

# workers' ACTION

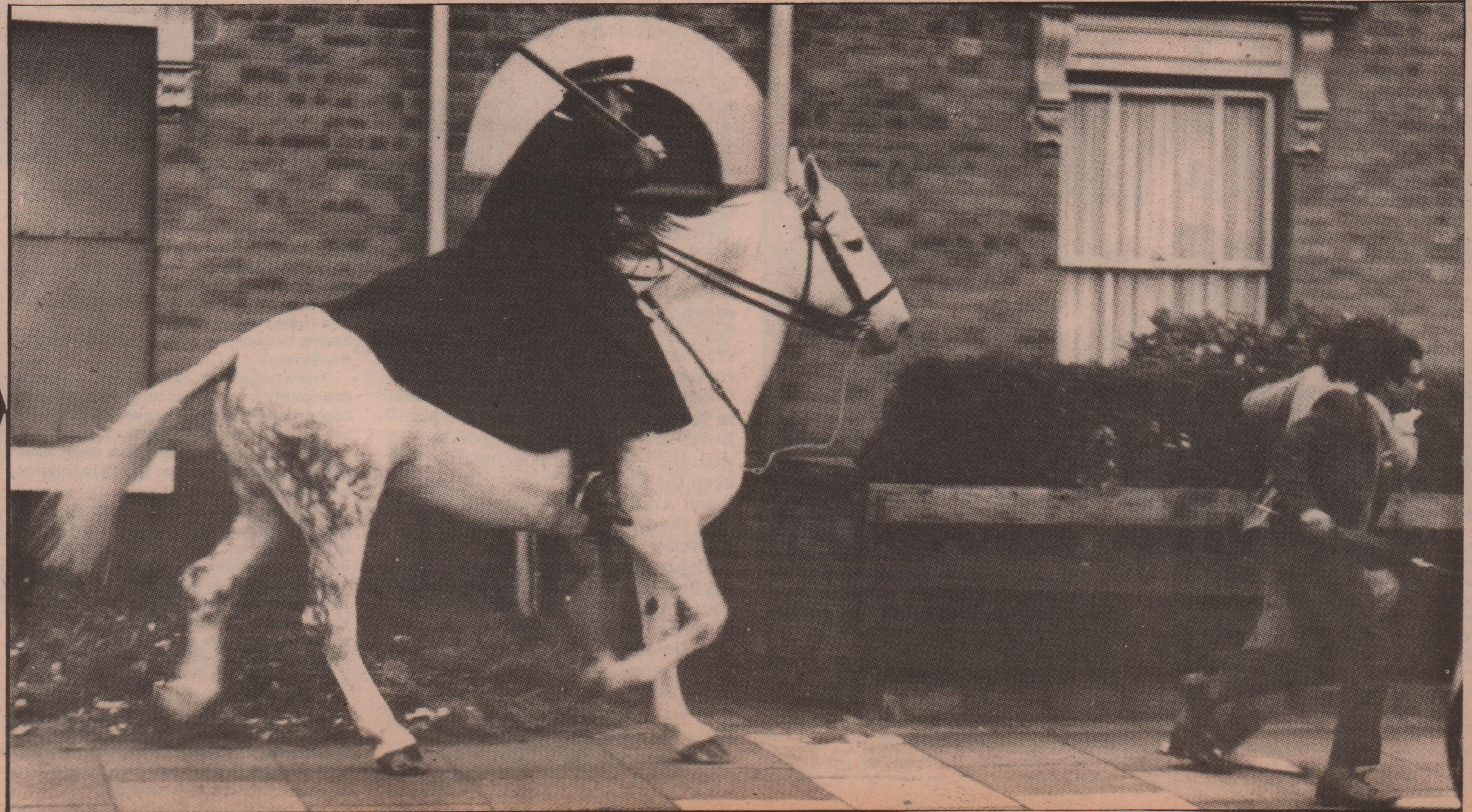
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## MAY 26 - THE FIGHT FOR JOBS

# LET'S SEE ACTION, NOT APPEALS

TWO MONTHS AGO the Labour Assembly on Unemployment called for a Day of Action on May 26th. That call was issued by over 3,000 delegates from trade union and Labour Party bodies. It provided a focus for militants and socialists organising against the Labour government's attacks on jobs, services, and wages.

But the organisers of the Assembly, particularly the Communist Party, saw their rally and the call for a Day of Action principally as part of a programme of pressure to be applied on the trade union leaders and 'left' MP's.

Since then the government hasn't had a change of heart. Far from it. The Healey budget has

stepped up the attacks on all workers living standards. The Tribune 'lefts', looked to by the Assembly organisers, have put up no fight against these measures. They have not been prepared to vote against the budget, and the trade union leaders considered 'left' by the Assembly's organisers (Hugh Scanlon and Alan Fisher) are now actively campaigning for acceptance of Healey's wage-cutting deal.

In this situation the leaders of the Labour Assembly have not followed up their call for action with an organised campaign to mobilise the maximum support for May 26th. CP members have often not called for, and sometimes even blocked calls for, action on the 26th.

With the majority of trade union leaders lined up behind the Healey deal, those who look to the 'lefts'

in parliament and the trade union leadership to put up a fight are in disarray. It is more important than ever that those militants who have campaigned for action on the 26th should have a clear idea of where to go from here.

No reliance can be placed on the trade union leadership to put up a fight to defend jobs. It is up to socialists and militants in the localities, in the factories, mines, and offices to build a campaign against unemployment and for the defence of workers' living standards.

For that we need two things. Maximum mobilisation on May 26. And clear debate on fighting policies.

Workers Action argues against the reactionary 'import controls' policy which featured prominently at the Labour Assembly and which will be raised on May 26th by organisations like the Communist Party. We say we need a policy for working class action, not for petitioning the ruling class.

●Cut hours, not jobs. If full-time working is impossible, then the hours of work should be shared out equally among the workforce, under shop floor control and with no loss of pay. Against overtime working, for a 35 hour week with guaranteed full pay.

●Open the books and the meetings of the state, the employers, and the

corporations to the inspection of worker-delegated representatives. Against phony participation schemes, we must arm independent shop floor organisation.

●Occupations, - holding the bosses' property to ransom for our jobs - as our answer to threatened redundancy. Seize the factories and force nationalisation with no compensation, recognising workers' control won by occupation.

●No covering for unfilled vacancies. Full trade union commitment to resist all pressures to force black workers, youth and women out first. For a woman's equal right to work.

●Full trade union rights for the unemployed. Trade union registration of unemployed workers and of all unfilled vacancies.

These policies must be argued for in meetings called by Trades Councils, unemployment campaign committees, Trade Union branches, shop stewards committees, and Labour Parties, for the 26th. And those meetings should be used to boost or to set up united-front labour movement committees to fight unemployment, which can (and should especially on the 26th) give real practical support to workers in local struggles for jobs.

May 26th should become a demonstration that we are no longer willing to put up with the wage-cutting, job-slashing policies of the Labour Government - and that we will organise to fight back.

## MAY 21 - DEFEND UNEMPLOYED VICTIMS OF POLICE RAMPAGE

ON 19th MARCH, 80 unemployed workers and trade unionists were nearing the end of their 'Right to Work' march from Manchester to London.

Along their route they had been greeted by Trades Councils, trade union branches, and Labour Parties who appreciated the marchers' efforts to rouse the labour movement on the question of unemployment. Their march was to culminate the next day in a rally, several thousand strong, in the Albert Hall.

As the marchers were coming off the end of the motorway and

entering London, they were attacked by police. And then attacked again. And again.

The police said the marchers had attacked them! They made 44 arrests, on various charges, including one of 'grievous bodily harm' against John Deason, secretary of the Right to Work Campaign.

For any active trade unionist, the police story made no sense at all. Why should the weary marchers, anxious to complete their march and reach the rally, suddenly launch themselves into suicidal attacks on massive forces of police?

Dozens of Trade Union branches, Trades Councils, Constituency Labour Parties and LPYSs are supporting a picket on 21st May, when the 44 arrested marchers come up in court. They will be demanding the dropping of the charges and a labour movement enquiry into the police attack.

The picket starts at 10am, outside Hendon Magistrates Court, Edgware Rd, London NW9. Donations for the Right to Work Marchers Defence Fund can be sent to: Ernie Roberts, Honorary Treasurer, Defence Fund, 265A Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

# Preparing to sell out the Palestinians

AFTER nine months of bitter and open hostility, the two Arab allies in the Yom Kippur middle east war against Israel are going to try to patch things up. In the first half of June there will be a meeting in the Saudi Arabian capital, Riyadh, between the prime ministers of Egypt and Syria.

This will be the first high level meeting between the two countries since Syria denounced the Sinai accords between Egypt and Israel and set up the Rejection Front of countries (like Syria and Iraq) and movements (like the Palestine Liberation Organisation) who opposed the Accords.



This jolly looking crowd of patriotic ramblers are members of the extreme Zionist movement GUSH EMUNIM, on a recent march through the Israeli-occupied West Bank. More than 20,000 went on the two day march demanding permanent settlement of the area and its annexation. Some of them settled down in caravans near the Arab village of Kadum, saying they would turn this into a permanent settlement.

Their action has fanned further the mounting Arab resistance to Zionist settlements in the area, and placed the Israeli government in an acute dilemma. The government is committed to a policy of 'planned settlement' on the West Bank. Now the Gush Emunim have jumped the gun and attracted massive popular Zionist support. The government cannot go against this,

but at the same time they want to contain the growing Arab rebellion. After several heated debates they came up with a compromise which can only inflame Arab opinion further.

Although the government announced that it would not allow a permanent settlement at Kadum, they set no date for the settlers to leave, and decided against using force to make them go.

Gush Emunim, for their part have declared that they will not give up the site.

Palestinian rioting and protest continues. Last weekend's 28th anniversary of the declaration of Israel's independence from Britain saw more riots and bombs in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Many Arab demonstrators have been injured by Israeli troops, and during the weekend a 17 year old school girl was shot and killed by them.

Up to last week the Syrian government had said that any future co-operation with Egypt depended on the tearing up of the Sinai Accords.

Egypt has given no indication that it is prepared to do this. It is the Syrians who appear to have made the move. What lies behind this apparent change of heart?

Since the war and the rift with Egypt, Syria has attempted to gather around it allies against Israel, and to push for concessions from Israel (the return of Syrian land taken in '73) by applying diplomatic pressure, mainly through the UN.

But repeated Syrian attempts to move the UN Assembly toward a position of support for the Arabs against Israel ran out of steam in the face of repeated US vetoes. This has left Syria casting around for an alternative approach.

## Strain

On top of that, the Syrian intervention in the Lebanon has placed an increasing strain on the country's resources. Two major financial backers of the Syrian regime are Saudi Arabia and Kuwait - and it is these two countries that have sponsored the meeting in Riyadh.

Undoubtedly they used financial levers to get Syria to agree. But behind their initiative may well lie the hand of the US State Department, which cooperates closely with the Saudi government. (Recent disclosures have shown just how close this cooperation has been. When the US Congress turned down any more aid to the anti-MPLA forces in Angola, it was the Saudis who stepped in with the blessing of Kissinger to keep the supply of money flowing. Saudi Arabia has also offered to help the USA to 'eliminate Soviet influence' in Somalia.)

Behind all this wheeling and dealing lies the desire of the major Arab countries, of Israel and of the USA to hamstring the struggles of the Palestinians.

Of course, there are major differences between these countries as to how far this should go. Israel would like to see the PLO smashed completely, and the Palestinian 'problem' 'liquidated'. On the other hand, the Arab governments support the PLO because they are committed to some form of Arab solidarity, however weak; and because to do so will effectively weaken Israel and strengthen their own bargaining positions. But one thing they don't want is a strong,

independent Palestinian movement which would effectively challenge the Israelis and spark off a new war into which they might be drawn.

As far as the USA is concerned, it would like to see the whole area stabilised under American influence - but this stabilisation cannot be achieved while the Palestinians continue their struggle.

So, for a variety of different reasons, all these countries have a common interest in seeing a controlled and subdued Palestinian movement.



## ELECTED AT GUNPOINT

PALESTINIANS in the Lebanon are now fighting a war on two fronts.

For the past year they have been fighting alongside the left wing Moslem forces in the civil war against the Maronite Christian right wing militias. Now they are having to contend with their former allies, the Syrians.

There are about 7,000 Syrian troops in the country, as well as units of the Syrian-controlled Palestinian groups al-Saiqa and the PLA (Palestine Liberation Army).

All these groups in the past week have taken part in attacks on the Palestinians and their Moslem allies.

In many ways this is the logical extension of the increasing Syrian interference in the country. The Syrians were drawn into the cease-fire agreements early in the year because they were thought to favour the Moslem-left coalition. But since then, the Syrian government has made it plain that it aims to get a settlement which will make the country subordinate to its wishes.

To achieve this, they first tried to bolster up the right wing President Franjeh. When he agreed to step down, in face of the successful Moslem resistance to his rule, the Syrians put forward their own candidate for the presidency.

Last week's election of Elias Sarkis to that position gave the Syrian government what it wanted. Sarkis, elected by a majority of the Lebanese parliament, said that he was thankful for Syrian support and hoped to see it continue.

As far as his election went, Syrian

A 'marriage' of Syria and Egypt (which already have a history of such marriage and divorce) presided over by the reactionary governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and blessed by Israel and the USA, is a logical if problematic outcome of recent developments.

If the PLO is deprived of its base in the Lebanon, and Egypt and Syria agree on new negotiations with Israel, the stage will be set for another attempt to finally 'liquidate the Palestinian problem.'

'support' consisted of widespread intimidation of parliamentary deputies to vote for Sarkis. Groups of militiamen led by Syrian officers rounded up many of the deputies, forcing them at gunpoint to vote for Sarkis. Without this bullying, the man elected would have been Raymond Edde, who stood for independence from Syria.

Sarkis, and the Syrians, have already implied that they want a tighter rein kept on the Palestinian movement. The fighting of the past few days has shown that they are prepared to spill Palestinian blood to get that.

Now the Palestinian Liberation Organisation has put out a public statement, containing for the first time an outright denunciation of Syria. They accuse the Syrian-backed forces in the Lebanon of attacking Palestinian guerillas, and go on to call on the rank and file of the PLA to disobey Syrian-inspired orders.

Pointing out that the PLA should not fight other Palestinians, they appeal to its soldiers to turn their guns instead on the right wing Falangist militias.

The election of Sarkis can only aggravate the situation. The Moslem coalition opposing him controls two thirds of the country, three quarters of the population and over half the regular army. To have any chance of asserting control over the country, he will have to rely heavily on his Syrian allies - and the support they can be relied on to provide him will depend on more than just what is going on in Lebanon itself.

# The bell tolls for apartheid

"The black man no longer feels the need to jump to attention, take off his hat, and say 'ja, boss'. He knows that the old order is coming to an end. What has happened in Angola and Mozambique - and what is happening in Rhodesia - is tolling the bell. And we know the white man is listening, and thinking...thinking hard."

These words of the coloured South African journalist, Howard Lawrence, give an idea of the new hopes that have been kindled amongst South Africa's 21 million non-whites by the black liberation struggles on their borders. The message for them is that soon that struggle will spread into South Africa itself, and it is a message that the country's 4 million white settlers are paying increasing attention to.

## Threat

Previously the whites could afford to shrug off this threat, secured behind a barricade of white settler states in the north. Now two of these have been overthrown, and the Rhodesian regime is tottering. South Africa itself is becoming the front-line.

Already the government has responded by stepping up its military capacity. A high barbed-wire security fence has been built along the border with Mozambique, and reserve units have been called up into the army. In an interview with the American magazine, Newsweek, South African Prime Minister John Vorster last week tried to minimise the call-up, saying that they "had only the nucleus of a full-time army. But that army is highly sophisticated and much better

equipped than those of the black guerrillas or the neighbouring African countries, and the South African government has recently increased its military budget by 42% to a new total of 1.6 billion dollars. Last week they also introduced a harsh security bill to give the Ministry of Justice power to arrest with-

sophisticated radar and monitoring system. Last week the Anti-Apartheid Movement produced documents to show that a South African defence official, Dr. L. van Zyl, had visited Britain with the permission of the Labour government. Not only did he have talks with management at Plessey's and

communications system. This system is an essential part of any campaign against black guerrillas operating inside the country's borders.

Even more sinister is the likelihood of South Africa developing her own nuclear war-heads. In the interview with Newsweek

become a nuclear military power. Of course, this would not be any use in combating guerillas fighting inside the country. Even the most violent racists in the government would not contemplate wiping the country off the map simply to stop it falling into the hands of the blacks, but it certainly could be used as a deterrent brandished in the face of any African regime giving the guerillas support.

## Morale

All these developments must give a boost to the whites' flagging morale. In a rather pathetic attempt to boost this further, the government has rushed out a TV film of a reconstructed battle between South African troops and Cuban forces in Angola. The film presents a spectacle of the heroic South African troops walking all over the Cubans. Unfortunately, the film - Bridge 14 - suffers from all the faults of such hack propaganda efforts. To the government's dismay it has been mercilessly panned by the TV critics who found the acting poor and the battle scenes completely unconvincing...

The help given to South Africa by countries like the USA and Britain is a much more serious contribution to white morale. Socialists in Britain must demand an immediate end to the scandalous spectacle of a Labour government which in public professes its abhorrence of apartheid...and which conives with it in private. The labour movement must demand a full exposure of the back-stage dealings with the South African racists and the breaking off of all connections with them.



Van Der Byl reviewing his latest batch of recruits

out trial anyone suspected of 'activities dangerous to the state'.

South Africa is certain to use the increased military budget to buy equipment from the major Western military powers and arms companies. Workers Action a few weeks ago pointed out that they had already secured a major British contract to provide a

Hawker Siddley, but he was shown round the Army establishments of the Royal Radar Establishment and the Defence Operational Analysis Establishment. Both of these are top-secret military research sites. It seems that van Zyl was sounding out the possibility of increased British co-operation in South Africa's extensive surveillance and

"To you will fall the honour of exacting the most terrible vengeance for our comrades and compatriots who have been maimed, murdered, and mutilated by the terrorist beasts."

This was how Rhodesian Defence Minister Van Der Byl attempted to rouse the 220 young white Rhodesians who had just completed their training course after being called-up into the Rhodesian army. White parents loudly applauded this vision of their sons' mission of racist vengeance. Keeping the country white was the pre-occupation of the passing-out parade, but the parade itself was a reminder of how impossible that will be. None of the 220 would have been called up if the war against the guerillas wasn't taking an increasing toll of the Rhodesian army...

Vorster admitted that they did have the capability to make these, and he pointed out that South Africa had not signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It is well known that Israel, which now has nuclear weapons, has been helping the South Africans to make their own, and it is very likely that within a couple of years South Africa will

# The George Davis case: The handful win, the millions lose

GEORGE DAVIS, thanks to one of the boldest and most imaginative campaigns in memory, has been released from jail. DES WARREN, the building worker jailed 2½ years ago for picketing, is still behind bars. A short period of parole in which Des can spend a holiday with his wife and kids is all that the millions-strong labour movement has managed to squeeze from the state's vindictive grasp.

The handful have won; the millions have lost. Only a handful of campaigners, courageous and dedicated, made the public take notice. They dug up the Test pitch; they crashed the gates of Buckingham palace, they climbed St Pauls, they plastered the East End with posters and painted on every available space — be it hoarding, bridge, wall, pillar, or bench — "George Davis is Innocent, OK!"

Certainly the media were more open to publicising the George Davis story than anything done about Des Warren. They can falsify the reality of East London life with rubbish about "cockney quaintness", but for the working class militant they have only hostility and hatred. However, it was the campaign of the handful around Rose Davis, Peter Chappell, and a few others, which forced the media and the public to take notice.

And the spirits of the few activists were kept alive not only by dedication, but by the knowledge that an ever-growing number of people who didn't

know George Davis began to repeat the phrase "George Davis is innocent". The very persistence is convincing.

But they didn't only force the media and the public to take notice. Through their campaigning, through their publicity, they finally forced an investigation into the police's handling of the case. Despite the towering hostility and massive inertia of the state, the "back up the Bobby" line and the official indifference, they exposed the outrageous fit-up of George Davis. Although Jailer

Jailer Jenkins at the Home Office won't give George Davis a free pardon. But the campaign forced an investigation which admitted that it wasn't happy with evidence based on a rigged identification parade in which 34 civilians didn't pick out George Davis but five coppers did!

The labour movement is millions-strong; it boasts enormous organisations and even — not that it is anything to boast about — its own men in the leadership of the Government. Yet this movement has failed Des Warren, who doesn't even get the usual remission of sentence.

The outsiders have won. The insiders have got nothing. To shake even these concessions from the state, like the freedom of George Davis or the freedom of Des Warren, demands audacity and not forelock-



touching, courage and not orderly deputations, and above all an attacking spirit. One of the mottos of our class is "Never on our knees". The outsiders, the "unofficial" body, the great George Davis campaign understood this better than the reverend leaders of the centenarian LaRour Movement.

## 28 arrested as police wade into anti-fascist demonstration

LAST SATURDAY, 15th May, police attacked anti-fascist demonstrators outside Winson Green prison, Birmingham, with horse and motor-bike charges. Later they harassed demonstrators trying to disperse, arrested people indiscriminately. 28 people were arrested altogether.

The demonstration had been called by Birmingham Anti-Fascist Committee to protest at the provocative National Front picket in support of notorious racist Robert Relf. Members of the Indian Workers Association, Bangladeshi Workers Association, West Indian Federation, and many other immigrant organisations attended the picket. Also represented were Birmingham district Labour Party, area NUS, other trade unionists, and revolutionary socialist organisations.

### Swelled

Starting with about 1000, the demonstration swelled to around 2,000 as it passed through Handsworth to Winson Green.

Demonstrators were aware that the National Front was not the only enemy. Throughout the previous week, a racist campaign had been built up in Birmingham. Not only were National Front members operating inside factories, but so-called "socialist" councillor William Jarvis, chairman of the West Midlands County Council, had fuelled the racist fire by calling for a halt to immigration and implying that the presence of black people in the region was the cause of the

lack of jobs and the poor social services.

The local press, the Birmingham Evening Mail and the Express & Star, had given great prominence to this statement. The Evening Mail had also carried a series of articles on Handsworth with the last one headed: "Streets of Strife".

Counter-propaganda by anti-racists had succeeded in getting resolutions passed at the district Labour Party and the Trades Council condemning Jarvis's statement. The district Labour Party also agreed to support Saturday's demonstration.

The demonstration — uniting socialists and trade unionists with youth from the black community indignant at the racist onslaught and at the continual police harassment in Handsworth — assembled, as agreed with police, on a piece of wasteland near Winson Green prison. A deep cordon of police blocked the passage to where the NF supporters — only 150 hard-core fascists turned up — were meeting.

Local press and radio had made much play of police "contingency plans". Demonstrators soon found out what they were. A move towards the cordon was met by a motor-bike charge. Demonstrators met police obstruction as they tried to move to the West Indian Federation headquarters nearby, and replied with stones and bricks. Further police horse charges forced demonstrators to flee into doorways and alleyways.

Eventually the demonstration re-formed and marched back to

Handsworth. Along its route, it met further harassment, and indiscriminate arrests, continuing as the demonstration entered Handsworth Park to disperse.

Why did the police make such a violent and sustained attack on the demonstration? They were irritated by the sight of black youth standing up for themselves — and doubly irritated by a united multi-racial demonstration.

It was a clear contrast to the police attitude to fascist exploits like the National Front attack on the Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration this year. Although the State doesn't like fascists at the moment, we should be in no doubt which side they are on when it comes to a fight.

### Defence

A 'Handsworth 28 Defence Committee' has been set up, at a meeting on Sunday 16th, uniting defendants and representatives of the organisations participating in the demonstration. The committee has issued statements and leaflets countering the press lies about a 'race riot', and calling for a labour movement enquiry, as well as the dropping of all charges.

The defendants come up in court on May 25th. Money, and messages of support, should be sent to the Handsworth 28 Defence Committee, c/o Lozells Development Community Centre, 1 Finch Road, Lozells, Birmingham.

ANN JONES



# The NF and the threat from the right

Editorial

THE NATIONAL FRONT considerably increased their vote in the recent council elections. They came within 60 votes of winning a seat in Leicester. They pushed up their vote substantially in Bradford. In Blackburn Kingsley Read's National Party secured two seats on the council.

These successes have been accompanied by a barrage of racist muck-raking in the bosses' press and on TV. After the hysteria over Asians in hotels and illegal immigrants, the media are now spearheading a campaign against the entry of 71 Malawi Asian families. Labour leaders have joined with the Tories in whipping up the hysteria. Ex-chief whip Robert Mellish has joined in the racist chorus of "enough is enough".

In this situation, the National Front, emboldened by their successes, is once again making a concerted bid to establish itself as a national and credible force. Their deliberately provocative racist march in Birmingham, last week's ransacking of the Islamic centre in Greenwich, show that they mean business, and what their business means. They are now putting their forces behind the campaign of support for Robert Relf, a self-confessed racist, who refused to sell his house to blacks.

The rise of the fascist right must be taken seriously by socialists. Already their strength constitutes a real threat to black communities and organisations.

At present the British ruling class does not need a fascist street army to break strikes and picket lines. But if the National Front can establish a toe-hold for themselves now, if they can win their freedom to organise openly and campaign, then they will stand as a serious threat to all working class organisations. They have already smashed up meetings campaigning for the withdrawal of troops from Ireland and supporting the MPLA in Angola. They must be stopped now.

The leadership of the trade union movement and the Labour Party have turned a blind eye to the organisation and activity of the fascists. The reactionary slogan of import controls — of exporting unemployment to foreign workers — trumpeted by most trade union leaders, starts from the same position of 'Britain First' as the fascists build on. The fascists capitalise and push further on this nationalist propaganda.

In towns like Blackburn and Leicester the Labour Party has tried to ignore the fascists, avoiding any campaign against the NF and their racist 'answers'. Thus they have to take their blame for the present confidence of the fascists, however much they talk belatedly about the menace of the National Front.

The National Front will step up their harassment of black organisations and left wing meetings. They will step up their campaign in the trade unions to win a base for their organisation's fight with the left. They will step up their campaign of marches and demonstrations.

They will muster behind protection of police forces. They can rely on the active sympathy of whole sections of the police. The Italian fascists once declared to the Italian left, "we have the police disarm you before we advance against you". If they can marshal their forces unscathed from attack by the left, they will be in position to go further ahead and step up their violence and provocations. Those who think the answer is to demand the government ban the fascists are living in foolish complacency.

Blackburn, Bradford, Leicester and Birmingham must be a warning to us all. The labour movement ignores the fascists at its peril. It is vital that serious united work is developed in the trade unions to root out the fascists and deprive them of their trade union credentials. It is necessary that united anti-fascist committees based on the working class movement explain and expose the racist lies and the real aspirations of the fascist right.

Most importantly, the fascists must be actively prevented from organising their racist campaign, from intimidating the black community, and from breaking up left meetings. We must stop them organising and strengthening their forces now. We must grant no platform for fascists.

Goebbels said of the period when the German Nazis began to raise their banners in public, "If the enemies had known how weak we were it would probably have reduced us to jelly... it would have crushed in blood the very beginning of our work". The left must not lose its opportunity now.

## BETTER STRONG THAN IMPORTANT

WITH FLATTERY and not a little patronising contempt, the trade union leaders are being thoroughly buttered up as 'important men' who have 'never before' been so close to 'public policy'. Healey angled his approach well by appearing to 'give the trade unions a say' on the shape of taxation. Jack Jones wears his patriot's badge with pride, lecturing the ruling class on 'the country's interest'.

Trade unionists should take this praise as an insult. There is a world of difference between this talk of 'importance' and the more usual cry of the bosses, that "the unions are too powerful" and that "the unions run the country". Those are the sort of things they say when the unions show their real power — the industrial strength of the mass of their members acting in solidarity to improve their conditions. We should be pleased to hear it again.

# LETTER FROM PARIS



## Masked soldiers join the May Day marchers

THE TIDE of the Union of the Left (that is, of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party) is running strong, with an apparent majority in the country.

But other, more militant, tides are now rising beside it.

The massive May Day marches were an indication of this: 100,000 in the wine growing centre of Montpellier; 200,000 in Paris, where the march took nearly 5 hours to pass.

The march was presented as a 'non-political' joint trade union march of the CGT and CFDT (the Communist Party's and Socialist Party's Trade Union organisations) — which meant that it was swamped with the CP's patriotic tricolours and with their 'non political' slogans of 'unity, vote for the Common Programme.'

The march was in area units so that while the different unions in each enterprise did not march together, nonetheless the tricolours of the CGT contingents alternated strikingly with the red flags of the CFDT.

The CGT led the march and also brought up the rear, and it made sure that even its own contingents from factories on strike or under occupation were placed at the end lest they set too militant a tone.

But unity brings penalties. the CGT have not only opened their arms to other bureaucrats, but also to sections of the working class movement, particularly in the CFDT, which are less under the rigid bureaucratic control of their leaderships than are the CGT's rank and file.

Between the vanguard and rearguard CGT stewards, inside the CFDT sections, were to be found the immigrant rent strikers of Sonacotra, the LIP workers who are now preparing for a new occupation, a women's liberation contingent and, most dramatic of all, three hundred masked soldiers in uniform surrounded by a heavy bodyguard of CFDT stewards.



At the national level the CFDT may not be far to the left of the CGT — but at the local level its sections have led or supported vanguard struggles.

The CGT hacks watched with undisguised hatred these unaccustomed intruders on 'their' march, and finally broke down at the sight of the women and tried unsuccessfully to drive them off with blows and sexist insults.

Outside Paris the CGT kept more control. In Toulouse, masked soldiers (who are campaigning for trade union rights in the army) were forced out of the body of the march and to the dangerously exposed rear, being told — 'this march is for trade unionists only!'

The Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire was the only political group to march in Paris under their own banners. They were held back to the end and then joined on, sealed off from the rest by several hundred CGT stewards. Nonetheless their numbers swelled rapidly to eight or nine thousand as people moved back along the pavements to join and to watch them.

Their energy and enthusiasm were impressive, but the absence of any union or factory banners was notable, as was the dearth of people over 30 years old. One noticed, also, the absence of any slogan relating to the government (they hadn't been able to agree on one).

AN uncontrolled but atomised militancy has been flashing periodically across the French working class since 1968 and is again at a high level. At the latest count, some 200 enterprises were on strike (half of them under occupation), involving nearly 200,000 workers.

What is new to the French scene is the length of these struggles (particularly those which are resisting closures): three or four of them have lasted over a year. And they are often linked to regionalist campaigns and moods, against the need to evacuate 'declining' areas.

The newest on the list is also one of the older inspirers of the movement — the LIP watch factory at Besancon, whose workers prevented a closure after a year-long struggle involving an occupation and production under workers' control.

That was in 1973. Now LIP has again been declared bankrupt and is scheduled to close again at the end of May.

Everyone is looking to see what the LIP workers will do, and many enterprises with more recent records of struggle are hoping to find in them a lead to take them out of their isolation.



Immigrant rent strikers

IF militant industrial struggles have failed to link up, the same is not true of the immigrant workers in the Sonacotra hostels. The movement that started late in 1975 has continued to spread, involving now some 200,000 workers from a dozen countries of origin in 52 hostels all over France. They have now set up an elected and recallable coordinating committee.

What started as a rent strike against increases has broadened to demands for free speech and political rights for self-management of the hostels (which are at present run by ex-colonial army and police officers) and for the right to bring their families.

This is the first autonomous and unitary movement of immigrant workers, and it has grown despite the active opposition of the Communist Party and the Algerian Government-backed 'Algerian Workers' Friendly Society' (which have both advocated separate negotiations, hostel by hostel); and despite, too, the violence of the State.

On April 16th, in the early hours of the morning, the police raided the hostels and deported 18 members of the coordinating committee, illegally and without charge, trial or procedure.

A protest march the following week called by the coordinating committee (and boycotted by the CGT while being supported by the Paris region CFDT) saw 15,000 French workers and immigrants side by side on the streets.

The remaining 140 members of the coordinating committee (who no longer sleep in their own beds) have now received eviction notices. But the strike remains solid, and replacements on the committee for its deported members are not hard to find.

LOUISE MICHEL

WEEK BY WEEK, the unhealthy clamour for import controls makes itself heard in one quarter or another. We've seen it in the pages of Tribune and the Morning Star. We've heard it at the vast Labour Assembly called at the end of March by the London Co-op. Last week it was put forward at the Labour Party's NEC — and rejected. It is peddled by academics and favoured by a large section of the trade union leadership.

Little wonder, then, that workers facing large scale redundancies — in the textile industries, in motor manufacturing, in electronics — have seen nothing wrong in adopting this seemingly 'common sense' slogan as the answer to their most pressing problems. And in many cases they have walked into the trap of simply being used by the very employers who will discard them to boost profits and productivity.

The demand for import controls certainly isn't a real working class answer to the problem of redundancies: that answer lies in the fight for shorter hours at the same pay; in hostile opposition to voluntary redundancies and a refusal to cooperate in filling up the 'gaps in the line' left by sackings; in a fight against overtime working; in occupation of works threatened with closure so that bosses cannot capitalise on the equipment, accompanied by the demand for nationalisation under the continuing control of the workers who have taken over.

Nor are import controls any solution for those who think not about saving their jobs but 'regenerating British industry'. They are a 'cure' whose side-effects will hit workers harder than ever and leave the disease — the world-wide capitalist crisis — untouched.

## Solution

For the Communist Party and the Labour Lefts, import controls form the cornerstone of a whole economic and political strategy — a seemingly coherent and complete 'solution' to the capitalist crisis. This strategy is in fact not only utopian (in that it tries to solve capitalism's crisis, in a way which benefits the working class, within the framework of the very system that caused the crisis); it is also reactionary, posing a 'national' solution which is said to benefit 'the nation' as a whole. It is a "way out for Britain" which ignores the realities of class struggle and in fact (especially in the CP's 'anti-monopoly alliance') explicitly puts forward class collaboration as part of the plan.

Forget the fight over profit margins, they say — if only 'Britain' were managed our way, there's be plenty to go round for everyone.

The basis of the policy is that the Government should reflate the economy by increasing — not cutting — public spending and encouraging a high wage economy. This is where



Turkish workers from London Eating Houses on strike and campaigning against the "import on labour — the "import control" that provides common ground between the traditional

# IMPORT CONTROLS For ostrich For work

the import controls come in: they will prevent all this money that's going around from sucking in more imports; therefore it will have to be spent on home produced goods, thus further stimulating production and cutting unemployment. Though the import controls won't of course help trade, they will produce a continuing boom because of the growth of the domestic market based on increased wages.

## Prevent

Brian Sedgemore, writing in Tribune recently, said the aim of the left was to reach the 5½% growth laid down in the Budget by this route.

Meanwhile, price controls will prevent an inflationary effect, and some nationalisation combined with cash injections through the NEB will encourage investment.

This programme is clearly tied to a continuing campaign against EEC membership, as EEC or foreign intervention is seen as the main

force that could prevent these measures from being carried out.

As far as the Tribunites are concerned, all this is the first step to

## Trade

From 1945 to the late '60s the whole drift was towards freer trade. The General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) — signed by the Allies in 1943 and ratified by 35 nations in 1947 — provided that no new tariffs should be imposed and that existing ones be reduced. The 'Kennedy Round' negotiations of 1962-67 led to further reductions. And in Europe, the EEC and EFTA created areas of mutual access.

The capitalist powers wanted to avoid a return to the system of high tariffs and trade barriers which had in the 1930s fragmented the world capitalist economy into national units and virtually reduced trade to barter between countries. This process had intensified the slump of 1929; and it would have been a serious brake on any growth of capitalist trade and industry after the war.

For the USA, now economically dominant, the move away from tariffs emphasised the leading role of American capitalism in creating new economic institutions.

In addition, the prospect of political independence for the colonies made the colonial powers recognise that their protected access to raw materials and captive markets had gone. To go on exploiting these one-time colonies and make sure of economic domination once political domination was gone, free trade was necessary.

In the boom of the 1950s and '60s, trade grew rapidly: at 6% a year in the '50s, and then 7½% a year through the '60s.

The pattern of trade changed too: the growth was concentrated between advanced capitalist nations now, and consisted increasingly of finished industrial goods. Old national bases of production were partially broken down with the growth of multinational companies and trade blocs such as the EEC.

All the major capitalist countries were able to share in the benefits of this growth. Even Britain, despite chronic balance of payments prob-

# workers' ACTION supporters' groups

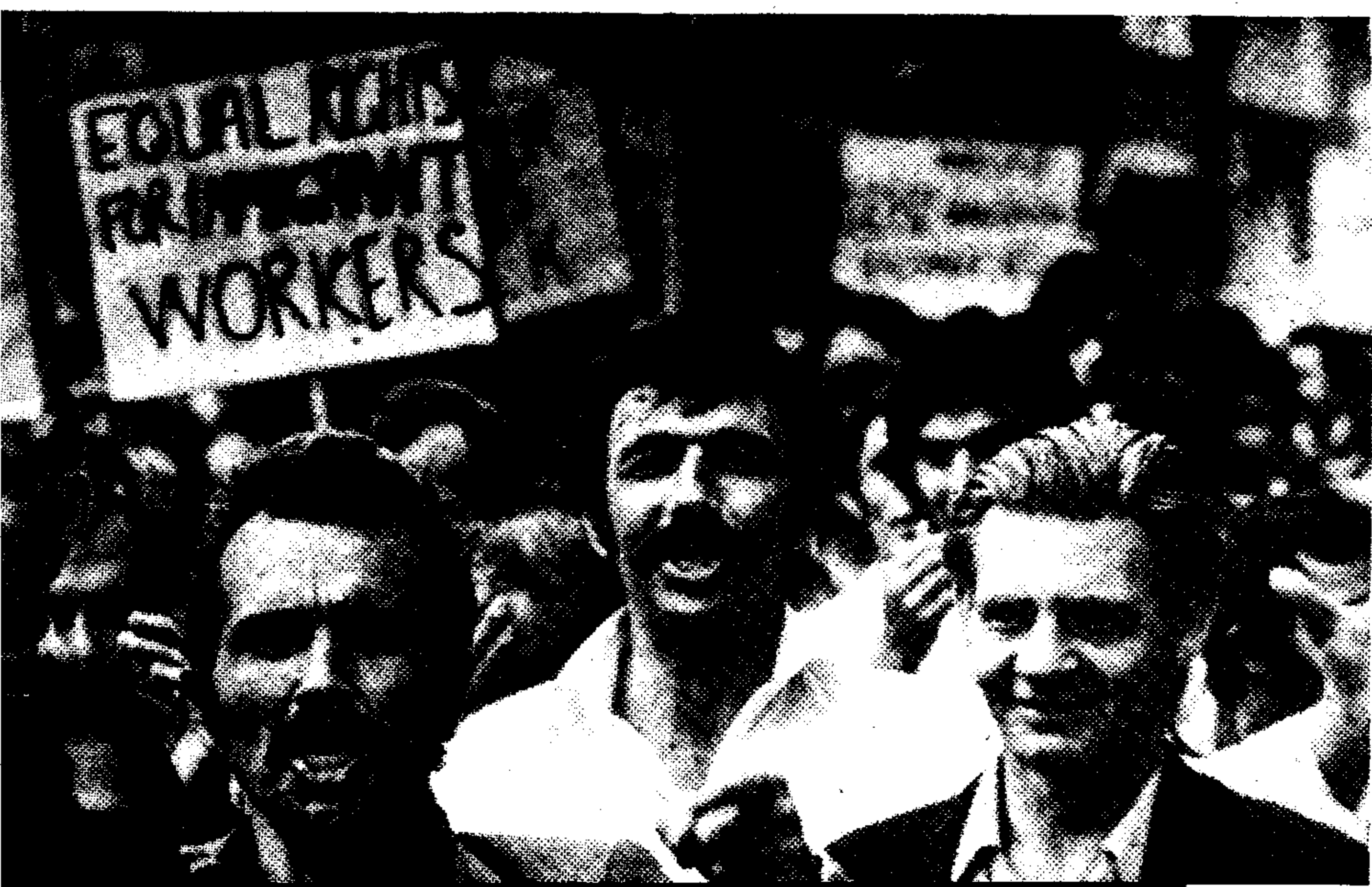
Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Chelmsford, Chester, Coventry, Crawley, Durham, Edinburgh, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Newtown, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Rochdale, Sheffield, Stafford, Stoke

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port control" Left and the extreme Right.

oto by John Sturrock (Report)



These misguided workers think the choice is between foreign workers' jobs and their own.

# CONTROLS Yes, yes! No, no!

socialism (see below). But whether it is or it isn't — and we think it isn't — will it bring a better deal for workers here and now?

This policy says to workers: we'll make you buy British goods, and give you the money to do it. But the trouble with this is that since the last

## winds

blems, managed an absolute growth in trade, though its share of world trade fell from about 18% in 1957 to 12% in 1967.

When Wilson in this period tried 'protective' measures with import quotas and the 15% import surcharge, he was forced to back down because of international opposition. At that time, the Labour Lefts were not in favour of it either...

Now the long boom is over for capitalism around the world, even its most successful practitioners. There is a general crisis of overproduction — which doesn't mean there is too much food, housing or clothing for the people of the world, but that what capitalists can sell on the world market at a profit is worth less and less relative to the value of the capital that's needed to produce it.

This has meant deepening recessions, with the upswings between them becoming shorter and shallower. And in these short upturns, there is intense competition for markets.

In this sort of period — and given the changing pattern of trade toward finished goods sold by one advanced capitalist country to another — less competitive countries like Britain not only lose their foreign markets but import more goods for domestic consumption.

■ ■ ■  
Britain share in world trade fell by 1½% in the one year 1974/5. At the same time, in the British market for manufactures imports soared from 10% of the market in 1969 to 17% in '74. In that year one quarter of all imports into Britain — once the 'workshop of the world' — were of manufactured goods. And the proportion is rising all the time.

Little wonder that the panacea of import controls looks attractive to certain sections of the British bourgeoisie. But despite the fact that the notion is so current in the British left that it is almost taken for granted by many workers, it is one that the working class will espouse only at its greatest peril.

century British capitalism's home market just hasn't been big enough; a wider market must be reached; if import barriers are erected, they'll go up in other countries against British imports; and even if they don't, the high wages this policy envisages will be needed to stimulate the British home market will act to make worse that crisis of profitability which has squeezed out British trade from the world market.

British capitalism needs to raise the productivity of labour relative to the wages paid: that is, to intensify the rate of exploitation. It is certainly not going to concede higher wages — and take a cut in its profits — just to give itself a better home market. If it did so, it would combine it with demands for a huge increase in the intensity of work: speed-ups, flexibility etc and, of course, massive sackings.

## Call

The Lefts' plan of putting up the barriers and getting on much better without all these foreigners — a sort of 'state capitalism in one country' — leads them to the call for import

controls; and many workers who know nothing about the grand plan it was part of nod in agreement, for the idea fits in so well with all they hear about 'buying British' and contributing to the 'country's' prosperity so that they can themselves share in it.

But nobody seriously contends that Britain could cut imports absolutely. If they are selective, what sort of goods will be kept out?

One suggestion is that controls should be applied to those industries where jobs are threatened by competition from abroad, such as cars and textiles. But while workers in these industries are often persuaded that this should be their answer to threatened redundancies, it could actually make things worse for them.

It is unlikely that even selective import controls could be imposed without retaliation from other countries aimed at British exports. Foreign sales would be cut, and home sales increased. But only slightly increased, because the home market is small and limited. Overall, there would very likely be a net loss of outlets (depending on the extent

of retaliation) leading to an increase in unemployment in those sectors

At the same time, a belief in import controls as a panacea will prevent a spirited fight against the bosses' plans for closures and shake-outs.

Another way of selecting imports for control is to concentrate on manufactures, while leaving capital goods and raw materials free from controls. (This mostly includes those industries in the first category.)

## Real wages

Sedgemoor in Tribune quotes with approval the conclusions of another group that favours import controls on manufactures — the Cambridge Economic Policy Group. The only trouble is that they have a different route to the 'promised land' — and that is via an export boom involving the holding down of public spending and real wages! In their view, full employment would ruin the balance of payments; and any expansion of the economy will be achieved only at the cost of working class living standards.

But the advocates of the 'high wage economy home boom' idea are themselves only interested in higher wages as a piece of economic engineering, rather than for its own sake as a way of bettering workers' living standards. Many of them are in the present wage-cutting Cabinet, others on the TUC which has just agreed to cut workers' wages again in the next year.

They are only prepared to see wages go up in the context of a long-term expansion of the economy, where there's some mythical situation of 'plenty for everyone' and no fight with the capitalists.

Meanwhile, import controls will have the effect of making inflation worse, with tariffs increasing prices and scarce foreign goods being bidded up on the market. The answer of the import controllers, they say, would then be for price control: at a time when imported raw materials are rising.

After all their efforts to avoid a clash over wages, they pose an equally sharp confrontation with the capitalists on prices — once again the TUC 'ostriches' prefer to bury their heads in the sand.

# A STEP TO SOCIALISM?

WITH undeniable audacity, some of the more embarrassed advocates of import controls will describe this patently nationalistic and reactionary scheme as a 'first step to socialism'.

We should see it, they say, as a step towards a planned economy, as part of a 'package of socialist measures' including such 'socialist' institutions as the National Enterprise Board which gives away millions to private industry.

Far from being a return to a measure common to early capitalism (when a developing industrial economy put up trade barriers to protect its still vulnerable industries) import controls are dressed up as 'state planning of trade'. Accommodating to Tribune, the IMG now demands a "state monopoly of foreign trade", which, though sounding very 'socialist', can in the present context mean nothing other than ... import controls.

This is all allied to loose talk of controls of foreign trade in the Comecon bloc (East Europe), in Cuba and in China — as

if that were relevant to Britain.

The fact is that the preconditions for a planned economy do not exist in Britain today. The basic pre-requisite for that is that the working class should have overall control of the economy, having first concentrated political power in its hands and destroyed the political and economic power of the capitalist class.

It is ludicrous therefore to speak of import controls as being a first step; on the contrary, it is only possible to talk of them having a socialist content when they are applied in a society that is fundamentally non-capitalist.

To apply import controls in Britain now is to apply them in an economy governed by capitalist laws of motion, which determine the way in which such controls would operate. One cannot talk of planning a system which is by its very nature anarchic and irrational.

Import controls would now be either a measure to simply preserve British capitalism by restoring a better international

position; or they would be a utopian attempt to go against the rule that capital will go where the profits are highest without overthrowing that rule.

When capitalism was still a system which could develop the forces of production, protection was in certain countries a means of developing industrially. In its period of decline, they are reactionary even by comparison with the limited degree of internationalisation of the economy which has taken place since the war, let alone in comparison with the potential of a socialist economy.

Of course, the very idea of pressing a government to take a 'first step' to socialism — even if it were a progressive step — is part of the 'never-never socialism' of the Tribunes and the Communist Party, in which socialism becomes a question of pure choice of policies (albeit under 'pressure') rather than a conscious fight by the mass of the working class for a radically new type of society.

# COLD LAWS OF COMPETITION

WHAT would be the effects of import controls?

The first and most certain effect — one that strikes against workers' interests — is an increase of prices, as cheaper imported goods are taken off the market.

Beyond that, there may at best be some little reduction in unemployment in certain industries in this country. But without a doubt, brothers and sisters abroad would be put out of jobs. At the best, therefore, import controls would remove unemployment from one country to another.

## Expand

But it could work out quite different. The tendency would be to retaliation, and thus to a reduction of the world market. That would bring a general increase in unemployment, both here and abroad.

Modern capitalism, even though it can use import controls from time to time, cannot live enclosed into national boundaries. Modern industry needs to gain its

raw materials, to sell its products, to expand its operations, on a world scale. A national industry may be 'protected' in the short term by import controls, but that will mean reduced investment and increased inefficiency relative to its competitors. Before long the industry will succumb to the cold laws of capitalist competition.

Import controls, on a world scale, are in fact a policy for increasing unemployment. And they hit weaker countries especially hard.

Import controls would not so much hit the multinational firms, which are based in several major European countries and could easily evade them; rather, they would hit workers in relatively poor countries. Thus a ban on textile imports would hit workers' jobs in places like Taiwan, Hong Kong and Portugal. A Portuguese textile workers' leader who visited Britain last year said that import controls

imposed by Britain would be disastrous for his members.



(Above) Portuguese textile worker Marcellino Abrantes who recently toured Britain asking British workers not to call for import controls on Portuguese textiles.

Portugal also shows an example of a major capitalist power (Britain in this case) using import controls to impose political pressure.

For workers in countries like these, to lose a job is total disaster bringing starvation and utter degradation.

The 'import controls' policy package directs workers to trying to solve our problems at the expense of other sections

of our class — brothers and sisters in other countries. It directs workers away from international solidarity against the capitalists who throw us out of jobs, towards allying with the more backward sections of our 'own' national capitalist class. It directs workers away from direct action, towards petitioning the government. It is the perfect let-out policy for any 'left' who wants to talk and not act.

At the Labour Assembly in March, import controls were given a left wing gloss. People said they could be used to boycott regimes such as those in Chile or Spain.

This argument is a cynical and irrelevant cover-up. A political blockade against a particular regime is quite a different matter from import controls as an economic policy. And it should take the form of blacking rather than asking the government to introduce controls.

Import controls and the demand for them will only disorientate workers in Britain and act against the interests of our brothers and sisters in other countries. Rather than wait for the government to be convinced of the 'case' for the utopian and reactionary policy of import controls, we should begin to fight back against the cuts and unemployment now with direct action and international solidarity.

Bruce  
Robinson



CONTINUING OUR SERIES ON THE GENERAL STRIKE

# Why the CP backed the wrong horse



A.J. Cook

Stalin (left) and Zinoviev: discouraged criticism of the 'left' union leaders



THE BRITISH Communist Party, after the launching of the Minority Movement of rank and file trade unionists in 1924 (and having reorganised itself internally) stood poised to play a significant role in the events of the coming two years.

Never, either before or since that time, have revolutionaries stood in such a strong position as a real and living alternative to the reformist leaders of the British labour movement.

Although it was small in numbers, it was almost entirely working class in character. Its cadres were seasoned leaders of mass trade union struggles — figures like Tom Mann, a veteran of the re-birth of socialism in the 1880s, of the great wave of unionisation of the unskilled in 1889/90, a founder of the ILP in 1893 and leading figure in the pre-war syndicalist movement. Men like Wal Hannington, leader of the National Unemployed Workers Committee Movement; people like Murphy, Gallagher and Pollit, leaders of the shop stewards movement during the war and the workers' committee movement in the period 1919-21.

These men were known and respected by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of workers.

There was no serious rival to the Communist Party on the revolutionary left. The Socialist Labour Party and SPGB had degenerated into tiny propaganda sects.

How did this party fail to take the

opportunities presented by the great events of 1924-26?

The answer lies both in the political weaknesses within the Party, and in the line dictated to it by the Communist International: the general staff of the world revolution.

In 1924-25 the tide was flowing strongly to the left in the working class movement. The growth of the minority movement's affiliations, representing nearly a million workers, was a reflection of this swing among rank and file workers. 1925 saw the great victory of Red Friday, when in July of that year the Baldwin government backed down before the threat of an embargo on coal movement in support of the miners which had been organised by the TUC.

Parallel to the movement of the masses to the left was the rise to prominence within the General Council of 'left' leaders like Len Swales of the AUGW who was president of the TUC in '25, Alf Purcell (president in '24) and George Hicks of the AUBTW.

These leaders were given to left wing rhetoric that makes today's TUC lefts look rather pale. Swales in his presidential address to the TUC conference in Scarborough in September 1925 declared "We are entering upon a new stage in the upward struggle of our class ... The new phase of development which is world wide has entered upon the next and probably the last stage of revolt. It is the duty of all members

of the working class so to solidify their movements that, come when the time may for the last final struggle, we shall be wanting neither the machinery nor men to move forward to the destruction of wage slavery and the construction of a new order of society based on co-ordinated effort and work with mutual good will and understanding."

In 1924 the Communist Review had warned against the "suicidal policy" of the Communist Party and the Minority Movement placing "too much reliance on what we have called the official left wing". Yet there was some muddle and confusion about these lefts.

The same article went on to talk about criticising the lefts' weaknesses "relentlessly". It also talked about changing "the muddled and incomplete left-wing viewpoint of the more progressive leaders into a real revolutionary viewpoint."

This evasive language about the real nature of these lefts was, however, qualitatively different from the paean of praise raised by the CP after the Scarborough Conference.

The Workers' Weekly (CP paper, forerunner of the Daily Worker) stated "The Congress was intent on its work from start to finish. When Swales delivered his opening speech, the real temper of the Congress began to manifest itself. The more militant became its mood, the more delegates responded to his fighting challenge."

A whole series of militant resolutions was indeed carried. They condemned imperialism, and endorsed cooperation with the Russian trade unions through the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee.

Yet this period — July 1925 to April 1926 — was the time when Baldwin, Churchill and their class were preparing for the inevitable confrontation with the miners and the whole trade union movement. Despite Swales' rhetoric about the "last final struggle" neither the Congress nor the General Council did a thing by way of preparation.

In this sense the General Strike was 'betrayed' before it even took place.

The CP took little heed of the warnings it was getting from rank and file members that even some of the left leaders closest to the Party, like A.J. Cook the miners' leader, were something less than revolutionary in national office.

At the Party Congress in May 1925 a delegate from Sheffield pointed out "A.J. Cook's speech at the recent miners' conference was completely out of tone with the speeches he had previously been making (before he became Secretary of the Miners Federation with Minority Movement support). After we have praised and said nice things about these left wing leaders, what will the masses say about the Communist Party when these leaders fail them? We must give the necessary qualification to our support of these left wingers."

Given that there was confusion within the Communist Party, and a pull towards the right — towards accommodating to the left reformist leaders — what advice did the Party receive from the Communist International (Comintern)?

## Door

As early as 1924 at the 5th Congress of the Comintern, Grigori Zinoviev (its chairman and, with Stalin and Kamenev, part of Russia's ruling 'Troika') had begun to despair of the British Communist Party.

He stated "We do not know exactly whence the communist mass party of Britain will come, whether only through the Stewart-MacManus door (i.e. the existing CPGB) or through some other door. And it is entirely possible that the communist mass party may appear through still another door."

Already the Soviet bureaucracy was looking for "another door" than that of a really revolutionary party.

After Zinoviev's fall in 1925, Stalin and Bukharin drove the Comintern's policy even more sharply to the right. The Anglo-Russian Committee, in itself a perfectly legitimate agreement on limited aims (to fight the danger of war and Anglo-French-American intervention in the Soviet Union) and only entered upon by the British TUC under the pressure from the rank and file, was

converted by Stalin into a political bloc; and the Comintern proceeded to subordinate its and the CPGB's criticism of the reformist leaders to the preservation of this bloc.

Purcell, Hicks and Swales, who served on the Anglo-Russian Committee, in fact used it to enhance their reputation as left wingers, and gained thereby the support (only mildly critical) of the CPGB at precisely the moment when the latter should have been warning the working class of their instability, their failure to organise for the coming battle with Baldwin, and their potential treachery when under fire.

Under the impact of this fatal political non-aggression pact, the CP drifted further and further to the right. Whereas even in 1925 the Party had been warning that a general strike by its very nature involved a challenge to capitalist class rule that the workers must either take up and see through to the end or suffer defeat even over the most limited aims, by the weeks which preceded the General Strike it was arguing a left variant of the General Council's line that "this strike is not a challenge to the constitution."

## Advice

"Our Party does not hold the leading positions in the Trade Unions. It is not conducting the negotiations with the employers and the government. It can only advise and place its forces at the service of the workers — led by others..."

"Those who do not look for a path along which to retreat are good trade union leaders who have sufficient character to stand firm on the demands of the unions, but they are totally incapable of moving forward to face all the implications of a united working class challenge to the state. To entertain any exaggerated views as to the revolutionary possibilities of this crisis and visions of new leadership 'arising spontaneously in the struggle' is fantastic." (Workers Weekly April 30th 1926 — J.T. Murphy.)

The fact is that a general strike was and is a challenge to the state and therefore revolutionaries cannot restrict their activities, however small, to "advice" and "placing their forces at the disposal of the workers led by others."

It was not those who exaggerated the revolutionary potential of the strike but those who failed to warn of its revolutionary logic and the need to replace the treacherous leaders who were failing in the communist's first duty "to tell the working class what is."

One lone voice attempted to do this. In 1925 Leon Trotsky wrote a pamphlet called "Where is Britain going?" In it he warned against sowing illusions in the lefts and against passively accepting the existing left reformist leadership as inevitable.

"An English proverb says that one must not change horses while cross-



The Baldwin Government locked up the CP's leaders (above, top) on the eve of the strike. But they were a lot less dangerous than they might have been. They failed to warn of the coming sell-out for fear of attacking their 'left' allies in the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, and even called for 'All power to the TUC' (the gentlemen in the lower picture) which was to ditch the strike

sing a stream. This practical wisdom is true, however, only within certain limits. It has never yet been possible to cross a revolutionary stream on the horse of reformism, and a class which enters battle under opportunist leaders is compelled to change them under the enemy's fire."

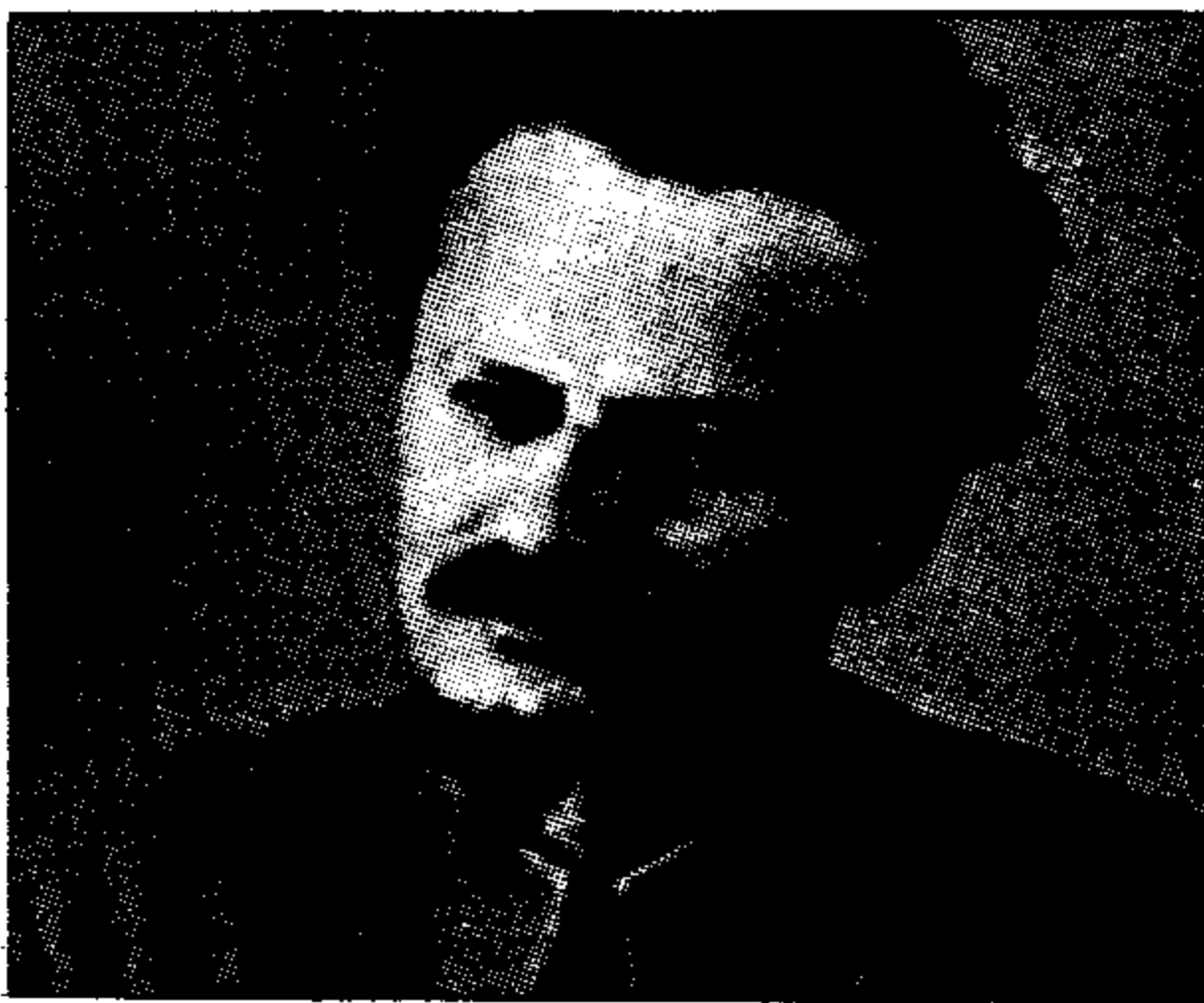
Trotsky's warnings went unheeded in the Comintern and in the CPGB. The 'lefts' joined with the right in betraying the General Strike.

Of course the masses of workers did not see the strike as revolutionary — indeed all their leaders from J.H. Thomas to the CP had stressed that it was not so. But they did want to win, to see it through to a finish. They were beginning to create organs of struggle, transforming trades councils into councils of action which represented organs of working class struggle against the state.

A Party that had predicted the betrayal, had warned against it, had described the issue as in the final analysis one of power, of who rules, could have acted as a much greater pole of attraction to the disillusioned militants betrayed by the General Council.

What should the CP have said about the 'lefts'? Trotsky summed it up: "The most dangerous variety of the liberal Labour politicians are politicians of the type of Purcell, Hicks, Brailsford and Co." The Comintern gave them cover by maintaining a political bloc with them in the Anglo Russian Committee, refusing to break with them even after the betrayal of the General Strike and whilst they were engaged in scabbing on the miners.

The whole abysmal political weakness of the CPGB abetted by the Stalinist Comintern — despite the undoubted heroism of the CP leadership and its militants in the struggle itself — is amply summed up in the Workers Weekly of May 21st 1926, which expressed surprise at the treachery the RIGHT WING



Trotsky — warnings unheeded

was capable of — "...even the CP can be forgiven for not believing it to be possible that once the struggle had begun these leaders should have proved themselves such pitiful poltroons as to surrender at the very moment of victory."

Trotsky summed up what a correct policy could achieve even in a situation of betrayal such as that which followed the General Strike: "In such a period the Communist Party can rapidly enhance its revolutionary authority, its numbers and especially its influence, provided that it conducts a clear, firm, bold, revolutionary policy, calls everything by its right name, makes no concessions of principle, keeps a sharp eye on its temporary alliance partners and fellow travellers and their vacillations and mercilessly exposes trickery and above all treachery."

Alas, it was not to be. For a further two years the CP pursued its rightist policy. Having reduced the Minority Movement to playing second fiddle to the Trade Union lefts in 1925 and '26, the Party failed to mount a vigorous campaign against the offensive launched against it by arguing for trades councils affiliated to the Minority Movement to disaffiliate rather than fight the TUC's ban on their membership of it.

There followed then the ultra left idiocy of the Comintern's 'Third Period' — when in a diametrically opposite swing all reformist leaders were characterised as "social fascists". This finally killed the Minority Movement by turning it into a mere appendage of the CP. But the opportunism of 1925/26, fostered by Stalin, had done the real damage long before this.

At a time when a period of massive class battles is opening for British workers, the lessons of this period have to be learned: unity in action with all those who will fight; merciless criticism and warnings against the reformist leaders, be they never so 'left wing'.

## 'Mind you, we're worth £70' — DUNLOP STRIKERS

24 WOMEN T G W U members are in the third week of a strike for equal pay at Dunlop Engineering, Dudley.

The dispute is over piece work rates, and negotiations have been going on since last September.

The women expected to get the rise on 29th December in accordance with the Equal Pay Act, but management is still trying to use one of the many loopholes in the Act to get out of paying an extra £2 a week.

The women do truing of wheels in the wire wheel shop. In the same shop, men work as wheel builders. The men's rates are similar to the average in the factory, which work out at £1.23 an hour. The women's rates don't reach £1 an hour.

Management claim the work is not of equal value, but, as the strikers told WORKERS ACTION, the truing process involves considerable skill.

"I tried to teach one of the men once" one striker told us "but he couldn't easily get his hands through the spokes. Some of the others probably could do it, but they just won't learn."

The women also have to lift the wheels, so the management is pushing its luck in arguing that the women do lighter work

than the men.

"We got fed up when friends say they're jealous of us rich carworkers earning £70 a week, when we're getting nothing like that. Even if we got the average rate for the factory we'd never earn that much. Mind you, we're worth £70."

The TGWU has made the strike official. The rest of the 300 workers, nearly all of them men, were called out for two days last week, but were allowed to return.

The women have managed, themselves, to stop all lorries going into the plant. But they realise that they may have to call the men out again.

The strike could certainly be won much sooner if the whole workforce was out. There's no reason why winning equal pay should be left just to the women involved, and that male fellow workers should cross a picket that turns back lorries.

As those in the Working Women's Charter Campaigns, and other campaigns for equal pay, have consistently pointed out, winning an equal pay battle is a victory for the whole workforce. Losing such a battle is a defeat for all concerned.

SUE THOMAS



PICKETS AT ORLAKE PLASTICS, DAGENHAM. 100 women workers have been on strike for two weeks, for a wage increase and against the victimisation of two workers. At present their rate is about £15 for 25 hours. Most of the male workers are not supporting the women, but the consistent picketing has gradually brought the firm to a halt.

## CAYU: from the heights of obscurity to its depths

ABOUT 100 delegates attended the conference called by the Campaign against Youth Unemployment (CAYU) in Manchester on Saturday May 15th. The Campaign Committee of the CAYU 'came together' at the November 26th lobby of Parliament by the North West Regional Council of the TUC, but in reality the conference was organised by the Communist Party sponsored Broad Left.

The domineering hand of the CP was obvious in both the speeches from the platform and the choice of speakers from the floor.

Speaking from the platform, Alf Lomas of the London Co-op Society complained about the outflow of capital from the country aided and abetted by the Common Market. He called for the 're-allocation of investment' to 'where it is needed', and for import controls to protect fresh investment.

Defending import controls, he argued that only when we had socialism could we afford the 'luxury' of internationalism.

Charles Clarke, president of the Students Union, did not object to this posing of the labour movement as the champions of British capitalism, despite the fact that the NUS had recently opposed the whole idea of import controls.

The whole orientation of the conference was concerned with 'applying pressure' on the TUC and government. According to one speaker, the TUC is the 'most powerful body in Britain' even though Alf Lomas had previously accused it of 'grovelling before the government'.

But all the speakers agreed that the only thing that could be done to defend

jobs was to call on the Labour government to 'revitalise' British capitalism and withdraw from the Common Market.

Speakers supporting the paper Militant were the only ones given a chance to break the boredom of these recitations. But all they did was vary that boredom. According to them, what we should ask of the government was not import controls but "socialist policies".

An amendment to the major conference resolution was drawn up by supporters of WORKERS ACTION along with IS and IMG delegates. It outlined the need for a real fighting rank and file campaign against unemployment, one which would draw in young and unemployed workers.



Despite demands from the floor that this amendment be voted on, the Campaign Secretary narrowly gained acceptance for his proposal that the amendment be referred to the Campaign Committee. Thereby, the more vigorous opponents of the Broad Left were denied the right to address the conference. And this was justified on the grounds that there was 'not enough time' — yet the conference ended 1½ hours early!

It is unlikely that the Campaign will organise another conference in the foreseeable future. Given the absence of any perspective for activity other than support for whatever happens on May 26th, it seems probable that the CAYU will have an ending as obscure as its beginning.

PETE RADCLIFFE



## Rule 14 and Camden TC

FOLLOWING ITS suspension by the TUC last month Camden Trades Council has been "reconstituted".

But instead of a new 'kosher' council, the "reconstituted" council is exactly the same as the old one. Even the officers are the same...with one exception. Gregory, a Communist Party member and secretary of the old Trades Council, wanted one permitting only delegates from union branches which accepted Rule 14. Having broken every rule in the book to get this, he now felt obliged to resign!

One important change has taken place, however — the Trades Council has approved Rule 14. This is the rule which forbids councils from co-operating with bodies which oppose TUC or Labour Party official policy.

From being a possible base of co-ordinated opposition to the present attacks on the working class, trades councils are being tran-

## THE UNIONS



sformed by the TUC into miniature models of class-collaboration.

The fight against Rule 14 must continue — both from those Trades Councils that have refused to accept it and from those who accepted it reluctantly.

A picket of the Annual Conference of Trades Councils is planned for Saturday May 22nd as part of the campaign to get this rule kicked out of the trade union movement.

STEVE CORBISHLEY

## Only united front structure can save TOM

THE National Delegate Conference of the TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT (TOM) last weekend showed how far the TOM is from being a genuine united front with anything like wide-spread support.

The real decline in the Movement was shown very clearly at the beginning of the conference, when it was revealed that the paper membership had dropped to a miserable 180. And as the various reports from the national organisers came in the true state of the organisation could be heard again and again.

The position of press officer had not functioned at times, student work was at a wretchedly low ebb, the women's organiser had resigned and not been replaced, even the fund-raising around the Bloody Sunday demonstration had only brought in about a third or a quarter of what had been hoped for.

The truth of the matter, in a nutshell, was that the TOM had more and more failed to live up to the image of an organisation capable of developing serious on-going activity around the question of the struggle in Ireland.

Much of the blame for this state of collapse and organisational ineffectiveness must be attributed to the fact that TOM in no way resembles the united front which it claims to be and needs to be.

As at the previous NDC, any motions which could have pointed the way toward building a real united front with affiliated organisations firmly in control were lost — much to the relief of the clique of one-issue campaigners who are currently able to control the TOM with hindrance.

Particularly unfortunate was the fact that there was no real discussion on the structure of the committee which is organising the Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland.

During the conference it was continually asserted that the delegation itself would have the final say about which bodies it was going to meet during the visit. However, since the organisation of the tour has been left to a sub-committee of the TOM rather than a structure based on those organisations sending delegates, it follows that any proposals put to the delegation will be on the lines of "take it or leave it".

## Workers back teachers' anti-Tory action

IN THE GREATER MANCHESTER borough of Tameside, plans by the newly-elected Tory council to retain the 11-plus are being faced with threats of industrial action. Unions not directly concerned with schools have warned of this if any victimisation arises from teachers refusing to co-operate with the Tories scheme.

Although they didn't say so in their election manifesto, the Tories had evidently been planning for some time to stop the planned comprehensive re-organisation due to start in September this year. Of the four teachers they have 'consulted' about this, one is a headmaster who has been coaching his "A stream" for the 11-plus since last September.

The Tories attempt to justify this retention of grammar schools by blaming comprehensive education for a "slide in morals".

They announced their plans the day after the election results, but were forced to postpone implementing them after the teachers' unions invoked the collective disputes procedure and refused to supervise or mark exams.

However, the Tories claim that they have already recruited enough scab labour to ensure that the exams go ahead within the next fortnight. In the face of this, Tameside Trades Council has responded quickly, and is acting as a co-ordinator for the fight-back. This includes calling a picket of the council meeting on May 18th.

Telegrams and messages of support should be sent to: Bert Ellicott, Secretary, Tameside Trades Council, 110 Thornfield Grove, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.

Protest messages should be sent to Tameside Education Authority, Town Hall, Duckinfield, Cheshire.

# WORKERS IN ACTION

## Gops back white racist with arrests

EIGHTEEN young black people were arrested after police waded into a crowd coming away from a sports meeting in Tottenham, North London, on Wednesday 12th May.

Some school students and unemployed youth, leaving the sports ground, went to buy sweets and refreshments at a nearby newsagents. The shopowner, Robert Reave, locked his shop and refused to serve the young people, all of whom were black.

"I'm not serving you black bastards", he said.

Police arrived in several cars and police vans and waded into the crowd, picking out the unemployed black youths.

Some of those picked up were later released without charge, but nine will appear at the Magistrates Court on June 11th, and a further nine at the Police Juvenile Bureau.

## EVENTS

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

Wednesday 19th May. Campaign for a Socialist Solution in Ireland public meeting, with speakers Stanley Orme, Ernie Roberts, and Eddy McParland. 7.30pm at the Trades Hall, Bruce Grove, Tottenham.

Thursday 20th May. Working Womens Charter Campaign meeting on the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act. 7.30pm at the Roebuck, Tottenham Court Rd.

Thursday 20th May. Reading Socialist Forum on "The Fourth International". 8pm at St Davids Hall, London Road, Reading.

Thursday 20th May. Birmingham Workers Action meeting on 'The May 26th Day of Action and the next step'. Speakers: Andrew Hornung and John Bryant. 8pm at the 'Wellington', Hurst St.

Friday 21st May. Protest picket outside Hendon Magistrates Court, where the 44 Right to Work marchers arrested on March 19th will be appearing. From 10am at The Hyde, Edgware Rd, NW9.

Saturday 22nd May. Campaign for a Socialist Solution in Ireland conference. Delegates credentials from E. McParland, Flat 4, 133 Victoria Way, London SE7.

Saturday 22nd May. Day School on Women's Rights. 10.30 am to 5pm at Nottingham Teachers' Centre, Cranmer Rd, Nottingham. "The new laws and how to use them... What you and your union can do in the struggle for equal rights". Organised by Nottingham WWCC and other groups.

Sunday 23rd May. Troops Out Movement Seminar on Ireland for Greater London Labour Party members. 10.30am at the City of London Poly, Whitechapel Rd (Aldgate East underground).

Sunday 23rd May. Manchester labour movement conference on Chile. Speakers: Pedro Cornejo (Chilean TUC), Andrew Bennett MP. 2pm to 5pm at the AUEW offices, The Crescent, Salford.

Monday 24th May. Debate between Haringey TOM (Chris Davies) and CSSI (Eve Smith). 7.30pm at Sterling House, Stuart Crescent, London N22.

Tuesday 25th May. 'Unemployment: organising the fight-back in Brent'. Joint meeting organised by Brent Trades Council and Brent East LPYS. 8pm at the Trades and Labour Club, 375 High Rd, Willesden, London NW10.

Tuesday 25th May. Greater Manchester TOM meeting on 'Why self-determination?'. 7.30pm at the Ducie Arms, Gt Ducie St.

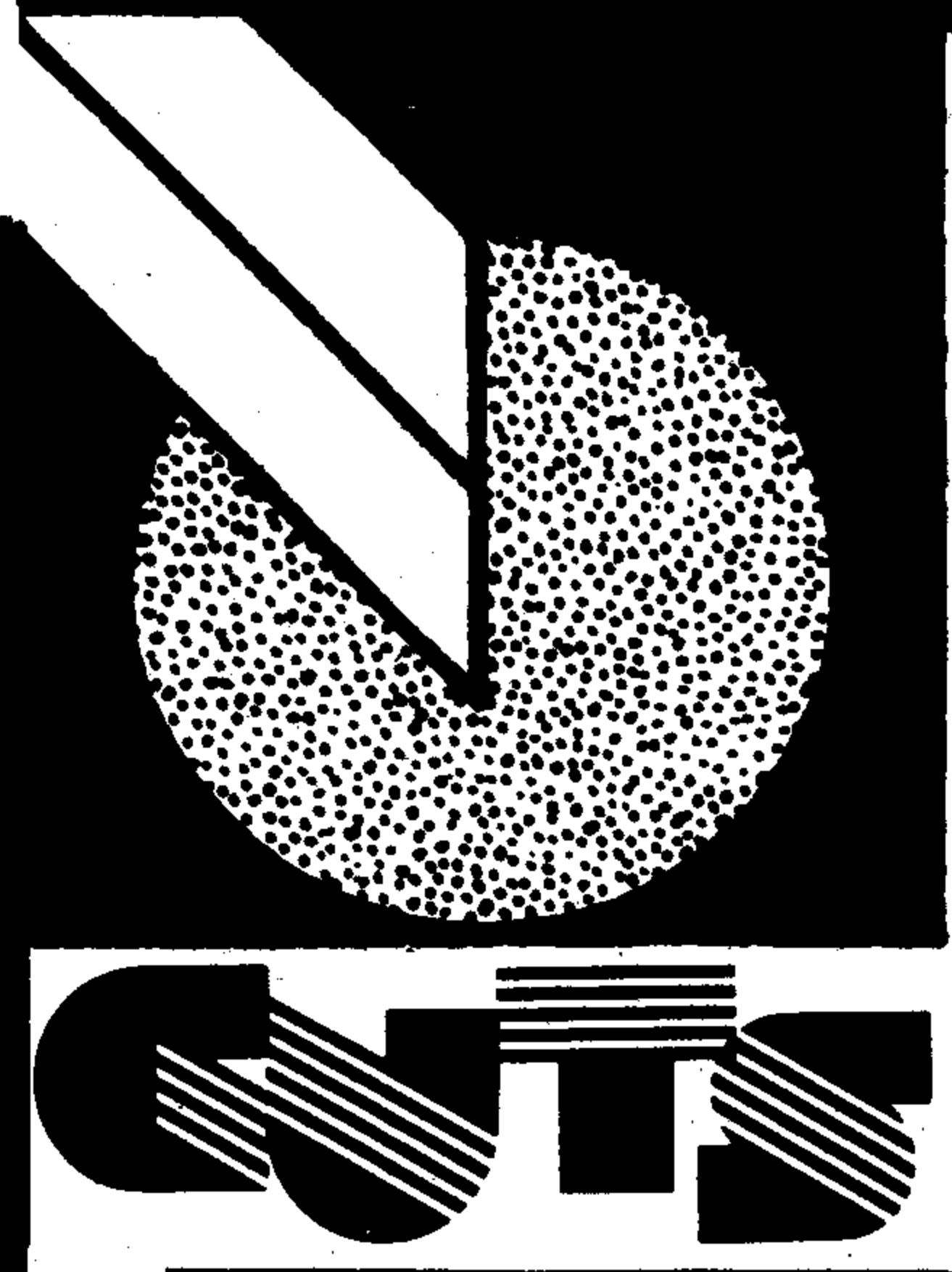
Wednesday 26th May. Day of Action called by the Labour Assembly. The London Confed and the London CoOp Political Committee is organising a march and lobby of Parliament, starting 1pm at Tower Hill.

Wednesday 26th May. Social organised by Hackney Trades Council: from 7.30 at the Middleton Arms, Middleton Rd/Queensbridge Rd, E8. Music, bar extension. Entrance free.

Saturday-Sunday-Monday 5th-6th-7th June. Lutte Ouvriere fete, at Meriel, near Paris. A group of Workers Action supporters will be going. If you wish to go, contact WA at 49 Carnac St, SE27.

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# London bus crews resist the cuts



LONDON TRANSPORT are past masters of the old technique of the 'big lie'. Their latest venture into this field concerns the cuts in services. According to them, their new scheme of primary and secondary schedules will make for more reliable and regular (if not more frequent) services. In fact, it is an excuse for increasing the work load and cutting jobs and services.

At present the full bus operating staff establishment is about 24,000 — but only 21,000 are actually employed. Manning has been kept at this low level because they want to carry the maximum number of passengers with the minimum number of staff. At one time there used to be 70,000 busmen in London. Now there is only a third of this number, and no chance that more will be employed.

The idea behind the introduction of primary and supplementary schedules is that the service will be divided up into routes which have priority, and those which are not so important. Bus staff will be put on rotas, and workers on the secondary rota can be switched about from route to route at short notice as London Transport see fit.

This will result in an obvious deterioration of conditions for the workers. Shifts will be irregular and crews will be split up. More than that, it will institutionalise service cuts. If this is successful on the buses, the 'tubes' will be the next to follow.

With the connivance of the union leaders, this scheme was forced through the Central Bus Conference (which represents London's busworkers) in a hurried and undemocratic manner. A further attempt to get this decision referred back was made by Wandsworth garage at the last Central Conference this month, but this was defeated by 36 votes to 26.

London Transport and the local T&GWU officials must have thought that this was the end of the resistance, and that they had a clear hand to push through the schedules garage by garage. But some rank-and-file busworkers decided to organise a fight-back. After a very well attended special meeting, Willesden garage decided to come out on an indefinite strike and Wandsworth agreed to come out for a series of one-day strikes. They did this despite the interference of the full-time T&G officers, who urged them to stay at work.

This action must be spread to other depots affected by the schedules. It should also get the fullest possible support from the rest of the labour movement. Already a factory near Willesden garage has demanded from its management no penalties for lateness, early finishing, and compensation for using other forms of transport.

By taking this action, these busworkers are fighting for all of us. They have made a start — now the fight must be spread and strengthened. New battles are already looming up. London Transport want to put up their fares, very shortly. Only a concerted resistance by busworkers and passengers will stop them.

A group of militant L.T. workers based around the rank-and-file paper — Platform — are trying to organise this fight-back. Information can be got from: The Platform Committee, 8 Buller Rd, London N17 9BH.

Donations and messages of support for Willesden should be sent to: 1/350 T&GWU, K. Maynard, 377 Redcliffe Walk, Wembley, Middlesex. STEVE CUSHION

## Occupying Scottish students get widespread support

THE OCCUPATION by over 500 students at Moray House college of education, Edinburgh, has sparked off a wave of direct action against the cuts in Scotland.

Dundee college of education, Craiglockhart college (Edinburgh), Queen Margaret college (Edinburgh), and Callander Park (Falkirk) have already followed Moray House into occupation. Jordanhill college, in Glasgow, is expected to occupy on Tuesday 18th May. Edinburgh university and Edinburgh college of art students have supported a picket of the Scottish Education Department offices.

'Flying squads' sent out by the Moray House students have created a response in the EIS, the Scottish teachers' union. EIS associations and districts have passed resolutions calling for EIS action on one of the occupation's main demands — renegotiation of teachers' contracts to reduce class size.

Support for the Moray House students has also come from the lecturers' union at Moray House, the NUM at Bilston Glen and Lady Victoria collieries, the EIS at national level, the local division of AUEW-TASS, the Edinburgh building workers' committee and the Edinburgh Right to Work committee.



The Moray House occupation started on Wednesday 12th May, after 200 students had been attending job interviews. Only a handful of the 200 got jobs, and it seems certain that 60% of the students finishing this year are due to get no teaching jobs. The press estimates 2000 finishing student teachers will be unemployed in Scotland next year.

The education cuts are also scheduled to hit at the college intake: the Diploma course being reduced from 260 students to 160, the primary course from 173 to 74, and the secondary from 867 to 705.

600 students at a General Meeting on Wednesday voted to occupy with only four against, and since then the occupation has been run by an organising committee of 15 responsible to regular daily general meetings which have been attended by up to 1100 students.

The demands of the occupation, in addition to the renegotiation of contracts, are:

- \* For a campaign against all cuts in public spending and for the right to work.

- \* That the college refuse to implement the cuts.

- \* That the college give an assurance of no staff redundancies, and refuse to cooperate in the rundown of training facilities.

- \* For a meeting on policy against the cuts between students' representatives and the EIS and Lothian regional council.

- \* For the EIS immediately to instruct all members not to teach any class over 33 and not to cover for staff absent for more than 3 days.

- \* For the EIS to ensure that any teacher unemployed next session be entitled to the full facilities of the EIS.

As those demands show, the students see their battle, not as a 'special case', not as a matter of 'save our college', but as part of the necessary general rank and file fight-back against the cuts. One of the leaflets put out by the occupation sums it up:

"How do we win the campaign? We accept that one localised occupation will not be successful. We argue, however, that a mass labour-student movement campaign, based on direct action, can defeat the present Labour Government's policies. We see our action as an integral part in the building of such a campaign".

Messages of support and donations should be sent to: Occupation Committee, Moray House College, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh. BILL FORD

## Manchester NUPE lead fight for jobs

APRIL'S MEETING of the National Executive Council of the National Union of Public Employees endorsed a resolution from the union's South West Divisional Council.

The resolution calls upon the NEC to "take the initiative in arranging with other TUC-affiliated unions to organise resistance to cuts in public expenditure" and "to insist that all NUPE negotiators, at all levels, approach their employing authorities and negotiate for the following guarantees:

- "1. No members to be made redundant.

- "2. No loss of earnings resulting from cuts.

- "3. No increases in workload without appropriate increases in earnings.

- "4. Where an employee leaves he or she should be replaced... failing this our members refuse to undertake the workload which had been covered by that employee. Also that where there are extensions to existing workloads (e.g. new additional buildings, extensions of services, etc) the appropriate number of staff must be appointed to cover the work.

- "5. To prepare contingency plans for industrial action in order to ensure that we will be in a position to effectively resist should this prove necessary, and to demonstrate our determination and sincerity in this matter".

So far, however, despite the brave speeches of Alan Fisher and other NUPE leaders about opposing the cuts, branches and NUPE officials have not been circulated with instructions to implement the resolution.

Many NUPE militants have not waited for the word to come down from Head Office before taking action. In Manchester the Health Services District Committee has already called upon all members to refuse to cover for staff who are not replaced. It is also planning a rally against health cuts in early July.

The cuts have also prompted the setting up of Joint Shop Stewards Committees in a number of Manchester hospitals, one of the prime aims being to get a unified policy of resistance to any management ploys. The Manchester Health Services branch of ASTMS has put out a call for an all-Manchester

meeting of NHS stewards to discuss action against the cuts, and this has been taken up by NUPE.

In North and South Manchester hospitals the Joint Shop Stewards committees have resisted attempts by management to alter the dates of two extra statutory days' holiday, thus saving money on premium payments. Extra staff have been taken on at Ancoats Hospital and at St Mary's after threats of action by NUPE members.

## TWO WAYS TO FIGHT THE CUTS

TWO DIFFERENT WAYS of fighting the cuts were clear at the 300-strong demonstration last Saturday, 15th May, in Oxford.

At the end-of-march rally, full-time union officials from COHSE, NALGO, NUPE and ASTMS spoke. The COHSE speaker called for import controls and the NUPE speaker said strike action would be no use since it would only save money for local authorities.

The organisers — the Oxford Joint Trade Union Action Committee Against the Cuts, dominated by the Communist Party — then refused speaking rights to the Trades Council and closed the meeting. This stupid bureaucracy was undoubtedly provoked by the fact that revolutionaries of the Workers Socialist League and other tendencies now have a leading influence on the Trades Council and it is firmly opposing Rule 14.

There was a strong call from the rally to allow a Trades Council speaker, and after the meeting had been officially closed, the audience stayed to hear Gerry Casey from the Trades Council. While failing to take up the import controls question, Gerry Casey argued clearly that if we wait for the trade union bureaucracy to stop the cuts, then we will wait forever.

Either we plead and petition for less cuts, or we mount resistance through direct action, with official support if possible, unofficially if necessary. That is the choice. There is no escaping it. Steve Pitt.