

WORKERS' ACTION

12 pages
15p

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Nov. 24, 1979

LEYLAND: IT'S WAR!

"I'VE been selected for the sack in order to terrify and intimidate the whole organisation and in order to get the [bosses'] 85-page document [on speed-up and curbing stewards' rights] accepted."

"They want a tame trade union organisation at the point of production. Strike, not for me as an individual, but to defend the whole organisation."

Derek Robinson, speak-

ing to the Longbridge Joint Shop Stewards' Committee just after being sacked on Monday 19th, pinpointed the key issue. If the convenor of one of Britain's biggest and best-organised factories, and the chairman of the BL Combine Committee, can be sacked just for criticising the bosses' plans, then every workers' job is unsafe and all shop stewards' organisation is

at risk.

Frank Henderson, a NUSMW steward in the West Works at Longbridge, spoke for many BL workers when he told Workers' Action: "As someone who has often criticised Robinson — over participation in particular — I have no hesitation in calling on every worker in BL to give their fullest support in defence of Derek Robinson.

"Our shop floor organisation is under attack, and my personal views on Robinson's capabilities as a convenor in no way affect my attitude to this issue."

At the same time as Robinson was sacked, three other BL trade union leaders were given final warnings: Len Brindle, vice chairman of the combine committee and convenor at the Leyland (Lancashire) plant; Jack Adams, combine committee secretary and chairman of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee at Longbridge; and Nick Clarke, combine treasurer and TGWU deputy convenor at Rover Solihull.

Their "crime" was the publication of a combine committee booklet opposing managing director



MICHAEL EDWARDES

Michael Edwardes' plans for speed-up and job cuts in BL. "By publishing such a booklet calling for disruptive action", said BL bosses, "they are deliberately undermining the company's recovery policy".

The major offending passage runs as follows: "Around the demands for the 'right to work' and

'BL must be saved', we must develop a campaign that involves every BL worker, every component worker, and the wider labour movement.

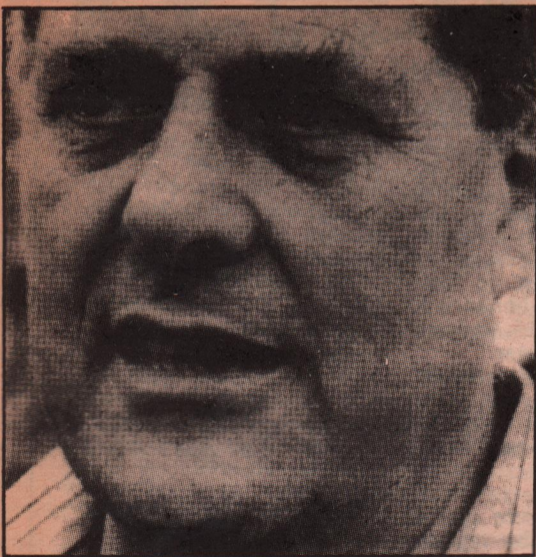
"The combine committee's policy of refusing to accept the transfer of work from one plant to another unless the parent plant agrees must be fully supported".

The press has made a lot of Derek Robinson's membership of the Communist Party. The Birmingham Evening Mail even had it that "he was sacked for distributing Communist literature on the shop floor".

Many BL workers have

Wipe the grin from this man's face

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DEREK ROBINSON

A conference for the left

Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory
Socialist Organiser

CONFERENCE: Saturday November 24
At Central Library, Holloway Rd, N7

Agenda:

10 to 10.15	Registration of delegates and supporters
10.15 to 12.30	Morning session. Political and Organisational reports on the work of the SCLV. Resolutions and amendments.
1.15 to 2.30	Resolutions and amendments continued, and voting. Election of new Editorial Board.
3.00 to 5.00	Rally in support of Lambeth Council's fightback.

Voting: • Each Socialist Organiser supporter shall be entitled to one vote.

• Delegates from sponsoring bodies shall be entitled to votes as follows: CLPs, Trades Councils — 5 votes per organisation, Shop Stewards' Committees — 3 votes per organisation, LP, YS, Trade Union branches — 2 votes per organisation.

Conference Organising Secretary: John Bloxam, SCLV, c/o Hackney North Labour Rooms, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

TRAVELLING COSTS: As this is a national conference, with supporters coming from as far away as Scotland, arrangements will be made to share the cost between supporters, delegates and observers from different places, with comrades travelling shorter distances contributing £3 towards the costs of those travelling further.

STOP THE TORY RACIST LAWS

Demonstrate Sunday 25th November.
Assemble 12 noon at Speakers' Corner,
Hyde Park, and march to Trafalgar
Square.

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FUND DRIVE

This week we have received:

Islington.....£1
Longbridge.....£10
Total this week.....£11

Total this month.....£50.45

To reach our £200 target we still need £149.55

Send contributions to: Fund, PO Box 135, London N1

Blair Peach: Court backs cops

THE Blair Peach inquest is to go ahead again, without a jury. The Coroner's refusal to call a jury has been upheld by the High Court. The law provides for a jury in cases where the event in question is likely to recur, therefore giving 'the public' an interest in the case.

The High Court judges decided that the death of Blair Peach in the middle of an SPG rampage against the people of Southall was just an isolated incident, as if Blair Peach had been killed by a solitary maverick SPG man in a lonely backstreet.

The judges also decided that counsel for Blair Peach's family and the Anti-Nazi

League should not be allowed copies of statements made by witnesses to the police in the days after Blair Peach's death. Lawyers for the police have had seven months to go through these looking for trick questions to trip up witnesses. Lawyers on the other side have now no way of anticipating these questions, nor can they study the statements to draw out all their implications to help in cross examining the witnesses.

Thus the court proceedings will be heavily weighted in favour of the police. And the Coroner's bias to the police, which he made clear at the start of the proceedings, will have no jury to check it.

Another official secret: your rights

THE CHILD Poverty Action Group has just published details of a secret code which advises officers in the Department of Health and Social Security on how to treat claimants.

The code, known as the 'A-Code', is issued by the Supplementary Benefits Commission and is used in Social Security offices all over the country. The aim of keeping it secret was to stop claimants knowing what their rights are.

The code itemises cases in which payment can be made to claimants, but by instructing local officers to keep it secret, the DHSS is really saying: "If you are pushed, you can pay out, but don't tell anyone their rights or they might all want them".

According to the DHSS, the Labour Government did intend making the code public, but didn't manage in its five and a half years in office to do what the CPAG has done

in a week. It is this kind of secrecy that leads every year to a situation where the amount estimated to have been 'saved' by people not claiming their entitlements is vastly greater than what the Tory press concentrates on — the amount estimated to have been claimed fraudulently.

According to the Supplementary Benefits Commission's estimates, £340 million in supplementary benefits went unclaimed in 1977, while fraudulent claims amounting to only £3½ million were detected. The government estimated the amount of undetected fraud from 1976-77 was £50-60 million — at most, less than a fifth of the unclaimed sum, and peanuts compared with the £2-3 billion of unpaid tax which Sir William Powell, Chairman of the Inland Revenue, estimates that his department was cheated out of, chiefly by the rich and by big business.

THE ANTHONY BLUNT AFFAIR

Secrecy is the real scandal

THE ANTHONY Blunt affair has brought to the surface all the reactionary garbage that usually simmers just below the surface of British society. All the values of the British ruling class are reasserted in a frenzied outburst of hypocrisy.

Firstly, nationalism. Loyalty to the nation state is considered to be a virtue above any other considerations, such as political ideas or personal conscience. Blunt himself stated: "(It) was a case of political conscience against loyalty to country: I chose conscience." But according to the Press and the British ruling class one should ignore conscience if it conflicts with the national interests of British imperialism.

Secondly, anti-communism. Hunting the 'Fourth Man' goes hand in hand with witch-hunting revolutionaries and industrial militants: both are done in the name of the 'national interest' or 'national security'.

While Britain was allied to the USSR in the Second World War — the period when Blunt did most of his spying — the 'national interest' demanded that everyone consider Stalin respectable and above board. From the time the Cold War began, the position was reversed and the spy-hunting is a good way to maintain Cold War attitudes.

The Blunt affair has also produced some of the more silly manifestations of support for an idiotic institution: the Monarchy. For The Times, the main worry of the whole affair was whether the Queen had been exposed to unnecessary scandal or — horror! — had had a red under her bed.

The press has also kept returning to Blunt's homosexuality as an explanation of why he

became a spy. Unable to believe that Blunt could have spied out of political conviction, they claim that he was recruited by Guy Burgess because they were having an affair, which Blunt strongly denies.

The only thing Blunt hasn't been accused of yet is being cruel to his cat! The ruling class particularly resents Blunt as a class traitor, yet any scab who tries to break picket lines is hailed as a hero.

Nevertheless, Blunt's treatment when he confessed and was 'pardoned' in 1964 contrasts sharply with other less embarrassingly well-connected spies such as George Blake, who was sentenced to 42 years in prison for spying.

The 'Blunt affair' has also nailed one important myth we hear day in, day out, according to which the Civil Service, the Secret Service, the police and army are all simply servants of a Parliament which wields the real power. In Blunt's case, the secret service acted completely outside the control of the government when he confessed and was pardoned in 1964.

Though MI5 chose to tell Buckingham Palace, neither the Prime Minister, Home, nominally the head of the Secret Service, nor the Home or Foreign Secretaries were told about Blunt's pardon. Home did not even know of his confession. The Attorney-General at the time — now conveniently dead — was supposed to have discussed the issue with the Director of Public Prosecutions — who decided the 'pardon' on the basis of representations made by MI5.

One reason suggested for the cover-up was that the

General Election was close and that, following the Profumo Affair, another scandal in high places would have ensured the Tories' defeat.

According to the Sunday Times, MI5 later changed its mind and decided to 'get Blunt', once he was no longer of any use to them. They planted a totally false story on The Times accusing Donald Beves of being the 'Third Man' in order to reawaken interest in the case and set writers off on a new trail.



Anthony Blunt

This aspect of the Blunt case has proved very embarrassing for the government. Thatcher could only have been half-aware that her exposure of Blunt in the Commons would throw such a sharp light on the secret activities of MI5 and the law that veils them.

Secrecy is essential to the smooth running of the capitalist state, even if it does sometimes mean the government itself being in the dark. In the USA, the extensive rights to examine government files under the Freedom of Information Act has done a lot

to expose the FBI and CIA and paralyse their activities.

In the last few years, there have been a number of attempts to maintain secrecy about spying operations. First of all, there were the expulsions of Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball. Then there was the trial of Duncan Campbell, John Berry and Crispin Aubrey under the Official Secrets Act for having published information about installations for intercepting communications by other powers.

The trial was an almost total fiasco, which convinced the Labour Government of the need to replace the Official Secrets Act with something more up-to-date. The Tory Government introduced a Bill, which would have been even more of a dragnet than the previous law and would have prevented disclosure of a wide range of government information not previously specifically covered, under pain of two years in prison.

If this Bill had become law, Blunt's spying and his deal with MI5 would never have become known. The author of the book implicating him and other journalists would have been liable to prosecution and imprisonment. The Tories have now rather shamefacedly dropped the Bill. Yet the Official Secrets Act, still on the Statute Book, is just as dangerous, if less specific.

The bourgeois state relies on its true repressive nature remaining concealed. The Blunt affair has shown the two ways in which it does it: the dominance of reactionary political and social values and simply keeping embarrassing information from the public. The fight against secrecy is a fight to undermine the state's ability to protect itself.

A BRITAIN FIT FOR RACISTS?

HOME Secretary William Whitelaw's compromise between the most rabid Tories (and Thatcher's) wish to see immigration of Asians halted altogether, and the caution of many others, has produced new Immigration Rules which will scapegoat a few thousand people, causing them great distress for the sake of giving another sop to the racists.

No-one, least of all the government, has a precise idea of how many men — and women, children, and marriages — will be affected by the new curbs on entry of husbands and fiancés. Last year, about 10,000 men were admitted to the country as husbands or fiancés: 3,000 from the Indian sub-continent and 1,000 from Africa. Presumably it is these whom Whitelaw has in mind when he gives his estimate of 3,000 to 4,000 affected, but no-one knows how many of these men were joining women who were not born in the UK, and would

thus fall foul of the new rules.

The new rules include these clauses:

■ Husbands or fiancés of women settled here cannot gain entry if the couple is not to live together or has not yet met, or if the marriage is arranged in order to gain admission to the UK.

Because some white women are included in this, "an entry clearance may be issued provided that the wife is a citizen of the UK and colonies born in the UK", and as a concession, immigration authorities will deal "sympathetically" with cases of girls born abroad to parents on Crown service, in the army, etc.

■ Fiancés allowed in will be granted a temporary visa for 3 months, during which time they cannot work. After marriage they must apply for an extension.

■ Women allowed in as wives or fiancés cannot work for a provisional three months, nor claim any sort of benefit.

New Tory immigration rules

■ Dependants seeking entry will be even more strictly vetted: those under 18 will now have to be unmarried; those over 18 qualify only if there are "most exceptional compassionate circumstances"; those over 65, who already must be wholly or mainly dependent on sons or daughters in Britain, must now prove that they have no relative in their own country, and that their standard of living is "substantially" below that

of their own country; those under 65 will only be admitted in the most exceptional compassionate circumstances.

■ The granting of extensions to temporary visas, or of permanent stay for those on temporary visas (students, visitors, etc) will be limited, even if their extended stay will lead to eventual settlement, such as in work or in marriage.

■ Dependants of students

and of businessmen and the self-employed must be supported: they cannot claim benefit, and in the case of students' dependants, cannot work either.

■ Au pairs must be from Western Europe, unmarried, between 17 and 25, and can only stay for one year.

■ Further discretionary powers in applying these rules are granted to immigration officials, whose crude racism is notorious.

Further expected restrictions, the quota system for entry, and the register of dependants, have, according to Whitelaw, been delayed but not abandoned. Whether or not they are introduced may well depend on the mobilisation against these rules.

The NCCL intends to take the government to the European Court of Human Rights, for its breach of the clause concerning the right to marry without discrimination on grounds of sex, race, religion, national origin or birth: all five

principles may be breached by the new rules. All the bodies concerned with immigrants' welfare have reacted angrily, and there appears to be a powerful unity developing in opposition to the government's blatant racism.

The UK Immigration Advisory Service called the rules "unnecessary, racist, and quite gratuitously nasty in their effect upon ethnic minority communities settled in this country".

A demonstration on Sunday 25th, supported by the major black community organisations and by the Labour Party, will protest against the new rules and against the 1971 Immigration Act. It must be the beginning of a major campaign against all immigration controls. For once the racist principle that black immigrants are "a problem" is established, obscenities like Whitelaw's new rules are only the inevitable consequences.

MANDY WILLIAMS

Trades Councils back fight against racist deportations

AT PRESENT, even the Asian, African or West Indian who qualifies for entry and eventually acquires British citizenship remains vulnerable throughout his or her life because of state racism: the police have wide powers to harass coloured people, checking passports, picking youth up on 'sus' charges, etc. And they can be arrested without warrant, and deported without trial or right of appeal.

There are two cases at present of people threatened with deportation, which have become the focus of campaigns against the racism of police

The first is Nasira Begum, who came on a visit from Pakistan in 1976, and while here met and married a British citizen. Two months later her husband deserted her.

Three years later, the Home Office has told her that she has to leave because her marriage has broken up.

She applied for an extension of her visa a few days after her visitor's visa ran out, and is thus subject to a new decision which applies in retrospect that extension cannot be granted in such circumstances, and that there is no right of appeal against the refusal.

Extended police powers allow them to arrest her, and to deport her within fourteen days.

'Friends of Nasira Begum', supported by the local MP, the Manchester and Stockport Trades Councils, and Tony Benn, have held a public meeting and a demonstration to campaign for her stay.

The second is Said Dibi, who is 80 and in poor health. She has no support in Pakistan, and applied two years ago to come here. She was refused a year later, on the grounds that her family here had insufficient room for her: her appeal has still

not been heard, so she came here on a visitor's visa, and has now been told to leave immediately.

The local law centres, with the support of local groups and activists, have taken up Said Dibi's case. They have been encouraged by the success of the campaign around Abdul Azad recently, who, after his mother was murdered, was picked up and questioned by police on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant.

The second time they arrested him, he was held for a week and not informed of his right to a solicitor. The

police alleged that blood tests proved that he was not in fact related to the murdered woman (he had lived here as her son since he was twelve), though such tests are by no means conclusive, and cannot now be repeated.

When Abdul Azad had been forced to sign a confession, and was detained for deportation, the local Bengali community gathered support for a campaign on his behalf, and he was allowed to stay on compassionate grounds.

During the campaign, the police harassed the Bengalis by picking up hundreds to check on their passports.

RACHEL WOLSTENHOLME

WHAT THE STEWARDS SAY:

"Who's going to be next? If they can sack Robinson over this, no-one's safe. The whole issue has been personalised in the press, as though it's simply a feud between Edwardes and Robinson. But it's much more than that. Edwardes wants to get rid of anyone who's willing to oppose redundancies and speed-up and to defend conditions." Frank McGurk, T&G steward, West Works.

"Edwardes is out to smash the shop stewards movement in BL. He wants tame unions controlled by officials who'll agree to anything the company says, and if he gets away with this, it will obviously give a big boost to the Tories' coming anti-union legislation." Pete Leydon, AUEW steward, West Works.

"Four years ago BL tried to sack me. They told Robinson I was a trouble-maker and extremist. Apparently Robinson replied 'You mean I'm not?' We all thought that was very funny at the time, because Robinson seemed to be going along with all of management's demands. But it doesn't seem so funny any more, does it?" Jim Denham, T&G steward, CAB2

IT'S WAR!

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been dissatisfied with the feebleness of Robinson's leadership against the BL bosses, arising from the nationalist and class-collaborationist politics of the CP. What BL bosses and the press are crying out against, however, is the fact that Robinson gives any leadership against the

bosses. The 'no transfer' policy is a longstanding position of the combine committee and is also official TGWU policy. Obviously the bosses have seized on the booklet just as an excuse for an attempt to smash the strength of shop stewards' organisation in BL.

The day shift at Longbridge walked out within hours of Robinson's sacking. Two Jaguar plants in Coventry struck for one

day on Tuesday 20th. On the same day the Canley works, also in Coventry, voted for an indefinite strike, and a meeting of BL senior stewards called for other plants to "give whatever support is possible".

TGWU officials promised support for the workers' action. AUEW president Terry Duffy, while evading any commitment on the action, has condemned the sacking of Robinson.

The issues at stake affect every BL worker — indeed, every trade unionist. If the sacking and the warnings are not withdrawn, trade union organisation in BL will be severely weakened and a deadly pre-emptive blow will have been struck against any resistance to the BL bosses' plans for speed-up and cuts in real wages.

The rank and file must organise to extend the action to an all-out strike

in BL which will continue until:

■ Derek Robinson is reinstated and the warnings are withdrawn.

■ A serious offer is made towards the BL workers' claim for £24 a week rise, inflation-proofing of wages, and a 35 hour week by 1982. (So far, BL has only offered a 5% pay rise — with 85 pages of strings!).

■ The company's 85-page document on speed-up is withdrawn.



Pickets outside Longbridge on Tuesday 20th. By Wednesday, 20,000 BL workers were on strike in protest at the sacking of Derek Robinson

THE TORIES' PLANS FOR LEYLAND

THE TORIES' programme for the cold winds of free enterprise economics to brace British capitalism for a leap forward requires class war to put it into practice. Workers in the less profitable "lame ducks" must be taught the hard way that capitalism can only give them a meagre ration.

BL is a prime case for the Tories.

The build-up to the present confrontation began with the government saying it might not let BL have any more money. BL boss Michael Edwardes demanded that workers should approve the plan for cutting 25,000 jobs in BL as a precondition for him pressing the government for the money.

Most BL workers, faced with the choice between Edwardes' plan (labelled 'survival plan') and the void, with union leaders showing no readiness for a determined fight to save all the jobs, voted for the plan.

Then Edwardes and the Tories tried to press home their advantage. Edwardes replied to the BL workers' wage claim with an "offer" — or rather ultimatum — of a 5% pay rise

Then Tory Industry Minister Keith Joseph stated that the government's plans

for BL would depend on the workers' reaction to this "offer".

Whether or not the Tory government has been directly involved in the decision to sack Derek Robinson, certainly it is centrally involved in the whole strategy leading up to that sacking.

The BL bosses probably got the confidence to sack Robinson from the ballot result on November 1st. 87% of those voting approved the plan despite the fact that the combine committee and two unions (TGWU and TASS) opposed it.

In February this year Longbridge, under Robinson's leadership, struck against BL's refusal to pay out previously promised parity money. The strike ended in defeat after a week because other plants did not join Longbridge. In August 1977 a strike launched by Robinson in protest at BL's pay offer that year had to be called off almost immediately because of workers' protests against lack of consultation on the strike decision.

The bosses no doubt take all this as a sign that the BL stewards are isolated from, and way to the left of, the rank and file workers.

They misread the sit-

uation.

BL workers resent the bureaucratic methods of Robinson and his associates, who spend most of their time trying to restrain rank and file militancy, but then every so often expect workers to follow their strike calls like troops at a wave of their commander's baton. And many workers are deeply sceptical and cynical about the combine committee leaders.

A postal ballot like the recent one highlights these aspects. Faced with a choice between an uncertain struggle under a leadership which they didn't trust, and a plan which seemed to give a way at least of avoiding the worst, it was not surprising that all but the most class-conscious workers voted Edwardes' way.

At the same time, however, most workers deeply resented Edwardes' blackmail. And once workers come together in struggle — like now — that aspect can come to the fore.

So the bosses' plans can be upset. And BL workers can go forward from winning Robinson's reinstatement to reverse the whole downward spiral of the relation of forces in BL since the collapse of the fight against the closure of the Speke plant in May 1978.

Two years with the axeman

MICHAEL EDWARDES was appointed boss of British Leyland in October 1977, after Sir Richard Dobson resigned in a scandal about his racist and anti-trade union remarks.

But Edwardes was appointed as an axeman, on the basis of his record with his previous company, Chloride.

On January 4th, 1978, he told journalists that he was cancelling the ten year BL expansion plan and cutting 12,000 jobs. On February 1st, he outlined his plans in more detail to convenors, senior stewards and union officials.

The bamboozled union 'leaders' endorsed the plan and even gave Edwardes a standing ovation. The *Morning Star* lamely explained, "No shop stewards or staff representatives had any chance to consult on its terms, and to have voted against would have appeared irresponsible".

On February 15th, the first instalment of the Edwardes plan was announced: Speke no. 2 plant would be closed with the loss of 3,000 jobs.

The pay claim

THE sacking of Robinson is as much a part of BL's response to the unions' pay claim of a £24 a week rise as the official offer of 10% for skilled workers and 5% for the rest.

For attached to the offer — or ultimatum, to be more exact — were 85 pages of conditions: total mobility, ending demarcations, loss of most lay-off pay entitlement, tighter training rules, reduction of rest allowances, reduction of the night shift rate and, the meanest of all, reduction of the pay of disabled workers.

But, as WA said, 'the most far-reaching is the proposal specifically designed to squeeze out the shop stewards role'.

The BL ballot, of course, was another way of squeezing out the shop stewards, by replacing union and shop meetings with a management-imposed and management-biased ballot.

Now the BL bosses have tried to batter the stewards rather than by-pass them.

The combine committee protested, and the Speke workers voted to fight the closure.

But the Speke stewards dithered about organising decisive action or even informing their membership properly. After having been stabbed in the back by the AUEW, and getting only passive support from the combine committee, the Speke workers voted to accept redundancy terms on May 6th.

On May 26th, Edwardes said that the job cuts were not going fast enough. Another 7,000 had to go before the end of 1978. At the end of the year he announced that he wanted another 14,000 jobs cut in 1979.

Resistance was sporadic after the Speke defeat. A 5% plus strings pay deal for 1978-9 was accepted after scattered strikes at SU carburettors, Drews Lane and Bathgate. BL's productivity criteria for paying out parity money were eventually accepted by the senior stewards in May after the failure of the Longbridge strike on the issue in February.

The craft workers, whose big strike in early 1977 was the beginning of the end for the Labour government's wage-curb policies, made a last effort in April this year with a two-week strike for a £90 pay target. But Michael Edwardes faced them down with the threat of more factory closures, and the AUEW openly supported scabbing.

It was in September this year that Edwardes' plan to cut 25,000 jobs was announced. Confed union leaders organised a demonstration against the plan, on October 9th — then soon afterwards accepted the plan and called on workers to vote yes in the ballot.

At each stage, Edwardes' axe has cut deeper and deeper. And at each stage, the union leaders have dithered, mildly protested, and ended up going along with the axe.

by Andrew Hornung

AT a recent rally in Tehran, representatives of several Iranian leftist organisations denounced the government for its "petty-bourgeois anti-imperialist demagoguery".

These organisations are not overnight converts to the spirit of anti-imperialism, but long-time opponents of Iran's imperialist connections and of imperialism worldwide. Why should they choose this moment to denounce what in the capitalist press is daily described as an attack on US imperialism?

It is because they are aware that whatever genuine moods of anti-imperialism there are among the masses and even among

Behind the Tehran embassy drama

the clergy, the present occupation of the US Embassy, in Tehran has nothing in common with a genuinely anti-imperialist policy.

They realise that the occupation is nothing more than a stunt to boost the credibility of elements in the Islamic Revolutionary Council who have no policy for satisfying the needs of the masses.

They know that behind the denunciations of imp-

erialism, there is a campaign building up to link the left with imperialism. The authorities will brand the left wing opposition 'objectively' pro-imperialist or even as conscious agents of US imperialism.

The western press denounces the occupation for quite different reasons. They claim it is an act of terrorism. At the same time they claim that harbouring the Shah — a man whose rule of terror, tor-

ture and brutality lasted for more than a quarter of a century — is an act of humanity. The US, normally insistent on the extradition of terrorists, now insists that handing over the Shah would be a breach of principle.

And they claim that the Embassy's activities do not include spying, which is certainly a lie.

As revolutionary socialists, completely opposed to imperialism and to the

butcher Pahlavi, we completely solidarise with the anti-imperialism of the Iranian masses and their desire to try the ex-Shah. But, like the Iranian socialists, we do not see this action, with the taking of innocent or insignificant hostages, as genuine anti-imperialist struggle.

On the contrary, we see it as a shamelessly cynical device aimed at deluding the masses.

Carter has gained enor-

mously from the present situation: according to US polls, his popularity has soared since his 'firm stand' against Iran since the Embassy occupation. Now the American government has succeeded — in less spectacular ways — of mobilising public support for imperialist intervention.

Direct military intervention by the US still does not seem an immediate possibility, though the use of neighbouring countries to threaten Iran militarily is certainly possible. We say: Hands off Iran! For a workers' and peasants' government, the only one capable of a consistent anti-imperialist policy.

IMPERIALIST HANDS OFF IRAN

Corby steelworkers will fight for their jobs. As we go to press, shop stewards are meeting to decide on recommendations to a mass meeting on Wednesday 21st. From the mood at the works, it looks likely that Corby workers will stage a work-in.

Whatever the tactics

are, the working class movement should rally to support Corby.

The TUC Steel Committee has only given a tepid response to the proposals of the Iron and Steel Confederation for a fight against unemployment, though the ISTC's proposals were very small beer.

Tragically, just as Corby need the most broadly generalised struggle, at Shotton the decision has been to accept the shutdown of the works [with the exception of the finishing end] and enter negotiations over severance pay.

Corby's stand could make the works a second

UCS.

Whatever the ideas of the UCS leaders and the fate of the shipyard in the end, that struggle transformed the attitude of the labour movement in Britain to the struggle against unemployment. Corby could do the same, building on the UCS

experience, steering clear of the mistakes, but like UCS involving the whole of the labour movement in the fight.

JAMES DAVIES looks at the state of the steel industry and back over previous fights against closure, notably at Shotton itself.

A bold plan and the will to carry it out

THE programme of work-sharing without loss of pay and for workers' control of the steel industry is not simply a good idea, a better one than Shotton's idea of arguing for viability to 'save Shotton'. It is the only programme that can provide the focus for a united struggle against unemployment, and it is one that has in the past arisen as the logical next step in the struggle, though there was never the will to carry it out.

Viability arguments refer only to single plants. Apart from the fact that they accept the logic of profit, assuming wrongly that this need not contradict the logic of safeguarding workers' interests, these arguments must divide one works from another.

Instead of class struggle, the struggle becomes dominated by regionalism, petty nationalism and class collaboration.

Likewise, the refusal to impose workers' control — in the first place through occupations — usually rests on the fatal mistake of assuming that those who run capitalism share the same priorities and concerns as the workers and will listen if they are only approached with reasonable projects.

But all the marches and lobbies and blueprints in the world will not soften the logic of capitalist profit. There is no meeting point. Only by boldly imposing our solutions through mass action can we develop the power to win and create something different from the insolent bureaucratic indifference that characterises the British Steel Corporation.

Steel: a crisis caused by capitalism, not imports

ONLY one week separated the two death sentences: the first passed on the Corby steelworks near Northampton and the second on the Shotton works in North Wales. The British Steel Corporation's second announcement, on November 9th, also included a statement that BSC would be shutting Teesside's Cleveland plant, along with some smaller sites in the same area, as well as two Scottish steel mills — Dalzell and Clydesdale.

What has brought about this wholesale slaughter? With a falling off of demand in the industrialised world as a result of the world capitalist crisis, all the optimistic forecasts for steel industry expansion have proved false. Targets being discussed a little over five years ago look like the ravings of the deluded.

The output target of 32 million tonnes proposed some years ago looks foolish against the actual record of a fall in the last five years from 21 million tonnes to 17 million tonnes and a likely further fall to 15 million. In the same period, the work-

force in the steel industry has been cut from 228,000 to 184,000.

In addition to the general crisis, two other factors have influenced the course of the steel industry. First, a number of third world countries that were previously import-

ers of steel are now producing their own steel and even exporting it; second, technological changes in steel production have meant that many of the old steelmaking centres are not well placed to operate under the new conditions.

The idea that what is essentially wrong with the British steel industry is that it is the victim of foreign competition in the domestic market is pure nationalist nonsense. What is happening to the jobs of steelworkers here is no different from what is happening to steel workers in France and Germany — and in the USA.

France and Germany import 40% of their basic steel forms (against only 17% imported in Britain) while the USA has created a system of import controls (the trigger mechanism) — yet all three find themselves in much the same situation as British steel.

Meanwhile there have been attempts to buy off the anger of the steelworkers. The EEC has agreed to give Corby £20 million in aid and both Corby and Shotton will be declared special development areas: which certainly won't mean jobs for even half of those sacked, but will mean that employers setting up in the area will get big cash handouts. There is a lot of talk of 'thousands of jobs in the pipeline'. But 15,000 jobs were hacked away in the first week of November, and one Welsh MP described the plans as 'a rag-bag of non-events'.



Bill Sirs of the ISTC was negotiating redundancies right up to the moment BSC decided that all 5,500 jobs would have to go at Corby. His reaction, surprisingly, was to go to the TUC Steel Committee with a proposal for a one-day national strike and a series of selective stoppages. He has also called for a withdrawal from all joint consultative committees except on safety.

This new-found firmness was not greeted with any enthusiasm on the TUC Steel Committee, especially by leaders of the GMWU and the Blastfurnacemen's union who want to take the money and run. Unfortunately there is nothing in Sirs' record to make us think he will lead the kind of fight that can stop the government axe.

SHOTTON'S FURY FIZZLES OUT

Shotton's failure contains vital lessons for Corby's continued fight. Shotton after all waged a long fight to save the steelworks, their Action Committee was widely supported by the workers as well as the rest of the community, and it was the nucleus of the National Action Committee that flourished in 1973 and 1974.

The leaders of Shotton's campaign never stopped talking about viability. They put out plans to make the works viable and from the beginning put more effort into bringing these projects — a lot of them frankly pie in the sky — to the attention of MPs and others than into forcing an outcome by using the collective strength of the workers.

On one occasion they decided to blockade the steel coil they were producing in order to force BSC's hand. Good: but they released the coil which was in acute shortage just when their action was beginning to bite. Those on the action committee who did not approve of this retreat (decided without consultation) refused in the interests of a wrong-headed sense of unity to denounce what had happened.

On another occasion, when the closure of Shelton Bar works in Stoke was being discussed in the National Action

Committee, a bold plan was put forward by the Corby delegates at the meeting. Shelton Bar should work as normal, Corby would supply them as usual — the workers would seize control over the industry and impose their plan.

In the event the individual works were more interested in saving their own works and nothing happened — not least because of lack of militancy at Shelton Bar. Shotton was no exception: Welsh nationalists speaking on the platform of 'Save Shotton' meetings were even allowed to condemn steel investment in England.

Most of all, the Shotton workers never took an uncompromising stand in favour of work-sharing without loss of pay.

Corby can avoid these pitfalls: they can adopt a clear programme of worksharing in the steel industry; they can take the initiative in organising a national steel action committee capable of waging a national fight to impose this workers' solution. They can link up beyond this with the French and German workers currently fighting just the same attacks on their jobs, instead of opting for divisive nationalist nonsense against the EEC or in favour of import controls.



ISLINGTON CLPs VOTE TO OPPOSE COUNCIL

THE Labour council which, according to Roy Hattersley, 'likes making cuts', last Saturday came face to face with its angry Labour Party.

The confrontation had been instigated by Islington Labour's Local Government Committee (LGC), and was open to all members of Islington's three parties. Overwhelmingly, those who attended (a rather poor turnout at just over 100) came to support the LGC against the Council, and by 92 votes to 12 endorsed the statement of the LGC calling for no cuts, support to all councils defying the government, and for Labour to lead the cuts fight against Islington council.

The conference also called for active support for the November 28th Labour and TUC demonstration against the cuts, and for all Labour wards and GMCs to be active in the Islington Campaign against the Cuts.

Few of the guilty councillors turned up to defend themselves, and council leader Gerry

Southgate was said to be on holiday. It was left to the old-guard ultra-right Bayliss clique to claim that the council was acting for the best in a tight spot.

Southgate did send along a paper which defined the top priority (indeed, the 'absolute priority') as 'winning the next general election'. Bill Bayliss spoke of their deep care and concern, and then sat down in front of the conference and proceeded to ostentatiously do his Daily Telegraph crossword puzzle for the rest of the afternoon, while his wife Audrey (chair of Islington Councils Social Services Committee) raucously heckled speaker after speaker from the body of the hall.

Understandably, many speakers vented their anger at his hypocrisy rather than seriously getting down to discussing what should be done. And because the cuts (in housing maintenance, Under-5s provision — now withdrawn after a successful campaign —

and in participation and voluntary services) had been decided hurriedly and with evident prejudice, many among those supporting the LGC merely wanted to see more subtlety rather than no cuts.

The conference divided more evenly over a resolution from Mildmay branch calling for rate rises to be no greater than the rate of inflation, recognising 'that this will make a confrontation with the Government inevitable'.

Since the current round of cuts resulted not from Tory government measures but from a reduction in the planned rate rise for 1979-80 under right wing pressure, the left in Islington has tended to be rather fixated on a high-rates policy in reply. Others have feared to give ground to the right wing if they 'conceded' that high rates were no solution, feeling that this would detract from the no-cuts priority.

But in his paper Gerry Southgate spent most of his

argument against the no rate rise line, and those who voted down the Mildmay resolution did so in the company of the Bayliss mob.

One of the surprises of the conference, however, was the support of Keith Veness (previously a high rate rise campaigner) for the Mildmay position, on the grounds that it provided the best stance for a real fight with the Tory government: an argument that WA has been putting for months — against Veness.

WA militants played a significant part in the conference. We gave out a reply to Southgate, argued for a massive mobilisation along the lines of the Lambeth fight, and drew big applause when, in reply to one speaker who had said 'I'm sure we all agree as a first principle that we can't break the law', we reminded the conference that the labour movement would not exist if it had not broken the law, time and time again.

RL

WILL THE MINERS STRIKE FOR PAY?

THE MINERS' union executive meets on Wednesday 21st November to decide whether to put the Coal Board's 'final' pay offer to pithead ballot.

The left wing in the union, like the Scottish NUM and Yorkshire president Arthur Scargill, have opposed the ballot. They say the union should instead go ahead with organising industrial action to win the full claim.

For the right wing, union president Joe Gormley said he was 'bloody disappointed' by the union negotiators' rejection of the offer.

The right wing on the executive may go for a ballot. Although miners will be recommended to reject the offer, the right wing reckons that the rank and file may accept it. If the union leadership looks unwilling to lead a serious fight, an inadequate offer now may seem better than a risky attempt to get more.

But, as the Sunday Times pointed out, the right wing's tactics may lead them 'by

accident rather than design into an overtime ban or even a national strike'.

The claim is for £140 basic for faceworkers (who at present get £85), and £80 for surface workers (presently £61). The Coal Board offer would give £102 for faceworkers, £74 for surface workers, and nothing on the other elements of the claim: a shorter working week, earlier retirement, and pay guarantees for older miners downgraded after sickness or injury.

Militants in the pits cannot rely on accidents in the executive right wing's schemes. They must design and put into action a strategy for victory.

There must be pit head meetings and national rank and file leaflets arguing for the claim and putting the miners' case to power and rail workers. And Scargill and the executive left wing must help to organise a national rank and file response to Gormley's and the right wing's designs.

P.OWEN

CP WRESTLES WITH ITS IDENTITY PROBLEMS

LAST WEEK'S Communist Party Congress was an altogether more low-key affair than the previous Congress in November 1977.

In 1977 the CP was concerned to present a new image: a break away from 'dogmatism', which meant distancing the CP from Moscow, a new version of the 'British Road to Socialism', stressing the CP's attachment to democracy and the 'broad democratic alliance', and an open discussion of the new programme in the CP's press. An ITV film crew was even allowed to film internal meetings which prepared for the Congress.

Despite a split of hard line pro-Moscow Stalinists, CPers hoped that a demonstration of the CPGP's attachment to Eurocommunist ideas would provide a basis for stemming the decline in the CP's membership and influence.

Two years later those hopes appear completely illusory. Gordon McLennan, the General Secretary, reported a drop in membership of 4,694 since November 1977 — reportedly the largest drop since the invasion of Hungary in 1956. Membership now stands at 20,599, of whom no more than 6,000 are active (according to the *New Statesman's* estimate). The CP's candidates in the General Election got a derisory vote, and the party's paper, the *Morning Star*, is in chronic financial crisis.

The CP's industrial influence has declined more slowly than its membership. Yet the CP seems to be increasingly unable to provide a convincing strategy in the unions to fight either the Tories or the right wing. The support of the leading left-wing bureaucrats, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, for the Social Contract undermined 'Broad Left' politics, and left the CP with few weapons to fight an attack from the Right.

Now, for example, for the first time in years, there is not a single CP member on the AUEW Executive Committee.

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, which in the late '60s and early '70s was able to

focus and lead the opposition to anti-union legislation, is a shell which calls occasional conferences but is unable to take practical initiatives to beat back the Tories.

The Congress did not provide any solution to the problem of the Party's decline. Much of the discussion focused on the internal situation in the Party and the report of a 'Commission for Inner-Party Democracy',

views onto the Executive — either as representatives of a tendency or as individuals.

The main differences came on the issues of how to elect the Executive, on rights to argue for and organise for minority views in a pre-Congress period, and on the way the Congress is run.

The minority on the Commission, which included National Organiser Dave Cook, argued for a reduction of the Executive's power

arguing for the CP to approach the Labour Party more closely, possibly with a view to affiliation.

The development of the left in the Labour Party makes this last problem a life or death question for the CP. However much the CP stress that it is a 'different kind' of party, with a 'marxist ideology', the fact that its politics are largely indistinguishable from the mainstream Labour left means



New members of CP's executive with old-timers McLennan [centre], McGahev [3rd from right] — new faces but no new direction

which itself stated, "Too many [branches] are ill equipped to tackle their political responsibilities and some do not function at all".

As with all the other 'Eurocommunist' CPs, the British CP's allegiance to 'democracy' is in sharp contrast to practices inside the Party. The Congress discussion confirmed that there are very narrow limits to the 'democratisation' that the CP is willing to undertake, whatever the effect on its outside image.

Apart from a motion from the Yorkshire district not to discuss the issue at all (defeated by a relatively narrow majority of 175 to 102), there were three basic positions put: the Executive's, the Commission majority's, and the Commission minority's. In their essential commitment to the Stalinist understanding of 'democratic centralism' they were not fundamentally different.

All, for example, supported the continuation of the ban on factions in the CP, and the Report of the full Commission argued against the election of people with minority or oppositional

to draw the lines of discussion in the CP Congress and to control the election to the Executive by means of a list system and public vote. All of their proposals were defeated by a large majority.

The Executive supported most of the recommendations of the majority of the Commission, with the exception of one that full-time Party workers should get another job after 10 years. (This was defeated). None of the proposals that were carried represent a radical break with the existing regime in the CP.

The results showed that the CP in Britain cannot carry 'Eurocommunist' conceptions to any kind of logical conclusion out of fear that the centrifugal forces would be too great to hold the party together. There is already sharp conflict between old-style Moscow loyalists and Eurocommunist, between those who want the 'broad democratic alliance' to get broader and broader, and those who argue for a narrower focus on industry; between those who want the CP to present a more independent identity and those

that there are few reasons for choosing a second-string, ineffective reformist party. The Labour Party has at least some chance of achieving the parliamentary majority which is the lynchpin of the CP's strategy.

There was no real answer to this at the CP congress. In fact since the general election the CP has put forward a theory to avoid tackling these difficult points. According to the theory, the election of Thatcher represented a 'real shift to the right' in the whole framework of British politics and this explains the CP's continued decline, not the CP's strategy.

The congress did nothing that could stop the CP's continuing decline. The 'new' political answers put forward with such fanfares two years ago have been shown to be hollow and irrelevant. The CP is caught in an inescapable contradiction between a Stalinism that is all that it has as a clear identity but is hardly attractive today, and a Eurocommunist strategy that is not even cosmetically different from the mainstream Labour left.

BRUCE ROBINSON

SWP: a return to normal?

LAST WEEK'S SWP conference was held at a time when both claimed membership and active membership have been falling for over two years, and when SW sales per member are at an all-time low.

It followed a period of heated debate over the future of the SWP's black and women's organisations (Flame and Women's Voice), both made nominally independent at last year's conference. There was also a growing revolt against the downplaying of the industrial struggle over the past few years in favour of campaign-style politics, and against what was seen as a remote and out-of-touch central committee, free from the need to account for its actions.

In the event, the leadership was able to head off the disparate oppositions, but there is no evidence of it being able to solve the chronic crisis of the SWP.

Under the Heath government of 1970-74, the IS tried to present themselves as the best anti-Tories. With the return of Labour, IS, not understanding that the hold of reformism on the working class had not actually been broken by even the most militant struggles under Heath, expected a continued series of confrontations, enabling IS to grow fast as the alternative to Labour.

When the class struggle in fact became considerably quieter, IS retreated into sectarian chest-beating and plunged its members into a series of campaigns, losing substantial numbers in the process.

With Lewisham the SWP gained much credibility (and many members) as being serious fighters against fascism. The ANL emerged, the SWP downplayed the importance of the class struggle, apart from an abortive attempt at setting up lots of factory bulletins in January 1978. The SWP developed an analysis in which the downturn was caused by the bureaucratisation and cooption of shop stewards, ignoring the role of reformist ideology.

It was not until four weeks into the Ford strike that the SWP 'rediscovered' a combative and essentially undefeated working class movement.

Last week's conference restored the industrial struggle to its former prominent position in the SWP/IS's orientation. But there has been no advance on the previous IS formula of merely pushing for more militancy, being the best trade unionists, linking up the fragments in a purely organisational way.

The SWP has no more idea of how to combat reformism, particularly the resurgent left variety within the Labour Party, than it had five years ago. The resolution and speeches published in last week's Socialist Worker (17.11.79) nowhere go beyond the limits

of what a good trade unionist would automatically support — apart from a few references to the need to raise politics in addition to the militant trade unionism.

There is no accounting for the mistakes of the the previous period, let alone any understanding of what gave rise to them.

There was no real accounting on Women's Voice or Flame either. Conference confirmed the leadership policy against strong opposition from WV and Flame activists. In WV this means an organisational independence — in which the WV editor and full-timer are appointed by the SWP — with the politics of WV defined as being the same as those of the SWP. In practice, this amounts to WV being an SWP periphery organisation.

For Flame, the SWP has abandoned the perspective of building an 'Independent revolutionary organisation of Blacks'. In the face of strong opposition from the majority of black members, it was decided to allow the retention of local Flame groups but these are periphery of the SWP.

In both cases, factors in the change of policy seem to have been a fear of losing control as SWP members in both organisations developed an identity as WV or Flame members, and the danger of contamination by other political tendencies, such as black nationalism, feminism of even Workers' Action, (which had the support of a significant minority at the recent WV conference).

Rather than fight for its politics, which would be difficult given the low level of political education of the average member, the SWP decided on an organisational solution.

There was little attempt at an honest accounting of the successes and failures of the SWP's most successful venture in the field of mass movements to date, the ANL, which at its height mobilised 100,000 anti-fascists. The SWP was unable or unwilling to use the mass audience it had gained to organise for its policies of no platform for fascists and no immigration controls.

Having made minimal gains from the ANL, the SWP seems to have now virtually dropped it.

On Ireland, too, there was little evidence of a more serious attitude to a question which the SWP/IS has always found 'difficult'.

With this conference, the SWP no doubt hopes that normality has been restored after the aberrations of the last few years. But the SWP still does not understand that militant trade unionism is not an infallible antidote to reformist consciousness — or at least it acts as if it does not understand this. And so similar policies are likely to lead again to similar errors and similar crises.

Ygael Bluntstein

WHEN A LORRY HITS A PICKET IT'S AN ACCIDENT

400 maintenance engineers at Manchester direct works are on strike against a threat of lay-offs, arising from the blacking they have imposed on jobs not covered by their bonus scheme.

As one picket told WA, the fact that no bonus was paid for 30 jobs resulted in up to £30 difference between painters' and engineers' pay.

The main Bessemer Street Depot and other sites are being picketed. The Capital Works Depot in Cheetham Hill, and the Moss Side Repairs Depot have also

struck in sympathy.

Last week a picket, 26-year old David Horrocks, was knocked down by a scab lorry at Bessemer Street and severely injured. Police have refused to prosecute because the 'accident' took place on a private road. (Would they have said the same if a scab had got injured on a private road?)

The union (NUSMWH&DE) has made the strike official, and the district officer Bill Lawrenson has already contacted union solicitors who find the police decision on the picket 'very unusual'.

MICK WOODS

Fascists smash up Lambeth meeting

ABOUT twenty fascists, armed with clubs, invaded and broke up an SWP public meeting in Lambeth Town Hall on Thursday 14th November. The main target of their attack seems to have been Paul Holborow, who was addressing the meeting.

About 25 people had come to the meeting, which was about Lambeth council's fight against the cuts. After about half an hour the fascists came in in two files, one down each side of the hall, and started attacking those present with cosses and with chairs.

Unprepared for self-defence the meeting broke up and people got away through an exit [luckily unguarded] at the back of the hall. The fascists then disappeared.

Three from the left and one fascist were taken to hospital, but all were able to go home soon after.

It is uncertain whether the fascists were from the NF, or the British Movement, or both.

The NF have a strong base in Southwark; they have several shop stewards in Southwark Council's refuse depot at Grove Lane, one of whom was seen around the Town Hall the evening of the meeting, and they also do irregular paper sales at the East Street market in the borough.

The SWP are planning to have another meeting, same place, same topic, in a few weeks' time. Next time they intend to have stewards, a practice which they have let slip this year.

The lessons of this event are, first, that the fascists haven't gone away — it is essential to have stewards at publicly advertised left meetings; second, there must be a concerted drive to kick the NF out of the labour movement in Southwark, and a regular left presence in East Street market in enough numbers to stop the NF when they do turn up.

JEFF SLEE

Good learners in Stoke

At a meeting in Stoke organised by SO and the local NALGO branch, a united cuts campaign has been started. 30 militants representing the NUT, NUJ, NATFHE, NUPE, NUS, and G&M elected a committee to begin organising the fightback in the area, with the emphasis on rank

and file direct action and involving both organised and unorganised sections of the working class.

Like Clay Cross, the Lambeth fightback is becoming a crucial lesson to us in fighting the Tory cuts. Let's show the Tories that we are very good learners.

SIGNED YOURS FAITHFULLY ANONYMOUS OF DUKINFIELD

LAST WEEK an anonymous letter was sent to all 182 striking engineers at Adamsons Containers. The letter, claiming to be written by the wife of a striker, attacked convenor John Taylor for being "power-mad" and a "megalomaniac".

How anyone but management would know all 182 addresses, and be able to photocopy the letter and afford £18 in first class post-

age is something the strikers would like to know.

The strike, against sackings in the plant which are aimed at removing selected shop stewards and union activists, is now entering its 13th week.

Donations and messages of support to:

Adamsons Containers Strike Committee, c/o John Taylor, 27 Jubilee Avenue, Dukinfield, Cheshire.

MICK WOODS

Socialist Organiser

Labour councils and the cuts

Conference timetable

The policies

Socialist Organiser

Lambeth conference tells the Council:

STOP THE CUTS NOW!

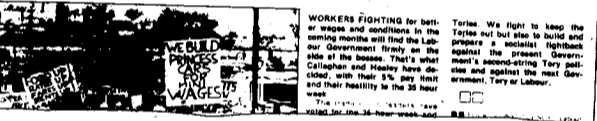
Concordat: A new con-trick



Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory



Whose side are you on?



SOCIALIST ORGANISER

HOW THE LEFT HAS ORGANISED

THE SOCIALIST Campaign for a Labour Victory, the tendency round *Socialist Organiser*, meets in conference this Saturday, November 24th.

The key task is to get organised as a force of inter-

The key task is to get organised as a force of the internationalist, class-struggle Left, with a specific role to play within the generally nationalist and parliamentary broad left of the British labour movement. For there are big tasks and there are opportunities coming up for the Left in Britain. And the established official Left will not do what needs to be done.

The British labour movement is sluggish, ramshackle, attuned to haggling over small issues within relative capitalist prosperity. The sharpening crisis of world capitalism, and especially of Britain, dictates that it become something different, breaking its links with the existing state, rallying its forces for struggle, and raising its horizons from petty reform to revolution.

The necessary reorientation and reorganisation has to start with a reorientation of the Left.

After 1966, left wing activists streamed out of the Labour Party. After 1975 they reacted differently to a right wing Labour government. Mostly they stayed in to fight. Many learned lessons. The Brighton conference decisions for greater Labour Party democracy were the reflection of that.

The decisions are limited, and decisions about formal democracy without a parallel political victory for a class struggle socialist programme are in no way adequate to the requirements of the labour movement in the present crisis of British capitalist society.

But the Brighton decisions can set going a struggle which is much less limited: a struggle for control of the Labour Party, between conflicting class loyalties. Most of the official leaders of the Left may not understand it, but a Labour Party where the leadership is seriously accountable to the working class base could not be a stable governing party for capitalism in times of difficulty for the capitalist system.

The right wing has its schemes to neutralise the Brighton decisions. If it comes to the crunch, they are prepared to threaten a split: the idea has already been raised by ex-Ministers and trade union leaders. The feeble performance of the Parliamentary and NEC Left during the Labour government shows that they might wilt under such a threat, or, at any rate, that it would be foolish for the class struggle Left to rely on them to push through the Brighton conference decisions. The structure of the Party is still bureaucratic, and large sections of the Left are very passive.

What could strengthen the Left are the mounting struggles against the Tories, and the ability of the Left to organise in and from those struggles. The Labour Party is open enough for a fighting left wing to pull

in forces and gain influence quite quickly. Such a left wing could force the official Left leaders to stand firm, or take up the fight if they buckle.

The Tribune/Bennite Left is not attuned to organising in and through class struggle. This came out clearly at the Labour Coordinating Committee conference on November 3-4: no plans for action on the cuts; no discussion on the proposed anti-union laws or the wages struggle. Instead, reminiscences of "when we were at the Department of Industry".

The attention of the official Left leaders is focused on what they can do for the working class when they get into office in the next Labour government. They see the democratic reforms in the Labour Party as a shift in the system

of checks and balances to give the labour movement greater weight vis-à-vis the permanent state apparatus. The direct class struggle is only a supplementary factor, and above all they have no notion of fighting it out to a finish.

Central in diverting the official Left from a focus on direct class struggle is their nationalism. Their 'Alternative Economic Strategy' envisages remoulding Britain into a siege economy, somehow supposed to be halfway between capitalism and socialism. Their prime answer to unemployment is import controls; they look to action by the British state against other states rather than international action by the working class against the bourgeoisie.

One of their main political demands is withdrawal from the EEC: they see the way forward as bolstering and protecting British

capitalism world, rather than opening international unity against capitalist unit

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Organiser mu: using the Left: gane. Many of resolutions s Saturday's cor local SO group movement bo necessary They analyse ive Economic assert that the for international unity and not the EEC, deno: ion of dissiden Europe, and ca

How the Right could carve

FOR MANY on the left of the Labour Party, the two victories at Brighton and the composition of the committee of inquiry into the party are proof positive that the left is at last making the running, and will soon assume the mantle of power.

Such ideas not only stem from the victories and the seeming no-nonsense determination of the left on the NEC in the way it handles the right, but also from the fact that the right itself seems to be in disarray.

Paradoxically, the vitriolic press campaign against the left and its pleading for Callaghan to take a grip on the situation have given the left a further sense of security.

This situation has come about because the traditional mechanism of the right's control of the party, the TUC block vote, has been fragmented. Through the gap this has created, the

constituency Labour Party activist has been able to step. It is this which threatens the stability of a future labour government if it acts in the interests of capitalism.

The importance of the inquiry is that it is the next round of the fight for control of the party. But the Right will try to neutralise these gains by incorporating them into a reconstruction of the party.

The inquiry was first proposed at the 1977 conference by David Bassett, leader of the GMWU, and the driving force behind the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory. The TULV is broad enough in its composition (including Moss Evans and

Alan Fisher) not to be identified as solely a body of the right. However, the Right dominates the TU side of the inquiry. Some of the ideas they are likely to push on the inquiry closely parallel those of the Man-

ifesto Group of MPs, and have been echoed by Callaghan in a number of speeches over the years, and especially since the setting up of the inquiry.

They have two main areas of concern. The first is the NEC. Ideas for a new voting system would include breaking down voting into sections outside the control of conference as a whole. MPs would have their own section, and CLPs would vote on a regional basis. Councillors would be specially brought onto the NEC (Callaghan has for a number of years floated the idea of the "professionalisation" of councillors).

Such a radical reconstruction of the NEC would probably give the right a built-in majority.

Secondly, there is the question of reorganising TU contributions to the party. At present, about 90% go to the party nationally, which in effect means to the NEC. While Chapple

floated the idea of paying the money direct to the PLP (and was promptly sat upon by his cleverer right wing friends), the TU may well press for the redistribution of money to the CLPs in the form of sponsorship for MPs. This will go towards the creation of a network of full time employed agents, and through the financial control that the TU will wield in local parties they will obviously have a considerable say in those parties' policies.

This is most apparent on the question of reselection. If the sitting MP is bringing in most of the money, CLPs are likely to think more than twice before they go ahead with the reselection procedure.

Of course, the best-laid plans of trade union bureaucrats can be upset by the rank and file. The conclusion must be that the fight for democracy in the Labour Party cannot be separated

from a fight for democracy in the unions. Left tendencies like *Socialist Organiser* must be active in the unions as well as in the Labour Party.

Given these protective measures for the Right, mandatory reselection and the writing of the manifesto by the NEC could stay, and some form of electoral college for the selection of the leader could be introduced too, weighted in favour of the trade unions.

Over the writing of the manifesto, at the last election, Callaghan threatened to resign if the NEC insisted on what it wanted, forcing it to back down. There is no reason why future leaders cannot pull the same trick, and given the record of the NEC, they will get away with it as long as local activists did not call them to account.

Finally, the Right wants to see the Underhill report on 'entrism' investigated, and the structure of the YS altered to break the hold of *Militant*.

If such proposals were pushed through, then the present dualism between PLP and CLPs would be abolished, and a monolithic and bureaucratic structure financed by the trade unions would take its place. However, a number of constraints exist.

Bassett cannot push too hard with these proposals for fear of breaking up the TULV alliance. The TU block vote is split, with the T&G and NUPE on the left, and the AUEW in the middle.



Will the Right use the Inquiry to gut the Brighton

The left must be on guard against the emergence of a patched-up compromise, perhaps with the reorganisation of the NEC dropped. (This is also the issue on which the left will fight hardest: apart from the political implications, if such proposals were to go through, then the majority of the present NEC members would be out of a job).

Behind these moves by the TU leaders, there is obviously a desire to tame the left, and to stabilise the party both politically and financially. There is also the experience of the

last Labour gov: which apart from period at the begi its term of office r totally impervious needs of the trad bureaucracy, even extent of the timin election.

Once again the leaders found that in office was able against their wish they had no means o them to order.

In that context, th by the trade union must also be seen first shots in the bind a future Labo ernment to their



Left-wingers on the Inquiry: Benn, Heffer, Kitson, Richardson

ER CONFERENCE

E AS TO SE

against the than as devel- ional workers' international controls (all icial Left. ne of trying British state at, the right says win, for correspond to ity. Socialist start organ- for a different the political ublished to fference from s and labour lies lay the groundwork. the Alternat- Strategy, fight must be al workers' to get out of nce repress- s in Eastern l for activity

Women's Rights" as a step towards a "socialist women's movement based in the working class". An amendment from Hackney SO group, while not opposing Fightback, wants SO to give its main support to the socialist-feminist current.

The conference will also discuss how SO should organise. Traditionally, Left groupings in the Labour Party have hung together on a clannish or cliqueish basis: Tribune (which still offers a home to Michael Foot) is an example, as are dozens of constituency Left caucuses. To change the labour movement, we must change the Left. SO, by its nature a left alliance in the Labour Party, cannot have a razor-sharp ideological definition, but it should be based on definite political positions.

Socialist Challenge supporters, who have been very marginally involved in SO, argue against this. They say that SO should be active in the Labour Coordinating Committee (we agree, and indeed, WA supporters have done a lot more in the LCC than *Socialist Challenge* supporters), but also that the paper *Socialist Organiser* should be replaced by a bulletin to coordinate various existing campaigns in the Labour Party. Apparently, they want SO to be a vague ginger group within the LCC rather than a fighting left wing.

There are echoes of the same concept in a Hackney SO group resolution, when it talks about uniting "all on the left of the Labour Party", without political qualification. But on the

major practical points of the SO organisation, there is an agreed resolution from the outgoing SO Secretariat. On the SO platform, too, the great majority is likely to agree except on the issue of rate rises.

The most contentious item on organisation is a clause in the Hackney SO group resolution which says, or appears to say, that no tendency can have a majority on the SO Steering Committee. The wish to have a fair deal for minorities in SO is legitimate — and the Hackney resolution declares that they have had a fair deal so far — but an arbitrary limit of the sort suggested would be quite undemocratic (and unworkable without complicated constitutional rules). It would make supporters of any majority tendency in SO second class citizens, unable to use their votes as they see fit.

A proper organisational structure for SO is vital: the right wing is going to get organised, and we will not defeat them unless we get organised too.

The battles against the Tories and the coming struggles within the Labour Party open big chances for revolutionaries to reorganise and re-educate the Left. Sadly, many socialists let themselves drift along with the broad left, or confine themselves to self-marginalising exclusive focus on trade union militancy (like the SWP). SO is well placed to avoid those two errors and to play a pivotal role. Saturday's decisions can be vital in preparing it to do that.

Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

VOTE LABOUR

ONE THING distinguishes the Labour Party from all other parties. It is the mass party of the working class, built by the trade union movement to be its representative in Parliament. It is, accordingly, the party through which the vast majority of workers will express their hatred of the Tories — the representatives of wealth and privilege.

The vast majority of workers will rightly want to vote Labour, not because of Labour's record, but in order to deny the bosses a victory in Parliament.

The Labour government's record is a disgrace. Instead of challenging capitalism, Labour has managed it in the interests of the rich and powerful. Socialism has not been discredited — it was never tried. And the wishes of the Labour Party conference were ignored by the Government.

The SCLV calls on every worker not only to vote for Labour but to campaign for a Labour victory. The fight must be kept up after the election to push the Labour leaders to break with the bosses and bankers. We need leaders that will fight for and with the working class in government and out. And we need a labour movement capable of calling the leaders to account.

The fight won't finish with the election. The power to run society does not lie in Parliament, but with the ownership of industry and the organisation of the army, police and state bureaucracy.

That is why we need to fight to create a really socialist movement that will break this power. We need to replace the chaos and anarchy of the profit system with a society run by the working class and democratically planned to meet our needs.

FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

DISBAND McNEE'S ASSASSINS

This is their law and order

SOCIALIST BEATEN TO DEATH IN SOUTHALL



POLICE COMMISSIONER ...

up Brighton's reforms

Moves to change NEC, LP finance



While these constraints exist on the right wing trade union leaders, and therefore on the right of the party, the left also faces constraints. However, these are fundamentally of its own making, stemming from its political limitations. The drive for democracy stemmed from the Labour rank and file, not the Left Parliamentarians. Indeed, some Left MPs, like Ian Mikardo, played a negative role. But the rank and file Left has not yet organised its own leadership to challenge the official parliamentary Left.

During the last government, the Tribune left was consigned to the part of a wretched bunch of conscience-stricken MPs, unable and unwilling to break from the domination of Wilson and then of Callaghan.

The lessons that the leading left MPs learned from the experience really centre around the failure of the government to adopt the alternative economic strategy (a radical bourgeois alternative to the crisis), and the debacle suffered over the Common Market issue and public expenditure cuts. Just as the alternative economic strategy is a "cold" imposition from above of state intervention (which they think is socialism), so, the lessons they have drawn rest within the confines of the constitutional relation of the PLP to conference.

Yet the logic of the struggle will go beyond the "constitutionalism" of Benn and his co-thinkers, begging parallels with the 1960 decision on unilateral disarmament. Will the Left today draw back as they did then, compromise themselves and allow the Right to roll back the gains?

The fundamental constraint on the Left is its blindness to the realities of class struggle. The question of building an activist Left in the Labour Party that fights in the interests of the working class and links up with industrial battles is secondary for them. For them, power rests in Parliament:

the role of the working class is one of supporting the second "Keynesian revolution". Such a perspective and understanding can only be a debilitating factor in the Left's ability to fight for and carry through their ideas.

However, more fundamental than the bureaucratic calculations of the Right and the Constitutionalism of the Left, the manner in which the committee has been disputed reflects the state of the class struggle,

and by the same token is part of that struggle, representing the shortening of the options for both right and left.

The fight takes place when an undefeated class is not only experiencing vicious attacks on its living standards, and on its organisations, but has just been through the experience of a right wing Labour government. Also, for the first time since the end of the first World War, the Left is not facing a monolithic

trade union block aligned with the right wing. If the class struggle Left gets organised in the unions and CLPs, all the calculations could be upset.

The conference on the democracy issue called for by the LCC and planned early next year, must be actively supported, seen as a focus to forge maximum unity of the left, and used as an opportunity to press forward with organising the class struggle Left.

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN



And the right-wingers: Basnett[top], Keys, Foot, Callaghan

What the SCLV has done

THE idea of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory was first put forward by Workers' Action just before the Labour Party Young Socialists conference at Easter 1978. We started from the tasks posed by the general election which was then expected for the autumn.

Left wingers could not abandon the political field entirely to the anti-socialist leadership of the Labour Party, and just slog like dumb foot-soldiers in the election, we wrote. Instead a campaign was necessary to 'combine support for Labour in the elections with a fight-back against the present government, for socialist policies'.

We put forward a platform for the campaign, and appealed for support to LPYS and Labour Party militants.

The 'Chartist' tendency immediately responded — and, after them, much wider support than we expected. A formal launching conference was held in July attended by 200 people from 76 CLPs.

By then one CLP, three parliamentary candidates, over 25 Labour councillors, and many trade unionists had sponsored the SCLV. In the following months three other CLPs, two Trades Councils, a shop stewards' committee, and several trade union branches and LPYSs sponsored the SCLV.

The election did not come as soon as expected. But the basic idea of the SCLV — to organise a fighting left wing in the Labour Party — was not only relevant at election time.

In September 1979 the first issue of the SCLV's paper *Socialist Organiser* came out, with a front page appeal to help defend the Asian community of Brick Lane, in East London, against a National Front march. The SCLV was out to organise a left wing that was active on the streets as well as in the committee-rooms.

Socialist Organiser has come out monthly since January 1979, with two special issues in addition before the May general election.

It has helped to build support for industrial struggles; the March issue reported on Haringey SCLV supporters' work to build a labour movement support committee for the public service workers' strike. It has mobilised for major demonstrations: SO put out a special appeal for the August 12th Troops Out march and got about 400 behind our banner.

SO has carried many debates: on rate rises, on the EEC, on devolution, on economic policy. It has covered the struggle internationally, particularly Iran and southern Africa. It has made a special point of coverage on Ireland.

In the general election campaign, the SCLV produced its own alternative election leaflets. Some candidates and constituencies took them as official Labour election material; in other constituencies SCLV supporters used the leaflet, posters and a special election broadsheet to get across socialist ideas while canvassing.

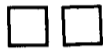
The ten months of SCLV activity since the July 1978 conference had convinced us all that there could be no question of winding up the campaign after the election. The SCLV put itself on the scene at the October 1979 Labour Party conference, producing a daily Briefing and getting 150 people to a fringe meeting on the cuts.

Two major campaigns will focus the SCLV's work over the coming months: a campaign to support the fightback against the cuts, especially in Lambeth; and the Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights — against the Corrie Bill and other Tory moves restricting women's rights.

Why socialists need Marxism

This article is the first of a series of four we will carry in the Magazine Section, giving a brief introduction to some of the ideas of Marxism and their importance for the struggle for socialism

This week: how Marxism differs from utopian and reformist socialism, and what its distinctive method is. To come: Profits and exploitation; Commodities and money; Why capitalism is doomed. All the quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from Marx or Engels.



HEGEL WROTE, in relation to the French Revolution of 1789-99:

"... Not until now had man advanced to the recognition of the principle that Thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch".

And:

"... The halo which has surrounded the leading oppressors and gods of the earth has disappeared. Philosophers demonstrate the dignity of man; the people will learn to feel it and will not merely demand their rights, which have been trampled in the dust, but will themselves take them — make them their own".

Previously the social order, and the allotted status of each individual within it, had been widely considered as something god-given. Questioning the established order of society was immoral and sacrilegious. The French Revolution established the idea that the people could and should arrange society according to human reason — although it turned out that "this kingdom of Reason was nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie" and "bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the essential Rights of Man".

The French revolutionaries had proclaimed the rule of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Quickly it became clear that the new society was in fact unequal (despite the citizens' formal equality before the law), unfree for the majority, and very far from fraternal. The bourgeoisie had "pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors' and [had] left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payments'".

The most radical thinkers reacted by demanding a further revolutionary transformation of society.

Thus socialism became a real political current, though in all sorts of confused forms. For the first socialists, "the proletariat, as yet in its infancy, offers to them the spectacle of a class without any historical initiative or any independent political movement". They therefore resort to schemes and doctrines for rejigging capitalist society in such a way that its 'good sides' can be fully developed and its inconvenient 'bad sides' disposed of.

"In the formation of their plans, they are conscious of caring chiefly for the interests of the working class, as being the most suffering class. Only from the point of view of being the most suffering class does the proletariat exist for them".

As the working class develops, this utopian socialism loses its justification: "... although the originators of these systems were in many respects revolutionary, their disciples have in every case formed mere reactionary sects".

Their method is carried on by what Marx and Engels called the bourgeois and petty bourgeois socialists — or Social Democrats (*).

"The peculiar character of the Social Democracy is epitomised in the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of doing away with the two extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony. However different the means proposed for the attainment of this end may be, however much it may be trimmed with more or less revolutionary notions, the content remains the same. This content is the transformation of society in a democratic way, but a transformation within the bounds of the petty bourgeoisie..."

This theory was originally championed by the middle class radicals of the 19th century. In the 20th century, with variations and modifications, it has become the typical theory of the bureaucrats in the labour movement. They too:

* The term 'Social Democrat' has had various meanings in its history. In the 1840s it meant the left, 'socialist'-minded wing of the bourgeois-democratic movement. In the later 19th century it was taken (despite protests from Marx and Engels) as the name for the mass workers' parties, and 'Social Democratic' became synonymous with 'Marxian-Socialist'. After 1917 it was the name for the reformism of the labour bureaucrats — similar but not identical to 1840s Social Democracy.

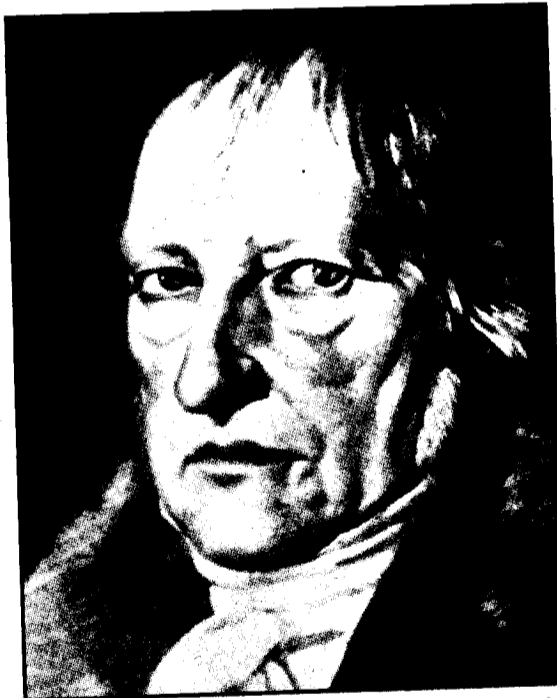
"want all the advantages of modern social conditions without the struggles and dangers necessarily resulting therefrom. They desire the existing state of society minus its revolutionary and disintegrating elements".

To progress beyond these versions of socialism — dreamers' blueprints, or vapid schemes for harmonising capitalism — is possible only from one viewpoint, as Marx recognised in one of his earliest communist writings.

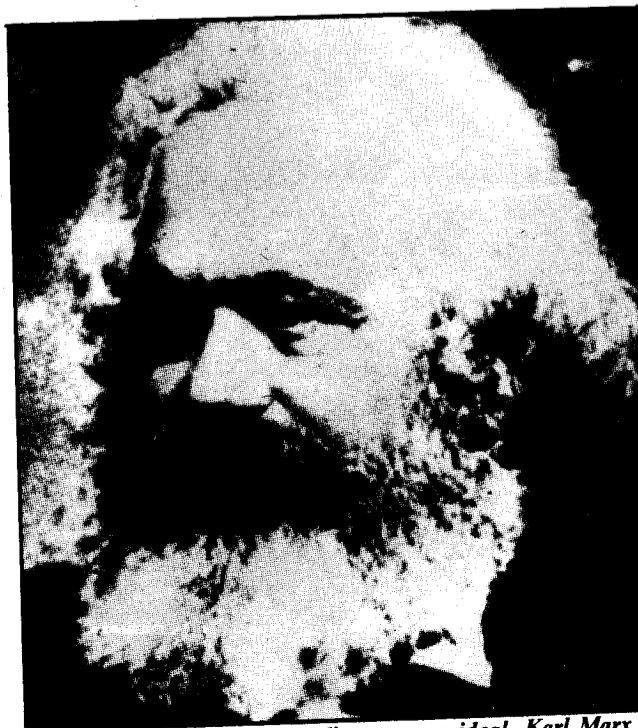
"Where, then, is the positive possibility of German emancipation?"

"Answer: In the formation of a class with radical chains, a class in civil society that is not of civil society, a class that is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society having a universal character because of its universal suffering and claiming no particular right because no particular wrong but unqualified wrong is perpetrated on it; a sphere that can invoke no traditional title but only a human title, which does not partially oppose the consequences but totally opposes the premises of the German political system; a sphere, finally, that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, thereby emancipating them; a sphere, in short, that is the complete loss of humanity and can only redeem itself through the total redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society as a particular class is the proletariat..."

"Heralding the dissolution of the existing order of things, the proletariat merely announces the secret of its own existence because it is the real dissolution of this order. Demanding the negation of private property, the proletariat merely



Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Although tied up in a conservative system, his dialectical method expressed in its highest form the critical, revolutionary aspect of philosophical idealism. Marx and Engels learned from and re-developed this method.



For previous socialists, socialism was an ideal. Karl Marx integrated the programme of socialism into an overall conception of history as 'the history of class struggles'.

raises to the principle of society what society has raised to the principle of the proletariat, what the proletariat already embodies as the negative result of society without its action".

The task of Marxist theory is to render conscious the revolutionary movement of the working class. To do this we have to understand bourgeois society as a totality, not picking out its 'good sides' and 'bad sides' according to ideals themselves derived from bourgeois conditions; and we have to show how socialism is inherent in 'what the proletariat already embodies', rather than being a mere 'good idea' for rejigging society.

In doing this, Marxist theory plays a practical role in revolutionary struggle.

"Criticism has plucked imaginary flowers from the chain, not so that man will wear the chain that is without fantasy or consolation but so that he will throw it off and pluck the living flower".

In normal times, the working class is dominated by its bourgeois environment, and by the ideas of bourgeois conservatism and social democracy derived from that environment. Only the fusion of the efforts of Marxist science with the spontaneous revolutionary strivings of the working class can bring victory.

Moreover, to continue revolutionary activity through all the ups and downs of the class struggle, communist militants specially need the guidance of Marxist theory; that is, an understanding of the capitalist system as a whole, and a broad historical perspective. Without that, even the most fresh and vigorous revolutionary will can be diverted into utopianism or reformism by the discouraging pressure of bourgeois society, particularly within narrow and isolated spheres of activity.

The essence of 'bourgeois socialism' is to split up capitalist society into its various aspects, and to propose piecemeal reforms in relation to each 'particular wrong'.

They consider production — in abstraction from its relation to the market, that is, the fact that it is production for exchange, for money-grabbing — and find that the different factors of production, capital and labour (†), are natural necessities. They further find it natural that part of the resulting revenue goes to the workers, part to the expansion of the constant capital, and part to reward the capitalists. However, they note that unfortunately often the capitalists' income seems excessive and workers' too low; thus they propose trade union action to increase wages and taxes to equalise wealth. They find also that regrettably often the capitalists are too authoritarian; thus they propose 'worker-director' schemes and the like to equalise matters.

In this way the bourgeois socialists reckon to replace the conflicts within the capitalist production process by harmony. Not stopping to observe the vapid impotence of their schemes, they turn to the sphere of the circulation of products.

Having considered production in isolation from circulation, they then consider circulation in isolation from production. Since it is taken for granted that goods enter circulation as exchange-values (that is, things to be exchanged, for money, and destined for use only after a process of exchange has brought them to the final consumer) the basic relations once again appear unquestionable. The 'bourgeois socialists' nonetheless becomes concerned about some features that seem unreasonable; where people suffer exceptional hardship as a result of being short of money; where, on the other hand, financiers and speculators apparently draw huge fortunes out of circulation bearing no relation to what they put in. So they propose state welfare measures on the one hand, state restrictions on excessive wealth on the other.

They then turn to the state. Naturally there must be machinery for the administration of society. Sadly, the existing machinery is somewhat biased in favour of the rich. So it must be made more democratic by increasing the authority of Parliament, more democratic recruitment of top state officials and army officers, more consultation with the trade unions, and so on.

The various proposals for 'socialism' within the fundamental limitations of bourgeois society are very diverse. Sometimes they are naive, sometimes simply cynical. But they share the same method. Marxist theory uses a different method. It shows how all the excesses of capitalism are just part of the logic of the whole system, with as much right as its apparently normal features. It shows how the 'good sides' of capitalism and the 'bad sides' are inextricably interwoven. In place of all the schemes for rejigging capitalism (innumerable in their variety, for it only needs imagination to think of a new one) it puts a thorough-going critique of the whole system.

The efforts of Marxists have succeeded to the extent that the 19th century chaos of socialist doctrines has disappeared. Today's quack socialist usually confine themselves to presenting some diluted or bowdlerised version of a few Marxist propositions. This form of quackery can however be just as dangerous as the old forms, and the need to understand the Marxist critique is just as important today.

† And land. But it is easier to grasp the basic economic ideas if we leave aside the problem of land and of rent.

POLITICS OF THE U.S.F.I.: ALGERIA YESTERDAY, NICARAGUA TODAY

WISE AFTER THE EVENT?

ON ALGERIA, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International [USFI] eventually criticised itself for attitudes very similar to those it now has on Nicaragua. Here we print the final part of a resolution adopted by the International Executive Committee of the USFI in 1969. It certainly falls short of an adequate critique, but it does eventually get round to the core of the matter: the USFI did "too little" "in carrying out the specific function of the Trotskyist movement — to form the nucleus of a future Algerian revolutionary party" [in fact, it renounced that function even as an aim], and correspondingly failed to agitate for workers' councils.

Is the USFI able to learn from its mistakes?

TODAY the Trotskyist movement is unanimous in its assessment of the current situation in Algeria. After the June 19 coup d'état, however, the limited extent of the change in the government makeup led some militants to ask whether the character of this coup had not been exaggerated; since, after all, it did not exceed the dimensions of a palace revolution. Subsequently the majority agreed that the coup was the qualitative expression of a molecular deterioration which had occurred in the last period of President Ben Bella's regime. But in view of the rapidity with which the state bureaucracy accentuated its right turn, a second question arose: Did the Trotskyist movement exaggerate the advances of the Algerian revolution in February 1964 when it characterised the Ben Bella government as a workers and peasants government? This is the question that must be answered now.

There is no reason to minimise the real advances that marked the development of the Algerian revolution during the first years after independence. Real anti-imperialist and anticapitalist actions were taken by the Ben Bella government and, more precisely, the limited team around Ben Bella, which in important instances went beyond the institutional framework, legalising the conquests of the masses by decrees. The Fourth International was correct in giving critical support to the Ben Bella team from the time it conquered power in July 1962.

It is, however, likewise necessary to take into account the fact that the masses in movement who won self-management were the permanent workers on the large estates that later became self-managed farms; that is, the agricultural proletariat in the true sense of the word. After the summer of 1962, this agricultural proletariat was the only sector of the masses in motion. This was the social base of the Ben Bella team. Its relative narrowness constituted a most serious weakness. The masses of poor peasants could have offered a broader social base, but they were atomised during the crises of the summer of 1962. They could have been mobilised through immediate implementation of a radical agrarian reform. But the Ben Bella team did not do this.

The Fourth International did not correctly estimate the narrowness of the social base on which the Ben Bella team rested and therefore failed to see the major difference between the situation in Algeria and the situation which led to the establishment of a workers state in Cuba less than two years after the Castroist team took power.

In this situation, a revolutionary leadership possessing an adequate instrument, a revolutionary party, could still have mobilised the peasant masses. But in Algeria, the FLN was never a "party" in the class sense. Moreover, it no longer existed after 1958, except as an organisation in the federation of France and as a government in the GPRA (Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne — Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic). For all other purposes it had abdicated in favour of the ALN.

In its early stages, the Algerian freedom struggle had served as an inspiring example throughout the colonial world. The Cubans, especially, were influenced by it. After the victory of the Cuban revolution and the establishment first of a workers' and peasants' government and then a workers' state in Cuba, this reciprocal influence continued, with Cuba now becoming an example for the Algerians. It was legitimate in Algeria to hold up the example of Cuba and to struggle for a similar outcome.

However, the dynamics of the Algerian revolution was determined by important differences from the developments that led to the establishment of the Cuban workers' state. French imperialism had drawn a lesson from the victory of the Cuban revolution; it followed a different course from the one taken by U.S. imperialism towards Castro. The mass mobilisations were much more limited in Algeria than in Cuba. The Ben Bella team was of much lower revolutionary political stature than the Castro-Guevara team in Cuba. It failed especially to smash all surviving elements of the bourgeois army — which in Cuba were smashed upon Castro's entering Havana. Instead, in accordance with one of the main provisions of the Evian agreement, Ben Bella allowed these elements to be integrated into the ALN. In view of these differences, which became evident in the course of the struggle, it was a mistake to expect an outcome analogous to the one in Cuba.

This error in estimate was made worse by a wrong assessment of the nature of the ALN, especially after the application of the Evian agreement, and by the conception, maintained primarily by the Pabloite tendency, that in the

concrete Algerian situation of 1962-63 the army could play the role of the party. The grave consequences of the delay in organising an Algerian revolutionary vanguard were seriously underestimated.

The Pablo tendency, which was in charge of the work in Algeria and which also controlled the journal of the French section of the Fourth International for at least two years, tended to develop its own independent line. It advanced confused and incorrect formulas with regard to the Algerian state, calling it an "anticapitalist state" or "semiworkers state". It did not grasp the contradiction between the workers' and peasants' government and the bourgeois character of the state apparatus. It therefore assigned to mass mobilisations essentially the role of supporting the Ben Bella tendency and carrying out the programme of the FLN, failing to appreciate that it was crucial for the urban and rural proletariat and poor peasantry to set up independent organs of power, and clinging to the utopian and non-Marxist concept of the possibility of a gradual change in the nature of the state.

From this, various consequences followed such as minimising certain serious events; for example, the gangster-like attack committed by the Khider apparatus at the UGTA congress, which was explained away by calling the UGTA leaders "left Mensheviks".

The Pablo tendency eventually split from the Fourth International.

The Fourth International never used the category of workers' and peasants' government in the Algerian context as a synonym for a dictatorship of the proletariat. The state structure was always correctly analysed as bourgeois.

But although the International correctly applied the designation of workers' and peasants' government to the Ben Bella regime, it did not sufficiently stress the imperious necessity of establishing independent organs of political power by the urban and rural proletariat. Such bodies, moreover, would have been the best instruments for a gen-

eral mobilisation of the masses and the sole means for making the process of permanent revolution irreversible.

A concomitant error was committed in May 1964 when the International Executive Committee set the task for the revolutionary Marxists of collaborating in the formation of a revolutionary socialist left "led by the FLN" (the IEC resolution, "The International Situation and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Marxists", Quatrième Internationale, July 1964) instead of stressing the need to work among the ranks first to create a revolutionary Marxist organisation linked to the Algerian masses.

The lesson of the events in Algeria is of considerable importance. The victory of the socialist revolution in Algeria was possible. But a decisive factor was lacking: the revolutionary party.

Within the frame of this self-criticism it must be added frankly that if the participation of the Trotskyist movement in the Algerian revolution, including its material support to the struggle and its backing of the most progressive tendency after 1962, was considerable, too little was done in carrying out the specific function of the Trotskyist movement — to form the nucleus of a future Algerian revolutionary party. The work of training and recruiting Algerian militants was neglected for work at the top.

Doubtless, during an initial phase, in view of the smallness of our forces, it was correct to concentrate on a campaign of practical support for the revolution which was creating a climate favourable to the spread of our ideas. But after a given point, the formation of an organised nucleus should have been given priority and all our work at the top subordinated to this goal. The International recognised this at its Sixth World Congress. It did not, however, make the necessary effort to carry out this line. Thus, it shares the blame for this error with the comrades of the Pablo tendency, who were the main ones responsible for this work and for the false orientation as regards building a revolutionary nucleus.

In 1962, after eight years of war against the might of French imperialism, Algeria won independence. France conceded defeat in the Evian agreement. The National Liberation Front [FLN] under the leadership of Ben Bella took power — or rather its army, the ALN, did. The new regime followed radical nationalist policies. But then in June 1965 more right-wing sections of the FLN, around Houari Boumediene, ousted Ben Bella. The nationalist line was not really reversed, but illusions about Algeria having a workers' and peasants' government were no longer tenable.

The USFI made a self-criticism — though it tried to offload as much as possible of the blame onto Michel Pablo, a former leader of the USFI who had split from it in 1965.



Class nature

TROTSKYISM VERSUS 'STATE CAPITALISM'

IN FEATURES celebrating the 100th anniversary of Trotsky's birth, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) has been explaining what it thinks were Trotsky's "weaknesses".

Trotsky, according to the SWP, was misled by "fervent optimism" into overestimating the crisis of capitalism in the late 1930s, mistakenly posing the need for a transitional programme, underestimating the chances of capitalism in the Third World (in his theory of permanent revolution) — and above all into believing that Stalinism represented a reactionary usurping bureaucracy resting on the social foundations of the workers' state in the USSR, rather than a new exploiting class.

Was Trotsky guided by misplaced optimism, or rather by revolutionary activist perspectives and the dialectical spirit of Marxist theory? *Workers' Action* thinks the latter. In this article we take up the debate on the class nature of the USSR.

Trotsky's evaluation of the USSR was summarised like this by James P Cannon: "The Soviet Union emerged from the October revolution as a workers' state. As a result of the backwardness and poverty of the country and the delay of the world revolution, a conservative bureaucracy emerged and triumphed, destroyed the party and bureaucratized the economy. However, this same bureaucracy still operates on the basis of the nationalised property established by the revolution. That is the decisive criterion for our evaluation of the question..."

"The Soviet Union, on the basis of its nationalised property and planned economy, the fruit of the revolution, remains a workers' state, though in a degenerated form."

"As such we stand for the unconditional defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack."

"The best defence is the international revolution of the proletariat."

"In order to regenerate the workers' state we stand for the overthrow of the bureaucracy by a political revolution."

The SWP, in contrast, argues that the USSR represents a new form of capitalism, a state capitalist economy based on arms competition.

by Martin Thomas

WORKERS had formulated the ideals of communism long before Marx wrote *Capital*. The contribution of Marxist theory is to back up the instinctive, more or less unstable, more or less unclear, communist ideas of the militant working class with a precise analysis of the laws of motion of society. Only such an analysis makes scientific strategy, tactics and perspectives possible.

Marx's theory of value is at the heart of that analysis. It explains exploitation, surplus value, profits and prices. It explains commodity fetishism, alienation and the mystifications of capitalist competition. It explains how Capital comes to dominate humanity, and the internal contradictions of that domination.

The theory of state capitalism in Russia defended by Tony Cliff and the SWP blurs over all this precise analysis. It effectively throws us back to a primitive socialist view of capitalism as just domination by a rich few over the poor many. This state-capitalist theory is inconsistent with the most basic ideas of the Marxist theory of value. It is unscientific and politically disorienting.

To understand whether the USSR is capitalist or not, we have to understand what capitalism is — and thus what capital is.

The existence of a surplus, and of exploitation, is not what defines capitalism. Nor is it the size of the surplus — though capitalism, as it develops the productive forces, generates a far greater surplus than previous societies. It is the specific form through which the surplus is produced and the ruling class get it in their hands — i.e. through market relations, and especially wage labour — which defines capitalism.

That specific form determines the characteristic drives of capitalism. In previous societies, the surplus is generally produced in natural form. The ruling class grabs the labour-time of the working people in the form of food, luxuries, palaces, the means of war, etc. In capitalist society, the exploiters characteristically pocket surplus value in the form of general wealth, money, therefore in the form of value which has the potential of attracting further surplus value. Capital is self-expanding value.

For previous ruling classes, their greed, architectural ambitions, or zeal for war set a limit to their pumping-out of surplus. Capital knows no such limits. Its inherent drive is to expand itself beyond all limits. The capitalists' greed or frugality is a secondary question; they are merely the agents of capital.

For Marxists, capital is not machines and factories. Capital is a social relation of production, presupposing production for the market. But Cliff dissolves the precise Marxist notion of capital as a social relation into an a-historical notion of capital as hardware.

The USSR, in Cliff's theory, is state capitalist because it is dominated by accumulation under the pressure of international arms competition. Right at the beginning of Cliff's book (*Russia, a Marxist analysis*, p.33-36) figures are given for a rising share of the means of production in

gross output — and without more ado the figures are taken as evidence of the accumulation of capital. Capital is defined as means of production, not as a social relation. The build-up of heavy industry is taken as proof positive of the capitalist nature of the economy.

The USSR has indeed accumulated means of production quickly. It is also true that capitalism accumulates means of production far faster than all previous societies. But to conclude from that similarity that the USSR is capitalist is purely formal argument. The healthiest workers' state would also accumulate means of production fast — not as fast as the USSR in the '30s, but faster than modern capitalism.

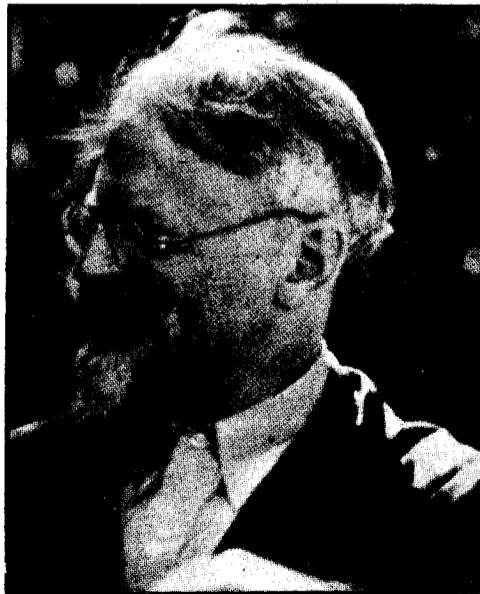
The state capitalist theory replies that the decisive factor is not the mere fact of accumulation, but that accumulation is imposed on the producers as an overbearing force. The 'accumulation' of public works, cathedrals, castles and palaces in ancient Oriental despotism or in feudal society also weighed on the producers as an overbearing force. The point is that different economies are defined, not by the existence of an accumulated surplus, nor by its size, but by the specific form of the production and appropriation of that surplus.

Capitalism accumulates capital: that is, congealed labour set in a specific relation with living labour. That accumulation generates the specific contradictions of capitalism: the clash between its tendency to squeeze out living labour in favour of machines and the fact that only living labour yields surplus value (the tendency of the rate of profit to fall); the clash between production straining all limits and limited consumption; and the clash between increasingly socialised production (including a concentrated working class) and private appropriation.

There is none of that in the USSR. In the state capitalist theory, all the precision of the Marxist analysis is blurred, and we are left with the banal description of profit as the difference between production and workers' consumption, capital as a means of production, and accumulation as an increase in the mass of durable goods. With these definitions it would be easy to prove that Robinson Crusoe was J.V. Stalin, if only he spent more of the time making tools, fishing rods, animal traps etc. than on direct hunting and gathering.

Cliff in fact describes the economy where none of the basic laws of motion of capitalism hold. Labour power, he maintains, is not a commodity (p.158-158). There is no tendency to crises of overproduction (p.167-175). The "speed of the development of the productive forces in Russia [is]...the very opposite of what capitalism in decay and stagnation experiences" (p.123). The supposed 'imperialism' of the USSR is characterised by looting and not export of capital (p.176-183).

For most SWP members, the purpose of the state capitalist label on the USSR is to express their bitter opposition to Stalinism and their conviction that the USSR has nothing to do with socialism. On that level, Trotskyists do not disagree, any more than we disagree with the basic, instinctive idea expressed in the scientifically wrong formulas 'Property is theft', or 'Profits arise from labour being paid under its full value'. We have a more precise analysis.



Leon Trotsky

A partisan of the state capitalist theory would tell us: Enough of these quibbles! The workers in the USSR are oppressed, deprived of control over their lives, reduced to a low standard of living and forced to labour for the benefit of the privileged bureaucrats. The essence of capitalist exploitation is there.

The gist of this argument is that the USSR is nothing like socialism. Trotskyists agree — and were denouncing the oppression of the workers in the USSR long before Cliff developed his theory. But oppression, alienation and hardship are not unique to capitalism. They will not be ended immediately by a workers' revolution, but only in the process of transition from capitalism to socialism, after the revolution.

That, in a backward and isolated workers' state, bureaucratic degeneration should result in raising oppression, alienation and hardship above the level of many capitalist countries, is a monstrous result. But the problem cannot be solved by emotional phrases.

In the USSR, the bourgeoisie was expropriated during and soon after the revolution of October 1917. New social relations were established by the revolutionary working

class. To destroy those social relations, political betrayal is not enough; it would need a social counter-revolution.

That social counter-revolution could, at least at the start, retain nationalised property. But it would change the fundamental economic laws of society. A new capitalist class would share out industry and its proceeds among themselves, even if they left its management in the hands of the state, simply drawing interest from it. There would be an inherent tendency towards break-up into private capitals, as with Egyptian state capitalism. Production would be geared towards maximum surplus value, within the world market.

The social counter-revolution has not taken place. The USSR remains a society in transition between capitalism and socialism. Elements of socialist planning and strong remnants of capitalist market relations coexist. A powerful distortion is superimposed by the usurping bureaucracy, which grew up first as a gendarme on distribution, and now seriously warps the organisation and development of production. Movement towards socialism is blocked, and indeed the USSR has much more in common with capitalism than with socialism: commodity relations, more or less modified, embrace labour power and consumer goods. The bureaucracy is the most powerful force for preserving bourgeois relations in the USSR.

Transitional society — a workers' state, or in this case, a bureaucratically degenerated workers' state — is characterised by a close fusion of economics and politics. The USSR is wracked by sharp contradictions, which it can only contain by screwing down the clamp of totalitarian dictatorship. Politics is concentrated economics, and in so far as the state continues to defend the new relations of production created by the revolutionary working class, it is a workers' state. The state bureaucracy is, however, parasitic and anti-working class.

The programmatic task set out for us is to resolve the crisis by clearing out the bureaucracy, re-establishing direct workers' power, and freeing production of the bureaucratic distortions. This will be a political revolution with very big social effects; nevertheless, a political revolution.

The classics of Marxism did not provide for a workers' state looking like the USSR. They did not provide for a political revolution against a workers' state. The whole development was nowhere mapped out theoretically in advance. That is why Trotsky reconsidered and revised his analysis at each stage, giving more precision to the criteria of the class nature of the state and arriving at an assessment which is more nuanced and more complex than the summary formula 'state capitalism'.

The theorists of 'state capitalism' would reply that our argument is formal, pedantic, and bookish. Of course the internal mechanics of the USSR are very different from those of private capitalism. But the USSR is related to the world economy by a mechanism which is substantially, though not formally, capitalist competition.

Cliff argues: "...the commercial struggle has so far been of less importance than the military. Because international competition takes mainly a military form, the law of value expresses itself in its opposite, viz; a striving after use values."

"Value is the expression of competition between independent producers; Russia's competition with the rest of the world is expressed by the elevation of use values into an end, serving the ultimate end of victory in the competition. Use values, while being an end, still remain a means."

"A similar process takes place in the countries of traditional capitalism also, although in a less obvious way. It makes no difference to the individual armament manufacturer whether he invests his capital in the production of guns or butter, provided he makes a profit. But the state to which he belongs is extremely interested in the use value of his products...The slogan 'guns before butter' means that competition between the capitalist powers has reached the stage where the international division of labour is disrupted, and competition through buying and selling is replaced by direct military competition. Use values have become the aim of capitalist production." (Russia, p.160-1)

Harman takes up the argument (IS 41): the common essence of capitalism and the USSR's economy (seen as part of the world economy) is "the competition between rival owners of means of production that forces each to try and resist the inroads of the other by continually expanding the means of production", or "competition between producing units that has advanced to the point where each is compelled to continually rationalise and rearrange its internal productive processes so as to relate them to the productive processes of the others". And Stephen Marks (IS 49) argues that the critics of Cliff's theory have failed to understand his central new insight, that mechanisms other than classical capitalist competition can produce the same essential results.

This argument is best dealt with point by point. 1. There is still the same blurring-over of concepts which are sharp and precise in the Marxist analysis. Value relations under capitalism determine competition: a particular form of competition. Here the relations are turned upside-down: competition becomes the fundamental defining characteristic of capitalism.

2. Competition of one sort or another has been a powerful force in human development for centuries, and will continue to be for some time in the future. It is not specific to capitalism. Ernest Mandel (in *The Inconsistencies of State Capitalism*) cites the ancient competition between Rome and Carthage. One could also cite the naval competition between Britain, Spain and Holland, which took place in the period of the rise of capitalism, but wasn't modern capitalist

of the USSR



competition. Lenin, in his last writings, and the Left Opposition in its texts against Stalin and Bukharin, constantly stressed competition with capitalism as a major factor determining the USSR's economic development. Does that make them up-and-coming businessmen for the Soviet Union Inc.?

The competition to which Cliff refers is use-value competition. This is fundamentally different from capitalist competition, based on exchange value. The society based on use-value competition may present some similarities to capitalism, but not much more so than to feudalism, slave society or oriental despotism.

In the USSR, what happens to the surplus is straightforward and clear. Part goes in public works and welfare, part goes to building up means of production, and a scandalously large part goes in weaponry and bureaucrats' consumption. Most of this surplus is appropriated directly by society in its natural form, without any intervention of money. It is clear what a workers' political revolution would do: end the bureaucratic privileges, cut the arms spending (though the needs of defence against imperialism might severely limit the cuts possible), and introduce rational democratic planning for welfare services and the build-up of means of production. A social counter-revolution, reintroducing capitalism in the USSR, would, by contrast, introduce a totally different mechanism for the appropriation of the surplus.

It is partly because what happens to the surplus is so clear and straightforward in economic terms that the bureaucracy in the USSR has to impose such a severe regime of political repression and obscurantism.

3. Is it in fact true that the arms competition effectively determines how production in the USSR is organised and reorganised? To be sure, it is a large drain on the USSR's resources. But it is not proved that it decides how the remaining resources will be allocated. To argue that it does would be effectively to agree that the Stalinists were right when they said their crash industrialisation course was the only way to sustain the USSR in the face of imperialist hostility — and merely to add that it was not worth sustaining the USSR at that cost.

For the other Stalinist states, the task of showing that arms competition determines their economies has not even been seriously attempted. The Shah's Iran, for example, spent 26 times as much per head on its armed forces as China. Does that make the Shah's regime more state capitalist than China?

4. If Cliff's argument about use-value (arms) competition determining the USSR's economy is true, it does not prove Cliff's conclusions.

The arms competition is more or less symmetrical. Therefore, if it determines the USSR's economy, it also determines the USA's economy. The 'western' countries are also 'state capitalist'. Cliff hints at this conclusion when he writes that use-values have become the aim of capitalist production.

For the state purchasing arms, as for any purchaser, use value is of course the aim. Under conditions of all-out mobilisation for war, where those state purchases dominate the economy, those use values do, in a certain sense, become the aim of capitalist production. But the war is only an episode within the drive of capitalist production, not towards use-value, but towards ever-expanded value. Capitalist powers don't make war for war's sake. And, even in war, the basic relations of profit and wage labour continue to operate.

The period since World War II has seen a horrifying expansion of armaments. Inasmuch as the interlinked theories of state capitalism and the permanent arms economy express a moral protest against this arms race, we solidarise with them. But cold scientific examination shows that arms production is still a limited portion of the capitalist economy. Capitalist powers may reduce it, as Britain has done, for sober political reasons. It may absorb a smaller fraction of society's labour-time than public works and welfare services.

Accumulation of arms is not, despite Cliff, 'accumulation for accumulation's sake'. It is accumulation for arms' sake. As such it has certain limits conditioned by the amount of use value wanted at any particular time. The limits are very elastic for arms which are mostly just produced to be stockpiled and to maintain 'overkill' capacity. Nevertheless they exist. By contrast, the essence of capital is to seek accumulation without limits.

Michael Kidron, in *International Socialism* journal no.100, draws out the logical conclusions of Cliff's analysis, painting a nightmarish picture of a world of 'state capitals' dominated by military competition. This world 'warlord period' would in fact be a new epoch, bearing only a loose similarity to capitalism. It would demand of communists that we reject Marxist analysis as outdated, study the perspectives of the new epoch, and reconsider whether communism is possible in the near future (or, for that matter, ever).

Kidron's analysis represents the logical limit of the SWP theory. It provides a theoretical basis for the disdain for 'Third World' struggles, seeing state capitalism as their inevitable outcome, which is a more or less constant theme of SWP politics, counterbalanced to varying degrees by the revolutionary instincts of the SWP leadership and membership.

The state-capitalist theory is motivated by a healthy hatred of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But it adds nothing to the Trotskyist programme of action against the bureaucracy. And it subtracts a great deal from Marxism. It leads to fatalism in

relation to the 'Third World'. Logically it gives the Stalinist bureaucrats more credit than they are due, presenting them as a new ruling class which has opened up a whole new dynamic epoch of social production. If the state capitalist theory were applied as a consistent theory, rather than as a moral protest tricked out with scraps of Marxism, then it would lead to the conclusion that the USSR should be defended as against 'private capitalism', because it represents a higher form of social production. Cliff argues that the USSR is not progressive because socialism is possible (p:129-131). This is irrelevant: to recognise a regime as progressive, it is not necessary that it be the most progressive regime historically possible at that time.

The final argument for the state capitalist theory is: how can the USSR be a workers' state when there is no workers' control? It is the strongest argument, but also the argument most spoiled by demagogy, when the conclusion is drawn that those who recognise the USSR as a degenerated workers' state fail to see working class activity as central to socialism.

Some currents in the Trotskyist movement do blur their focus on the working class, tending to dissolve it in a general concept of the 'revolutionary process'. But for the serious currents this is never more than a tendency. Working class activity remains central in these comrades' basic ideas.

On the other side of the coin, the state-capitalist analysis is no guarantee of proletarian intransigence. The first people to argue for it were social democrats, anarchists, and anti-Bolshevik ultra-lefts: hardly tendencies with a clear political focus on revolutionary working class action. Later state capitalist theorists include CLR James (who combined it with support for Nkrumah), new variants of ultra-leftism and... a substantial contingent of bourgeois thinkers.

If absence of workers' control makes the USSR a new class society, then it was a new class society as early as 1918. In fact it becomes doubtful whether there was ever a socialist revolution at all. Cliff avoids this conclusion because he does not want to end up with the social democrats and anarchists. But his logic points that way.

The civil war led to control by the party — the proletarian vanguard — substituting for direct control by the class. A section of the party became corrupted and linked up with the remnants of the old Tsarist bureaucracy. By 1924 it had secured control, and in 1927 it pushed out the class conscious core of the party, the Left Opposition.

There was a growing contradiction between the political regime and the economic relations established by the workers' revolution. At what point should we say that this contradiction changed the class nature of the USSR? Absence of workers' control at factory level cannot be decisive; that would be a syndicalist view. Absence of direct workers' control at a social level can only be decisive if we take the class nature of states as defined by their political form rather than their economic base. The political form interacts with the economic base very substantially in a workers' state, far more so than under capitalism: that is indisputable. But an interaction sufficient to overthrow the economic base through a social counter-revolution must be necessary to change the class nature of the state.

The Trotskyist theory maintains the Marxist 'norms' of a workers' state, but does so by constantly analysing how those 'norms' are verified by the contradictions arising out of their own negation and the paths which those contradictions make towards reaffirming those norms. The dialectical method of analysing the class nature of the USSR is the only one which is consistent with Marxism.



Czechoslovakia [above] and Hungary: the state capitalist theory adds nothing programmatic or practical to the Trotskyist perspective of political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracies.

38,000

sign to save

Royal Northern

by
Lawrence Welch

IF THE Camden and Islington Area Health Authority has its way, the accident and emergency department at the Royal Northern Hospital in Islington will close next March.

Nearly 40,000 people used the casualty department in 1978, of whom 3,400 had to stay on in hospital. Many were acute emergencies such as those with heart or kidney failure, strokes or severe asthma. For such patients every second counts. But in future they will have to travel up to the Whittington Hospital to queue up there for treatment, or even go further away to find facilities already overstretched and under threat of cuts.

Usual waiting time at the Whittington is already from three to four hours.

In a report to the AHA meeting that decided to lop off this desperately needed section of the Royal Northern, it was stated that 'the Whittington, with reason, has complained that its A&E department needs more junior medical staff to maintain a 24-hour service, and it can fairly be doubted whether cover is adequate ... particularly on Saturdays and Sundays'.

But later in this report from the area team of NHS officers they reveal their priorities by estimating that 'the high cost of medical staff, nursing staff, radiography, cleaning and portering suggests that the Department is staffed to do twice its present level of work.'

The AHA's cuts are an attempt to save four and a half million pounds, at whatever cost to life and limb — not to mention jobs. As well as the Royal Northern's A&E department, two homes for the elderly, (and another one for TB sufferers) are to close, as are several wards in the Royal Northern, in the Whittington, in the Hospital for Tropical Diseases, in University College Hospital, and in the Temperance Hospital (where the AHA's refusal to find a locum for one doctor on extended sick leave has meant the abrupt closure of the only local day-care abortion clinic).

Staff recruitment has been banned except where this means 'a complete breakdown of the service'.

Staff at the Royal Northern fear that this is the beginning of a complete closure: without their intake of acute emergencies they no longer qualify as a training hospital and will lose the junior doctors on whom other departments rely. If it doesn't actually close, it may be turned into a geriatric hospital, as has happened to other hospitals in London in a bid to save money. Geriatric hospitals use much lower staff ratios and far fewer consultants.

The Camden and Islington Joint Campaign against the Cuts and for Better Health Care is organising against the cuts. It involves health service workers and other trade unionists, pensioners, community groups and the two active local Community Health Councils.

Nursing staff from the Royal Northern have led the petitioning for support which has collected 38,000 signatures in three weeks. A public meeting early in November was attended by 100 people.

The South East Regional TUC has called a week of action from November 24th, and there will be torchlight vigils outside threatened hospitals on Tuesday 27th organised by the Joint Campaign and supported by the local Campaign against the Cuts as well as a number of community groups and local trade unions.

Cuts threaten unique hospital

THE HENDERSON Hospital, which has pioneered the use of group therapeutic techniques on the NHS for some of the most difficult and violent psychiatric patients, rather than using heavy sedation, electro-convulsive therapy [ECT], or punitive behavioural methods, is threatened with closure.

The Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth Area Health Authority planned the "temporary" closure of the hospital to save £¼ million of the 25 million they aim to cut. The resistance of the unit's director, Dr. Stuart Whiteley, and of other staff, has given the hospital an extra lease of life while the possibility of alternative funding is investigated. Dr. Whiteley continued to admit patients after being told to start to run down the unit: as a result he was told that his action threatened his career and the long term prospects of the hospital.

Professor Gunn, of the Institute of Psychiatry, commented that the Henderson "pro-

vides a very important facility which hardly exists anywhere else on the NHS. It would be crazy to close it."

The group of staff and patients, to which all are expected to make a strong voluntary commitment, uses group pressure and a variety of therapeutic techniques to influence members to adopt less anti-social and violent behaviour: its "success rate" is certainly no lower than that of other, less humane, methods.

Violent incidents between patients at the hospital, and the "permissive" regime, have received a consistently bad press, and no doubt many members of the AHA agree with the local press that the Henderson's patients belong in prison, or heavily drugged in locked wards, according to more conventional psychiatric practice. The unit's work has been extensively researched, and has been used as a model for similar units all over the world.

WORKERS ACTION

7,000 on the streets in Bristol

7000 teachers, parents, pupils and other workers took to the streets of Bristol last Thursday afternoon, 15th, in the biggest public demonstration the city has seen since the war. They were acting in response to the National Union of Teachers' call for a half day strike against the massive public spending cuts being perpetrated in Avon. Local branches of NATFHE, NUPE and NALGO supported the strike.

Although Avon's original

threat of 406 teacher sackings has been toned down after protest to 4, the marchers were convinced that we must remain vigilant.

The education authority has decided to stop all children approaching the age of five from attending primary school until they have actually reached five. Nursery school places are available only to 8% of four year olds in Avon, compared with a national average of 17%.

Bill Williams, West of England Regional Secretary said at the end of the march that "We in NATFHE have come to the clear conclusion that the correct way to save the education service is to unite with all workers in a common struggle to defend the social wage".

A local coordinating committee rooted in the labour movement is needed to take the fight forward.
IAN HOLLINGWORTH

Fight the cuts! All out Nov 28

NOVEMBER 28th will see the biggest demonstration yet to confront the Tory government. From all over the country workers will be coming to demand an end to the cuts.

The demonstration, which is supported by the Labour Party and TUC, and by many trade unions and trades councils, will unite tens of thousands of working class people who are fighting the cuts in every part of the country.

At least 1,000 firement will be joining the march according to FBU national officer Ken Cameron. Scottish miners will be one of the biggest contingents from north of the border. Ford shop stewards from Dagenham are also sending a delegation.

The move for the demonstration came initially from South Yorkshire trades councils. It has rapidly found support in every

Even a massive show of strength isn't going to make Thatcher take to her heels yet.

But it can set in motion a movement capable of pushing Labour councils into defying the cuts and holding out against rent and rate rises; capable of throwing the Tories out; and capable of giving real weight to the demands for the nationalisation without compensation of the banks and finance institutions, for the lifting

of the interest burden on local authority services, for millions for hospitals and not a penny for 'defence'.

After November 28th we must go forward to build cuts committees in every area, drawing in tenants' organisations, community groups, and Labour Parties as well as the trade unions, and committed to an escalating campaign up to and including industrial action to stop the cuts.

Students fight Tory fee increases

No racism! No cuts!

IN THE last few weeks, students at more than 100 colleges have staged occupations in protest at the government's racist attacks on the 87,000 overseas students studying in Britain.

The government plans to raise fees for overseas students in 1980-81 to "full economic cost" — an average of £3,500 a year, just for tuition. Before leaving office, the last government announced a 9% increase for both home and overseas students. To this, the Tories have added a further increase of 20% for overseas students, for this year.

Next year the fee increases for overseas students will range from 265% for 'A' level courses not using labs and workshops, to 532% for medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses. This amounts to an attempt to drive overseas students out of the education system (home students mainly have their fees paid by Local Education Authorities).

These discriminatory fees are a backdoor way to implement cuts and course closures, while dividing students, to limit any resistance. If overseas students are forced to abandon their studies, many courses will become "uneconomical" and will be chopped: college closures and redundancies

will be carried through on this pretext too.

The National Union of Students has failed to give any real lead. They called a "Week of Action" from the 5th of November, based on 24-hour work-ins, and other forms of token protest, which effectively act as a harmless safety valve for student militancy. However, many student unions used the week of action as a real focus for a fightback.

Students organised pickets, demos, mass union meetings, fee strikes and occupations in an attempt to force the authorities to back down. Manchester Poly succeeded in having only a 9% increase this year through direct action of this type.

More colleges are taking action every day — on Monday 19th, Plymouth Poly, Exeter Art College, and Hounslow Borough College went into occupation. Manchester University and Polytechnic of Central London are amongst several others still in occupation.

In London, at the London Students' Organisation Conference on Saturday 17th November, the dissatisfaction at the role of the student union leaders was clear — a motion of censure for failing to organise prop-

erly in the week of action was only narrowly defeated.

A motion was passed, however, which mandated LSO executive to organise a campaign for the freezing of all fees and for a reduction in overseas students' fees to the level of home students, pending the total abolition of all fees. This campaign is to coordinate, encourage and support direct action using occupations, pickets etc against fees and quotas.

The motion also committed the LSO to campaign against the proposed Nationality Act.

The campaign will call for students to support workers in their fightback against wage cuts, redundancies and public expenditure cuts. Great emphasis was placed on the need for students to work closely with the unions, and in the current action, this type of cooperation has already been established.

Many colleges, like the Polytechnic of Central London, have an active Joint Union Council — the Students' Union informs the college trade unions when they intend to occupy a section of the college, and a shop steward or convenor is usually present when they go in.

The PCL Students' Union described in a recent leaflet

the attitudes of staff when asked to leave an area about to be occupied: "the most hostile response is a stern reminder to water the plants, and the nicest one is a demand to know why we hadn't occupied sooner". Students on their own have no bargaining power against the government, but with other unions they have enough strength to force the government to back down.

The fightback has only just begun for students, and to ensure that it gathers momentum, the London Students' Organisation must coordinate the activity in London properly.

• An action committee with delegates from every college must be formed, and colleges not taking action, particularly Further Education Colleges, must be encouraged to attend, in an attempt to carry the campaign forward into every educational institution.

• We must convince student in every college that they can't fight education cuts in isolation, but must link up with the unions in a mass national campaign against the cuts.

• We must build for the demonstration against the cuts on November 28th.
KATE GLEESON

How the cuts cause waste

WHEN Lewisham Community Health Council condemned the waste of public time and money by the Area Health Authority as "sickening", the Daily Telegraph was delighted.

since Lambeth Council and the Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark Area Health Authority both announced their defiance of the Tories' cuts, the press have been eager to show that these bodies were not protecting services but merely concealing wastage, inefficiency, overstaffing, and incompetence.

So the Daily Telegraph headlined "Millions wasted on new wards", and went on to tell of how "several million pounds of public money have been wasted building hospital wards and medical centres which have since stood empty and unused".

Picture the scene in the average Lambeth hospital: beautiful new wards stand empty while nursing staff loiter idly or while away their time organising "anti-cuts" demos in order only to guarantee their indolence. Meanwhile, the healthy but gullible population are hoodwinked by unscrupulous reds and variously hued pinks that vital services are being endangered by the cuts.

...Until you examine the report of the Community Health Council a bit more closely. Then it becomes clear that the reason why several wards at Grove Park Hospital, renovated and improved for the care of the mentally handicapped, are empty — there is no money for staff to run them!

Likewise, a day centre for the elderly at Hither Green Hospital is underused because of lack of ambulances to take people there.

Health centres at Lewisham and Sydenham, which cost more than £1 million, are also closed because there isn't the money to run them.

Far from the report proving that the Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark AHA was throwing its money around wastefully, and that Lambeth Council thinks that it's dealing in "Monopoly"-money, all this attack by the Daily Telegraph proves is that the cuts create waste.

Of course it's true that public money is wasted every time a rational plan is interrupted, buildings lie empty whether finished or just shells, and facilities are set up without there being money to pay staff. This means that what is needed is a big expansion of public services, a gigantic infusion of funds to see that these expanded services are well staffed and that the staff are well paid.