workers' Action