

workers' ACTION

No. 10

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Triumphant Wilson bows out as —

Labour plays the loyalty card

WHEN 37 members of the Tribune group — that is, less than half of it — decided to abstain from voting for the Government's White Paper on Public spending cuts, they made their reasons clear.

Eric Heffer probably spoke for all of them when he wrote in 'The Times' that: "The sad truth is that the Government has succumbed to the pressures from the CBI, the City of London and the Tory Party... They intend to cut the capital programme for health and social services by 13%, ie £47m. Housing cuts will total £365m by 1978/79, of which £310m will be a reduction in public sector housing, meaning that council rents will rise."

The result of their abstention was that the Government was defeated on one of the chief planks of its economic policy by a rag-bag of Tories, Liberals and others.

The action of the Labour 'rebels' was incontestably right. If the Labour Government is not putting forward policies in the interests of the working class, it should be defied and the policies rejected — even if it means that the Government is brought down.

If that does not happen, then the working class must as usual bear the cost of Labour loyalty.

If Labour loyalty meant loyalty to a party which was itself loyal to the interests of the working class, there would be no problem. But that is not what Labour loyalty is. Labour loyalty means loyalty to a party which is serving the best interests of the direct enemies of the working class.

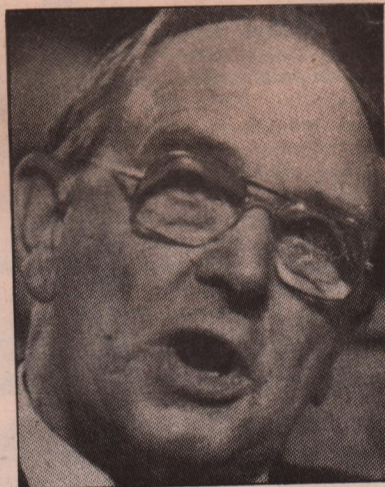
Deplorable

Those like Heffer, Thorne, Litterick, Maynard and others who understand this are, even so, fed the line that they should be personally loyal to the Labour leaders. As Tom Litterick put it "It is deplorable that the Government consistently plays the loyalty card, exhorting their supporters to be loyal to good old Dennis, good old Michael, and all the other people who have made a legendary contribution to the Labour movement. Well, I do not believe in legends, and I do not believe in loyalty in that individualistic way. I believe in loyalty in principle. It is to that kind of loyalty that we on this side of the House appeal".

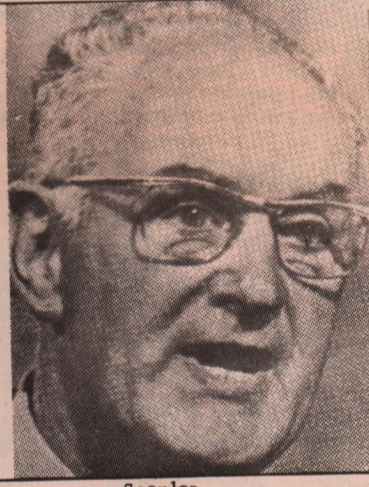
The trouble is that, having said that, he and his fellow 'left wingers' who were rebels on Wednesday decided on Thursday that the loyalty card trumped all the others ... including the picture-cards of principle.

In fact, that decision had been taken before the Wednesday abstention, as 'Tribune' chairman Arthur Latham revealed when he said: "There is no doubt that we will play our part in sustaining the Government and keeping the Tories out".

No wonder Wilson, Healey, Jenkins and Rodgers were abusive. No wonder their voices snarled with contempt. They know that all they needed to do was to make the very



Jones



Scanlon

JACK JONES, David Basnett and Hugh Scanlon have called on the labour movement to "close ranks" so as to preserve the Labour Government.

This call asks the Labour movement to forget who is the servant and who is the master. It does not ask the Labour Government to heed and support the working class, but vice versa. It does not ask Wilson to serve the working class, but asks the working class to serve a Labour Government intent on supporting the CBI, the City of London and the international financial organisations.

In short, it is a call on the working class movement to ditch its rightful claims and accept Labour's attacks on it without even a word of protest.

The call was clearly issued in response to the abstention of 37 left wing MPs in the parliamentary vote on the Public Expenditure cuts on March 10th. Yet these MPs themselves, in the end, did what these union leaders are demanding. When it came to the Vote of Confidence the next day, they put 'party loyalty' before workers' interests' and simple anti-Toryism before the struggle for socialism.

If Jones, Scanlon and Basnett mobilised their millions of members in a struggle against the present attacks on the living standards of ordinary people, they would really be doing something to arm the working class to fight against Toryism. As it is, they have called on workers to disarm themselves.

It should be rejected.

Tube Bombs — a statement

The three bomb incidents in 24 hours in the London tube system, following other recent incidents, suggest a new bombing campaign focussed on the Underground.

We do not know who is responsible. It may be Irish republicans.

The crimes of the British Government in Ireland can all too easily lead its victims to want to lash out and to bring to the people of Britain the reality of the war in the north of Ireland.

WORKERS ACTION wants the immediate withdrawal of the British Army. We are in full solidarity with the Republicans who are fighting to drive it out. We defend their right to strike at the British state and its agents, in Ireland and in Britain.

But a bombing campaign against a civilian population is indefensible, and can only be harmful to the Republican cause.

Whatever is intended, bombs in tubes will inevitably, probably sooner rather than later, produce a mass slaughter of innocent civilians, that may well make the Birmingham pub bombings seem almost petty. It can only harm the cause and the name of Irish Republicanism.

WORKERS ACTION appeals to the members and/or the leaders of the Republican movement to think responsibly of the implications of such a campaign, and to remember the damaging effects on our common cause of the indefensible Birmingham bombings.

And WORKERS ACTION asks British workers to understand that the Catholic population in the north of Ireland is daily faced with oppression from the professional terrorists Britain has unleashed there.

Lay the blame where it belongs!

The only way to stop that dirty war spilling over into Britain is to stop it in 'Northern Ireland'. Get the British Army out — now.

16th March

The coup in Lebanon ISRAEL THREATENS 'COUNTER MEASURES'

THE uneasy peace in the Lebanon since the last ceasefire in February has finally been shattered.

Neither the Maronite Christians nor the Moslems were happy with the compromise agreement engineered by the Syrian government. The Moslems, particularly, saw that the months of fighting had brought them no significant advances. This has led to a great deal of disaffection among the Moslems in the Lebanese army. Now, led by Lt. Ahmed al Katib, they have been splitting off from the army and forming their own 'Lebanese Arab Army'.

This now controls at least 11 major garrisons — a majority of those in the country.

Against this background the present coup of the Moslem commander of Beirut, Brigadier General Aziz al Adhab, has taken place. Last week the troops under Adhab seized control of the State radio station and broadcast an ultimatum demanding that President Franjeh resign.

Franjeh, a Maronite, has repeatedly shown that he is prepared to use his authority on the side of the Christian community. In the last round of fighting, he ordered the army to attack Palestinian and left wing Moslem militias, even though the army has traditionally remained neutral in such conflicts.

So far Franjeh, isolated in his presidential palace and guarded by loyal troops, has refused to stand down.

It seems, however, unlikely that he can remain in power much longer. Already a majority of the Lebanese parliament has supported the call for his resignation.

The avowed aim of the Moslems is to give more power to the Moslem majority in the Lebanon, and to make the country adopt a more aggressive policy towards Israel. They also support the continued presence in the country of the Palestinians, and their right to organise and arm themselves.



In an interview two weeks ago, army breakaway leader Lt. Katib said "Civil war in Lebanon has not ended because the rival sides have not achieved what they wanted. The settlement does not provide a drastic solution to the Lebanese crisis and the minor reforms it proposes are not commensurate with the sacrifices that have been made." He demanded that the Arab character of the country be recognised, that posts in the government be awarded on a strict majority basis, and that the Army be reorganised on a non-religious basis.

Whether these demands will be met now depends on the willingness of the Christian right wing militias to engage in more fighting.

Undoubtedly Franjeh has the support of the majority of the Maronite community, and Adhab has the support of the Moslems. It seems

unlikely that either side is more now than it was a couple of months to reach a compromise solution. reaching of such a solution has been aim of the Syrian government intervention in the negotiations. the Syrians have been able to do little change the basic situation.

President Assad of Syria undoubtedly like to see a compromise agreement which shifted power towards the Moslems. This would Lebanon closer towards the Arab against Israel. Yet Assad is personally compromised by his close friendship with Franjeh, who sought refuge Syria during a Maronite feud.

In effect, Adhab has decided to power for the Moslem community. What he will do with that remains to be seen. At the moment all that is known that he does favour closer participation in Arab plans and greater cooperation with the Palestinian guerrillas. To achieve this, he will not only have to fight the resistance of the Maronites who are bitterly hostile to Palestinians, but also the influence of Israel.

Israeli Defence Minister Shimon Peres warned last week that any change in the Lebanese situation "which affects Israel's security ... will oblige us to take counter measures."

The announcement of Adhab's move was met with great enthusiasm among Lebanese Moslems. Yet one thing is certain. It is far too soon for the Lebanese to celebrate a victory.

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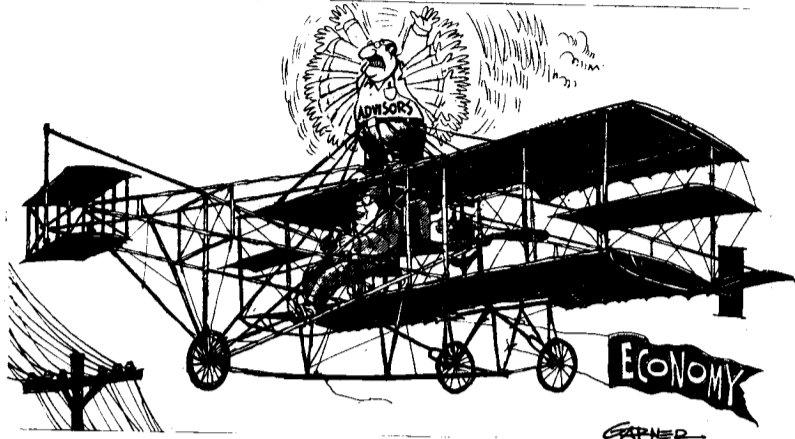
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Is there a light at the end of the tunnel?

Analysis by Phil Smith



BRINGING in swingeing social service cuts, holding down wages and pushing up unemployment, the Labour Government and its henchmen, the Trade Union leadership, always use the same argument. Temporary sacrifices, they argue, are needed to pull British industry through. Cuts and unemployment, they say, are necessary to usher in a period of full employment and plenty. Healey and Wilson argue that the world economy is beginning to pick itself off its knees. The British economy, they say, will be sure to follow suit.

On the surface, this argument may seem plausible. There are definite signs that the world economy is on the upturn. The US economy, which accounts for nearly half of capitalist production, started to grow again in mid-1975. Between July and September 1975, growth was running at about 12%. Unemployment declined from 9.2% in May to 8.5% (about 8 million) in October. By the end of 1975 the economies of West Germany and Japan were also on the upturn.

Profits

But the upward trend in the US economy faced severe limits. Growth rates declined to an average 5.4% by the end of 1975. Unemployment in the States has stuck at the 8.5% level. Inflation is still running at around an annual 10%.

Whereas the tendency to growth has continued, it has been accompanied by continuing unemployment and inflation. In the United States, Japan and West Germany, re-stocking of industry after the recession, together with certain tax measures, have stimulated the economies. But only a massive increase in capital investment can actually provide the basis for an extended and stable rise in production. In fact there is little if any of the expected increase in capital investment in 1976 either in the US, Germany or Japan. Tremendous sums must be redirected from workers' wages, welfare services and

'unproductive social expenditure' for the funds are to be made available for new rounds of long term capital investment.

The rate of profit — the rate of return on capital outlay — has been progressively declining throughout the capitalist world. Profits are not large enough to finance new investment. Only systematic attacks on workers' living standards, shake-out and rationalisation of declining industries, and the redirection of state expenditure into investment for production for profit, can partially offset the immediate effects of declining profit rates.

Britain

The lack of means for new capital investment is not the only limit on the expansion of the major economies. The recent recession has taken its toll of new productive capacity — particularly in the metal and raw material industries. Any boom must immediately come up against a backlog of raw material shortages — bringing rising prices and inflationary speculation, particularly in semi-finished products (ie steel, reinforcing bars for the construction industry, and certain chemicals especially ethylene, which affects supplies of many basic plastics).

Not surprisingly, the major capitalist governments have been extremely cautious in stimulating growth — fearing the inflation and imbalances that too fast a rate will bring. All governments sit nervously prepared to apply the brakes rather than face the spiral of rapid inflation.

British capitalism is an especially lame duck. All the problems facing the world economy are brought to a head in Britain. Investment dropped by 13% in 1975, and the Department of Trade and Industry indicates that it will fall by between 5 and 8% in 1976. Unemployment is firmly expected to rise towards the 2 million figure.

Britain's share of world exports in manufactured goods declined from 30% to 10% in 1974. Only the continual devaluation of the pound (which even before last week's fall had dropped by over 30% against the

major world currencies since 1972) has maintained British industry's exports.

As a proportion of the Gross National Product, capital investment in Britain has been consistently lower than the other major capitalist economies. Declining profit rates have hit the British economy with a vengeance. For example the return on assets declined from 10.2% in 1965 to 6% in 1973 (with profit rates in food manufacture declining from 11.3% to 4.1%, and those in textiles going down from 12.2% to 5.8%).

Faced with this, successive governments, both Tory and Labour, have grappled with the problem of shifting totally the pattern and scale of investment. Huge sums borrowed on the money markets can provide short term assistance and massive repayment burdens. To tackle the root problems of British capitalism, another answer had to be found.

Only a massive injection of new capital into manufacturing industry — to replace obsolete equipment, to set up production on a competitive basis with the other major capitalist economies — can solve the problem. And the extent of that problem can be seen by this figure: investment in British industry is lower now than it was 20 years ago!

Attacks

The aim of government policy has been to siphon funds away from workers' consumption and living standards and into investment for profit. This has meant diverting increasingly large sums of government expenditure from unproductive welfare, education and housing into handouts for private industry. It is increasingly leading to attacks on workers in the public sector — with politicians like Healey contrasting their jobs as unproductive and unnecessary as compared with the necessity for investment in manufacturing industry.

Trade union leaders, such as Scanlon — have joined in these attacks.

Besides dividing the working class, such Union leaders betray their own members' interests. Workers in the public sector, in the social services such as education and health, are unproductive only in the sense that they do not directly produce profits for the 2% of the population that owns 80% of the wealth. In terms of the usefulness of their work to other workers and their families, they contribute centrally to the basic essentials of life. But capitalism is a system that gears production to the profit of the few, not the needs of the vast majority. When it is in crisis its solution is to cut the standards of life to the barest minimum in the drive to raise profit rates.

The attacks on workers' living standards are colossal. But will even they be enough to stabilise profits and boost investment in British industry? Are they, in fact, a temporary sacrifice for future prosperity?

Healey made it quite clear that his new welfare cuts will only be sufficient if a five and a half per cent growth rate is achieved and kept up for three years. This means an eight and a half per cent growth rate for manufacturing industry. And "If we should fail for any reason to get that improvement we shall have to cut public expenditure programmes further, rather than increase them."

Unless workers can be forced to push up profits dramatically with wage restraint, unemployment, speed-up and welfare cuts, then further attacks must follow.

The worst recession to hit the post war capitalist world is now coming to

an end. But uncertainty, instability and a sharpening of competition are still the order of the day. British capitalism is a particularly diseased section of the world system. The deep roots of British capitalism's crisis — declining profit rates and hopelessly inadequate investment — are not the responsibility of the working class. Any temporary growth will only be financed by wage cuts and unemployment and the slashing to ribbons of the welfare state, such as it is. And what do we get? The continuation of a rotten system that can never solve its overall crisis.

Ideas exist in the labour movement to tackle this crisis. Benn and the Labour Left support massive state investment and intervention projects to inject life into British capitalism. Through participation schemes and worker directors, they see the workers' movement taking responsibility for restructuring British industry and investment, pushing up profit levels and production rates.

Benn and Co. want to use the organised workers' movement to intimidate sections of big business into accepting state rationalisation. And they want to use the trade unions at the same time to tie the hands of workers in those sectors of industry to be rationalised or phased out.

Above all they want to stop the working class acting for itself and settling accounts with its exploiters.

Benn's plans are a total fantasy in terms of restoring a prosperous mixed economy in Britain. They are not a first step on the road to socialism. Rather, they are a dangerous side track for militants and a snare to involved the fighting organisations of the working class in managing capitalism, or at least blunting any fight back.

These policies can offer no alternative to workers paying with their living standards for the collapse and stagnation of British capitalism.

We must face hard facts. A rosy tomorrow, even a return to the '60s, is not waiting just around the corner if only we tighten our belts for a couple of years. The light at the end of the tunnel that government Ministers talk about is a mirage — at least for workers.

No doubt Healey's and Wilson's success in driving down standards of living do seem to hold out a promise of a better tomorrow for Britain's bosses, after their nightmare of the last two stormy years of the Heath government. But for the working class, the only hope lies neither in the openly pro-capitalist policies of Wilson nor in the muddled and deceitful left phrase-mongering of Benn and the Tribunites.

Workers must look to a fighting strategy which starts here and now with a refusal to pay the price of the crisis in lower wages, ruined services and unemployment. A strategy which takes up the fight for real workers' control instead of phony participation, and which includes the building of workers' organisations capable of installing a workers' government and a democratically planned economy as the alternative to the chaos and misery of capitalism.



Leaks warn Leyland workers of rationalisations

LEAKS from the first meeting of the new Leyland Joint Management Council — the highest tier in the participation scheme — have shown just what Leyland management expect the workers' representatives to participate in.

At the meeting, held at the end of February, a secret part of the Ryder report was revealed. The plans are for the closure of four Rover component plants in Birmingham, employing 2,700 people, and the transfer of the work to Triumph in Coventry. We know what 'rationalisation' means: nothing like the original number of jobs would become available in Triumph. The results would be dole queues for some and speed-up for others.

The Leyland participation scheme is dangerous not only in itself. As WORKERS ACTION has pointed out, Leyland is a test run. The bosses and the government are watching carefully, hoping they can spread the idea to other firms. The point of the scheme is that management can involve workers' representatives in all kinds of decisions that go against the interest of the workers on the shop floor. With convenors and militants drawn into taking responsibility for profitability, they can more easily sell them to the shop floor. What will be the next action of the

convenors involved in the Joint Management Council? Leaks may warn the workforce but they don't stop management. The longer these leading convenors and stewards continue to sit on these committees the more they'll get involved in management plans and the less they'll be able to carry out their proper job of defending and improving the working conditions and living standards of their members.

That job does involve cutting back management's power — but not collaborating with them, which is what participation means.

The left wing workers' representatives on the Joint Management Council must give a lead now and speak out openly against the participation con-trick. They include trade unionists with some of the finest records in Birmingham who have won widespread respect, including supporters of the Engineering Voice.

But rank and file workers can't just sit back and leave the battles up to them. The campaign against participation hasn't ended with the start of the scheme — now's the time to point out what management are up to and argue for pulling the trade unionists out before it's too late.

SUE THOMAS

Labour plays the loyalty card



from page 1

same issue a matter of confidence, and the 'rebels' would come to heel.

However shortlived their rebellion, the Tribune lefts have managed to focus attention on the nature of government policy; and by their support of the Assembly of Labour on March 27th, they have also given some support to the extra-parliamentary pressure building up against Government policy.

But as long as they show in practice that their ultimate principle is that of **keeping Labour in power** — and that was the real result and the real lesson of what they did last week — they will only succeed in channeling that protest into the same cul-de-sac of parliamentary lesser-evilism that caused their collapse and rout.

The trouble is that they see nothing wrong with this. Not one of the 'rebels' gives the slightest impression of having learned the lesson of last week's debate (a condition they share with the organisers of the Labour Assembly) and that is: Parliament at best can be an auxiliary of working class direct action; it can never replace it. Any attempt to subordinate direct action and the clear interests of the working class to the plots and ploys, the blocs and deals of parliament is a betrayal of those interests.

If the 37 had stood by their principles and the Government had lost on Thursday's Confidence vote, who would be to blame if the Tories returned to power?

All the insults, all the mindless venom and spleen spat into the faces of the 37 'rebels', only serves to emphasise that the Labour leadership knows that if it faced a general election now it would lose. And it cannot blame the 37 for that.

It was Healey and Wilson, Jenkins, Foot and Benn who wrote in the October election manifesto: "We have made no easy promises. Our programme has been fully costed. And we have weighed these costs carefully. But we have set our aims high. ... Our objective is to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families."

And it is these same people who have led the retreat on these policies — and who then have the impudence to ask for confidence!

As Heffer pointed out "When one considers the cuts as a whole, it can be seen that they are a reversal of the policies upon which the February and October General Elections were fought."

What hope for the Labour leaders from an election fought now on a promise of cuts, wage curbs and unemployment?

And what of the trade union movement? Jones, Basnett and Scanlon have made an implicit attack on the 37 MPs. But the political platform of the Tribune group is nothing more than the parliamentary extension of the TUC's own policy. Its position on Wednesday night was nothing more than the parliamentary version of the argument of the TUC's Economic Review.

So where was the TUC? Where were the people the Labour Government dare not attack. They were silent. And their silence not only left the 37 high and dry, but it meant the ditching even of their faint, over-cautious, confused and misguided presentation of the interests of the working class.

Healey's abuse turns the stomach of any militant in the labour movement. But that abuse — a direct echo of the abuse he pelted the Labour Lefts with at the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee meeting three weeks ago — only shows more glaringly the desertion from their posts of the TUC leaders. Compared with the revulsion the labour movement should feel at their cowardice and servility, the parliamentary foulness seems almost mild.

Rebels still uphold a worker-bashing government

"For myself", wrote Alan Watkins, political commentator of the 'Observer' and late of the 'New Statesman', "I find it greatly encouraging that the 'Tribune' MPs can help defeat the Government on Wednesday night and give it a vote of confidence on Thursday... it indicates not the instability of our politics but their stability".

Nothing could be more damning of the 'rebel Tribunes': far from striking fear into the hearts of the ruling class, it actually represented for some an inspiring confirmation of the stability of "our politics".

Mr Watkins was no doubt moved by a similar display of self-congratulatory faith in "our politics" from a surprising corner, from Joe Ashton, Labour MP for Bassetlaw, who was one of the 37 MPs on the Labour benches who abstained from supporting the Government on the Wednesday 10th March debate on cuts in public spending.

"We are determined", he said, "not to smash and bring down the Government, and return to the policies of 1970 and 1974, but that does not mean we cannot express an opinion". Certainly we can all do that: those of us who are

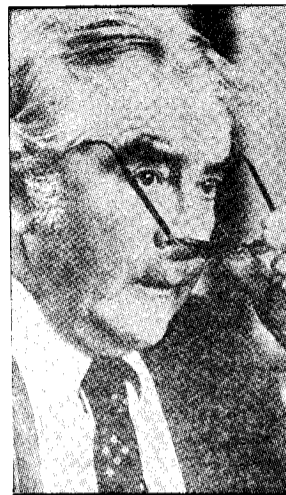
in the Commons can do that if they catch the Speaker's eye, and we outside can go to Speaker's Corner near Marble Arch... where you can say anything you like.

But the working class does not progress through ritual protest or passive expression of opinion. The working class advances by struggle for its political independence. Above all that independence must not be subordinated to the needs of "party unity", "the poor state-of the economy", and least of all, "the need to maintain confidence in sterling".

The Communist Party sees things differently. They have nothing but praise for the 37. Had that party got MPs in Parliament, no doubt they too would have voted to support the Government.

For revolutionaries, however, entry into parliament does not mean we accept its rules, does not mean we accept the principle of "vote for the lesser evil and never mind your own principles", and does not mean accepting the primacy of parliament.

Revolutionary socialists in Parliament would not fear to bring down a Labour Government. They would owe no allegiance to a government carrying out anti-working-class policies. And they would not fear to take their ideas to the electorate.



Gormley wants TUC re-call to fight the Left

The NUM Executive last week joined the growing list of those calling for the TUC to be recalled.

Workers Action supports the idea of calling the TUC to order — of recalling it to face clear demands for action against the cuts, against redundancies, against wage curbs. But the arguments put forward by Gormley and the NUM right wing highlight the dangers of making this demand in an open-ended, uncritical way.

Gormley made his position clear. He fully supports the Labour Government. He launched a hysterical attack last week on Tribune MPs who "threatened to bring down the Labour Government". Does he want to recall the TUC to demand that it fights for the working class against the government? No. On the contrary — he hopes to take the steam out of pressures in his own union to oppose pay restraint and to fight all pit closures. A recalled TUC before the next NUM conference will, he calculates, reaffirm pay restraint and help him control miners' demands for a decent pay rise.

Just as the CPSA leadership posed a recalled TUC as an alternative to recalling their own union and fighting cuts now, so Gormley hopes a recalled TUC will support the government's policies and strengthen his hand against the left in the NUM when it comes to his own union conference.

Thus the call for the recall of the TUC can be taken up by union leaderships as both an alternative to fighting now, and as a method of fighting the left.

We must ensure that the demand for the recall of the TUC is never an alternative to action now or to recalling Trade Union conferences now to demand action. And we must guard against a stage-managed recall TUC which simply rubber-stamps government policies again and provides a base for the Gormleys in every union to use against the Left in the major union conferences.

Right-wingers bow out

Stephen Haseler and Douglas Eden, two Greater London councillors, have announced that they will not be standing for Labour in the next GLC elections. They are both leading members of the right wing Social Democratic Alliance, and their action follows a marked swing to the left at the last annual Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party.

At the meeting a series of resolutions was passed condemning the cuts proposed by the Labour government and the ones already being carried out by the GLC.

An emergency resolution attacking the Government's public expenditure cuts was carried by a large majority against the platform, and GLC policies on housing and transport were also rejected.

The first sign of the way things were going came on a resolution which regretted the GLC fares increase and called for steps to be taken towards a free transport system. Another resolution called on the GLC Labour Group to re-instate their housing programme. It also demanded that the Government reverse all housing cuts, provide interest-free loans for housing, and induce councils to take over empty houses.

A further resolution from Norwood CLP was passed, deploring the ILEA reduction in the number of teachers and calling for a reversal of this.

It was these events that precipitated the actions of the two right wingers. They claimed that the meeting had seen "an unprecedented parade of mindless extremist resolutions" turning the events into a "theatre of the absurd". They coupled this outburst with an attack on the GLC leaders in the Labour group, who they claimed had been too soft on the left.

Their only good words were reserved for the right wing Labour drop-out, Lord George Brown, who they praised for his "courage".

In their statement they also made reference to the events in Newham, and the decision of the Regional Council that all future GLC candidates in council elections would have to be submitted to full selection committees before next year's elections.

Clearly this is a case of more than just sour grapes. The SDA has been losing ground to the left in London, although this used to be one of its main power bases. The two SDA members obviously see little chance of reversing this drift in the near future. This being the case, it would be unlikely if either of them was selected to stand at the next council elections.

So they choose to bow out in advance, rather than face a humiliating rejection next year.

After Prentice's defeat, they seem to have no stomach for fighting another Newham.

The move to the left in London and the narrowness of the defeat suffered at the recent Yorkshire LP Regional Council shows that the Tribune Group has more support in the Labour Party than would appear from the recent events in Parliament. The rank and file members of the Party are showing their willingness to fight against the Government's policies. Unfortunately, that fight is being hamstrung by the feebleness of the Tribune leadership and by its hopeless policies.



General strike spreads in Spain

IN SPAIN, the struggle against the fascist dictatorship continues to gather strength. Up to half a million workers are on strike in the four Basque provinces in the north of the country, and tens of thousands more are on strike in the rest of the country.

Protest strikes were called throughout the Basque region in the wake of the police killings of four demonstrators in Vitoria. These strikes — the biggest since the Civil War — have been met with fierce police repression. In Bilbao, the centre of Spanish heavy industry, demonstrators were met with bullets and tear gas. Near Bilbao, in the industrial town of Basauri, workers'

leaders were arrested in police dawn raids. Later, police in the town opened fire on a demonstration and killed a young metal worker, Vincente Ferrero.

Instead of being cowed, the workers' response was to call a complete and indefinite general strike in the area, like the one still continuing in Vitoria.

So far, seven Spanish workers have been killed by the police in the last couple of weeks. Hundreds have been injured. Coupled with heavy sentences handed out to the officers charged with being part of the Democratic Military Union, the police repression of the workers shows that the Spanish dictatorship is still the same. The workers in Spain know this. But the events of the last few weeks seem only to have steeled their determination — not, as the authorities must have hoped, to crush it.



Spanish police in action

Repression in Iran

"IF the Shrewsbury Two had been Iranians, they wouldn't only have been wrongly jailed, they would have been executed".

These are the opening words of a leaflet launching a campaign for trade union rights in Iran. Since the CIA-engineered coup restored the present Shah in 1953, all trade union rights have been suppressed. All the five million workers in Iran are denied the right to form their own trade unions. If workers there fight for higher wages, they meet with the most brutal repression. Recently, for example, 25 textile workers were shot dead during a strike.

This denial of the most basic trade union rights makes Iran a very attractive place for investment by the multi-national companies. As the leaflet says "without trade union rights, workers cannot protect their interests. This is the main reason why multinational companies find such places (as Iran) ideal for investment: where labour is cheap; where there are no trade unions to cause 'trouble', and where even if workers attempt to strike, the Shah is at hand to forcibly suppress their efforts."

The campaign is urging all labour movement bodies to support a British labour movement mission of enquiry to "visit Iran and find out the real conditions under which the workers struggle for trade union rights."

The campaign also urges constituency Labour Parties to pass resolutions

demanding that the Labour government should sever all relations with the Iranian regime.

WORKERS ACTION fully supports this campaign. For over twenty years, the Iranian regime has indulged in the most brutal persecution of all oppositionists. The Shah's notorious political police, SAVAK, have systematically tortured and murdered all those who so much as breath a word of criticism of the Shah. One of Iran's biggest growth industries is prison building, on which more is spent than on health and education put together.

Despite this, the British Labour government still maintains close links with the Shah. A real campaign is needed to bring home to British workers how their brothers in Iran are treated. We would like to hear from readers of actions they have taken for this campaign, and will report on any resolutions passed supporting it.

For more details, contact: Campaign for the Restoration of Trade Union Rights in Iran, at 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1. (Next week WA will carry an analysis of the situation in Iran.)

...and on the West Bank

ISRAELI propagandists are forever asserting that the Arabs living on the West Bank are not hostile to the Israeli occupation and are treated well. Such claims are, of course, common to all occupying armies; it's a mark of the blinkering of the British Left on the

question that it tends to accept such Israeli propaganda.

Now, events in the town of Nablus have done a lot to undermine Israel's claims.

Last month Israeli soldiers were sent in force into Nablus and other West Bank towns to quell rioting which had broken out there. This followed the decision of the Jerusalem municipal magistrate to acquit a group of Jews who about a year ago, had defied a police ban by praying on the Moslem religious site of Haram es Sharif. Extremist Zionist groups have repeatedly tried to break the ban, and the West Bank Moslems were incensed at the Magistrate's decision to overturn the police ruling.

Following the decision, demonstrations and 'riots' spread in the West Bank in an eruption of anti-Israeli feeling. School students played a leading role.

The revolt reached a climax in Nablus just over a week ago. Pupils at a boys' school stoned a passing Israeli patrol. The soldiers responded by charging into the school, hauling the kids from their classrooms and batoning them. Several were so badly beaten they had to be treated in hospital.

The next day saw a one-day protest strike in the city, and the mayor and the town council resigned. Through the week, protests continued throughout the West Bank.

So much for the 'peace and harmony' prevailing in the area!

Support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation is in fact widespread amongst the West Bank Arabs; the harsh reality of Israeli occupation, with its searches, arrests and regulations, constantly renews this support. And among the young particularly, support has been growing in recent months for the Arab militants of the Rejection Front — those who reject the Sinai peace accords signed between Egypt and Israel.

CECIL RHODES once woke a companion in the middle of the night to ask him if he ever thought how lucky he was to be an Englishman.

Rhodes was the founder of the Rhodesian colony. In his world there was only one place for the African — at the bottom. To this day, the successors of Cecil Rhodes have made sure of that.

When the first English settlers arrived in Rhodesia during the latter part of the last century, they were amazed to find the ruins of a once-great African culture. This they assumed must be the work of white men, because it was so magnificent. In fact the enormous buildings at places like Great Zimbabwe had been built by a black African empire that flourished about 400 years before the settlers arrived.

Slaves

By the time Cecil Rhodes and his agents appeared on the scene, the country had been ransacked and its most able workers enslaved by Portuguese and, later, British slavers. The Zimbabwe empire was destroyed, and black African culture driven down to a low level.

In the eyes of the settlers, the only role the black Africans were fit to fill was that of servant and unskilled labourer.

Shortly after British settlement got under way, the area of colonial

“We have stolen his land, now we must steal his limbs. Compulsory labour is the corollary of our occupation of the country.”

domination in southern Africa was divided into ‘tropical dependencies’ north of the Zambezi river (which the British controlled and exploited but did not settle in) and ‘white man’s country’ south of the Zambezi (in which settlement took place). Southern Rhodesia, now Rhodesia, was designated as ‘white man’s country’.

Initially a couple of hundred settlers obtained the support of the King of the Matabele, an African state in the west of the country, and rapidly took possession of the eastern portion of Southern Rhodesia. They then turned on their erstwhile Matabele ‘allies’ in 1893, fought a bloody war and conquered the rest of the country.

Three years later the Africans rose in revolt against the settlement, but were crushed by the superior military

NOW that the chips are down for the Rhodesian whites, the kith and kin’ brigade have come out from the back streets and the Green Belts onto the front pages. The image of heroic pioneers struggling for civilisation against a black tide has become increasingly common in the British press, where we are exhorted to bemoan the passing of this bastion of old-style colonialism. British comedians Erik Sykes and Jimmy Edwards have gone to entertain the Rhodesian army — a handy morale booster in the intervals between their massacre of African villagers. All the actors’ union Equity could manage in response to this trip was to mutter a few words of condemnation.

These two ‘comics’ should be thrown out of the Union for their open collaboration with the Rhodesian slavers.

technology of the whites.

During its early period, Rhodesia was administered by a private company — the British South Africa Company. Its first problem was to find labour to work the farms and the mines on the land seized by the Europeans. Not surprisingly, the Africans saw no reason why they should work for the settlers. They had their own separate economy. Wages were no incentive, since money was unknown in the native villages.

The British South Africa Company resolved the problem by the simplest and most ruthless means. They forced

Rhodesia WHITE-MAN'S ELDORADO

by
Neal Smith

as a local garrison

The plan was shelved for about ten years, only to re-emerge in the late ‘40s and early 50s. By this time both the settlers and Britain wished to streamline the economy of the area, and in 1953 the Federation was forced through.

As the blacks in the North feared, their conditions worsened even further, with the settlers drawing now on a whole new area to tax and exploit. Education, for example, was split into European education, which was federal, and African, which was territorial. In 1959 federal spending on non-African education (mainly for the settlers) came to over £25 a head. For the Africans it was less than £1 a head.

Rule

During the ten years of the federation, ten constitutions came into being. All were designed to keep Africans from power, while appearing to make some concessions to African aspirations. For example, the constitution of 1958 gave blacks the chance to get 15 seats out of 60 in parliament. Whites argued that ‘as Africans acquired more wealth and education’ they would gradually capture the remaining seats. At best, this would have been an enormously long process. In fact it gave an extra incentive to deny ‘wealth and education’; and in addition, Southern Rhodesia had full power to revise the voting qualifications upwards, pushing the mirage of black power ever further away.

Black majority rule was firmly ruled out. Federal Prime Ministers Lord Malvern and Roy Welensky assured the whites that ‘no substantial change would occur in the foreseeable future’. Similar pledges have been given by Ian Smith.

This white intransigence increasingly forced the black nationalists to violent protests, particularly in the northern territories of the federation. In 1959 the Southern Rhodesian settlers finally

the Africans to work for them. The basic aim was put very bluntly by a white settler: “We have stolen his land, now we must steal his limbs. Compulsory labour is the corollary of our occupation of the country.”

A law was passed forbidding Africans to grow cash-crops, and a ‘hut tax’ was imposed on every African man. The money to pay the tax could only then be obtained by working on the settlers’ farms and in their mines.

Wages

When these devices failed, labour was simply obtained at gun-point. The settlers would force the Africans to work for no wages for a set period of the year on ‘public works’ such as railways and roads. Many died on these projects from the forced work and appalling conditions. But in the British African territories this kind of labour was common enough to call forth in 1923 a ‘Native Authority Ordinance’ restricting the use of compulsory labour. In practice such legislation meant little as the settlers easily found ways of getting around it. And when wages were paid, they were the lowest in Africa, amounting to between one twentieth and one tenth of the average white wage.

Thus vast profits were creamed off by the imperialist companies in Britain which amassed huge fortunes and great power from the exploitation of the mineral wealth and human resources of the country. And the white settlers living off the fat of the land could indeed count themselves lucky to be Englishmen.

In 1923 Britain decided to end the rule of the British South Africa Company, which had not been as efficient as was hoped in administering the territory. The Southern Rhodesian voters were asked to choose between joining South Africa as a fifth province, or becoming a ‘self governing colony’.

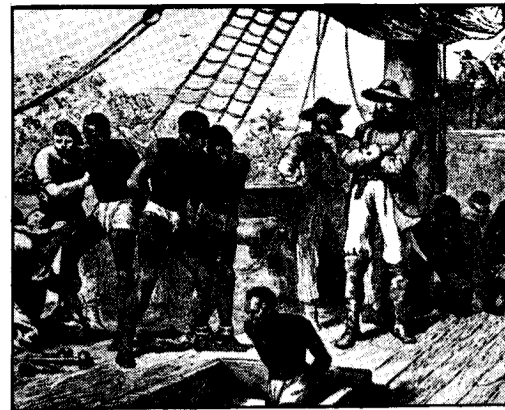
Land

The majority chose the latter. All the voters were white — and ‘self government’ meant that they would govern. Although there was (and is) no law excluding Africans from voting, the qualifications for voters were so high that Africans were effectively barred. They have been ever since.

Having achieved a measure of independence from Britain, the settlers began to step up the dispossession of the African population. A series of measures culminating in the Land Apportionment Act drove the Africans off any good land they still had into ‘reserves’ of poor and infertile land. There they constituted a pool of labour on which the whites could draw as they needed.

Finding themselves ghettoised on land that could not support them, Africans were forced to move to work as temporary labour in the cities and the white plantations and mines. Since the Act also forbade anyone owning or living permanently on land allocated to another racial group, there was no way to escape this situation — short of the complete overthrow of white domination.

Rhodes had seen the establishment of Southern Rhodesia as part of a grand imperialist scheme to cover the map of Africa with British ‘imperial red’ from Cairo to Cape Town. One step along this road would have been the formation of a Central African Federation. During the 1930s the amalgamation of Southern Rhodesia with the two ‘tropical dependencies’ of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland was discussed. But African opinion in the two northern territories was fiercely opposed to the scheme, which they saw as substituting an even more repressive form of colonialism — a rule which would use the settlers’ state



Slaving sapped Zimbabwe's strength before the settlers arrived

attempts by Africans to gain their democratic rights. But in doing so, they were setting themselves against the prevailing movement of African history. The full-scale ‘Mau-Mau’ rebellion in Kenya had led Britain to introduce a new policy of constitutional changes in Africa designed to lead towards a form of multi-racial government — a form of ‘power sharing’ in which the whites would still hold the real power. The Africans held out for majority rule and in the same year that Southern Rhodesia was invading Nyasaland, Britain abandoned its commitment to

African Federation. Although all went smoothly in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, which became respectively Zambia and Malawi, the Southern Rhodesian settlers refused to let go their hold on the country.

The British government had agreed on a formula of ‘no independence without majority rule’. By this they hoped to retain the favours of the new African states. But it was precisely this that the Rhodesian settlers were not prepared to concede. Negotiations, threats, visits of Ministers and Prime Ministers, all were useless in persuading the settlers.



In 1972, the Pearce Commission tried to persuade Rhodesian Africans to agree to a ‘settlement’. But they received a resounding NO from the black majority population.

multi-racialism.

This shift in British policy reflected what Harold Macmillan called ‘the winds of change’ in Africa. In a speech to the South African parliament in 1960 he implied that it was now impossible to insulate any part of the African continent from the political upheavals which had spread out from West Africa.

On that side of the continent, there had been no settler communities substantial enough to resist the process of de-colonisation. In 1957 the independence of Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) set the pace. The

On 11th November 1965 the Rhodesian government broke completely with Britain, and made their Unilateral Declaration of Independence — UDI.

This was the logical conclusion of the policy of settlement initiated by Rhodes, although Rhodes could hardly have foreseen it. As the settlers became established and generated their own capitalist class, a tension grew up between the British imperial government and the white Rhodesians, who wanted to develop their own economy independent of Britain, rather along the lines of a



We’ll win yet! Confident Africans jeer at Smith’s armed police

decided to stamp their rule on the whole Federation in an attempt to crush all opposition. A state of emergency was declared in Southern Rhodesia, and black leaders of the African National Congress were arrested and detained without trial. White Rhodesian troops were flown into Nyasaland, where rioting erupted in response. The riots were brutally suppressed.

The events of 1959 finally consolidated the hold of the Rhodesian settlers over the area covered by the Federation, and gave notice of their resolve to resist all

immediate impact was on Ghana’s neighbours. During 1960 a host of French colonies in West Africa became independent. The political ferment was such that Britain was forced to follow suit.

Britain and France saw that by giving political power to the emerging African bourgeoisies in these countries, they could retain an economic stranglehold. They knew that the new African rulers would be too weak economically to really break with their imperialist masters.

The biggest problem was to be the de-colonisation of the Central

mini South Africa.

This disagreement was about how to divide the wealth obtained from the exploitation of the Africans’ land and labour. Neither side has ever been concerned about the blacks, although the settlers have been more ruthless and vicious in their exploitation.

The wealth of the Rhodesian whites was heaped up by pillage and repression. The same is true of the fortunes amassed by British firms in Rhodesia. It is against both these enemies that black Africans have been fighting — and now seem certain to overcome.

ALVARO Miranda, one of the organisers of the Portugal Solidarity Conference, ended his introductory description of events in Portugal since 25th November last year with these words: "I hope that the British labour movement and British socialists will not treat solidarity as a fashion — shouting hooray when the struggle was on the upswing and turning to somewhere else when the Portuguese working class is facing severe difficulties and most needs help and solidarity."

Comrade Miranda underlined that the conference came at a time when the situation in Portugal had shifted seriously against the working class for the first time since 25th April '74. He detailed the series of severe attacks workers were facing — unemployment running at 15%, inflation rising by 50% a year, repression and assaults by the police and military on strikers, resulting in loss of life.

Restrict

Reactionaries who had kept their heads down for over 18 months after the fall of Caetano were now campaigning openly to retake control of their factories or landed estates. And a whole series of austerity measures from the 6th Provisional Government has been followed up by the suggestion from the Confederation of Portuguese Industry that a "social contract" between the Government, the bosses and the Trade Unions to restrict wages for a long period was the only basis for saving the Portuguese capitalist economy.

Yet the "Portuguese revolution is not over" The Government power base, said Comrade Miranda, was still relatively weak. In the Lisbon area only two military units were reliable. The main prop and cover for the regime were the reformist Socialist Party, led by Mario Soares.

The Portuguese ruling class had used this party against the workers from the summer offensive in the

Portuguese Solidarity Conference message to British workers is 'Portuguese workers need your solidarity'

north to the period immediately after the 25th November events. Now they were increasingly turning to the open bourgeois parties the PPD and CDS, and the SP was losing its bourgeois backers and its lower middle class support. It had also alienated many of its working class support by its alliance with the right wing.

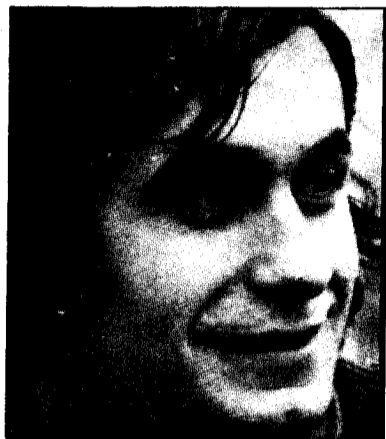
The Portuguese ruling class and their masters in the big British and American companies still need to mount a much stronger attack on all the major gains of the working class since 1974. Though Portuguese workers were at present engaged in a defensive struggle, the very nature of this fight to protect the land occupations, the nationalised

industries and the various elements of workers' control will lead the working class from a defensive to an offensive fight — "There is no way an effective defensive fight can avoid this".

British workers must prepare to support this fight. Building the Solidarity campaign was the major way this could be done.

Pitch

Anyone who thought that the activity of the working class had settled down to the pitch of the day to day battles of trade unionists in the major capitalist countries would have been shocked out of their



Jose Luis Ganhao - delegate of the Standard Electric workers



Sofia Ganhao - official of the Domestic Workers' Union

Photos: Morning Star

complacency by the richness of the struggles described by the two Portuguese speakers.

Sofia Ganhao, an officer of the Domestic Workers' Union, gave a detailed and moving account of the struggle by a particularly downtrodden section of Portuguese society for a decent life. (See text of speech below).

Jose Luis Ganhao, a trade union committee delegate from Standard Electric ITT, recounted the experiences of rank and file workers since 1974. He recalled the illusions many workers had following the fall of Caetano: "after the 25th April some of us thought that all our problems would be solved."

The sabotage and wrecking of management clearly showed the workers the need to struggle for workers' control, and imposed on them the duty of guarding and maintaining the means of production against the bosses' manoeuvres. Comrade Ganhao concluded by stressing the urgent need for solidarity "for workers in the multi-nationals to establish committees across frontiers".

In the afternoon, Conference debated and adopted the document on the aims and slogans of the Campaign, which had been drawn up by the Organising Committee.

Most of the debate was around an amendment from the International Socialists proposing the deletion of the slogan 'Solidarity with the organs of Popular Power' and its replacement with 'Solidarity with the Portuguese Working class'. The IS speakers motivated this by referring to the downturn of the struggle, its present restriction to a defensive level, and the need to solidarise with all workers' organisations, trade unions and political parties as well as the popular assemblies, workers' committees etc.

Speakers from the International Marxist Group accused IS of seeking to, as they put it, "evacuate the lessons of the Portuguese revolution" by taking the focus away from the

potential organs of dual power. Speakers from the International Communist League raised criticisms of both slogans.

The "Popular Power" slogan should be criticised because it showed ideological confusion and failed to locate the working class and organs of workers' power as central. In this respect it "evacuated the lessons" of 50 years of revolutionary communism. Further, it suggested a situation in which independent working class organisations are struggling for power in society as a whole and that they have already achieved a substantial measure of such power.

On the other hand, the slogan 'Solidarity with the Portuguese working class' is vacuous and doesn't specify that it is the workers and tenants' commissions and the soldiers' organisations that are under the most direct attack and need our support. The ICL delegates suggested that some formulations such as solidarity with the organisations of independent working class mobilisation and struggle would be preferable to either alternative.

Respond

However, since amendments from the floor were not in order, the ICL proposed keeping both slogans, with the IS amendment qualifying the resolution. But this was ruled out of order, and the IS amendment was then voted on and defeated.

The conference, though small, was representative of a wide spectrum of Labour Movement bodies. It lays the basis for a campaign not merely of propaganda but of establishing real links between workers in the same companies in Britain and Portugal, such as Plesseys, STC, GEC etc. Trade unionists and socialists in Britain will thus have a framework in which to respond vigorously to further assaults on the Portuguese workers, and to learn the positive lessons of their struggle.

Portugal — the servants' revolt

Sofia Ganhao's speech at the Portugal Solidarity Conference.

I am an officer of the Domestic Workers Union and I am very pleased to be invited to speak to you today about the struggles which we have been carrying out inside the union.

Domestic workers in Portugal total over 100,000, that is 3% of the total workforce. Before 25th April 1974, cleaning workers and all workers employed in the households of the rich were one of the most exploited sections of the working class in Portugal.

As with the agricultural workers, the law denied us any rights, and we couldn't organise in a trade union. In those conditions, within a social and economic structure dominated by a petty bourgeois mentality, in the absence of organised collective services such as laundries, or social services, such as nurseries or infant schools, the ruling class kept exploiting us to keep their families and households.

Our wages were the lowest, because we could not organise or formulate demands. Illiteracy, lack of political consciousness, ignorance and a vast labour force that was forced to emigrate from the countryside when agriculture was mechanised, all ensured the continuation of these conditions. The employers took advantage of the very nature of our work by creating false ties with bribes and paternalistic attitudes. Their sole aim — to keep us apart so they could use us as slaves.

Servant

Only after 1973 were we covered by the Health Service or protected against accidents at work.

These conditions led to the growth of employment agencies which further exploited our labour, going even to the point of openly promoting prostitution.

The only organisation at national level was the Catholic Society for the Protection of Servants, whose aim was to defend the existing practices and disguise the class conflict with moral and religious preaching.

They attempted to justify the 'social usefulness' of the domestic servant, and legitimise our exploitation at miserable wages and conditions. The Catholic Society for the Protection of Servants has also built itself up on our backs, charging us for any services or medical assistance even when we were unemployed. Today it is a wealthy and powerful organisation at the service of the right wing.

But even before the fall of fascism in Portugal, there was a movement of cleaning and domestic workers, which

worked and agitated for a class understanding of our work and living conditions. Demands could not be formulated and the movement did not have the strength to combat the repressive strength of laws, courts and police. But the work carried by this movement proved to be of utmost importance after 25th April '74.

Court

Soon after the collapse of fascism, in May '74, two conferences were called by this movement, first in Oporto and then in Lisbon, to create the Trade Union of Domestic Workers. Delegations were sent from all over Portugal and a project for a Collective Labour Contract was drafted for the first time, incorporating our demands. At the same time workers started organising at a branch level, not only to strengthen the new trade union, but also to carry out in practice a programme of collectivisation of cleaning and domestic services.

We have started a labour exchange in opposition to the employment agencies. In Oporto we founded a cooperative of domestic services.

Our demands and our struggle, which have always been suppressed by the bourgeoisie, have now been made public by our actions and by debates we have forced the media and newspapers to broadcast.

But working against our class interest, the Catholic Service for the Protection of the Domestic Servant, which I referred to before, working on exactly the same principles as they always did, has now constituted itself into the so-called Free Trade Union of Domestic Servants, and has asked for legalisation by the state.

As the Trade Union Law outlaws the existence of duplicate trade unions, the process of legalisation was blocked until the 6th Provisional Government came to power. With the growing strength of the right wing in this government, the old Catholic organisation has been promoted to a 'provisional legal status' until the statutes have been certified by a special court.

This decision is contrary to all legal assurances that governments have given to the trade unions, and amounts to the acceptance of duplicate trade unions. In addition, this new Free Trade Union of Domestic Servants has joined with professional organisations of doctors, lawyers and technicians to form a new federation of Free Trade Unions, a body nursed by the right wing PPD to divide the trade union movement in Portugal.

We, the Domestic Workers' Trade Union, will fight against this scab union

which is there only to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie and which was founded illegally. At present we have appealed in the courts against the decision of the Labour Ministry.

But we know that our struggle cannot be left to be decided in courts. We are carrying out in practice our fight for organisation and better conditions.

We have opened in Lisbon a home for unemployed domestic workers, which has organised a people's canteen where meals are served at very low prices. This canteen is used by the working class, not only for meals but also for meetings, cultural assemblies, etc.

This way, domestic workers who had been left without a roof over their heads when their employers fled the country after 25th April are now organised in a

production, by active participation in trade unions and in the organs of popular power, the workers' committees, the neighbourhood committees, etc.

We are also opening a canteen, and this way we hope to transform the nature of our work, by providing much needed services to the working people which up to now have been denied.

Our struggle is also linked to the agricultural workers, not only because most of us were forced to emigrate from the countryside by poverty and unemployment to be exploited in the rich households in the towns, but also we are, together with the agricultural workers, the only section that

struggle for legal recognition of the unmarried mother, where the worst injustices have been committed.

Four months ago a domestic worker was condemned to 14 years in prison for killing her child at birth. After having discussed and analysed the circumstances of the crime we arrived at the conclusion that no one in a sound state of mind could commit such an act and that the action can only be explained by —

- the injustice of a society and system of law that doesn't recognise unmarried mothers
- the lack of access to sexual education
- the lack of understanding and the



Women on a demonstration in Portugal

cooperative which is in direct contact with the agricultural cooperatives for supplies. At the same time it provides a much needed collective service to the working people in Lisbon.

Active

This type of contact generates a greater consciousness, not only of the problems of women in Portugal, but also of the experiences and struggles of other workers.

At the moment we are in the forefront of the struggle for women's rights in Portugal. By collectivising domestic service with the creation of the cooperative, we are making possible that working class women have time to defend their interests at the point of

was not organised in trade unions during fascism.

Still, today, both ourselves and the workers on the land are not covered by the national minimum wage of £17, and whilst the minimum for an agricultural worker is £14, we are still waiting for legislation to regulate our minimum wage. Faced with these injustices we demand the same minimum conditions for all workers.

We are still fighting not only the legal battle for recognition of our trade union, but also for the right to the same health services as other workers, for legal protection and assistance to the unmarried mother, and recently we won the right to 90 days paid maternity leave.

We consider particularly important the

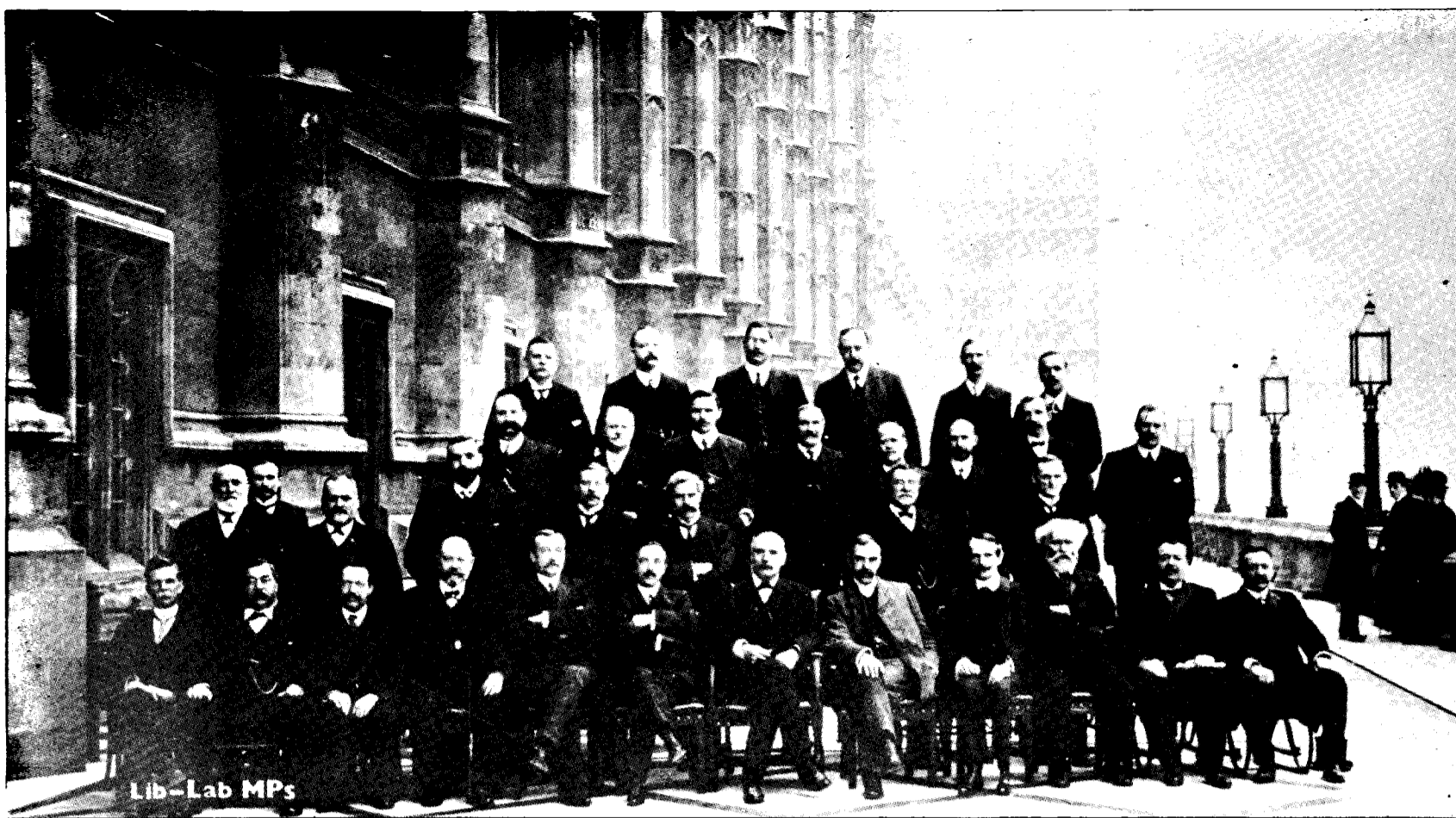
harassment by the employer when she discovered she was pregnant.

We decided to fight the case of our comrade and we have appealed against the court decision. We demand that she be retried, taking into account the injustices of law, and that the judge be a woman.

Liberate

All our struggle is based on the fight for the rights of domestic workers, but as such, it is also a struggle for the liberation of the woman. It is only when we are organised and united with other sections of workers that we can achieve positive results.

Only the workers can liberate themselves!



First, the Constitution re-ensured a decisive voice for the trade union leaders — then as now a conservative force within the movement. And with the creation of constituency parties, the Socialist Societies were gradually pushed aside. Second, the Parliamentary Labour Party was given almost complete independence from the rest of the party.

This meant that any radical policy decision could be first watered down and then safely ignored.

Confirmation of this can be found as early as the 1918 manifesto. Like every other Labour Manifesto, it is adorned with much socialist sounding rhetoric. But in its practical proposals it amounts to a plea for 'humanised capitalism': some limited nationalisation, a more progressive taxation system, and the desirability of the state providing minimum standards of health, education and employment.

Although the Labour leaders had abandoned their flirtation with the Liberals, they had not adopted a socialist perspective.

Two important points emerge from this picture of Labour's roots. First, there was no 'golden age' of Labour which a succession of right wing leaders have gradually seduced the party away from (and which left wingers could, with a small effort, restore). Secondly, Labour has remained in the mould it was cast in — a capitalist party of reform.

The only change has been a gradual diminution of its attempt to carry through reforms — and this has been inevitable as the priority of efficiently running capitalism has become more important than even the simplest measures of social reform or improvement.

Today, the vast majority of Labour MPs, belonging to one of the two major parties, are firm adherents of capitalism, even if they'd prefer to see it softened at the edges. Many of them would rather break with the labour movement than be forced to carry out fundamental anti-capitalist measures. Some are themselves employers, landlords, businessmen, enmeshed personally as well as politically with the dynamics of capitalism.

Left

Can the right wing be replaced with lefts? Labour has been returned to government 7 times now, and each time pursued the interests of capitalism. Left wingers have been incorporated into these governments, diligently doing their bit in this or that department or ministry. Lacking any conception of struggle outside parliament or afraid of it, the occasional angry resignation turns out to be a damp fizzle leading to nothing.

A variant of the 'transformation' theme is the one favoured by the Communist Party: in this version, the 'left' trade union leaders will push the Labour Party to the left as the block votes of the unions — once the bulwark of the right wing — change sides.

In the early seventies, this seemed an attractive proposition to many; indeed, 'left' leaders did throw their weight behind some radical resolutions at Conference and they had fallen out with the 1966 Government over *In Place of Strife*. But as a long term trend it could not work. Partly because what Labour governments actually do is only vaguely related to Conference decisions, but more important, because the 'left' leaders themselves are only committed to bargaining with Labour governments in the same way that they bargain for their members within the capitalist system but have no idea of overthrowing that system.

The working class and its militants will have to outgrow Labour, and come to see it and its gradualist philosophy as an obstacle to the overthrow of capitalism. Socialists in the Labour Party have a job to do here, and can contribute to this process, by fighting within it for working class demands, by helping to build a movement that can force the Labour government to act on behalf of the working class but which can act independently of Labour.

Such an approach means turning the Labour Party branches away from empty resolution-mongering and towards supporting — in deeds as well as words — the real struggles of workers.

but a class body which must be destroyed and replaced with a workers' state. Because the overthrow of capitalism will involve real working class democracy rooted in active involvement of workers in the factories, mines, offices and housing estates, the workers' state will be of quite a different character from previous states, all of which have existed so that a tiny minority will be able to repress the vast majority. Society will be completely transformed.

Because we fight to replace the bourgeois democracy of parliament with a real, active workers' democracy, we seek to develop independent working class activity and self reliance: not just as the only way to overthrow capitalism, but also as the true basis of socialism.

Those who claim to be socialists but oppose independent class action have not only a different tactic, but also a different goal in sight.

The 1918 Constitution of the Labour Party embodied unalloyed reformist principles. Parliamentary gradualism was confirmed as the only acceptable politics. But, for the first time, Labour cautiously declared itself in favour of "the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service".

The left wingers took this as a victory (and it was indeed a concession to the pressure of a rank and file powerfully affected by the previous year's revolution in Russia). But it was an empty one, for at the same time the Labour leaders armed themselves with two weapons which ensured their domination of the Party.



The Labour Party:

70 years of bargaining and betrayal

by S. Tuckwell

Despite all the cries of horror and shock, the actions of the present Wilson government must be depressingly familiar to socialists both in the Labour Party and out of it. Here we have a government — elected on the crest of a wave of working class resistance to the reactionary attacks of a Tory government — pushing through anti-working class policies with as much zeal as any Conservative administration. And it's getting the help of the trade union leaders to do it.

The picture is fairly typical of British Labour governments.

In 1929, for example, the Macdonald government, facing an unemployment level of two million heads of households (and many more besides) responded by cutting public expenditure — including the dole. The Wilson 1966 government froze wages, broke the seamen's strike with 'red scare' methods, cooked up anti-union legislation (which it was forced to withdraw again by mass working class opposition) and passed racist immigration laws. In foreign affairs, Wilson backed up American aggression in Vietnam and sent the British troops in Ireland into action.

Even the 1945 government, which occupies an almost mythological position in the image Labour leaders like to project, was no different in essentials.

Despite its reforming image, this government sent troops into the docks to break a strike just six days after coming into office. Three months later, 21,000 troops were sent to smash a national dock strike. Seven dockers were prosecuted. Atlee's foreign policy was tied completely to the coat-tails of American imperialism, and troops were sent to suppress anti-colonial uprisings in Malaya, Egypt and Indo-China.

It is of course true that many importance reforms were also introduced. But even these were botched. When Nye Bevan finally presented proposals for the NHS in 1947, he had already made crucial compromises with the private medical mandarins — compromises for which the Health Service is still paying.

Decaying

The famous nationalisations of the time were of decaying industries like coal which no capitalist really wanted to run, but which the capitalist class as a whole needed. In return, massive compensation was paid and private industry was guaranteed cheap fuel.

Labour at that time had massive popular support and a huge majority in Parliament. It was a time when the working class was full of enthusiasm for a real attack on capitalism; instead Labour chose to prop the bosses up.

Despite this many genuine socialists continue to believe that it is possible to transform the Labour Party into a party that will fight for socialism.

First of all Labour is not a socialist party, and was not even founded as one. Labour traces its origins back to the Labour Representation Committee, founded in 1900.

At that time the only 'working class' representation in Parliament had been in the form of trade unionists who stood as Liberal Party candidates — the so-called Lib-Lab MPs. But throughout the 1890s, pressure had been building up for an independent trade union voice in Parliament, and the LRC (and later the Labour Party) was the outcome of this demand.

From the very beginnings, it was explicitly non-socialist. In the early period, the Labour Party still saw itself as a radical appendage to the Liberal Party. Its only claim to being a separate group was that it had a special interest in the reform of trade union law — but so feeble were its ideas that it was easily outflanked by the reforms of the Liberal Lloyd George government.

At first, Ramsay MacDonald even believed that the Liberals could be 'won over' to the working class 'cause', and this led to shady manoeuvres and compromises which gained the early Labour MPs the bad reputation they've kept ever since.

In a pamphlet written in 1908 by Ben Tillett, he describes the Labour MPs as "sheer hypocrites" who repaid "with gross betrayal the class that willingly supports them."

Of course there were many in the

early Labour Party who did consider themselves to be socialists. But like all 'left Labour' movements since, they found themselves caught in a trap: whenever their socialist principles came into conflict with the actions of the parliamentary group, their 'loyalty' was called into question.

In these circumstances, 'loyalty' always won. Critical resolutions were duly passed, but the working class was never actively mobilised to force a change. And this was not accidental: it flowed from crucial positions that both the Labour parliamentarians and their left critics held in common.

Gradual change through parliamentary methods was seen by them all as the only way society should be changed. Some may have wanted Labour MPs to take a more aggressive stance; but on the fundamental method, they had no quarrel.

Also, they all saw 'socialism' as simply the nationalisation of certain key industries together with social reforms.

This view, deeply imbued with an elitist and bureaucratic spirit and leaving no role for working class action, has always been passed off in Britain as "socialism". It is seen as something to be handed down by wise parliamentary leaders to a grateful but passive working class.

Above all, 'politics' was an arena into which the industrial power of the working class should not be allowed to enter.

Revolutionary socialists, by contrast, have both a different approach and a different aim. Socialism is not just state ownership of industry, nor is the state neutral.

National Graphical Assoc.

Women are second-class union members

national, local and trade press and in the columns of 'Print'. When this has not produced the desired labour, we have dealt with the local Department of Employment in an attempt to find suitable males (*my emphasis*) with Telex or similar experience. It has then been the policy to seek to recruit disabled males who would be trained as operators at Government expense, and this will continue to be our approach to the problem."

The NGA justified this policy by stating that women cannot handle the heavy machinery, and that with severe unemployment in the print they are not looking for alternative supplies of labour. They accept the reactionary idea that women should work only when the capitalist economy sees fit — as during the Second World War, when women did enter these jobs — and otherwise should stay at home.

Under the Sex Discrimination Act the NGA are liable for prosecution, since the Act states that it is unlawful for a trade union to discriminate by refusing a woman a job, or refusing to promote or train her. But the NGA do not seem to be worried. A women member with no financial aid would face tremendous difficulties trying to fight the union through the courts.

But even if legal redress were easier, socialists should oppose fighting the union's reactionary policies through the bosses' courts. Such a course could only divert the organised militancy of women printworkers, further sabotage unity between male and female printworkers, and put the union at the courts' mercy.

Instead a fight should be taken up within the NGA and other print unions, for a reversal of the sexist policy, for positive discrimination in favour of women, and for an extension of women's rights and benefits.

This fight should include demands for special training courses for women to become MoCs (shop stewards); for a recruitment campaign of women into the union; for special apprenticeship schemes for women.

The narrow craft and sexist approach of the NGA can only cripple the fight against redundancies in the print industry, by setting union against union and male against female workers.

PAT LONGMAN

ONE UNION which isn't welcoming the Sex Discrimination Act is the National Graphical Association. It has an appalling record on the recruitment and training of women, and has operated hand in glove with the employers in seeking to prevent women from entering skilled printing jobs.

Its narrow, conservative craft unionism includes blatantly sexist attitudes, reflected in the fact that out of a total membership of 10,813 only 1,077 are women. These women are nearly always in the lowest paid jobs — usually operating the small offset machinery — and find it almost impossible to obtain jobs as composers, printers or readers.

The NGA runs an apprenticeship scheme which is kept as an all-male preserve. When women do qualify to join the NGA, they are often offered second-class membership — called Female Protective! — at half the contributions and with half the benefits. The NGA has never negotiated maternity leave and it gives unequal pension rights.

A recent NGA Annual Report states that:

"The Association has continued its stand against the employment of females on keyboards. Whilst Government legislation covering discrimination against females may present us with problems, the effect of equal pay for equal work appears to have assisted in seeking to maintain an all-male presence, the implications being that all the things being equal the employers will opt for a man rather than a woman."

"Where labour shortages have arisen, we have continued to insist that management must advertise in the

EVENTS

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

Thursday 18th March. Newham Rank and File teachers' public meeting on "The NUT and the Cuts". Speakers, Beth Stone (NUT Exec, in personal capacity), and Birendra Singh (Newham candidate for NUT Exec). 5.30pm at the Railway Tavern, opposite Forest Gate station.

Thursday 18th March. Manchester 'Workers Action' meeting on "What is Marxist Theory For?". 8pm in the Ducie Arms, Gt Ducie St.

Thursday 18th March. Nottingham 'Workers Action' meeting on "How 'Communist' is the Communist Party?". 8pm at the Peacock, Mansfield Rd.

Saturday 27th MARCH Labour Movement Assembly on Unemployment. At Central Hall, Westminster. Details from 'Assembly', no.8 Confederation District Committee, 12 Denmark St, London WC2H 8NJ.

Saturday 3rd April. National Abortion Campaign demonstration for Free Abortion on Demand and A Woman's Right to Choose. Assemble 1.30pm at Speakers Corner.

Saturday 3rd April. Local labour movement conference on unemployment and the cuts, organised by Lambeth Trades Council and Norwood Labour Party. At Stockwell Hall, Stockwell Park Walk, SW2. Details from VJWiseman, 23 Saunders House, St Martins Estate, SW2.

Saturday and Sunday, 10th-11th April. Working Women's Charter national delegate conference. At Lanchester Poly, Coventry. Details from Helen Gurdon, Flat 4, 39 Newbold Terrace East, Leamington Spa, Warks.

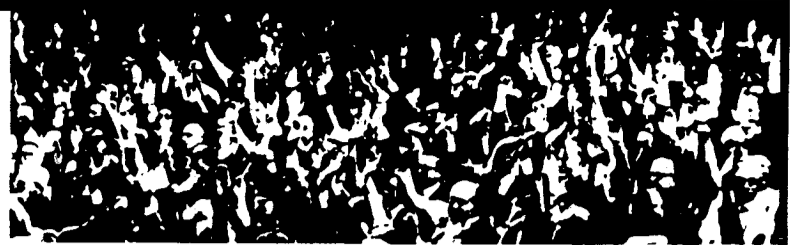
Sunday 11th April. Campaign to Repeal the Immigration Act demonstration — assemble 2.30pm at Speakers Corner. Committee to organise the demo meets every Friday, 7.30pm at 152 Camden High St.

Saturday 24th April. Rally against Unemployment and the Cuts called by the North West Regional Council of the TUC.

Sunday 25th April. National Demonstration called by National Coordinating Committee against the Cuts in the National Health Service. Assemble at Speakers Corner and march to Trafalgar Square. Details from P.Stern, 55 Bridge Lane, London NW10.

"Fight the Cuts" film made by a group of film-makers in ACTT. Available FREE for all meetings and conferences against the cuts by phoning 01-794 2825. 55 minutes, Black and White, 16mm optical sound.

Friday 26th March. Pre-Labour Movement Assembly meeting jointly sponsored by International Communist League, International Marxist Group and Workers' League. "The Fight against Unemployment — The Revolutionary Alternative". 8pm at the Pindar of Wakefield, Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross.



London Trades Councils throw out Rule 14

THE UNIONS



IN LONDON, the campaign against adoption of the TUC's new Model Rule 14 for trades councils has scored a number of successes. So far, seven trades councils — Camden, Barnet, Battersea and Wandsworth, Lambeth, Greenwich, Southwark, and Westminster — have thrown out the new rule, and a number of others, such as Haringey, have resolved to campaign for its abolition.

Model Rule 14 disbars trades councils from co-operating with any organisation campaigning against TUC policy, or with any political organisation other than the Labour Party. If enforced, this would mean that trades councils could give no support to events like the 26th November demonstration against unemployment called by the North West Region TUC, to committees against the cuts, or to the Working Women's Charter.

The new rule comes before trades councils backed by a threat from the General Council that trades councils which do not adopt the rule will be disaffiliated from the TUC. This overt piece of blackmail has been seized upon by the Communist Party as an excuse for falling into line. CP members have in fact been making the most virulent attacks on the left in their panic at the possibility of not getting the rule adopted.

The CP's involvement with Model Rule 14 goes back many months. One of the arguments they have used in moving adoption has been that the new rule came into being by resolution of Congress itself, not by fiat of the General Council. What actually happened was that Model Rule 14 appeared before the last Congress as a section (51) of the General Council's annual report. In order to prevent it becoming policy, the CP (who claim to have been heavily represented) could have moved that the report be referred back. This they refused to do.

One does not have to look far to find the reason for their 'flexibility' on the issue. The new rule replaces the notorious Black Circular, used by the TUC in the '30s and beyond against the CP itself. In return for deleting references to the CP, the TUC have secured their cooperation in bringing in a new rule directed against those to the left of the CP in the first instance, and also in policing the new rule once it has been adopted.

The new rule is of great importance now. It was formulated at the time that the £6 limit was being brought in, and it was obviously intended as a weapon to crush resistance to the class-collaborationist policies of the union bureaucrats.

The present struggle against the rule comes at a time when trades councils are becoming increasingly important in coordinating the fight against wage reductions, unemployment and public service cuts. They still have far to go before they can be adequate fighting bodies for the working class in their areas. They must be reformed to include direct representation from shop stewards' committees, and they must be freed from the stifling grip of the allies of the labour bureaucrats, including the CP. But it is precisely that development that Model Rule 14 is designed to prevent.



Street theatre at rally

Belfast rally calls for a woman's right to work

WOMEN are 30% of the workforce in Northern Ireland, yet there is not one state day nursery to care for the children of working mothers.

The lack of day nurseries, play groups and nursery schools was the theme of the rally organised in a Belfast city centre shopping area on Saturday 28th February.

The rally, which was organised by the Northern Ireland women's rights movement, attracted a large crowd of shoppers — many of whom seemed a bit bemused because this was the first time they had heard the question of women's rights being raised as a political issue in Northern Ireland.

After a performance by a street theatre group had graphically depicted the lack of facilities, the meeting was

addressed by trade unionists and members of the women's rights movement. Opposition to the cuts and a woman's right to work were the main themes. Unless adequate child care was provided by the state, women would never really have equal opportunity in employment. The campaign for these facilities must be pressed forward, and resistance must be organised against both unemployment and cuts in existing facilities.

There was little sympathy for the idea that cuts should be accepted as an inevitable part of the capitalist crisis. Women in Northern Ireland are beginning to realise that even in the days of expansion their needs were totally overlooked, and that, crisis or not, they will only get what they fight for.

Irish prisoners beaten up

The brutal treatment meted out to Republican prisoners in Belfast's Crumlin Rd jail continues. The latest victims, Mick Hillen, Pat Burns, Eamonn Murphy and Pascal Kelly, were attacked and beaten up last Thursday.

The incident began when the men tried to resist the indignity of being forcibly stripped for a "skin search" prior to being tried. The actual attack came after the men, wearing only underpants, refused to recognise the kangaroo court before which they were to be 'tried'.

After the attack with boots and batons, the four were taken to the prison hospital. Pat Burns was found to have suspected fractured ribs and the others were found to be suffering from multiple cuts and bruising. Having been stitched and bandaged up, the men were then left, still near-naked, in the prison yard for several hours. Finally they were locked in a cell with two mattresses and no blankets for over 24 hours, without food or water.

Because of the "insubordination" they had shown by resisting the skin search, they and 24 other prisoners have lost 14 days remission even before being found guilty! For one month they can receive no papers, cigarettes, or food parcels.

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

WORKERS IN ACTION

Toolroom agreement —

Leyland succeed in splitting unions

LEYLANDS management last week provoked a dispute with the toolroom workers in Rovers, Cardiff. The immediate cause of the dispute was an attempt to take away the extra fringe benefits to which the toolroom is entitled by previous agreements.

The previous week management had tried to force a cut in wages, but backed down when a strike was threatened. The aim of these attacks goes far beyond either the pay differentials or fringe benefits. The eventual aim is to include the toolroom in the national agreement covering the production workers.

At first sight it may seem that the company is either short-sighted or stupid. After all, the strength of the miners was massively increased when they changed from local agreements to national. However, the situation in the car industry is very different.

Here the strength of the workers has been built on the shop-floor around the shop steward system. By changing to national agreements, negotiated by the national union officers, management hopes to undermine the strength of the shop stewards. This would shift the focus of trade-union activity away from the shop-floor and into the boardrooms, and, if Leyland have their way, the 'participation' committees.

Management are using the present dispute to soften up the workers. In doing this they have one very great advantage. That is the traditional separation of the toolroom workers

from the shop-floor.

So far they are exploiting this division with success. In Cardiff, for instance, the AUEW took the decision to strike last Thursday. The same day the TGWU members decided that the dispute was no concern of theirs and that they would disregard the picket line. On Friday virtually all the TGWU members did break the picket line. Even worse, so did a large percentage of other AUEW members. Indeed, the TGWU convenor and branch secretary are in danger of being voted out because they did respect the picket line. No doubt management are delighted.

Despite this, the strike by the toolroom has every chance of forcing the company to back down again. No plant can keep running for long without a toolroom.

When the dispute is over, however, the question of the divisions revealed on Friday will have to be taken up. No trade union organisation can tolerate the crossing of picket lines. To ignore what has happened will undermine the strength not only of the toolroom but the production workers themselves — and play right into the hands of the management. Differences between sections of workers can only be overcome through strengthening shop-floor organisation at the level of Joint Shop Stewards Committees and Combine Committees. Crossing picket lines can only help the other side.

ON FRIDAY morning, 12th March, over 500 building workers employed on Knowsley, Merseyside, direct works, voted unanimously to strike until the local Labour Council withdrew all threats of redundancy and retracted allegations made against a local trade union official.

Redundancy threats have existed since January's council meeting. Behind closed doors (when cuts were discussed) a decision was made to reduce the workforce in the direct works department by one third. The exact figure has by now been given as 181 — involving 72 labourers, 54 joiners, 21 plumbers, 15 bricklayers, 6 plasterers, one general foreman, 8 section general foremen, and 4 'pre-views'.

At the same council meeting, a decision was also taken to close down three of the council's direct works depots — Halewood, Huyton, and Westvale (Kirkby). Both are direct attacks on the workers involved — and also against working class council tenants in the area. The council claim that the other depots will be able to cover. They ignore the fact that, without this 'rationalisation', there is already a backlog of 18,000 jobs to be done, and the figure is running at the rate of 2,000 a month.

Notice of the redundancies was given to senior convenors and full-time officials two weeks ago. They were rejected. Both this meeting, and the

Knowsley

Merseyside workers resist Labour council's cuts

following one last Tuesday (9th), were lobbied by striking workers from throughout the direct works.

The last meeting came to an abrupt halt. It was started by the Labour chairman of the direct works department, L. Nolan, launching into an attack against the trade union joint negotiating committee. He accused Rogers, the UCATT official, of lying and previously agreeing to 'gradual redundancies', and he said he didn't 'trust the trade union movement'. The allegations weren't backed up by any of the minutes of previous meetings — but he refused to retract them. Because of this, the trade union side withdrew.

At the mass meeting last Friday, the stewards' recommendation to strike immediately, until the threat of the redundancies and the allegations were withdrawn, was unanimously carried.

The local press and radio have given the situation a lot of coverage — on the council's side! The union's position has

scarcely been mentioned, although a press conference has been given.

The importance of the action taken by the Knowsley workers was underlined recently by Bill Smyth — Liberal leader of the Liverpool council. Summed up, his attitude is — if the 'socialist' council in Knowsley can cut their direct works department, so can the Liberals, even so far as closing the whole thing down after the May elections. Whether the council can get away with it at the expense of the workers in Knowsley is obviously crucial.

A strike committee was formed on Monday. Already the senior convenors in the metropolitan borough area (St Helens, Wirral, Liverpool and Sefton) have met and pledged their support to the strike — starting with financial support. Messages of support and donations should be sent to the Strike Committee, c/o 9 Leaside Close, Kirkby, Liverpool.

JOHN BLOXAM



Striking ASLEF members last week

Women's TUC Conference: Plenty of anger but no action

THE 46th WOMEN'S conference of the Trades Union Congress is over, leaving behind a trail of resolutions. Judging by previous experience, the TUC will do little other than 'take note' of them.

Although women now constitute a large proportion of the British workforce, the trade union leadership still does not take very seriously the job of involving them in union activity. Very little consideration is given to training and educating women so that they can play a full part in the life of trade unions. As long as this is the case, it's not surprising that the TUC women's conference is largely an irrelevance. No wonder it is given little prominence by the media and the vast majority of trade unionists.

Nevertheless the debate at the conference — on unemployment, cuts in public spending, the Equal Pay Act, and the Sex Discrimination Act — was about issues of vital importance to working women.

The cuts in public spending and the decline in provisions for children aroused a great deal of anger, expressed in a resolution calling for trade union resistance to the cuts and unemployment.

The conference also recognised that the organisation and unionisation of women was crucial, and therefore called for union meetings to be held in work hours, and for the provision of creches and nurseries at trade union schools and conferences. This would help women, particularly those with children, to attend.

The conference criticised the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act as not going far enough in abolishing discrimination against women. Pointing out that the Equal Pay Act had not benefited a lot of women, they called for 'men's pay for women'.

They also called on the TUC General Council to ask the Equal Opportunities Commission to investigate the cut-back in child-care facilities. Without such facilities, women have little chance of escaping from home and finding work.

Despite all these positive demands, there is little chance that the TUC will act on them. Until women in the trade unions begin to organise against their ghettoisation, their resounding calls to action will be left to gather dust and the conference itself will remain just a talking shop.

MICHELE RYAN

Warren refused parole

"VENGEANCE is mine, sayeth the Lord". Vengeance is ours, say the British ruling class.

Ruling class vengeance, ruling class justice, and ruling class vindictiveness put Des Warren in jail. He was to be a terrible warning against militant workers who used flying pickets. He was pinpointed as a central leader in organising flying pickets in North Wales during the builders' strike in 1972, and jailed for three years.

Normally convicted prisoners are released on parole after serving two-thirds of their sentences. Warren has already served two and a half years. He is refused parole.

Ruling class vindictiveness demands that the last possible month, week and day be gouged out of the life of this militant, and indirectly out of the life of his wife and children.

In the House of Commons on March 11th, Denis Skinner MP drew attention to the scandal of Warren's continued imprisonment. He was told that Warren had misbehaved in jail. He had refused to obey all the rules and regulations, and had even gone on a short hunger strike. A stiff-necked fighter outside jail, he has not softened inside it.

Skinner pointed out that a man — Ronald Milnech — jailed for three years for attempting to steal £25,000, was released after 17 months. Warren, the selfless fighter for workers' rights, gets no such tender consideration. That is class justice.

It is an outrage that the jailing continues. It is a measure of the state of the labour movement on whose support the Labour government depends that Roy Jenkins can get up and speak in favour of the continued persecution of Warren.

It is still not too late to do something. Trade union branches, Labour Party branches, and Trades Councils should

Buckton blocks railmen's anti-cuts strike

THE RAILWAYS are slowly bleeding to death by a thousand cuts — yet all the rail union leaders can suggest is that the patient should be given an anaesthetic. Their action last week in ordering striking Eastern Region drivers back to work showed their unwillingness to launch a real fight against the rail cuts. Instead they were reduced to a sullen muttering about British Rail breaking procedure.

Quite clearly management have been trying to force the pace on the cuts. The strike was provoked by the sending home of a driver who refused to work a changed schedule.

The speed with which the strike spread showed the willingness of rank and file railwaymen to defend their jobs and rail services. If only the railwaymen's leaders showed such willingness! As one Kings Cross driver told *Workers Action*, "once we were all out and Ray Buckton only talked about the need to get us back, there didn't seem to be much we could do". Without any coordinated national leadership or prior preparation, the strike has slowly petered out.

All the ASLEF leadership have managed to get from management is a compromise agreement whereby British Rail agreed not to send home without pay men who refuse to work the new

schedules. In effect they have dumped the entire responsibility for fighting the cuts on the shoulders of individual railwaymen.

This leaves British Rail with a breathing-space in which to work out the best way to proceed with the cuts... and the rail unions with no policy for fighting back. The only policy the ASLEF leadership seem to have considered is one involving a vague reliance on 'public opinion'. But 'public opinion' — and, more importantly, effective action — will not be roused without a fight.

The planned rail cuts — slashing the 11,000 miles of track down as low as maybe 4,000 — will hit both railmen and passengers. Rank and file railwaymen will have to try to link their fight with other fights against the cuts, joining local cuts campaigns and fighting round the uniform demand for the state funds sustaining public services to be increased at least sufficiently to cover inflation. They will also have to organise at rank and file level in the rail unions, to take the initiative from and to fight to replace the leaders who have failed them in this battle.

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National Working Women's Charter Conference

10th and 11th APRIL 1976

at the LANCHESTER POLYTECHNIC, COVENTRY

Details and application forms from Helen Gurdon, Flat 4, 39 Newbold Terrace East, Leamington Spa, Warwick

Organised by the Working Women's Charter Campaign in Coventry and London

£200 A MONTH FIGHTING FUND

With more than half the month gone, we still only have £32. There's still time of course for sellers and supporters to get out collecting, and to dig into their own pockets. Send to Fund, 49 Carnac Street.