

Workers' ACTION

8 pages
10p

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No sell-out! The full claim and save the jobs

THE CRAFT unions have agreed with BSC that there is the basis for "continued discussions on a negotiating framework". This suggests that they are going to settle for less than 20%, which would be a major blow to the rest of the steel workers.

Anything less than 20% with no strings amounts to a cut in wages, at a time when prices are rising 17% a year and likely to rise faster. Productivity deals of any sort will only lead to speed-up and quicker and more drastic job loss.

And there's no point in waiting for demand for steel internationally to pick up at some point in the future. Even if it does, BSC's plans for closures will go ahead anyway.

The Tories' instructions to BSC not to use any of the money destined as redundancy pay for settling the strike shows that quite clearly. If the steelworkers can't use this strike to win on both pay and jobs now, then there's little

chance later.

Sirs' back-tracking on pulling out the private sector again last week and the TUC's call on the Wales TUC to postpone their general strike date again suggest that the trade union leaders are getting their usual cold feet and could be looking for an early settlement.

Steelworkers do not need to accept the cutbacks as inevitable, or resign themselves to paying the cost of the capitalist world's steel crisis one way or another.

The whole steel industry should be nationalised, not just the unprofitable sectors, and it should be reorganised under workers' control. The drain of interest payments should be stopped. The hours should be cut, not the jobs; the work should be shared under workers' control with no loss of pay.

Links should be built with steelworkers in other countries for a common fight against the ravages of capitalist anarchy on a world scale.

It's
class
war—
fight
back
with
a:

WITH THEIR one-day general strike on Monday 28th, workers in South Wales showed how they thought the Tories should be answered. They took up the call raised loudly on a Sheffield steelworkers' demonstration on the 19th: general strike!

Over the last few days the TUC has given its reply. On Thursday 31st TUC leaders met Cabinet ministers. They came out of the meeting muttering about "a rough time" and the situation getting "out of control" if the Government does not

General Strike!

change course.

On Monday 4th TUC general secretary Len Murray met Wales TUC secretary George Wright... and told him the Wales TUC should put off its indefinite general strike call, set for March 10th, to the unspecified future.

The Wales TUC has already postponed action to March 10th from January 21st under pressure from the British TUC. Now they are to meet on Wednesday 6th to decide whether to retreat further under this new press-

ure.

The two meetings summed up the whole psychology of the TUC leaders. They feel themselves squeezed between the Tories and rank and file workers. On the one hand they plead with the Government to go easy, trying to fill the Tories with fear at the prospect of bitter class struggle; on the other hand, filled with fear themselves, they try to damp down the struggle.

They see the class struggle, not as a war to be fought to the finish, but as a

snag to be smoothed out of existence.

Len Murray told the BBC: "We are not talking about revolution or a general strike in the sense of bringing down the Government. But we are talking about industrial action. We are talking about protest, loud protest..."

"Our aim has never been to bring Governments down. Governments bring themselves down if they act daft and this Government is not being very sensible"

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Corrie: the fight goes on

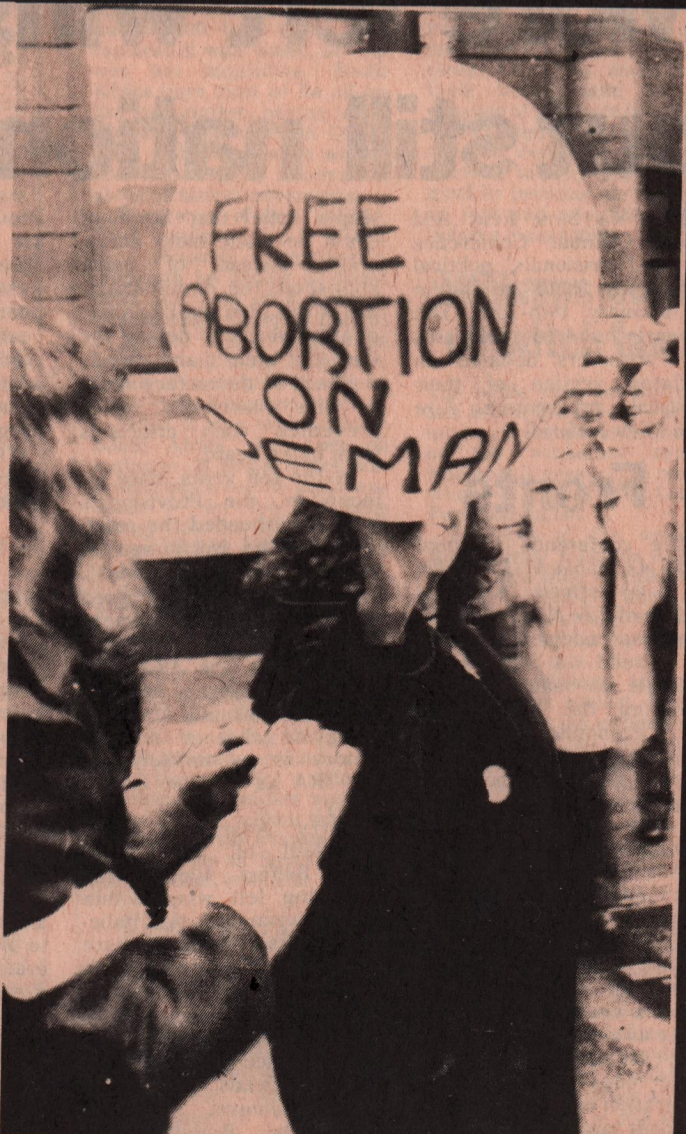
ON THIS, or one of the next few Fridays, John Corrie's Abortion (Amendment) Bill will reach the vote. There seems little chance of it being delayed: the Tory anti-abortionists have seen to that.

Last Tuesday, 5th, about 20,000 people, including 5,000 students on one-day strike, attended a rally against the Bill and lobbied their MPs. The rally was addressed by prominent trade unionists, MPs, and doctors.

The Bill, if passed, will cause immense suffering to women increasingly isolated by the Tory Government's cuts in jobs, wages, hospitals, and childcare facilities, and to their families. The only factor taken into consideration in allowing a woman an abortion will be her health: the size of her family, her plans and circumstances — let alone her wishes — are considered irrelevant, and even the health conditions are tight.

In addition, the Bill will destroy the charitable sector which has helped many thousands of women whom the NHS has refused abortion.

But the fight for free abortion on demand, for a woman's right to choose, continues, through the labour movement, through doctors willing to defy the law, and through women organising



TROOPS CRUSH PRISON REBELLION WHY DID THEY REVOLT?

THE STORMING of the New Mexico State Prison at Santa Fe by state police and National Guard troopers has been followed by horrific accounts of what went on inside the prison while it was being held by the inmates.

One report gives the number of prisoners killed by other prisoners as 25, adding that the victims' bodies were stacked up in the gymnasium and set alight. A Reuter's report has a state policeman claiming that "Prisoners killed prisoners and mutilated them and, in some cases, burned them beyond recognition".

The same state police spokesman insists too that the prison was retaken without a shot — all the killed and injured being victims of their fellow convicts.

So why did the men seize the prison? Almost certainly there were grievances about the conditions — about the quality of food, the daily humiliations, the degradation of prison life, the swinish injustices, the terror...

When, in September 1971, inmates of New York's Attica prison revolted, they were driven to their rebellion

by the hellish inhumanity of the place. And they were fired by a truly revolutionary spirit, by an incredible sense of the solidarity of the oppressed, blazing out of the tiny cells and the narrow barred windows the way the sunlight had never blazed in.

When police and troopers retook that jail, 34 people were killed — among them some guards that the prisoners had taken hostage. The recapture of Attica was followed by stories of mutilations, castrations, beating and burning, maiming and murders, just as in this case. Now it is known that every one of the stories about Attica was a lie: the hostages that had been killed were killed by the troopers!

What is the truth about Santa Fe? Who can believe that the police retook the jail without claiming a single victim?

And the predominantly Mexican-American inmates of Santa Fe Prison knew all about the merciless assault of the police and troopers at the predominantly Black and Puerto Rican Attica Prison. And yet their conditions were bad enough and their sense

of defiance bold enough to revolt!

Of course it is possible that terrible brutalities were committed by the prisoners. The prison population, after all, is the most brutalised section of society, the sons and daughters in the main of the most oppressed groups.

What the reports encourage us to do is see the prison inmates as being animals, being at least outside society. Socialist must always insist that they are as human and as much a part and product of society as the rest of us.

FUND DRIVE

This week we have received £20 from Stoke and £10 from East London. That makes the total for the month £121.50 — way short of our £200 target.

Only once before — last November — have we fallen anything like so short. Now, with the steel strike on, and other big battles looming, is the last time to let the fund flag.

Send contributions to: Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD. Cheques payable to Workers' Action.

Tories back Zimbabwe racists

Labour's complicity

ROBERT MUGABE's return to Zimbabwe has demonstrated the widespread support he and ZANU have among the African people. Over 200,000 supporters assembled to welcome him, despite the efforts of the British régime under Soames to harass, intimidate and isolate ZANU.

It is clear that Mugabe is seen, rightly or wrongly, as the principal threat by the imperialist forces. The British Governor, Lord Soames, delayed his return, insisting on the release of ZANU's detainees in Mozambique as a condition, regardless of the fact that around 10,000 detainees are still held under martial law in Rhodesia, and that the British have maintained this state of emergency for another six months.

The Rhodesian security forces and Muzorewa's auxiliaries, which Soames is using as his armed forces, have concentrated their efforts on what they claim are ZANLA guerrillas who have refused to enter the assembly points. And Soames has consistently accused ZANU of not cooperating with the ceasefire despite the fact that the Lancaster House agreement explicitly stipulated the confinement of the security forces and auxiliaries to barracks.

Soames has prevented the entry of ZANU election material from Mozambique and is now putting large obstacles in the way of repatriation of refugees from Mozambique. There are at least as many refugees there, mainly ZANU supporters, as there are whites in Rhodesia. While the whites are guaranteed 20 out of 100 seats in the coming election, the Zimbabwean refugees are very likely to be disenfranchised.

Exile

Another effect of this is that ZANU's political machinery, built up in exile and essential to fight the elections is trapped in Mozambique, unable to return. At most only 500,000 refugees will be allowed in, leaving another 300,000 behind.

The Rhodesian authorities have still not set a date for repatriation to begin, and have refused to open the second border crossing which is essential for large scale repatriation to take place.

Soames is now threatening not to allow ZANU to electioneer in the Eastern provinces, their stronghold.

The South African régime has consistently made threats of massive intervention if Mugabe should win the election, and until recently backed this threat with the presence of South African troops in Rhodesia. Soames defended their presence, although it was a direct violation of the London agreement. And it was only after concentrated pressure from the Organisation of

Africa, Unity and the front line states that the South Africans were induced to withdraw for the time being.

They are still, however, threatening to return if ZANU is successful, and here are in any case numerous South Africans among the Rhodesian security forces.

Mugabe himself, reportedly under strong pressure from Machel of Mozambique, spoke in terms almost as conciliatory as those offered by Nkomo the week before. He declared that the whites had nothing to fear, that Zimbabwe has a capitalist economy and that there would be no widespread nationalisation, and that there would be no seizure of land from any farmers or multinationals who "use it".

Mugabe's radical rhetoric has been suppressed under the threats of the British,

Nkomo and Mugabe has been reinforced, and there is a continual danger of tribal manipulation of these differences. Nkomo has even been reported as contemplating an alliance with the stooges Muzorewa, Chikereima and Sithole.

City

He is clearly seen now by many, for example Smith, as the moderate alternative to Mugabe's "Marxism". He is also being extensively financed in his electoral campaign by the City, as was Muzorewa during the last interim elections.

Muzorewa is being ignobly junked as imperialism's main hope in Zimbabwe.

The least we should do is to demand, especially through the Labour Party, a fightback against the Tories' complicity with the



Guerrilla leaders arrive in Salisbury, but thousands of their followers are being denied the chance to vote

Rhodesian and South African authorities — since he has allowed the bulk of his own forces to be neutralised and to surrender.

Despite Mugabe's manifest popularity, it is unclear whether ZANU will be able to translate this into electoral success, in an election which has been heavily weighted against him by Soames and his collaborators like Muzorewa. Even if he does succeed, there remains the real threat of intervention by the South Africans and of a military uprising by Walls, head of the security forces, with Muzorewa.

Further, the split between

racists of Rhodesia and South Africa. We should back Zimbabwe's nationalists' demands for the total withdrawal of SAfrican troops, the end of emergency powers, the release of all political detainees, the disbanding of Muzorewa's private army, and the complete freedom of assembly and propaganda for the elections, and we should also demand the withdrawal of British troops.

We must have an end to the obscene bipartisan policy over Zimbabwe which our representatives in Parliament have carried on in our name.

BOB FINE

AAM and Zimbabwe

Democracy for the democrats

THE BRITISH Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) campaigns against the lack of democratic freedoms for blacks in South Africa. On this basis it is able to appeal even to liberal conservatives: the Tory Reform Group, for instance, has observer status on the AAM National Committee. However, the AAM itself is not known for the rigorous practice of democracy within its own organisation.

A recent instance of the AAM's lack of internal democracy is likely to prove an obstinate thorn in the side of the Movement's Executive. At the last Annual General Meeting of the AAM (where the Movement's policy is supposedly decided) in October 1979, a resolution was overwhelmingly adopted calling for a widespread campaign against any British military intervention in Zimbabwe — under transitional or any other circumstances. The AAM Executive offered no opposition to this resolution, and it went through intact.

The previous year, the Executive had successfully moved an amendment to a similar resolution, adding the phrase "unless acceptable to the Patriotic Front". In 1979, the Executive must either have had an oversight, or else have been convinced by the public statements of the PF leaders to the effect that British troops would not be acceptable as a force to oversee the transition.

In any case, the Executive — through its failure to oppose or amend the resolution — allowed the Movement to be committed to a policy of opposing British military intervention in the internal affairs of Zimbabwe. The anti-imperialist current in the AAM, which — unlike the

Movement's Executive — had always seen such intervention as a likelihood, celebrated its small victory.

It therefore came as something of a shock to the supporters of the resolution to discover that the latter was not worth the piece of paper it was written on, when it transpired at the first National Committee meeting after the AGM (which is convened, supposedly, to decide the means of implementing AGM resolutions) that the Executive had decided against implementation of the Zimbabwe resolution.

Bob Hughes, MP "explained" that since the PF had reached agreement with the British at Lancaster House, the resolution was no longer applicable, or indeed, "realistic". This was decided without any discussion with the movers of the resolution, and without reference to the membership of the Movement.

Normally, the AAM officers would be able to impose such an about-turn in policy with no qualms at all, in the expectation that the issue would be dead and buried by the time of the following year's AGM, when the membership would have its first real opportunity to protest. However, in this case the AAM Executive had left its flank open through its sponsorship of the broad-based Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign Committee (ZECC). Considerable time at every ZECC meeting is now taken up with debate on the question of opposition to British military intervention in Zimbabwe, which must be galling since debate on policy is the last thing to which the AAM is accustomed.

The officials of the AAM have always been able to exert

their bureaucratic control over the Movement as a whole because the rank and file has never challenged either their politics or their methods of imposing those politics on the Movement. In the past, the far left has not had much presence within the Movement, dismissing it as reformist and hide-bound. One attempt, by the Socialist Workers Party, to set up an alternative organisation soon proved to be a failure, and was seen by most solidarity activists as a sectarian adventure. As a result, the AAM's monolithic domination of solidarity work on Southern Africa has continued largely unchallenged.

Today, cracks are appearing inside the monolith. The most important pressure is coming from activists in local AA groups, who are working with rank and file trade unionists. The AAM officials have never encouraged such activity, preferring to work through contacts in the leadership structure of the Trade Unions. One of the consequences of their politics was that the AAM Executive once opposed a resolution calling for an inquiry into the shady activities of the TUC International Department, on the grounds that this would "alienate" the trade unions...

The new orientation towards rank and file workers and other developments have opened up a space for the left to intervene in the AAM, and to help to build a stronger, more principled form of solidarity with the struggle of black workers in Southern Africa. In order to extend that space, however, activists will have to fight to make the AAM itself a democratic organisation.

ALEXANDRA FELDMAN

Provisionals' new programme

More left wing, but still nationalist

THE 75th Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (Annual Conference of the Provisionals' political wing) was held in Dublin on January 19th-20th. The several hundred delegates and observers debated an updated version of their political programme *Eire Nua* [New Ireland].

Fronts

The conference accepted what *An Poblacht/Republican News* termed "a radical update of *Eire Nua*". Conference also endorsed the need to "build a diversified struggle on many fronts", including the building of an "economic resistance campaign". The decisions taken at the conference were seen by many as a victory for 'the left wing' of the Provisionals, and in many senses this is a correct assessment.

Sinn Féin President, Ruairín Ó Bradaigh, in an interview with the Dublin weekly *Hibernia* gives five reasons why the Provisionals broke away from the Officials ten years ago.

He cites the 'Stalinist' infiltration of the movement; the drift towards Parliamentary reformism; the leader-

ship's belief that Stormont could be made more democratic instead of being abolished; the demilitarisation of the IRA and its consequent inability to defend the Catholic areas; and finally the lack of democracy within the movement which prevented such criticisms from being heard.

In the ten years since its inception, the Provisionals have spearheaded the resistance in the North against various British 'solutions'. The British Army admitted in a 'leaked' secret document last year that a military victory over the IRA was unlikely. However, sections of the Provisionals now also recognise that a military victory is as unlikely for the IRA as for the British Army.

Gerry Adams, a vice-President of Sinn Féin, from Belfast, typifies the emerging left wing within the Provisionals. An indication of its growing strength was the 1978 decision to incorporate *Republican News* with the 26 Counties' weekly, *An Poblacht*. The new paper took a stance well to the left of the Officials' paper, *The United Irishman*.

As the British Army document acknowledged, the

Provisionals in the North are "essentially a working class organisation" based in the ghettos and in the poorer rural areas. Last year, these elements circulated a policy document which proposed radical changes to the *Eire Nua* programme.

The proposed document threw out private property guarantees, which were in the programme to assuage the fears of the small farmers and rural businessmen who supported the Provisionals. The proposals also advocated getting rid of the federal structure, seen by the left wing elements in the Provos as a sop to Loyalism. They proposed instead a strong, centralised workers' state.

The outcome of these proposals was a compromise 8-page document which does not radically alter the original framework of *New Ireland*, although there is now an upper limit on the right to private property, and federalism as contained in *Eire Nua* will no longer be mentioned in the paper.

The main discussion at the conference centred on



EIRE NUA:
More
left
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the 'Economic Resistance' section of *Eire Nua*. Previously this simply meant the bombing of industrial and commercial targets. Now it has taken on a different meaning: an actual political movement for social and economic change is envisaged, going beyond the ranks of the Republicans and incorporating in a broad alliance all those oppressed and exploited in Irish society. Gerry Adams, proposing the document, which was passed by a very large majority, stated: "The document is not enough to overcome the massive inequality that exists... but at least the document opens the door to radical measures".

Left

The document is certainly a step forward generally, and for the left wing of the Provisionals in particular. But the new stress on economic resistance is still couched in orthodox nationalist rhetoric; Ireland's ills are still seen as flowing from 'foreign' domination, as distinct from capitalism, and justice is to be based on Christian principles as opposed to socialist ones.

A heated debate took place over the efficacy of, or the need for, the National H-Block Committee. Many felt that political status may be won, but at a high cost to the men and women involved. Many members are still obviously suspicious of broad alliance campaigns.

The present left trend within the Provisionals was indicated by the appearance of Major Otelo de Carvalho (former leader of the far left wing of the armed forces movement in Portugal), the calling of an all-Ireland youth conference, and a commitment to drawing up a policy document on women's rights.

Step up

It remains to be seen whether the political mass organisation to back up the military struggle is actually developed.

Meanwhile in Britain, the left must step up the campaign to get the Troops Out Now, and for the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future. In a week when the recently departed British Army General Officer Commanding in the North, General Sir Timothy Creasey, announced that Major General Sir Frank Kitson is to become the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the UK Land Forces, the importance and urgency of fighting for these demands increases.

MIKE FOLEY

ABOLHASSAN Bani-Sadr, the easy winner in Iran's presidential elections, will not know for another month what sort of government he will preside over. The first elected Majlis, or parliament will sit then.

Although Bani-Sadr is a devout Muslim and has been close to Khomeini, he was not the clergy's candidate. Their support mainly went to Mr. Habibi who came third. The votes of the non-clerical right were divided between Admiral Madani who came second with 14% (as against Bani-Sadr's 70%) and Sadeh Ghotb-zade, the minister of Foreign Affairs, who came fourth.

The candidate of the left and most of the country's Sunni Muslims was Massoud Rajavi, a member of the Mujaheddin Khalq organisation but he was excluded by Ayatollah Khomeini who ruled that as Rajavi did not support the newly agreed constitution and had not supported the activity of the Council of Experts, he was not eligible.

Kurds

Several national groups largely boycotted the elections — particularly after Rajavi's exclusion. There was little voting among the Kurds and there have been many reports that in some towns ballot boxes weren't even delivered. Not long after the beginning of the electoral campaign,

After 1 year of 'Islamic Revolution'

IRAN ELECTS A NEW PRESIDENT

Khomeini proposed an amendment to the constitution that strengthened the position of the Sunni Muslims, hoping in this way to draw them away from the boycott movement. This move managed to convince the Baluchi leader, Molavi Abdulaziz, but failed to move the Kurdish and Turkoman population.

It is not yet clear what the relations will be between the mullah-dominated Revolutionary Council — of which Bani-Sadr is a member — and the government after the majlis elections. (Bani-Sadr is a member of no party and so can hardly hope to dominate the majlis.) Nor is it yet clear what authority Bani-Sadr will have so long as Khomeini has supreme religious and national power vested in him by the constitution.

The election of the economics and finance minister and the low vote for the clerics' candidate may indicate that the Iranian masses are turning their attention

more towards the economic crisis that leaves Iran's poor no better off now than before the fall of the Shah. If this is so, then an explosion cannot be far off, because Bani-Sadr's government has nothing to offer the millions of Iranian workers and peasants.



Bani Sadr

With the end of the election campaign, Kurdistan has again come to the forefront of Iranian politics. Fighting has again broken out between Kurdish guerrillas and the Revolutionary Guards, the pasdaran, in several different places.

There had never been much reason to think that the government was prepared to concede to the Kurds' demands. Take for instance the central demand that autonomy for the Kurds be expressed through a council representing all the Kurdish areas of Western Iran — "At the least we are asking that the Kurds be incorporated into one single province as opposed to the several existing now", says the Kurdish leader Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini.

Without this so-called "remarcation", all talk of autonomy is no more than an amusing joke. Yet Sahabi, the member of the government delegation said to be "most open to suggestions", has flatly stated that, "remarcation is unacceptable to any Iranian." It should be noted that the provincial boundaries of Iran are in no way ancient ethnic or communal divisions; the Shah had rejigged them many times, precisely in order to break up any

national movement. Khomeini's recent message to the Kurds won't help either. True, it was not the usual string of religious denunciations, he didn't insist on the Kurds being in league with Satan or tools of imperialist conspiracies. But the message went no further than affirming the position of the new constitution, that is, that all are equal in the sight of Islam and that "no special privileges are granted to any section of society."

The fact that Mustafa Chamran, the Minister of Defence, and, after the maniacal Ayatollah Khalkali probably the man most hated by the Kurds, is a member of the "peace delegation", cannot inspire the Kurds with any confidence that the government is interested in peace or autonomy. It seems that the authorities are interested in playing for time, the better later to crush the Kurds militarily.

Extend

But more: it is inconceivable that a government that is repressing civil rights everywhere else in Iran — and will not substantially extend them even now with the election of Bani-Sadr despite his promises of a relaxation of the most repressive measures — could create in Kurdistan an autonomous area enjoying substantially greater political and civil rights.

ANDREW HORNING

Who's behind this swindle?

SHADY DEALINGS on the international oil market have come to light with the sinking of the oil tanker 'Salem', alias 'South Sun', alias 'Lema' off the west coast of Africa.

As Lloyds, the ship insurers who stood to be stung for millions in compensation put it, "this was no back-street operation".

When the 'Salem', disguised as the 'Lema', went into Durban en route from Kuwait to Genoa, discharged its 193,000 tons of oil and replaced it with water, no-one was too inquisitive. South Africa buys most of its oil on the spot market, paying up to \$20 above the normal OPEC price with no question asked, and censoring all information about oil tanker movements.

The owner of the 'Salem', Fred Soudan, who is based in Houston, apparently (although he denies it) hired (with the help of a German businessman based in Zurich) a phoney Greek captain to transport oil from Kuwait to Genoa. The cargo was sold en route to Shell International.

When it was sold again in South Africa, the Arab oil embargo on South Africa was broken and a double profit was made — for the insurance money for the oil could be claimed when the tanker was sunk.

As the 'Salem' was sinking, a BP tanker was passing, but received no distress signals. The 22 crew were rescued and landed in Dakar, where the phoney captain is now in jail for polluting Senegal's coast with the remaining oil.

The crooked captain has got the blame. But swindles involving \$25 million worth of oil and £11½ million worth of tanker, plus the evasion of the oil embargo on South Africa, are not small business.

Fighting cuts in the courts?

JUST A FEW days after Lord Denning showed how the courts can weigh into the class struggle on the 'bosses' side, Labour's frontbench spokesman on the Environment has come up with a brilliant scheme for fighting the

Tories' cuts... through those same courts.

At Labour's local government conference in Leicester on February 3rd, Hattersley called on Labour councils to respond to the Tory cuts by raising rates, by utilising various delaying tactics, and by taking the Tory government to court if it penalises 'overspending' councils.

Challenging the Tories and the bosses in their own courts can of course sometimes be a useful tactic — as long as you have no illusions in the result, and continue to rely on mass working class mobilisation as the only fundamental weapon. But the last thing considered in Hattersley's scheme was how working class communities would respond to these clever efforts by councils on their behalf (and at the expense of their rate bills).

Hattersley got the conference to defeat proposals for councils to defy the Government by insisting on "no cuts, no rent and rate rises", and rallying mass action.

Williams steps up witch hunt

The battle between the right and left in the Labour Party is not just about party democracy or the witchhunt against Militant. It goes to the root of what sort of party the Labour Party should be.

Speeches at the weekend from Shirley Williams (talking to the right wing Campaign for Labour Victory) and Eric Heffer (at the rally after the Young Socialists demonstration) showed this.

Shirley Williams advocated a witchhunt against Militant because "It is not unreasonable for a party to protect its principles and methods from being destroyed". She wasn't too precise about what those principles were, calling for 'new thinking' in the Labour Party, and an 'effective alternative government to the Tories'.

By an 'effective alternative government' she means another Labour government like the last one, a government offering an alternative way of administering capitalism at the expense of the working class.

Williams also made the threat — now a stock-in-trade of right wingers — of a split in the party if the 'legitimate left' did not act against Militant. Eric Heffer also favours

those opposed to the Party's principles being outside the Party — but has a different view of who they are. He threw back the threat of a split, saying 'if some people feel they cannot accept Labour's socialist principles, aims and objectives, if they cannot accept Clause 4 and the constitution, then they really ought to join some other party which is more to their taste... such people who have no sympathy for Labour's basic view should not act as a fifth column in Labour's ranks.'

Eric Heffer is right: it is the Right who have repeatedly — both in government and in opposition — ignored the wishes of party members. If they can succeed in starting a witch-hunt or reversing the last party conference decisions, the next Labour government will just be a re-run of the last one.

Italy: CP backs police powers

WITH THE BACKING of the Communist Party and Socialist Party, Italy's right-wing Christian Democrat government last Saturday (2nd) finally rammed its new "anti-terrorist" measures through Parliament. After a vote of confidence was won 522-50, the measures were passed 446-79.

Radical Party MPs obstructed the measures in Parliament as long as they could. One spoke for over 12 hours, and together their speeches totalled 99 hours. But 'Communist' MPs joined with Christian Democrats to harass and heckle the Radicals.

Now police will be allowed to detain people for up to 48 hours for interrogation, without a lawyer being present. A magistrate can extend the period for another two days.

The maximum period during which suspects can be kept in jail before trial has been extended, and phones can be tapped without the magistrate's authorisation previously required.

Phone taps exposed

IN A SECRET building in Chelsea, the Post Office has the equipment to tap at least 1,000, and perhaps as many as

5,000 telephones. An article by Duncan Campbell in the *New Statesman* reveals that the tapping is mostly done by the secret services and Special Branch, rather than the normal police. Its purpose must be largely political.

Among the technology used are computers that can recognise voice patterns and transcribe phone calls to paper automatically. This technology is still highly advanced and not generally available. GCHQ — the codebreaking centre in Cheltenham — has been involved in its development using the latest American know-how. Other computers allow the tappers to distinguish calls to particular numbers, thus getting rid of much of the hit-or-miss work involved in phone tapping before now. The system at Chelsea uses the special phone lines set aside for the defence network, so as to make their taps less obvious at local exchanges.

Among those reportedly tapped have been ex-Labour minister Judith Hart, Peter

warrants in force at any one time, while the capacity of the Chelsea headquarters is way above this.

In theory, the Civil Service (including the Secret Service) is answerable to the Government and the Government to Parliament. The reality is that the police and security services have more authority than the government does when it comes to harassing pickets and building up dossiers on left-wingers.

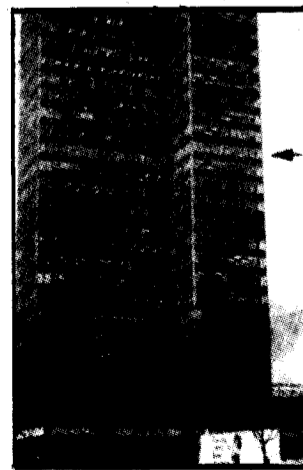
Wide protests at stabbing

AT A PUBLIC meeting on Afghanistan sponsored by the student union at the University of Frankfurt, West Germany on Friday 25th January, several socialists were attacked and injured by Muslim and Maoist militants. One trade unionist was stabbed in the back, and is still in the intensive care unit of a Frankfurt hospital.

It was a premeditated attack by supporters of the General Union of Afghani Students Abroad; an American Maoist GI group and Turkish Maoists, against members of the TLD, a small socialist group which has responded to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan with the slogan "Hail Red Army!", and which is sharply hostile to the Islamic movement in Iran.

A TLD press statement says: "As the TLD spokesman moved towards the podium to take the five minutes speaking time allotted to the TLD goons moved in behind TLD supporters while other blocked the podium. At least four goons had been assigned to attack each TLD supporter, beating them and attempting to stab the men. A number of TLD supporters were seriously injured while fighting their way out of the room defending themselves from knife-wielding Afghans and Turks."

A protest against this vicious attack has been backed by other West German socialist groups, including the Spartacusbund and the GIM, student societies, and by over 100 prominent trade unionists and left-wing activists. For a TLD public meeting on Afghanistan last week, a joint defence group was organised by the TLD and the Spartacusbund, and the meeting took place safely despite threats from Maoists.



Euston Tower, London. The arrowed floor houses MIS's phone-tappers; the GPO opens mail on another floor.

Hain, the Grunwick Strike Committee and the Patriotic Front delegation to the Lancaster House talks.

ISTC leaders in Rotherham set up a mock "mass picket" over the phone last week to test if police were listening in, and within four minutes police had arrived at the spot.

All tapping is supposed to be authorised by the Home Secretary. In practise, he issues warrants particularly easily to the Special Branch and secret services. Yet there are still only about 250-400

Stop all steel

by JO THWAITES

"THE trouble is that the strike is going too slow. We ought to pull off the safety cover", a flying picket from Conssett at Macready's steel stockholders in Pentonville Road, North London, told WA last week.

He continued, "Obviously if we do this it'll destroy millions of pounds worth of equipment. If the coke ovens cool down, they'll disintegrate". Blast furnaces have to be kept going all the time; it only takes a day or so for them to cool to cracking point, and then it can take years to repair them.

When the strike committees in South Yorkshire and Humberside decided on Monday 4th to stop the furnaces, not surprisingly the steel bosses had a blue fit. The ISTC leaders were also alarmed, and told the strikers to keep the cover on. But as a spokesman for the strike committee said, "If Sir Keith and the BSC management aren't interested in the future of this industry, why should we?"

The steel bosses have shown where their priorities lie, and so have the steel workers. They are defending

themselves against attacks on their very livelihoods and the life of their communities. They feel they should not shrink from drastic action to make BSC back down.

The bosses are worried about disruption of furnaces and loss of money. The workers are concerned about disruption of lives and loss of livelihoods. That sums up the basic issues in the strike.

Despite Denning's attempts to take the steam out of the strike, the private sector workers have come out fairly solidly again after the ruling was defeated by the Law Lords and ISTC leader Bill Sirs was defeated on his union executive in his attempts to avoid restarting the private steel strike.

GKN workers in Cardiff and Alphasteel workers in Newport came out very willingly. In the West Midlands many plants had stayed out after Denning's ruling anyway. At Hadfields in Sheffield, previously a centre of anti-strike feeling, a mass meeting voted to back the strike.

Only at Spencer Clarke in Sheffield and Sheerness Steel Mill on the Isle of Sheppey has there been substantial scabbing, and flying pickets from Yorkshire will massively picket

- and the furnaces

Sheerness unless it strikes soon.

More and more flying pickets are being sent out as the strike hardens. In South Wales and Teesside, the strike is so solid that there have been very few local pickets.

From Shelton Bar in Stoke pickets have been sent to the Birmingham area and some to a local stockholder in Longton. From Wales, pickets have been sent to stockholders in Yeovil and Bristol.

Pickets have arrived in London for the first time over the last week. Macready's stockholders in Pentonville Road, the docks, and other sites are already being picketed, and hundreds of pickets from Yorkshire are expected within the next week. As one picket at Macready's said, "We're going to shut down all steel in London next week with mass pickets".

The strike is really biting now and a number of engineering firms are on short time. In Doncaster, Bridon

Wire has virtually stopped production. The private steel giant Firth Brown has laid off virtually all its remaining workforce. In Sheffield, the food processing firm Batchelors is running out of cans supplied by Metal Box, and next week some workers will be transferred to its Worktop factory. They have only three weeks' supply of cans left.

At Metal Box, in Neath, the bosses have started laying off 2,500 workers.

The bosses are getting worried now, and they're trying anything, the courts, the police, even using Gypsies in Sheffield to transport steel. The police have been particularly active, arresting pickets in Pontypool outside Walker Steel stockholders, and pickets on the gate at Temple Borough Rolling Mills in Rotherham.

Flying pickets and the pulling out of the private steel workers are increasing the effectiveness of the strike. Reports from all over

the country show that it is solid.

As a London picket put it, "This strike is political, it's us versus the Government, not BSC Really, it's all the trade union movement versus the Government."

They thought we were a soft touch — a moderate union with prats like Sirs firmly in control. We've shown them how wrong they were, and now they're running scared".

The strikers' biggest problem now is to stop any moves for a sell-out. Any deal must be voted on at mass meetings, and the rank and file must win control over the conduct of the strike.

To get control, the first thing rank and file strikers need is information.

Often strikers still have to rely on the bosses' press. Local strike committees should produce their own bulletins, which can also be used to win support for the strike among other workers — and the ISTC nationally should publish detailed bulletins compiled from the information contained in local strike bulletins.

To win, we need rank and file control of the running of the strike. It can't be left to the full-timers and the back-trackers like Sirs.



How drivers must back steel strike

BIRMINGHAM lorry drivers in the huge TGWU 5/35 branch have passed a resolution declaring their unanimous support for the steel workers and urging all drivers not to cross picket lines and to give whatever support they think necessary to help the steel workers to win.

And nationally the TGWU, in response to an appeal by the ISTC, has issued an instruction to black all steel.

Many lorry drivers recognise that a defeat for the steel workers over pay will open the way for BSC's massive closure plans, and that will mean less jobs for lorry drivers as well as the steel workers. Besides, if the steel strikers can beat back the Tories, it will be a victory for all of us in the fight to stop the Government cutting our wages and weakening our organisations.

However, in many areas, especially where there are no big BSC works near, a lot of steel is still moving. Some of this is due to out-and-out

scabs and cowboys trying to cash in on the strike, who find difficulty understanding anything short of a brick through the windscreen, but a fair amount is still being moved by union drivers.

For instance, outside the private firm of Flather Bright Steel in Sheffield, lorry drivers have refused to recognise an ISTC picket line because there were no TGWU members on it.

Lorry drivers should help the steel strike by:

- *blacking all steel and reporting transport firms moving steel and warehouses storing it to the nearest ISTC strike committee and to TGWU officials.*
- *offering to join picket lines to persuade other drivers not to cross.*
- *holding workplace collections for the strikers.*
- *demanding the TGWU leadership starts really campaigning to make sure TGWU drivers respect all steel picket lines.*

by ANDREW HORNUNG

FOR Bill Sirs of the ISTC to defy the law would be as radical a turnaround as the Queen declaring Britain a republic. Sirs is a magistrate himself. He really seems to believe that the law serves society as a whole rather than the ruling class.

So when Lord Denning last week ruled that Sirs' union could not call on steelworkers in the private sector to strike in support of the workers employed by the BSC, Bill Sirs loyally complied — though he said he thought Denning was wrong.

When Denning's absurd ruling was overturned a week later by the House of Lords, Sirs' faith in the law was fully justified, he thought. His illusions were intact.

Not so Sir John Methven of the CBI. Methven expects the law to serve the ruling class, to reflect the interests of private property and keep his class in power. If Sirs were as class-conscious as Methven, the steel workers would have won their strike ages ago.

Methven feels 'let down' by the Lords' decision. Now he wants "changes to be made in the laws relating to trade unions". He and others used the occasion of Denning's ruling and its subsequent overturning to increase pressure on the Tories to get tougher with the unions in their forthcoming Employment Bill.

The Sheffield steel firm, Hadfields, is refusing to pay its taxes because it feels the Tories have let the steel-owners down. The answer "it's the law", cuts no ice with them.

The bosses' magazine,

The Economist, felt, "There is doubt whether Lord Denning correctly interpreted present British law... There is no doubt that he interpreted the wishes of the majority of the country". Reg Prentice has also called for a strengthening of the Employment Bill.

After Denning gave his ruling, a delegation of ISTC members tried to get to see him. One of them, ISTC shop steward Cyril Wheat, had a perfect grasp of what was going on. "We want Lord Denning and his judges to be left in no doubt that we feel they have acted wrongly. They have tried to anticipate a Bill going through Parliament before it actually has. They should know they cannot do this".

Of course, that is just what Denning and his wig-and-garter friends have been trying to do. They must have known when they heard the case brought by the 16 private steel companies that they didn't have a leg to stand on legally. Even the capitalist press said so. The papers applauded the decision because they are anti-union, but none of them saw a justification in law for it.

For some years now, the judiciary, led by Lord Denning, has piled up judgments curtailing union power. Every time they have tried to cut it really drastically, they have come up against Labour's 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act.

Their judgments have not been able completely to transform the law, but they have been able to fly kites for the Tories, and they have spun a whole new web of considerations directed against the right to strike in support of other workers and against so-called second-

ary picketing.

This time Denning tried arguing that the private sector workers could not strike in support of the BSC workers because that would not be a trade dispute, and only in trade disputes are unions immune from damages. He tried other arguments:

• That the strike was really against the government, because the government's

order a strike to stop if it was against the national interest.

• That no strike against a government could be proper because no government could be so silly as to give immunity to those who were attacking it.

Many of these ideas will no doubt be included in the new Tory laws. What will Bill Sirs do then? Denning will make his ruling and —

policy sets the for BSC, and se political and the dispute — a sense!

• That the ac permissible if firms could p government, t can't, the stri be allowed.

• That he ha say what was a the national

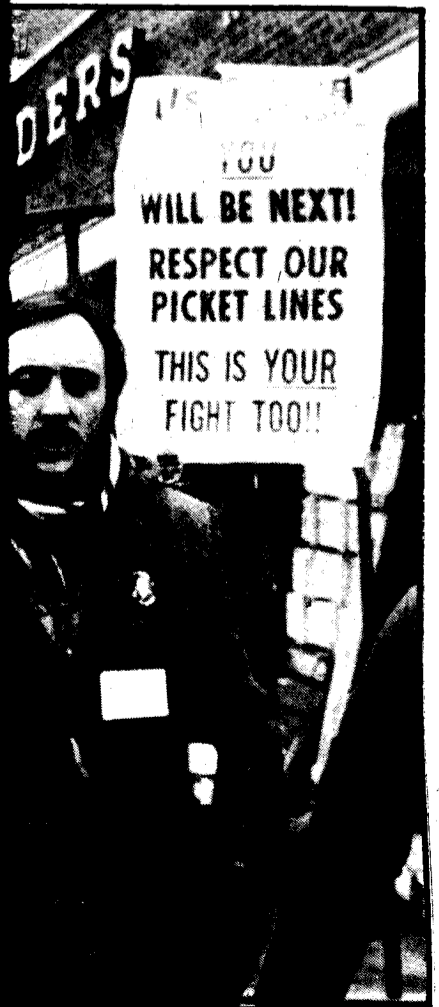


Pickets arrive in London [above], and march in Pontypool [top] and Newport



Tories' law

pay terms for once — he will be right in law!
 Those who understand that the laws are essentially instruments of class rule, and so are the courts, will not only be organising now to fight the Employment Bill before it becomes an Act — they will have no hesitation, if it does become an Act, in defying it and any other laws that hold our class back from victory over the exploiters.



Strikers expose police phone tapping

POLICE have been caught tapping the phones at the Rotherham strike headquarters. A dummy telephone call was arranged, and two pickets were treated to the spectacle of a police car and two vans full of police rushing around to the supposed scene of mass picketing, only to find themselves outside an ice cream

factory. A police spokesman later denied phone-tapping!

THE BOSSES at Arthur Lee in Sheffield are so desperate to find ways of moving steel that they've been asking gypsies to do their dirty work for them. These bosses are probably the very same people who would have no scruples about demanding that gypsies be moved on whenever they do stop in a town.

1000 STEELWORKERS demonstrated in Stocksbridge last weekend. Jimmy Reid of UCS fame addressed the workers at a rally afterwards. But steelworkers are learning the lessons of the early '70s. As one picket from Rotherham told Workers' Action: "They said we couldn't do it, but we showed them. We've stopped the country, just like the miners did, and we're only beginning".

Who says strikers are greedy and uncaring? Pickets at the River Don works in Sheffield have held a whip-round for 40 hardship cases — the shop-floor cats at the works. 'Cats in Industry', a charity for works cats, is organising a food collection, and has already received thousands of tins of cat-food.

SOUTH Yorkshire pickets on Dover docks got a surprise last week as four German steelworkers came up to them and asked the way to Rotherham. They were bringing messages of support to the strikers. Later in the week, a second party of German steelworkers arrived in South Yorkshire to give their support — and to see how a national steel strike is run. Bosses of the world, look out!

Why 'Defend Trade Unions' conference should be recalled

by STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

BOTH THE Communist Party (CP) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), each in its own way, have tried to play down the chaotic and early ending of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference on Saturday 26 January. CP stewards physically prevented John Deason of the SWP from speaking and the conference collapsed into disorder.

FACT

For the CP, the violence against Deason was a matter to be forgotten but maybe not regretted. But what had to be pasted over was the simple fact that the CP lost control of that conference. They did not have a sure majority among the 1,065 delegates. The revolutionary left's capacity to mobilise in the trade unions is now rivalling the CP's.

For the SWP, the incidents that closed the conference had to be played down in order not to damage their repeated attempts to get some sort of unity in action with the CP, even if at the expense of political blurring of lines.

For both organisations, the major step forward was the conference declaration. It called for the TUC day of action to have 'real action of general strike proportions'. It made mild and toothless criticism of the TUC for fixing the day of action as far away as May 14th. And the SWP saw it as a political victory that the LCDTU declaration contained formulas similar to their own Rank and File Code of Practice.

So the SWP was happy with the declaration — "a fighting declaration", as their *Socialist Worker* headline put it — yet it contained nothing sharp enough to disturb the CP. The chaos at the end of the conference was a better index of how much the CP had really conceded to the SWP.

The unprovoked violence

by the stewards must be condemned, and we should demand that the LCDTU conference organisers condemn it. But the SWP put themselves in a bad position to complain about lack of democracy — since the SWP has repeatedly adopted a similar approach of refusing to take resolutions even when the conference votes to take them, for example at last June's *Defend Our Unions* conference.

In a leaflet handed out outside the conference, the SWP said, conceding much of the CP's argument, "We do appreciate from our own experience of organising one day delegate conferences that it is often difficult to take numbers of [?] resolutions and amendments in a one-day conference".

It is quite clear now that the LCDTU is unlikely to call another conference very soon. The absence of serious delegations from Scotland either indicates that the CP is unable to mobilise its support in Scotland, or that the CP may abandon national conferences of the LCDTU, relying instead on regional ones.

Militants should demand that another LCDTU conference is called, on the basis of resolutions being taken from trade union bodies, and oriented towards action ahead of the TUC, not affixing along at the side.

OPEN

The *Defend Our Unions* organising committee must set its own house in order, open its meetings to representatives from outside the SWP camp, and begin a campaign to demand the TUC bring forward the date of the action and organise for a general strike. No reliance for the preparation of that strike should be placed on the TUC; the *Defend Our Unions* committee must take up the preparations itself.

Without these steps, the *Defend Our Unions* committee can make correct complaints about procedure against the CP and the LCDTU, but it will fail to make the political break with the CP's approach of using the LCDTU as a pressure on the TUC.

Organise for a general strike!

continued from p.1

That's the measure of it, for the TUC, protest, but be sure not to go so far as a general strike, and hope the Tories become more "sensible".

But the class struggle is a war to be fought to the finish. And the Tories see it that way.

Their programme for the steelworkers is big cuts in real wages (any pay increase less than 20%, at current rates of inflation, is a cut in real wages), speed-up through productivity schemes, and the axing of 52,000 jobs. The steelworkers are fighting back because that programme means the devastation of many working class communities, as the job cuts ripple out through linked industries, taking perhaps three or four more jobs for every job that goes in steel, and poverty and despair blight whole areas.

BL workers are in for similar treatment: a 5% offer with strings which mean huge attacks on conditions and organisation, plus the threat of wholesale shut-downs if they refuse to buckle under.

NEEDY

All the most needy are at the sharp edge of the Tory axe, too. The sick face shut-downs of hospitals and hospital units, increased prescription charges, and possible charges for hospital stays and doctors' visits. The homeless and poorly housed face the effects of huge cuts in housing subsidies and the public house-building programme.

In schools, there just will not be money to buy new books and equipment, and some authorities are already sacking teachers outright. Nursery provision will be cut even further. The unemployed and others on social security are likely to find their money falling behind inflation.

Meanwhile the Tories' motto is: everything for profits, everything for the Armed Forces, everything for the police!

The active support given to the steelworkers by miners, especially in Yorkshire and



South Wales, is the beginning of an industrial alliance against the Tories. The railworkers' support extends the alliance further. Both miners and railworkers will face huge threats to jobs if the steel cutbacks go through.

What the TUC should be doing is extending and building on the alliance, linking it up with the public service unions' campaigns against the cuts, organising for a general strike.

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

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

FAR

Instead of days of action comfortably far in the future, the trade union leaders should be organising now to extend the steel strike into a general strike. Instead of pleading or blustering at 10 Downing Street, they should be cutting off all talks and

all collaboration with the Tories, and insisting Labour launches a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction.

Instead of desperately and abjectly begging the Tories for better cooperation, the TUC should start organising to stop the Tories.

BROKERS

The whole psychology of the trade union leaders, and their position in society as privileged brokers between the workers and the ruling class, runs counter to that perspective. So the rank and file must seize the initiative.

Support for the steelworkers — collections, blacking, aid on the picket lines, offers of office facilities, duplicators, etc. — from every section of the labour movement is the first priority.

Resolutions in trade union branches and Trades Councils should demand the TUC breaks collaboration with the Tories and organises for a general strike.

On every official demonstration against the Tories — both local ones and the national TUC demonstration on March 9th — there must be maximum mobilisation, more mobilisation than the bureaucrats want, and the call for a general strike to stop the Tories must be heard loud and clear.

Every labour movement organisation must begin discussing the perspective of a general strike, strengthening their links, calling local conferences, explaining the issues and mobilising the membership.



To get mass action against Tory anti-union laws like in 1971 (above), we need unity in action without blurring of politics.

Bolton workers stand firm

THE OCCUPATION of Beloit-Walmsley's engineering factory which started on Monday 28th ended on the 4th as a result of an injunction from the Crown Court. But the struggle is continuing.

The dispute began on the 31st October when AUEW members in the machine shop refused to clock on and were locked out. The company were offering an 8% wage rise which was bad enough, but the strike was triggered because "conditions" were also included, which would put the machine shop back to piece-work. Other factories in Bury and Wigan had settled for the 8%, but conditions were not under attack there.

After three months of 24-hour a day picketing, it

was decided to occupy last week because 30 scabs were still working. The management retaliated by cutting off the electricity, telephone, water and taking out an injunction against individual strikers.

The strikers decided to leave today before the bailiffs came in and have now received an ultimatum from management who want to close the factory. There is some suggestion that this is simply blackmail, and the shop stewards are not inclined to buckle under.

The picket is continuing and the strikers need money. Send contributions c/o Terry Brierley, AUEW, 77 St. George's Road, Bolton.

SUE ARNALL

HJB Plastics: These sackings must be fought

LAST FRIDAY the TGWU branch at HJB Plastics in Leicester was informed by management that they intend to axe 128 of the 242 jobs at the factory. The bosses came out with the usual sob-story about "falling profits" as their reason.

Working conditions at the factory which produces plastic bags are atrocious. Night-shift workers end up with as little as £45 a week take-home. Health and safety regulations might as well not exist and in some shops on the night-shift the only times when the heating is switched on is if there is danger of the inks freezing; otherwise it's a case of bringing a thick pullover.

Toilet and washing facilities — where provided — are an insult and the mice in the canteen don't do much for your appetite.

The sudden announcement of the sackings, which the bosses want to carry out in 14 days, thus continues a long tradition of treating workers with contempt. But despite the lack of a militant tradition in the factory and poor attendance at the infrequent union meetings, a successful fight-back can be organised.

The first step is to recognise that we should not make any sacrifices for the bosses' profits. If their profits have been falling, then that's their

problem not ours.

The fightback must involve the whole workforce. The three unions with members at the factory (TGWU, AUEW, ASTMS) must present a united front against the bosses' attacks and interest in the unions must be revived amongst the rank and file members.

The need for rank and file control of the struggle is especially urgent in the TGWU (the main union in the factory) in Leicester, where the full-timer is George Bromley. Bromley is very efficient at handing out penalties to anti-fascists when he sits on the magistrates' bench, but is rather less efficient when it comes to protecting his union members' interests, especially if they are Asian. TGWU statements to the 'Leicester Mercury' deplore the "poor prospects" for those sacked, but say nothing about a fight.

We have to control this fight ourselves and not give Bromley and his cronies on the District Committee an opportunity to sell us out.

We must also build links with workers outside HJB Plastics. Isolated and divided, we will go down to defeat, but united and linked up with other struggles, we can and will win.

A worker at HJB Plastics

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Editorial Board statement

Afghanistan:

The PDP regime

THE APRIL COUP of 1978 placed in power a regime based essentially on the Army. It had the following notable features.

■ The ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), had a large base in the army and had won political hegemony over the decisive sections of the officer corps.

The links between the PDP and the officer corps were very close. This arose from the close relationship of the Afghan state apparatus to the USSR and its military-bureaucratic caste. Since the mid-50s the USSR had equipped the armed forces and trained their officers.

The officers, had developed ideas about their mission to develop and modernise Afghanistan in the face of the feebleness of the Afghan bourgeoisie according to a pattern familiar in many underdeveloped countries, but with the peculiarity that the client status of Afghanistan vis-a-vis the USSR inclined them to look to the bureaucratized workers' state as a model of a developed society. Their view of their own future was as an elite, like the USSR bureaucracy, on the basis of a serious social transformation.

■ Because of the absence of a mass base for the PDP outside the armed forces, the 'revolution' unfolded as an attempt at reform from above, stamped throughout and limited in every respect by its military-bureaucratic origins and the limitations of the PDP.

The 20-month history of the PDP-army regime, until the Russian invasion essentially put an end to it and replaced it, was marked by the narrow base of the regime and the attempt to use the armed forces as the instrument of a social transformation which proved obnoxious, for varying reasons to the big majority of the population.

Despite its unusually close links with the bureaucracy of the degenerated workers' state, the regime never got beyond the stage of being a military-bureaucratic state capitalist regime attempting to carry through the bourgeois programme of land reform, educational reform, and some easing of the enslavement of women.

Its methods in relation to the Afghan masses were never other than military-bureaucratic; the bombing and strafing of villages, including the use of napalm, from the first weeks of the regime, and the figure of 400,000 mainly non-combatant refugees, graphically sum up the military-bureaucratic regime's relationship with the Afghan masses.

■ The opposition to the PDP regime consisted of:

- the landowners, antagonised by the regime.
- the priests, many of them landlords.
- usurious capitalists.
- the masses of peasants.

All these were tied together, and hierarchical, social and personal ties maintained,

under the slogan 'Defence of Islam'.

The utterly reactionary character of the opposition is clearly expressed in its common bitter antagonism to any educational or social advance, or alleviation of the condition of women.

Outside Afghanistan many forces assisted.

- Pakistan gave facilities for training, drilling and raising money through the opium trade.

- Various Muslim powers gave money and guns.

- China gave guns and training instructions.

- Probably the CIA was involved — though not to the degree that Russia said.

■ It is difficult to get accurate information about the degree of support the PDP-Army regime did have. Some demonstrations were staged. Nevertheless the known courses of the Muslim revolt, the difficulty of the PDP-Army regime in standing up to it, and the incapacity of the regime to rally even significant, let alone decisive, masses of the population in support of reforming decrees that should have benefited millions, provide us with clear proof of the feebleness of whatever support the PDP had outside the army.

It does not even seem to have been able to muster a fraction of the support from urban petit-bourgeois and plebian masses achieved by Jacobin formations in 18th century Europe, although the conflicts in Afghanistan have many points of comparison with those between such Jacobin regimes and peasant opposition.

■ Socialists in Afghanistan would have had to give critical support to specific measures of the state capitalist regime, but in no sense could they have supported the regime as such. It would have been necessary to maintain class independence; to aim at dismantling and destroying the state apparatus; to criticise and expose the brutal military-bureaucratic methods of the regime as both counter-productive in relation to the reforms and expressive of the class character of the regime. Socialists would have faced the repression of the one-party PDP-Army regime.

Socialists would have directed their fire against the reaction, and in that sense only would have 'supported' the PDP-Army regime, while maintaining political and if possible military independence from it and striving to overthrow it.

The USSR and Afghanistan

Afghanistan had for 25 years been a client state of the bureaucracy and from 1978 had drawn very close to the USSR, which dramatically increased the number of its 'advisers', military and civilian.

As the regime increasingly showed ineptitude and fell apart, the Russians were drawn in to substitute for the PDP and the disintegrating army. The logical finale was the invasion, which marked the end of the Army-PDP experiment and opened a new chapter.

Russia invaded

- because of lack of confidence in the 'leftism' and intransigence of the Amin regime and its obvious incapacity to stabilise Afghanistan.

ence in the 'leftism' and intransigence of the Amin regime and its obvious incapacity to stabilise Afghanistan.

- because defeat of the PDP-Army regime would have placed in power a hostile regime on its borders (though this should not be exaggerated: the invasion has done just that in the case of Pakistan, now being rearmed and reinforced by imperialism).

- because to allow defeat of

revolution, the other being American imperialism.

It has taken opportunities to expand its area of control by agreement with imperialism as after World War 2. Competition with imperialism has led it to support a number of autonomous, mainly Stalinist-led, third world anti-imperialist movements, of a relatively progressive character.

In underdeveloped countries, the USSR's post October Revolution social



Storming the prison at Pole Kukri

its client could undermine its relations with other client states like Ethiopia.

- because — and this is probably the fundamental thing — the disarray and weakness of imperialism following its defeat in Indochina and the recent collapse of Iran as a military power seemed to allow the possibility of the Russian bureaucracy expanding its area of control with impunity, and in a strategically important area.

Further expansion through Baluchistan to the sea may well be in the minds of the Russian bureaucracy. In the '40s it seized and plundered territory in Eastern Europe and Manchuria, with the consent of imperialism. The USSR is not imperialist in the sense of being based on monopoly capitalism, with its inherent drive to expand and divide up the world — but the bureaucracy does seek to gain and plunder new territories when it can. As Trotsky indicated:

"The driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy is indubitably the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues. This is the element of 'imperialism' in the widest sense of the word which was a property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling castes, medieval estates and classes."

The foreign policy of the USSR today is that of a relatively stable bureaucratic degenerated workers' state. Since World War 2 it has increasingly been the co-equal of imperialism in terms of military power, in a world where the H-Bomb has led the rulers of imperialism and the bureaucracy so far to rule out full scale war as a means of trying each other's strength. In that period the bureaucracy has been the twin pillar of world counter-

system has allowed the Kremlin bureaucracy the possibility of relating to revolutionary movements in a seemingly positive way. Its own social structure has allowed it to seem in line with the anti-imperialist and even anti-capitalist objectives of the revolutionaries.

It has 'evoked' revolutionary movements in areas such as Eastern Europe — and almost immediately, or simultaneously strangled them, imposing a repressive totalitarian regime as the social instrument of the rule of a parasitic bureaucratic caste, on top of the revolutionary transformation it has carried through or helped through.

At the same time, the bureaucracy's limited rapprochement with imperialism has meant that CPs under its influence in the advanced countries have betrayed the revolutionary movements of the Italian, Belgian, French and other working classes repeatedly. And the awful example of the USSR and its satellites, presented as socialism by the reactionaries, has been a major dead weight on the struggle of the world working class for the socialist revolution.

For all these reasons, the bureaucracy, taken as a whole in its relation to world politics, has been a fundamentally reactionary and anti-revolutionary force.

The Russian military occupation

In Afghanistan, to have any hope of creating a friendly regime, the Russians would have to carry through the land reform and other reforms. They have the strength, including the milit-

what we think

ary resources and the physical power that the PDP-Army regime did not have, and therefore could carry through these changes.

If they do, it will be on the basis of the subjugation and conquest, with a greater or lesser degree of violence, of the vast majority of the people of Afghanistan. The most relevant experience here is Tibet/China.



Babrak Karmal

Other possibilities are open, including withdrawal under pressure.

Simultaneously, with any social transformation, the Russian bureaucracy will impose a totalitarian regime on Afghanistan, hitting most sharply at those elements of a labour movement that exist or will come into existence.

In the overall context, such a transformation, paid for at such cost, cannot be progressive. Trotsky argued: "The occupation of eastern Poland by the Red Army [in 1939-40] is to be sure a 'lesser evil' in comparison with the occupation of the same territory by Nazi troops. But this greater evil was obtained because Hitler was assured of achieving a greater evil. If somebody sets, or helps set a house on fire and afterward saves five out of ten of the occupants of the house in order to convert them into his own semi-slaves, that is to be sure a lesser evil than to have built the entire ten. But it is dubious that this firebug merits a medal for the rescue..." The argument against "lesser evilism" applies equally to Afghanistan too.

As Trotsky indicated: "The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or that area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution."

And again: "The stultification of the means of production is, as we said, a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by 'socialist' measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the socialist revolution with manoeuvres, and so on.

This evil far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland. In order that nationalised property in the occupied areas, as well as in the USSR become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say socialist development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy...

We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against seizures of new territories by the Kremlin."

We call for the withdrawal of troops because of their overall reactionary role, in terms of political pulverisation of Afghanistan, strengthening of the Russian bureaucracy, and reactionary effects in world politics (reinforcement of Stalinism and cold-war forces). We argue for the mobilisation of progressive forces in Afghanistan independently of and against the Russian Army.

However, if the social reforms proposed by the PDP and the transformation of Afghanistan into a deformed workers' state are carried through under the baton of the Russian Army, then we will be for the defence of the social gains — by methods of independent mass mobilisation — against an offensive by the imperialist-backed reactionary rebels. In that



Hafizullah Amin

sense, and in that sense only, we would be for progressive forces in Afghanistan allying with the Russian Army against the reactionaries and imperialism, while maintaining their independence and continuing the fight to get the Russians out.

The invasion and world politics

In general, revolutionaries have never favoured 'export of revolution' by military adventures. This would be so with a healthy workers' state, and especially in the epoch where nuclear war could annihilate civilisation if not humanity.

Avoidance of war, short of surrender to imperialism, would have to be part of proletarian revolutionary policy. We oppose peaceful coexistence, which essentially means the subordination of the struggle of the workers and masses to deals between the USSR and imperialism, wherever the USSR can control events. But opposition to peaceful coexistence is not a demand to the alien and anti-proletarian Kremlin bureaucracy to start World War 3 to further the revolution.

The consequence of the Afghan invasion, in intensif-

ying the cold war and giving credence to the imperialists' claims in the eyes of many in the labour movement, is an unconditionally reactionary consequence, the responsibility for which rests with the Russian bureaucracy in the first instance.

Our attitude in the cold war is of course determined not by secondary considerations, or by the events in Afghanistan as such, but by the fundamental antagonism between the USSR and imperialism. In this we are unconditionally for the defence of the basic property relations of the USSR.

Imperialism will not settle with the bureaucracy, the proletariat will. And imperialism or bourgeois democracy are not progressive alternatives to Stalinism in the USSR and similar states. That is the fundamental meaning of the defence of the USSR for Marxists.

As Trotsky pointed out: "Our tasks, among them the 'defence of the USSR', we realise not through the medium of bourgeois governments and not even through the government of the USSR, but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow. Such a 'defence' cannot give immediate miraculous results. But we do not even pretend to be miracle workers. As things stand, we are a revolutionary minority. Our work must be directed so that the workers on whom we have influence should correctly appraise events, not permit themselves to be caught unawares, and prepare the general sentiment of their own class for the revolutionary solution of the tasks confronting us."

"We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (planned economy and state property) and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern."

We defend the USSR on the basis of proletarian politics independent from the bureaucracy and its policies, and we distinguish between conflicts flowing from the bureaucracy, representing its interests and psychology, and conflicts in which the basic question of the existence of the USSR as against imperialism is posed.

"In every case the Fourth International will know how to distinguish where and when the Red Army is acting solely as an instrument of the Bonapartist reaction, and where it defends the social basis of the USSR" (Trotsky)

Our attitude

From the above our line and tasks follow:

We are opposed to the imperialist outcry. Imperialism can have no rights in Afghanistan, nor any right to attempt to drive the Russians out. We direct the main fire of our agitation at the imperialist pretences and hypocrisy. The main enemy is in our own country.

The USSR bureaucracy should withdraw its army. The anti-imperialist and anti-

capitalist proletarian revolution can neither be served nor expanded by such an advance by a social force that is the enemy of the revolution, even if the result of the advance is the assimilation of Afghanistan into the social system of the USSR.

We do not line up with imperialism even on the issue of the withdrawal of Russian troops. In the British labour movement, when the call for Russian withdrawal is raised in resolutions in trade union branches, etc., we add amendments calling for condemnation of the cold warriors, opposition to the imperialist military build-up, and British troops out of Ireland.

If those amendments are lost, we vote against the resolution.

Our own resolutions should be in the form, "While not supporting the Russian invasion, we condemn the imperialist out-

WORKERS' ACTION PUBLIC MEETING AFGHANISTAN: DON'T JOIN THE IMPERIALIST OUTCRY!

Speaker: John O'Mahony. 8pm, Friday 15th February, Small Hall, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

cry..." going on to itemise specific opposition to the military build-up, the British troop presence in Ireland and Zimbabwe, NATO's new missiles, etc.

As Trotskyists, we defend the basic property system in the USSR, and we also maintain our political independence from the bureaucracy. We reject any implication that the bureaucracy, since it can seize territories and peoples and incorporate them to the social system of the degenerated workers' state, is thereby expanding the revolution. We reject the implied position of the Socialist Workers' Party of the USA and others that power-bloc politics and the

foreign policy of the USSR bureaucracy can replace or supplement the class struggle.

This statement was approved by the Workers' Action editorial board after a discussion last weekend. To make space for it we are holding over the continuation of our serialised background article, 'Behind the Kabul coup'



From 'An Phoblacht / Republican News'

A LETTER FROM LONG KESH

ONCE AGAIN the Free State [S.Ireland] has followed obediently, lap-dog fashion, in the hypocritical footsteps of its British masters. I refer specifically to the endorsement by Dublin of the American and British calls for united action against Russia.

On Afghanistan, Russia is obviously in the wrong, but the American and British track records on trampling over the sovereign right of nations do not put them in much of a position to criticise. Their alleged concern over the recent internal exile of a prominent Russian nuclear scientist, as an infringement on human rights, is sickening in the light of American involvement in Latin America, Indo-China, or British involvement in Ireland.

It wasn't so long ago that Britain interned thousands of Irish men and women solely for their political beliefs. Now, the Diplock trials, which are sentencing men and women to lengthy periods of imprisonment on little or no evidence, are hardly the actions of a bastion of human rights.

Where was England's humanity when she allowed Patrick Conlon to die in bondage; a man with a serious and imminently fatal illness, jailed by them on a trumped-up charge; a man who protested his innocence even until death. Even the intervention of an eminent prelate such as Cardinal Hume was totally ignored.

Perhaps the most disgusting aspect of the whole matter was the propagation of English lies by a subservient and sycophantic media of the Free State. The British imperialist power once again exacts its pound of flesh!

Dissent is acceptable providing it constitutes an indictment of Russia. When it occurs in the West, the dissident is labelled 'terrorist', 'subversive', etc.

Britain, hark at your own stinking shame — your barbaric treatment of 400 men whom you would have rot in the sewers of H-Block — before shedding crocodile tears elsewhere.....

PATRICK MAC GLINCHEY
Cage 10, Long Kesh POW Camp,
Lisburn, County Antrim

Avon teachers' strike continues....

AS THE number of schools in Avon pledged to official strike action against the cuts rises to 40, Avon Education Committee has announced a plan to help parents avoid sending their children to "centres of agitation".

In a cynical attempt to make use of falling pupil numbers and the obvious inconvenience that strike action is causing parents, Education Committee Chairman Councillor Norman Reece has said: "In September we shall start to get accommodation available in most of our secondary schools. Parents will have freedom of choice. If they feel a particular school is a centre of agitation, where matters are continually being stirred up, and they want their child to go to another school, we will do our best to accommodate them."

Not a work about falling pupil numbers being an opportunity to reduce class size, possibly to the levels enjoyed at the independent school where Councillor Reece sends his own child! But then, Reece "would not send a child of mine to a school where teachers have been involved in disputes".

The teachers' action, spear-headed by the NUT, is in direct response to a cutback of 300 teaching jobs in Avon County. Tactics employed by the authority to cut these jobs include natural wastage, early retirement without replacement, "freezing" of vacant posts, and a refusal to appoint teachers on short

term contracts to cover for maternity leave (which the Authority regards as "natural wastage"). As a result of these cuts, the LEA has attempted to impose new timetables in secondary schools in the middle of the academic year.

The three schools worst hit, and the first to refuse to teach the new timetables, are Lawrence Weston, Hengrove and Hartcliffe. In these schools, NUT members are teaching exam classes only, whilst making themselves available for the old timetables.

Lawrence Weston, the worst hit, has suffered nearly 5 staff cut since Christmas and 160 timetable changes made to adjust for this; there is no Head of Department in Maths, and only three specialist Maths teachers in the whole school; lower sets in Maths are taught by English teachers; a Geography teacher has been asked to teach exam classes in English and Childcare; and NUT permanent staff have been asked to give up a total of 60 preparation and marking periods to fill the gaps.

In other schools, classes are taught by several different teachers each week for an exam subject; some classes have doubled in size; special numeracy classes have been completely scrapped and literacy classes cut by half.

It is clear that this is nothing less than the systematic dismantling of the education sector for economic reasons.

Teachers from traditionally passive schools have suddenly found themselves not only the victims of the cuts, but so contemptuously treated by the Authority that even their schools have now become "centres of agitation", and teachers unused to militancy have had to suffer abuse from their Headteachers as well.

Schools are being brought out on a rotating basis, and the determination is there for a long fight. NUT groups in affected schools are delivering leaflets to parents explaining the cuts, and, to put them completely in the picture, giving them details of the teachers' recent insulting pay award, which makes some of us richer by a princely 70p a month. Meetings are also being held for parents, and attempts are being made to forge links with local primary schools.

Bristol Trades Council has pledged its support for NUT strike action, and a delegation including the President and Secretary has demanded of the Education Committee that all teacher jobs lost in the cuts should be restored immediately.

Avon Campaign against Cuts in Education is holding a delegate conference on Saturday 9th February in Southmead, Bristol, with delegates invited from trades unions inside and outside education, as well as parents' groups, tenants' groups and political groups.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

WORKERS' ACTION

BL: a yes vote must mean strike action

BL WORKERS are set to reject the company's '5% plus strings' offer in this week's ballot.

Apart from the insulting 5% wage increase, the company's package includes a 92-page 'Draft agreement' on working practices that would destroy every protective agreement [and custom and practice] established by BL workers over years of struggle.

It would give the bosses a free hand to set manning levels without consultation with stewards; to move workers from job to job regardless of trade demarcations; to force in 'team working'; to change shift patterns at will; and to lay off workers without pay whenever it suits them. If this 'agreement' were to be implemented, it would turn the clock back 30 years in BL, and set a very dangerous precedent for all workers throughout industry.

Even the most craven officials and convenors on the national negotiating committee [LCJNC] were unable to reach agreement with the company - and as BL insisted that the package must be accepted as a whole, the union side of the LCJNC decided to call a ballot of the hourly paid Cars Division workforce.

Sensing the defiant mood of the workforce, the bosses then intervened with an offer to finance the ballot [to the tune of £25,000] and to bring in the Electoral Reform Society to run it. This offer was accepted by the LCJNC's 'ballot sub-committee' led by right winger Eddie McGarry. This allowed the company to prevent the union side from enclosing any statement in the ballot form envelope - but as the company controls the address list, it was able to send out its own propaganda alongside the ballot forms.

In addition, BL organised a series of 'presentations' in most plants, where groups of workers were taken off the job, to be lectured by senior managers on the disastrous consequences of voting to reject the offer.

At Longbridge, Austin Morris chief Harold Musgrove was vigorously heckled at every meeting, and at Rover Solihull the company abandoned the 'presentations' after the hostile response the first few meetings received. Also at Solihull, the stewards defied threats of disciplinary action and organised mass meetings at which the workers

ROBINSON: ALL OUT AND NOW!

AFTER stalling for two and a half months, the AUEW Executive has finally decided that BL Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson was wrongly sacked last November 19th.

After sabotaging the spontaneous strike last November, the right wing AUEW Exec must hope that the issue has cooled enough that workers won't respond to a strike call. We must prove them wrong. ALL OUT, IN EVERY BL FACTORY, NOW!

action. In fact, the union side has been at pains to deny that a rejection in the ballot would lead to strike action. Instead, they are merely talking about organising overtime bans and one-day strikes. This strategy can only frustrate and demoralise the workers. Reports from every major plant confirm that the workers are ready for [and often under the mistaken impression that the LCJNC is calling for] an all-out strike.

The company has already made it clear that it will not recognise the result of the ballot if it goes against it. Every BL worker understands that an all-out strike will be necessary to force a serious offer out of the company. In addition, the outcome of the steel strike will clearly make a big difference to the chances of victory in BL. Workers' Action supporters in BL are demanding that the union side of the LCJNC and the BL Combine Committee calls for all-out strike action from February 14th [when the ballot result is announced].

voted overwhelmingly to reject the offer.

However, the union bureaucrats on the LCJNC seem more anxious to exorcise the spectre of the 7 to 1 vote for the company in the October ballot than to use the ballot result to prepare for all-out strike

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch - payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

FRIDAY 8 FEBRUARY. Public meeting: WSL expels Leninist Faction - What programme for revolutionary regroupment? 7.30pm, Essex Rd Library, Essex Rd, London N1.

SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY. Greater London Association of Trades Councils conference on the cuts: delegates from Trades Councils and cuts campaigns. 2pm, NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields, WC1.

SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY. Anti-cuts conference called by 'Campaign for Manchester' (sponsored by Manchester Trades Council, Labour Party, City Council Labour group). 10am-4.30pm, Lesser Free Trade Hall, Peter St.

MONDAY 11 FEBRUARY. Sheffield SCLV launch meeting. 7.30 at the Station Hotel, The Wicker, Sheffield. All SCLV supporters welcome.

MONDAY 18 FEBRUARY. One-day general strike against the cuts in S. Yorkshire, called by S. Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils.

SATURDAY 22 MARCH. National anti-cuts conference, called by Liverpool Trades Council and District Labour Party. 11am, St George's Hall, Liverpool. Credentials: 50p from T.Harrison/A.Dodswell, 70 Victoria St, L'pool 1.

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FROM CENTRISM TO TROTSKYISM - Bulletin containing all the documents of the expelled Leninist Faction, and Introduction on struggle inside the WSL. Orders to: BM Box 380, London WC1 6XX. £1 including postage.

STOP THE N.F.!

The fascist National Front is planning a march for Sunday 24 February, starting at Camberwell Green (South London) at 10.30 and going to the Elephant and Castle. A counter-mobilisation is being organised. Look out for details.

and Coventry could follow

OVER 500 members attended a Coventry Association National Union of Teachers meeting on January 19th. The meeting was held in response to the local authority's proposals to cut the number of teachers in Coventry's primary and secondary schools by 350, by September 1980. This is on top of a number of other cuts that have already been proposed for the education sector, including shutting down a nursery school and reducing all nursery education in the city to part time.

The Local Education Authority has proposed a number of strategies for getting rid of the teachers: natural wastage, early retirement, voluntary redundancies and redeployment. It is also possible that it may try to introduce compulsory transfers of teachers to schools which did not originally employ them. This has led to fears amongst teachers that there may be groups of teachers who will be shunted from school to school all the time. Compulsory transfers would also give the local authority more flexibility in reducing staffing in schools.

The local authority has promised that there will be

no compulsory redundancies, but if it intends to get rid of so many teachers, this cannot be ruled out. In September 1977 it proposed reducing the number of teachers by 119; now the figure is 350. Schools in the city have been asked to revise their timetables and to work out ways of getting rid of the required number of teachers. This is on the basis of a new pupil-teacher ratio which means larger class sizes. For many schools, it also means drastic changes in the curriculum, with subjects being removed from timetables.

Part time teachers will be especially hit as the authority is planning to reduce their hours of work and to terminate contracts, which are annually renewable. The local NUT association passed a resolution at the meeting calling for a half-day strike on February 11th to lobby a special meeting of the education committee. Ballots have been sent around to NUT members proposing several forms of industrial action for members to vote on, including selective strike action, and no-cover action in schools.

ANN DUGGAN

Tories aim to axe direct labour

AS PART of the Tories' offensive against public expenditure, direct labour organisations are now under threat from the Local Government and Land Bill, due to become law this year.

The underlying philosophy of the Bill is to put direct labour on a "profits or bust" basis. While the Tories see this as a minor "mopping up" operation, in return for favours from their staunchest supporters, the big building contractors, the effect on direct labour will be to destroy it.

At present, direct labour, when utilised properly, attempts to develop a workforce and method of operation which meets the needs

of the local community, while for the building workers, the benefits of direct labour are better and safer conditions and a stable job.



The major proposal underlying the Bill is for direct labour forces to have a more normal form of accounting. All contract will have to be put out to tender, and will have to achieve a minimum return on capital (5% has been mentioned). Each section of direct labour forces will be forced to have a separate trading account: repair, new building work over £50,000, new work under £50,000, highway

repairs. The accounts will have to be published yearly as part of the Tories' so-called open government policy (of course, private contractors will not have to publish anything similar).

If the required profit figure isn't reached, then the council or the Minister will be empowered to close the section down after three years. While in Tory-controlled boroughs, and many Labour boroughs, Heseltine will probably not need to interfere, this new discretionary power is another stick that Heseltine can use to beat left wing boroughs. The major effect of the Bill if it goes unchallenged will be to drastically reduce

direct labour forces, handing back to the private sector not only the major work, but most of the rehabilitation and repair work which will be let off as a block. Councils will be left with the minor maintenance and repairs which would be unprofitable for private industry.



For the workforce, already suffering from lower wages at present offset by local bonus schemes, these bonuses will be much more tightly controlled by some form of work study which will reflect output, and allow one borough to be compared to another.

UCATT, the main building workers' union is at present doing very little about the threat posed by the Bill. The same goes for many local authorities (with some notable exceptions such as Camden and Hackney).

Building workers must start an immediate campaign on this issue and demand some action from our officials. Activists in local Labour parties should demand action from Labour councillors to defend this service and the jobs.

This is part of the general offensive of the Tories, and we have to see the defence of direct labour as part of the wider struggle against the cuts.

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN

Fightback for Women's Rights

10p

Combining Victorian morality with cold capitalist calculation as Britain heads into a world economic recession, the Thatcher government presents a major threat to women and the biggest challenge yet to the women's movement in this country.

In our first big confrontation, over the Corrie Bill, we have risen to that challenge in mass mobilisations and the closest collaboration yet with the organised labour movement. Other struggles, against cuts in health, day care and other vital services, are gathering pace every day.

Fightback for Women's Rights has called a conference on March 22nd with the aim of stimulating links, dialogue and further common action between the numerous groups, campaigns and individuals centrally involved in these struggles.

This broadsheet has been produced to outline the main issues for discussion at the conference and present the ideas, activities and approaches of some of the participating groups and campaigns. Most of the articles have either been contributed by these campaigns or compiled from their material. Where we have felt there were gaps, or that views expressed fell short of important principles for socialist women involved in Fightback, members of the collective have contributed a piece outlining our view.



PARTICIPATING

Labour Abortion Rights Campaign; National Abortion Campaign; Action Group on Immigration and Nationality and JCW;

Women's Aid Federation; National Maternity Grant Campaign;

Rights of Women; members of Claimants Union; Equal Rights for Disabled Women; Equal Rights in Clubs Campaign for action; Women in the NUT; and Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, which initiated the call for the conference.

BULK RATES
20 copies for £1 plus 40p postage;
Orders over 100 copies, post free, but phone to arrange delivery.
From: Fightback for Women's Rights, 41 Elington St, London N7 (007 5286)

OUT NOW: 16-page broadsheet for Fightback's conference