

workers' ACTION

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10p

Occupy Speke to

STOP THE LEYLAND MASSACRE

AT BRITISH Leyland there is never a penny in the till when it comes to discussing better pay and conditions. But in order to smooth the way to getting rid of 2,774 jobs at Speke No.2 plant, they have come up with £30 million.

In order to avoid a fight against the closure of the plant, Leyland are offering the Speke workers lavish redundancy terms. The deal promises two weeks' pay for each year of employment, on top of the statutory redundancy money, plus help with removal expenses, plus extra money to make unemployment benefit up to full pay for up to 18 months.

Workers who have been at Speke a long time can get up to £10,000.

Leyland's aim is to cut jobs. They are taking great care to soften the first blow, but if Speke is allowed to close then Canley or somewhere else will be next. And the next plant to be threatened will be terribly weakened if Speke goes under without a fight.

But it need not be like that. If the Speke workers, at their mass meeting on Friday 24th, decide to occupy the plant, then the support will be there to back them up.

The British Leyland senior shop stewards have declared total opposition to the closure and called on

plants to refuse work transferred from Speke. They have suspended meetings of the National Cars Council, top tier of the Leyland "worker participation" structure.

Liverpool port shop stewards' chairman Denis Kelly has said that the dockers are ready to black Leyland goods. Throughout the powerful Merseyside labour movement, there is no doubt that a courageous stand by the Speke workers would rally massive support.

Leyland bosses are trying to bribe the workers at the Canley plant, offering them the work on the TR7 transferred from Speke. But, given a lead, the Canley workers can remember how their jobs were saved by Solihull workers refusing to accept the transfer of Dolomite production from Canley; and they can do for Speke what Solihull did for them.

Throughout Leyland, an occupation at Speke could begin a concerted fightback against the bosses' job-slashing plans. Industrial action across the company could not only stop the closure but enforce worker-controlled work schedules, based on work sharing with

no loss of pay, so that work hours are cut, not jobs.

Speke shows up all the bosses' lies about Leyland.

Too many strikes, they say. But Speke's current strike — provoked by management unilaterally breaking agreements on manning levels — is the first one there for five years.

So they fall back on saying Speke's problem is absenteeism, not strikes.

But it seems that the state of the market for the TR7 is such that Leyland have actually saved money from it not being produced during the strike. If there were less absenteeism at Speke, the workers would just work themselves out of a job quicker!

Too much taxpayers' money poured into Leyland, say the bosses, on the way to the bank with their large salary cheques paid for by taxpayers' money. But apart from the profits of the privately owned component firms, and apart from the £60 million Leyland pays out each year in interest on the purchase of BL from the old parasites, the cost of the Speke closure and the transfer to

continued on page 3

INSIDE: TWO PAGES ON THE LEYLAND FIGHTBACK

IRELAND: Get the big-time killers out!

SIX YEARS ago the British Army cold-bloodedly shot down 13 civilians on a civil rights demonstration in Derry. Last Friday, 17th, 12 people were killed when the Provisional IRA bombed the La Mon House restaurant in Co. Down.

After the Derry massacre the British government issued a white-wash report in the name of Lord Widgery. No proceedings were taken against the soldiers responsible for the killings.

After 15 people were killed in the bombing of McGurk's bar in Belfast, in December 1971, the RUC and British Army blamed it on the IRA. Only six years later was a Unionist right-winger arrested and charged.

After the La Mon House atrocity, the Provisionals issued a statement:

"The IRA admits responsibility for the bombing operation at La Mon House in which 12 innocent people died. There is nothing we can offer in mitigation established that a nine-minute warning was given to the RUC. This has proved totally inadequate given the disastrous consequences.

"We accept condemnation and criticism from only two sources: from the relatives and friends of those who were accidentally killed and from our supporters who have rightly and severely criticised us.

"Abroad and at home the British Government has had a field day with its unchallenged version of events in that peace lies in the destruction of Irish Republicanism.

"All killings and tragedies stem from British interference and the denial of Irish sover-

eighty. The IRA will continue to resist the British with all the might that we can muster".

It is up to the Provisionals in particular and Irish republicans in general to deal with those responsible for the bombing. There are, and must be, different moral standards on the side of those fighting for Ireland's national liberation from those that British imperialism has made do with for centuries of colonial wars.

But the ultimate responsibility for the deaths and suffering at La Mon House rests with the British state and its continued grip on Ireland.

The movement of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland started out as a peaceful movement. They took up guns when the Orange state forces and the British Army, seeing that the civil rights agitation would threaten Partition and the existence of the artificial Northern Ireland statelet, met them with armed repression.

Partition was established by maintained by armed force.

Atrocities are nearly inseparable from national wars — especially when, as too often with the Provisionals, military strategy is allowed to substitute for political strategy.

Workers' Action has consistently expressed our solidarity with the Republicans and Socialists fighting to break Britain's grip on Ireland and end Partition. With all the more energy, we condemn the bombing at the La Mon House restaurant. We repeat our call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and self-determination for the Irish people, as the only steps that can bring peace to Ireland.

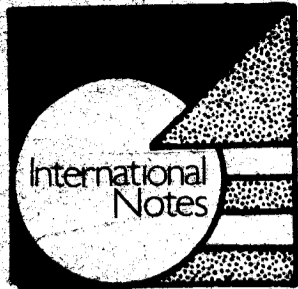
POWELL STEPS UP RACIST HYSTERIA

MERLYN REES says immigration controls are as tight as they can go. Margaret Thatcher says they should be tighter.

Enoch Powell says immigration controls are not enough. Black people living in Britain must be 'repatriated' — that is, deported. And then the fascists say: we can't wait for the politicians to deport black people, we must drive them out now.

Each racist stands on the others' shoulders. Each move by Labour Ministers to conciliate the racists allows Thatcher and Powell to step up their racism. Each new hate-filled outburst from Powell emboldens the racist street thugs.

We have to stop this racist drift now, by fighting in the labour movement for a campaign to end all immigration controls now!



Soweto boycotts Uncle Tom poll

THE PEOPLE of Soweto defied the South African government against last weekend, by an almost total boycott of government-organised elections for a town council.

Virtually all the organisations of the black community in Soweto have been banned, and its main leaders detained, including all the members of the former 'Committee of Ten'. The Government called elections for a Community Council.

In 19 out of 30 wards there were no candidates. In 9, candidates were elected unopposed. In two wards there was a contest, and only 5 to 6% of registered electors voted. Less than half the potential electors are registered anyway.

Less than 500 people voted altogether, in a city of one million.

The Government has declared the eleven 'councillors' who were elected to be the democratic representatives of Soweto. It says it will hold by-elections for the other 19 seats.

MORE HOT AIR FROM LYNCH

MR JACK LYNCH, prime minister of the Twenty-Six counties of Ireland, has once again called on Britain to recognise that a united Ireland is an indispensable part of any solution to the problems facing the two communities of the Six Counties which currently remain part of the U.K.

In a speech to the recent Ard Fheis (conference) of the Fianna Fáil party in Dublin last week, Mr Lynch called on the British Government to state publicly its interest in the unity of Ireland by agreement, in independence, and in a harmonious relationship between the two islands.

Mr Lynch also told his party conference that he is planning to set up a study group to investigate all aspects of the relations between the two Irish states. The group will report on such matters as civil rights, financial and constitutional aspects, and the possibility of a federal relationship between the Six Counties and the Twenty-Six. The group's conclusions might form the basis of a subsequent white paper.

In the period before Partition, the Irish people showed — including through parliamentary elections — that an overwhelming majority wanted the independence of Ireland. British imperialism and its Orange capitalist allies refused to recognise the validity of this democratic expression of the

WORKERS AND employers have returned to work after a two-week general strike in Nicaragua.

The strike was sparked off by the brutal murder of Dr Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of La Prensa, the country's only opposition newspaper, and leader of UDEL (the Democratic Liberation Union). He was the likeliest successor to the country's dictator, Anastasio Somoza Portacarrero, in the free presidential elections promised for 1981.

Silvio Pena Rivas has confessed to having been paid to assassinate Chamorro by Pedro Ramas. Ramas runs the Somoza-owned firm Plasmaferesis, in Managua, which buys the blood of poor Nicaraguans to sell to North America and Western Europe.

Immediately after the news of Chamorro's murder, about 30,000 people demonstrated in the streets of Managua (the capital), shouting 'Death to Somoza'. During Chamorro's funeral, about 50,000 marched through the streets, shouting slogans against Somoza, and demonstrators set fire to the Plasmaferesis building

A Dictator nears his end



and other businesses thought to be owned by Somoza.

National Guardsmen attacked the demonstrators with tear gas and machine guns, killing one. Two days of demonstrations followed. Somoza's businesses were wrecked, cars were burnt, and damage was estimated at \$7 million.

The general strike began on January 23rd, the inconclusive results of the official 'investigation' of Chamorro's murder became known.

90% of Nicaragua's industry was brought to a halt. In Leon, Nicaragua's second-

largest town, doctors, lawyers and dentists joined the strike. There were daily demonstrations, and one of 10,000 was the biggest political gathering in the town's history.

The National Guard killed at least six people during a demonstration in Matagalpa.

The strikers' main demand was the resignation of Gen. Somoza, and a fuller investigation of the death of Chamorro.

The Somoza family has ruled Nicaragua since 1936, as well as owning much of the wealth of the country.

The first Somoza, as head of

the National Guard in the 1930s, was responsible for the murder of Cesar Augusto Sandino, the guerrilla leader who freed Nicaragua from the American Marines.

The Americans occupied the country for a decade, and still exert enormous influence, financing the National Guard, supplying it with arms, and training about 175 National Guard officers every year. The 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion against Cuba was launched from Nicaragua.

America has propped up the ninth richest man in the western hemisphere, whose country is one of the poorest in the Americas.

There is one doctor per 3,000 inhabitants, 2 hospital beds for every 1,000 (as against 11 in the USA); only 36% of the population attend school, and the life expectancy is 46 years.

Nicaragua is also one of the most brutally ruled and corrupt of the Latin American countries. After the 1972 earthquake there was wholesale embezzlement of reconstruction funds. The National Guard use mass terror tactics in the countryside, and have driven 80% of the population out of some areas.

Recently the US government has criticised the brutality of the Nicaraguan National Guard. Local businessmen and bishops have also attacked Somoza's tyranny.

With Somoza's death last July, his direct rule was weakened, and political opposition grew stronger. The guerrillas of the Sandinist National Liberation Front allied with other groups, setting the early removal of the Somozas as their common objective.

Chamorro's UDEL was not in alliance with the guerrillas, but it is supported by Conservatives, Liberals, Stalinists, and Social Democrats. Chamorro was especially a threat to the Somozas because of his links with disaffected National Guard officers.

Now, after the death of Chamorro, even the secretary of the Conservative Party has said that if Somoza does not go peacefully, then he will finally go through violence.

LINDA COLLINS

WAR IN THE HORN

ETHIOPIA, until recently on the brink of being dismembered, has now launched major attacks against the Eritrean nationalists in the North and the Somalis in the East.

Russian-piloted Migs strafe the Ogaden desert and Soviet ships' guns pound the Eritrean and Somali coasts, while

recently successful national liberation movements.

Why is Ethiopia supported

by the Soviet Union and Cuba?

Until recently the Soviet Union was closely linked with Somalia. But Somalia turned down Moscow's plan — for which Castro was the broker — of creating a federation of the states in the Horn of Africa with the People's Republic of South Yemen.

In November 1977 Somalia was afraid that its territory would be dismantled, and with the successful liberation of Eritrea it would lose its sea ports. It also saw Somali claims as threatening the independence of Djibouti, which forms the terminal of Ethiopia's main rail line from the capital to the coast.

If Eritrea were to break away from Ethiopia, this would, in the eyes of Israel, turn the Red Sea into an 'Arab lake'. Israel also has considerable investments to protect in Eritrea. Thus Israel's commitment to Ethiopia — cut after 1974 — has been increased again, despite the fact that Israel thus finds itself on the same side as the USSR and Cuba.



Somali President Barre

crucial Red Sea; potentially it could control entrance from the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean.

Somalia had been financially dependent on Moscow. It turned to the West and the more conservative Arab states, looking to the latter also for support in the battle against Ethiopia.

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Ethiopia under the Dergue: See Page Six.

Carter menaces US miners

MINERS' LEADERS in the United States have rejected a new management offer, and President Carter has threatened them with drastic action if the strike does not end soon through collective bargaining.

Carter could invoke the Taft-Hartley Act, which gives him the power to force the miners back to work for up to 80 days while negotiations continue; or he could order a government takeover of the pits.

The miners have been on strike since December 6th, when their three-year contract expired. They are living on government food stamps, since they get no strike pay.

Arnold Miller, the president of the United Mineworkers' Union, favoured accepting the previous offer by the employers,

represented by the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association. But this deal would have allowed the coal owners to levy stiff financial penalties of over £10 a day on miners who joined unofficial strikes or refused to cross unofficial picket lines. The employers also proposed a reduction in health and welfare benefits.

500 miners showed their anger at the offer by storming the meeting of the union's executive council. The miners also want the right to strike at individual mines; at present only national strikes can be official.

Conditions in US mines are harsh; and the strike has been rough, too. Last year about

14,000 miners (or one in 17) suffered a disabling injury at work. In 1976 26 miners died in an explosion in Kentucky. A strike for union recognition has been going on for 18 months at a mine owned by the same company in another part of Kentucky.

Troops have been used against pickets in the current strike; there has been violence between scabs and pickets; and since Miller's attempted sell-out, he carries a gun and employs a body-guard.

Meanwhile, on February 18th, Miller's immediate predecessor, Tony Boyle, had his conviction confirmed for ordering the murder in 1969 of his union rival Jack Yablonski, with his wife and daughter.

L.C.

A workers' strategy in the Leyland crisis (see also p4)

Longbridge, Solihull STEWARDS REJECT EDWARDES JOB-CUTS

WHEN THE senior stewards took back the Edwardes plan to Longbridge they met an angry response. A meeting of all Longbridge shop stewards voted on 6th February to condemn the Longbridge representatives who had voted for the Edwardes plan, and to oppose the jobs cutbacks.

Nothing daunted, the works committee (made up of senior stewards) put out a statement last week saying they will accept de-manning as long as it is done in line with existing agreements.

In Longbridge the management have already announced figures for de-manning. They are constantly revised upwards, but the latest numbers given are 1138 jobs to go in Body and Assembly, and 580 in Power and Train. The workers whose jobs are

axed will be put into a 'holding pool', where they will be used as sick reliefs or just left idle until natural wastage creates vacancies. The 'holding pool' workers will then be assigned to these vacancies in order of seniority, with the condition that they should only be assigned to jobs they are trained for.

This way — so management says — the job cuts can be pushed through without any redundancies. They plan to start de-manning very soon and complete it by the end of March.

There is a lot of hostility and bitterness on the shop floor against this scheme, but as yet the will to fight is paralysed by a consciousness of lack of leadership

The closure of Mini track 2 in the assembly shop a few weeks ago showed that the works committee is not prepared to lead any struggle at all.

The workers on the track took industrial action against the closure. They were forced to admit defeat — but then they were assigned to other tracks in the same shop, not to the holding pool. Workers for the pool were chosen on the basis of 'last in, first out' across the shop.

Other sections of the shop then struck. But through all this the works committee blandly stood by, making no attempt to generalise the struggle. Management finally got their way.

Now that the Speke closure has dramatised the meaning of the Edwardes plan, it is high time this

sluggish union leadership was forced into action or replaced.

At Rover Solihull stewards took a similar vote to reject the Edwardes plan, adding a call for a meeting of all Rover group shop stewards "to consider the effects of Edwardes' proposals and to draw up a plan to defend the interests of the members in Rover". [There is talk of large-scale redundancies, if Speke closes, at the Rover plant in Cardiff, where a large part of the production currently goes to Speke for assembly].

At Solihull, it seems, and especially on the Rover 3500 assembly, there is a more militant mood than at Longbridge, and no definite figures for the Edwardes job-cuts have yet been given there. Numbers around 500 are talked of.



from page 1

SOLIDARITY CAN BEAT LEYLAND CARVE-UP

Canley would pay the Speke workers' wages for about three years!

There is money to cut jobs, but no money to save them!

The Leyland bosses fear an occupation at Speke. That is why they prepared the way for the closure by provoking a 16-week strike; and that is why their letter, which Speke workers received on 16th February, says the redundancy terms will be conditional on "an orderly transfer of TR7 assembly to the Midlands".

The letter also mentions the redundancy deal only in vague and general terms. That is an extra reason for Speke workers to refuse the bribe.

In any case, even in money terms, the deal is no good for young workers — the majority at Speke — whose chances of getting another job on Merseyside (where 11.5% are unemployed) are not good.

And if there turns out to be small print and double-dealing in the redundancy terms, then there is nothing you can do once you're on the dole and the factory is closed down.

The Leyland bosses hope that Friday's mass meeting will decide on a return to work — and then the 'work' will be arranging the transfer of assembly to Canley. They even hope to close the plant earlier than

the statutory 90-day redundancy notice, squaring this by paying full wages in lieu.

Leyland trade unionists must work out a battle plan to dash the bosses' hopes.

■ Occupy Speke — and any other plants threatened by closure.

■ An immediate emergency national conference of all Leyland stewards, to plan combine-wide industrial

action to enforce work-sharing with no loss of pay. Cut hours, not jobs!

■ Election from the shop floor of an accountable, recallable combine committee which will co-ordinate the fight.

■ End 'participation' now. Demand the opening of all Leyland's books, accounts and files, so that workers can inspect management's plans.

THE NONSENSE OF IMPORT CONTROLS

WHEN SAVING British Leyland is the strategy, import controls are usually the first practical proposal.

The idea is to keep out Japanese, American and other foreign cars, and give Leyland a secure home market.

It does not make sense even in economic terms. Leyland exports a large proportion of its cars, and even produces many of them overseas. The TR7 built at Speke is designed especially for the American market.

If Britain were to impose import controls on cars, then other countries, whose car industries also face similar times, would follow suit. And Leyland would lose out.

Even in the home market it would still face competition from the US-owned firms: Vauxhall, Chrysler, Ford. No doubt the Japanese car firms

would try to open factories in Britain to get round the import controls. Perhaps they would be banned from doing so; so much for import controls being a solution to unemployment!

There is a more fundamental reason to reject import controls. The car industry, more than most, is an international industry. A dozen multinational plants compete furiously all across the capitalist world.

If car workers are split up, with each group of workers trying to 'save' its 'own' company or its 'own' national industry, then it is as sure as lack of solidarity between plants in the same company. Import controls can only help create that sort of division. International workers' cooperation is the only answer to the crisis of the car industry.

Workers' control can save the jobs

BRITISH LEYLAND is publicly owned, and it has worker-participation in management. But when the Leyland bosses decided to close Speke no.2 plant, they did not consult the shop stewards, they did not consult Parliament, and they did not even consult the Cabinet.

Faced with a serious crisis, they reacted no differently from private capitalists. Their answer was to take it out on the workers. And in a serious matter such as this, they threw aside all the flummery of public control and industrial democracy.

British Leyland was nationalised in order to bail out the private shareholders. Through the 1950s and the 1960s the shareholders had pocketed fat dividends. If you invested in the British Motor Company in 1952, then by the time of the merger with Leyland in 1967 you would have received £33,000 in dividends.

Meanwhile there was very little investment. In 1969 British Leyland had fixed assets of £969 per employee, compared to Ford UK's £2709. So when world competition in the motor industry became sharper, in the late '60s, BL went on the rocks.

BL workers came under attack — but the shareholders were safe. The government paid them 10p for every share, although the shares had only been fetching 6½p the day before nationalisation was announced. To this day British Leyland is paying out £5 million a month in interest charges, according to former Leyland boss Alex Park.

CONTROL

Nationalisation was not a way out of the mad international capitalist rat-race in the motor industry. It was just another way for the bosses to organise themselves for that rat-race. And the workers' participation scheme was just a way for them to get the help of the full-time convenors and the senior stewards, painted up to look good with a bit of democracy about minor matters.

For workers, the only answer is a fight for workers' control. The first essential is full information about management's plans.

Today, the Leyland bosses say they will close Speke no.2 plant, and try to buy off the Canley workers with the promise of having TR7 production transferred to them. Tomorrow, they may be closing Canley and buying off Solihull with the transfer of Dolomite production. The only way to stop these salami tactics is to open the books and put an end to business secrecy.

The participation committees just draw senior stewards into management's plans and protect business secrecy. Even the Ryder report, which set up the participation scheme, had six secret chapters out of 15. They included discussion of the possible closure of four small Rover plants in Birmingham.

All workers' representatives should be withdrawn from participation committees now!

Having opened the company's books, the Leyland workers should work out their own work schedules, base on work-sharing with no loss of jobs or pay. With combine-wide solidarity, and the willingness to seize the factory, the Leyland workers can enforce this workers' control.

They should establish links with workers in the car components firms (whose jobs are also threatened) and in the other giant car firms in Britain and internationally.

Against the competitive rat-race for profits, they can build working class solidarity, based on the right to earn one's living.

The car giants' rat-race to crisis

FOR 20 years after World War 2, the car industry boomed. The boom was an example of capitalist irrationality, and so is the slump which is now coming in its wake.

Up to the 1960s the car factories pumped out cars to meet a demand which was continually boosted by advertising and consumer-society ideology. On the Detroit assembly lines, world centre of the car industry, it was impossible to survive over the age of 40. In the cities, pollution increased, and public transport stagnated or declined.

Millions of pounds were squandered: built-in obsolescence, yearly model changes with little or no improvement in safety; and costly advertising and promotion campaigns.

From the late '60s, the general economic slowdown of capitalism led to a more-than-proportional slowdown in car production. The market was nearly saturated; and rising petrol costs after the oil

crisis of 1973 hit the market further.

But under capitalism this slowdown could not lead to a brake on the expansion of car production capacity, with a slackening of the work-pace and reduction of the working week for car workers. On the contrary.

Each car company drives its workers to produce faster and faster, so that it can hold its own in the sharper competition. Instead of reducing the work-week, they sack workers.

And capacity still has to be increased! As the *Financial Times* pointed out in 1972, the Japanese car makers "Toyota and Nissan have grown so rapidly that they have been able to introduce a new 250,000-car-a-year plant every year. Thus, while their best plants are no more efficient than the best in Europe, they have none of the old-fashioned

average productivity of Renault and British Leyland.



The more competition sharpens, the more each firm has to introduce new machinery to keep up. And the more it becomes uneconomical to produce non-luxury models except in numbers sufficient to give maximum economies of scale. That means something between one million and two million a year of each model — and BL produces less than one million of all its models. It spends over £500m. in research and development

on the Fiesta model. To survive in world competition, you have to be able to make that sort of investment — and you have to be able to produce enough to meet your maximum estimated share of the maximum-likely future market or else you will lose customers which will never be regained.

Thus we get insanities like the fact that the European car industry overall only runs at 70% capacity. Car companies drive workers as fast as possible, then provoke strikes as soon as they have large enough stocks. New factories, like Speke no.2 which only opened in 1971, are closed down according to shifts in market conditions.

Fiat chairman Agnelli predicted long ago that the world motor industry would soon have room only for three American, four European and two Japanese firms. In that league Leyland is just too small.

It also has other problems. During the 1950s and '60s Leyland and British Motors invested very little. This was not because Leyland and BMC shareholders were more greedy and feckless than shareholders in other car companies, but because they could make more money by drawing their profits out of Leyland/BMC and investing elsewhere, especially abroad.

It means that Leyland has far more outdated factories than other car firms, and it also means that Leyland inherited a complacent and inefficient management. The workers are expected to pay for this.

Even if Leyland gets the best management and the best investment that British capitalism can find, it cannot beat the world competition. For car workers to rally behind the Communist Party's slogan "Save British Leyland" is suicidal. It is not even true that Leyland workers would be necessarily worse off than now if the company were taken over by one of the giant US car firms.

Speke is only the beginning. If the Leyland bosses succeed there, another plant will be next to go. Leyland workers can only defend themselves by rejecting and fighting against the dictates of international capitalist competition in the car industry. Work-sharing, under workers' control and with no loss of pay, must be imposed throughout the combine.

SHOULD THE LEFT TRY TO SAVE LEYLAND?

After Michael Edwards had presented his job-slashing plan for Leyland on 1st February, the *Morning Star* reported cringingly: "No shop stewards or staff representatives had any chance to consult on its terms and to have voted against would have appeared irresponsible."

In an editorial they felt they could voice some criticism: "This is not the kind of plan which will give the company's workers the opportunity they so keenly desire to get stuck in and build the firm."

When the Speke closure was announced on Wednesday 15th, the *Morning Star* drew no connections between that and the Edwards plan. It allowed itself to be "irresponsible" enough to oppose the closure, but made no proposals for action against it, nor even followed the bourgeois press in reporting talk on Merseyside about the possibility of an occupation at Speke.

The comments of the leading Leyland union representatives, among whom the Communist Party is well represented, were confined to bleating about lack of consultation. "The changes in philosophy since the new management has been introduced have been fundamental. No longer do we have the open method of management".

And the solution? According

to leading CPer Derek Robinson, as quoted in *Morning Star* on 1st February, it is 'back to the good old managers': "There must be a top management committed to and identified with nationalisation, sincere in its efforts to make worker participation a reality".

Since the CP has tied itself to "saving British Leyland" in the capitalist 'rat-race', it can have no better solution.

The revolutionary left press, of course, firmly opposed the Edwards plan. But *Socialist Worker*, in its issues of 11th and 18th February, had nothing to say about how to fight except the general phrases "united campaign", "grass-roots resistance" etc. No slogans, no demands, no proposals.

Meanwhile the *Socialist Worker* bulletin at the Longbridge works was saying: "The Ryder report and all the top economists have warned that the only way Leyland can survive in the face of international competition was to invest massively and expand production... immediately, we have to demand that there is massive investment in order to save jobs in Leyland."

Which, at the end of the day, leads into the same dead-end as the CP.

Socialist Challenge and *Socialist Press* in the main put forward the same policies as

Workers' Action: an end to participation, open the books, work-sharing with no loss of pay.

Each of these papers was, however, marred by its own pet notions. *Socialist Press*, with a one-track mind focused on individual plant struggles, made a big thing of the fact that Edwards' "decentralisation" ... turned out "in reality to be rigid centralisation" — and failed to say a thing about the need for combine-wide organisation and solidarity.

Further it stressed "the need to fight for a nationalised, planned, integrated motor and component industry, with a programme of useful public works..."

Socialist Challenge said that "Leyland shop stewards should be taking a leaf from the book of Lucas Aerospace Combine, which produced a workers' plan of alternative production, for which their workplace and plant could be used."

We entirely agree with the general intention of these proposals. But they beg an important question: who is going to organise this workers' plan? Thus they appear either as a confused way of calling for the rule of workers' councils, or as 'revolutionary left' versions of the "save Leyland" line.



PAUL ADAMS and GQ the outlook for the class of Phase 3.

THE acceptance by the miners' union of area centive schemes and the 10% limit has left slim chances of the 10% being smashed by heat struggle.

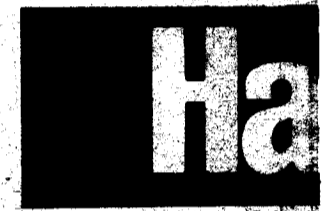
The NUM Executive sell-outs effectively crippled the firemen and the taxi drivers, and now the post workers are the only in section which remains in field against the Govern pay limits.

Yet the strike figures a powerful wave of revolt

The first half of 1977 a tremendous unofficial strike wave. In January to July last seven months of (Two) the rate of work days lost in unofficial strikes was as high as peak years of 1974 or 1975

The trade union bureaucracy tried to stem the tide. The rate of working days through official strikes even lower than in 1974

But at the trade union conferences in the summer



1977 the rank and file pushed through resolutions on wage control. The leaders had to promise 'return to free collective bargaining' and refused to endorse the 10% limit

In the second half of the strike rate rose even higher. From August to December, after the end of Phase 2, it was as high as 1971 or 1974. Separate unofficial and official statistics for this period, but it is clear that the percentage of unofficial strike action was much higher.

This strike wave was a direct challenge to Government wage controls. 50% strikes in the first 11 months of 1977 were over wages opposed to 43% in 1976.

And it was concentrated in the central industrial areas: metals, shipbuilding, engineering and vehicles: 61% the working days lost in this area, as against an average for 1970-6 of 40% 52% if the two big metal strikes of 1972 and 1974 left out of the calculation.

By a combination of bargaining and carefully demanded concessions, the Government and the top trade union officials have so far been unable to prevent the strike wave making a decisive breakthrough.

PROMISES

The Leyland toolmakers, the Heathrow engineers, Port Talbot electricians, Lucas toolmakers, the ball and roller bearing makers, the air traffic control assistants, the firemen, the taxi drivers, were all got bad work without cracking: the Government's promises (though some of them did it a good deal); Ford, Leylands were settled on special case treatment: promises for the future.

Despite the lack of a political breakthrough, the indications are that the revival of industrial militancy will continue

EN FOSTER open a discussion on struggle after the first six months

The economy is showing a slight upturn. Industrial production is expected to increase by about 2-3% in 1978. Manufacturing investment was up 7-8% in 1977 and is thought likely to rise further this year. A 5% growth in world trade is expected in 1978.

In Autumn 1976 the rate of taking on labour outstripped the rate of job loss for the first time since 1973. By September 1977 jobs lost were once again level with labour taken on; but in the metal industries the number of workers employed had gone up about 1.5% between September 1976 and September 1977.

This upturn, and the looseness of the 10% limit, will spur workers on to fight for increases. The CBI already estimates that 15% of the 850 settlements made since August 1977 are over 10%.

Against this background, there are three major problems facing the British bourgeoisie:



ties against employers breaking the 10% rule.

In the General Election, revolutionary socialists will have to campaign for a vote for Labour. The longer they continue in office, the less chance the Labour leaders have of evading being brought to account by the labour movement.

Yet there is no doubt that Callaghan and Healey, if re-elected, will continue on the same course of trying to make the working class pay the cost of the capitalist crisis. With another five years in office they will attempt a more energetic approach to the problems of British capitalism.

The policies of a new Tory government would be distinctly right-wing, though they would no more resemble the demagoguery of Sir Keith Joseph than present Labour Government policies resemble Wedgewood Benn's phrasemongering.

The Labour Government has been blithely storing up wage problems for the future, with the promises made to

What political responses are likely in the labour movement, especially after the general election?

Politically the labour movement has been faced with a dead-end since 1974. The tremendous industrial struggles of 1972-74 kicked out the Tories — and then the new Labour Government set about continuing the Tories' work.

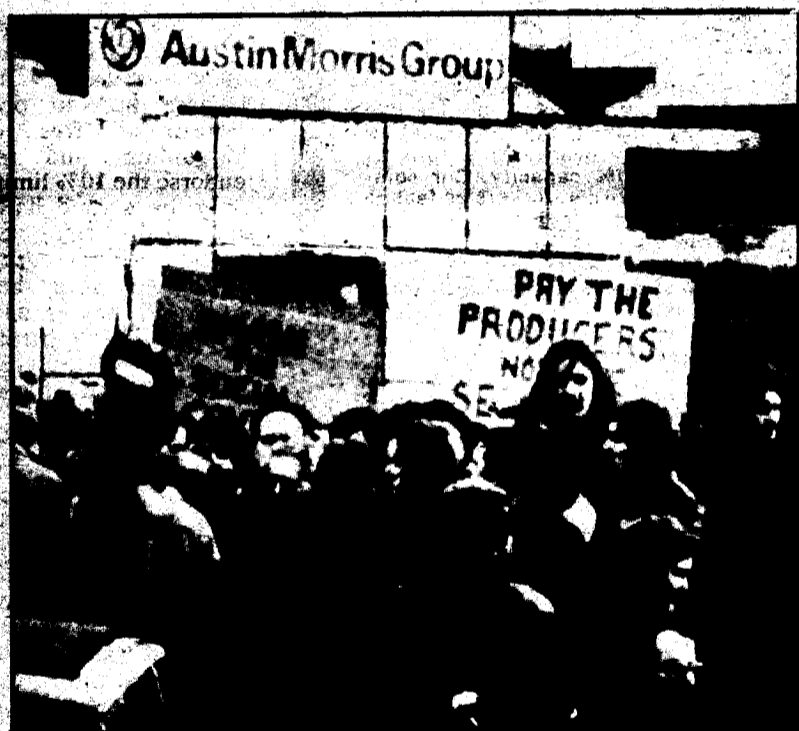
The trade union bureaucrats have worked hand in hand with the government; the Labour Left has been hamstrung by fear of letting the Tories back in.

There has not been a sufficiently strong revolutionary socialist alternative, and so there has been a political demoralisation in the labour movement. With the bureaucrats' shift to the right, rank & file groupings in the unions have generally become weaker and not stronger.

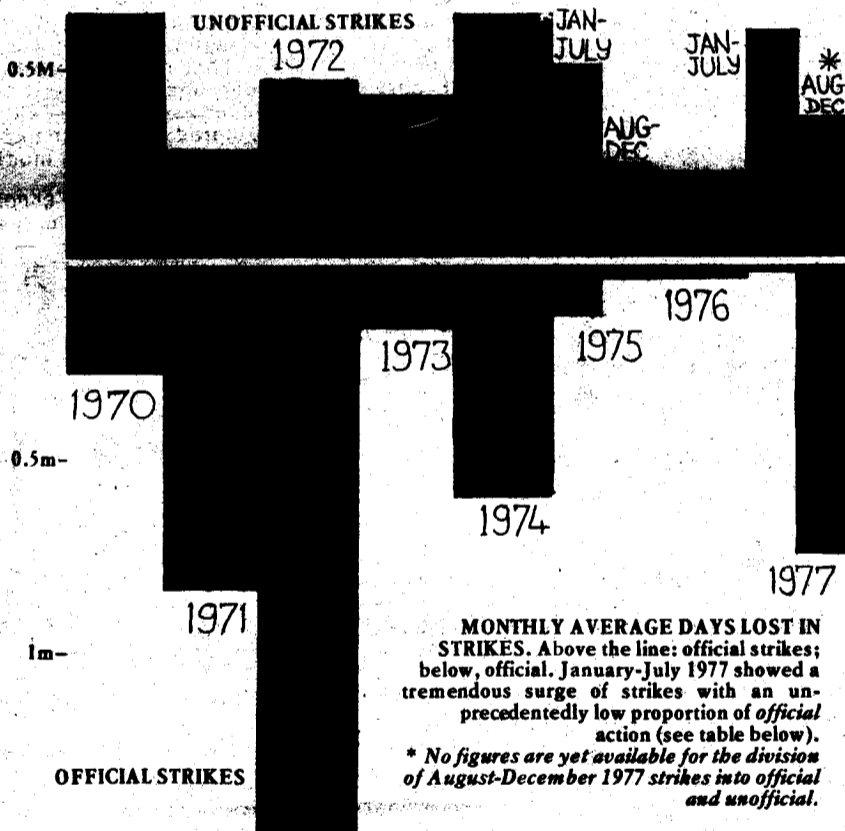
The political weakness has been shown most clearly by the fact that the labour movement has not yet mounted any major, concerted campaign over unemployment or the cuts.

Unemployment will continue very high, and the prop-

Has the rank & file been tamed?



The Leyland toolmakers' strike dealt heavy blows to the Labour Government's wage-freezing policy. But the miners' union dropped their £135 demand despite lobbying [above right] by militant miners supported by striking firemen



MONTHLY AVERAGE DAYS LOST IN STRIKES. Above the line: official strikes; below, official. January-July 1977 showed a tremendous surge of strikes with an unprecedentedly low proportion of official action (see table below). * No figures are yet available for the division of August-December 1977 strikes into official and unofficial.

ortion of young unemployed is rising. In July 1977, 48.8% of the unemployed were under 29, and 15.3% under 18, as compared with 14.2% in July 1976.

Yet despite all this, and despite many attacks on factory organisation, the 1977 strike figures show continuing industrial strength and militancy. Trade union membership has in fact increased during the period of the Labour Government.

This basic class militancy, as it becomes more confident and generalised, must eventually break through the political stalemate. It will do so all the more quickly if stimulated by the political upheavals in France and Italy which are likely as the Communist Parties come closer and closer to government office; the political radicalisation will also come more quickly if Labour goes into opposition, but it will also be more easily channelled into left reformism.

TASK

The task of revolutionaries is to fight to link up the industrial militancy with a workers' answer to the crisis.

■ Against the Social Contract: Labour must break with the bankers and the bosses!

■ Against wage controls: for the independence of the trade unions from the state; solidarity in wage struggles; a fight for wage increases to restore 1974-5 living standards plus an automatic increase of £1 for each 1% rise in the cost of living.

■ Against capitalist rationalisation and unemployment: work-sharing, under workers' control, with no loss of pay; workers' control of hiring and firing and of the organisation of production; opposition to "participation" and to all schemes which make workers responsible for the running of capitalism.

■ Against import controls: international working class solidarity.

1. The "crisis industries" — cars, steel, shipbuilding — which are central to the British economy. From the standpoint of capitalism, a drastic rationalisation and restructuring is needed.

2. Britain's position in the world economy. Now, at long last, Britain is being pulled into a slight economic upturn by the revival of world trade. Yet a new world recession — unlikely to be postponed beyond 1979 — will throw Britain back into severe crisis.

Meanwhile Britain can neither afford to pay its share of the overhead costs of rationalising economic relations within the EEC, nor meet the pressures of ever-sharpening world competition.

3. Phase 1 and Phase 2 did a good job for the bourgeoisie. Yet they have left the wages structure of British industry in chaos.

Established differential patterns have been thrown

into disarray. Public sector workers have slipped back about 3% since 1975 compared to the private sector, and are slipping further every month.

Many workers still have overtime, holiday and bonus rates calculated on basic pay negotiated in 1974 or 1975.

To iron out the anomalies would either need an increase in the total national wages bill of about 10%, or severe levelling-down of some workers' wages.

GRIP

Bourgeois strategists undoubtedly want to move Britain over to a system more like West Germany, where wages are negotiated nationally in a once-a-year "wages round". But to do that a government would either need a lot of economic leeway,

plus the goodwill of the trade union leaders, so that it could deal generously with the anomalies when introducing a "wages round" system; or an iron grip allowing it to run roughshod over trade union resistance.

On all these problems the Labour Government is at present marking time until the General Election. Their precarious Parliamentary position, and the problems of the devolution and direct elections legislation, do not allow them to do anything else.

For four years the Labour Government has been the best possible government for the bourgeoisie. Now, however, the bourgeoisie is increasingly ready to see a new period of Tory rule.

The Labour Government has controlled the working class, but at the price of the inconveniences for the bourgeoisie like the Employment Protection Act and the penal-

Percentage of working days lost in strikes which were official.

1972	76.2%
1973	27.9%
1974	47.7%
1975	19.1%
1976	14.4%
Jan-July 1977	4.2%

the firemen, the Leyland workers and the tanker drivers.

It will be difficult for a Tory Government to resolve these problems other than in a spirit of confrontation.

With Thatcher's speeches, the Tories have unleashed racist forces which they will be hard-pressed to control.

It is not even excluded that they will break bipartisanship over Ireland, renewing their links with the Ulster Unionists and trying to construct a new Six County executive, rather than continuing Labour's present strategy of attrition.

A Tory Government would therefore mean stormy class struggle.

Ethiopia in the grip of the Dergue

The war now blazing in the the Horn of Africa arises from three separate but interlocking developments: the class struggles within Ethiopia, the national struggles in the region, and the international rivalries of the super-powers, of Israel, and of the Arab states.

Here PAUL ADAMS describes the background events in Ethiopia.

IT IS ONE YEAR since Mengistu Haile Mariam finally became the undisputed leader of the Dergue, the military junta that has run Ethiopia since the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie.

During that year there have been mass arrests, mass executions, and open hostilities with neighbouring Somalia.

To understand this we need to go back twenty years to the great famine of 1958. In that year over 100,000 peasants died in Wello province alone. The political consequences of this mass starvation became clear with the 'December Coup' against Haile Selassie in 1980.

The coup attempt was brutally crushed by the Emperor, who refused to heed any of its warnings. Nevertheless the regime's need to develop a more modern army, police force and state bureaucracy led it to increase educational opportunities. And with this came for the first time a real students' movement.

At the same time there was an upsurge of nationalist consciousness among minority groups in the Ethiopian Empire. The Eritrean Liberation Front was formed in 1961, as was the West Somali Liberation Front. The sixties was a decade crowded with demonstrations, rallies and mobilisations against feudalism and national oppression.

Students often took the lead, not only in support of their own democratic demands, but also for demands like 'Land to the Tiller'.

The conditions in the countryside were getting worse, with heavy taxes on the peasants, the introduction of money economy, and rampant land speculation. In the late '60s, peasant risings shook the Selassie regime. When the peasants of Gojjam revolted their rebellion was put down by some 900 imperial troops — but this time Selassie felt forced into making some concessions.

Throughout this period drought ravaged the Ethiopian countryside. But harsh landlords refused any easing up on rent demands, and the state still demanded its taxes. The regime was now being exposed in all its inhumanity and rottenness. Price speculation, hoarding and corruption were rife.

Thus when the next drought crisis struck in 1973, it was inevitable that the social tensions which had been building up for over a decade would explode.

In mid-February 1974 students, teachers, and taxi-drivers went on strike. The urban poor showed their anger by blocking roads in the capital and smashing cars and buses. Within days the Second Division, stationed at Asmara in Eritrea, mutinied and took over the town.

The rebels demanded political and military reforms. The following day a naval mutiny broke out at Massawa and the air force at Debre Zeit went over to the rebels.

Haile Selassie tried to buy off this accumulated rage of decades with a concession here and there. With the defection of the Fourth Division and the Imperial Bodyguard, he dismissed Prime Minister Aklilu on 28th February and appointed Endalkatchew in his place.

The next day 3,000 students demonstrated all day against the new appointment: "A Popular Democratic Government — Yes! Ministerial Leap-Frogging — No!"

Within days the conservative leadership of the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU) felt the pressure of the masses sharply enough to confront Endalkatchew with a list of 16 demands and an ultimatum that a general strike would be called. On the day of the strike, 85,000 CELU members, 25,000 civil servants, and over 3,000 students took to the streets.

The masses had decided on a trial of strength. A mass demonstration of 5,000 women demanding equal rights and even a march of petitioning clergymen showed the depth of the social crisis.

"Towards the end of March", recounts Ethiopian socialist Addis Hiwet, "there was a popular uprising by the townsmen of Jimma: a mammoth demonstration which embraced almost the entire population of the town confronted the police force, expelled the governor, and elected, by popular will, a 34-man committee that would administer the town in place of the deposed provincial administration".

"This committee, composed mainly of teachers and students and merchants, and accountable to the people, remained in power for weeks... Before the end of March peasants in Meki, south of Addis Ababa, rose against landlords, burning the harvests and the houses of the latter and expelling some of them..."

In April over 100,000 people marched on a demonstration called by Ethiopian Muslims for religious equality. In the same month, the Military Coordinating Committee, forerunner of the Dergue, was set up.

The Committee quickly flexed its muscles, demanding Endalkatchew's replacement by Michael Imru, dismantling some feudal institutions and nationalising some monopolies owned by the Imperial family. On September 12th

Haile Selassie was finally deposed, soon to be murdered.

Yet it soon became clear that while the triumph of the army revolt spelt a defeat for feudalism, it also spelt danger for the power-hungry mass movement that had been generated over the previous year.

Almost immediately the new regime began to choke back the great movement of rebellion that had undermined the Ethiopian regime and brought it to power. In the early months of 1975 a bold military offensive was launched by the Eritrean liberation forces. The Dergue ended up controlling even less land than before, and alienating the sympathies of tens of thousands who now stood firmly on the side of the Eritreans.

With the Land Reform Proclamation of 4 March 1975 all rural land was nationalised. Four months later much urban property was nationalised. These laid the basis for a state capitalist type of development which still allowed a big role for foreign private capital.

Throughout 1975-6 Ethiopia was in a state of civil war. The Eritrean and Tigrean liberation forces were fighting in the North East; they were joined by the Afars, and risings took place in the Ogaden, in Bale, in Kaffa and in Begemder and Simien on the Sudanese frontier.

Apart from these forces, the Dergue was opposed on the left by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), a semi-Maoist organisation, and on the right by the Ethiopian Democratic Union, based on rightist landowners and some army units.

The leaders of the CELU were arrested. They have since been released, but the Mengistu regime has in the meantime set up a state-controlled trade union federation.

Not long after coming into power, the Dergue created a 'provisional people's organising bureau', drawing into high office the leading members of the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (Me'ison), which a few students and intellectuals with a leftist leaning had set up in 1968.

But within a short time Mengistu's faction broke with the Me'ison, refusing to democratise the Dergue or to build a mass movement based on the Peasants' Associations and Urban Dwellers' Associations. Now Me'ison, which had led the attack on the EPRP, became the victim of the Dergue's assaults.

In April 1977 the Ethiopian regime cut its ties with the US and established firm links with the Soviet Union. With this new support, and the arms and technical aid it brought, the Mengistu regime felt powerful enough to go onto the offensive against Somalia.

Within Ethiopia itself the new alliance did not bring any



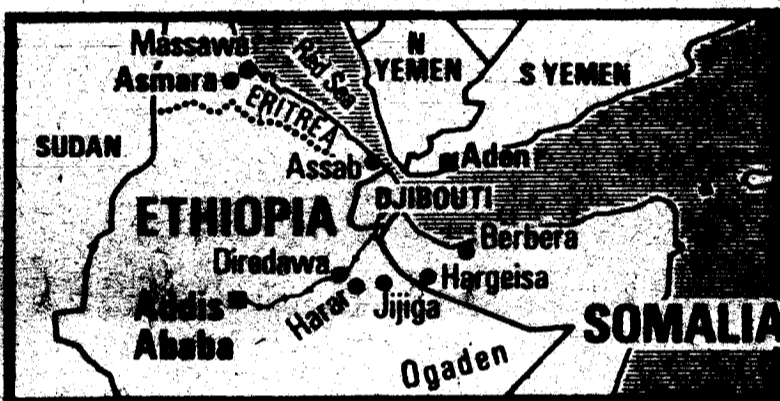
let-up in repression. On May Day 1977 hundreds of supporters of the EPRP who dared to use the occasion to criticise the Dergue were murdered.

Bodies were dumped in piles in the corridors of the capital's morgue.

The mass movement, for the Dergue, was to be mobilised for war or for meting our re-

pression against critics. Any other manifestation was ruthlessly put down.

Without revolutionary leadership, the militant masses who were the driving force behind the Ethiopian revolution of 1974 have succeeded in little more than fashioning a new whip for their backs.



THE SUBJECT PEOPLES REBEL

THE PRESENT WAR is a war on many fronts. Within the boundaries of the Ethiopian Empire are several nationalities, some of which have a long history of struggle against the regime in Addis Ababa.

Eritrea (in the North) was ceded to Ethiopia in 1952, after having been occupied first by Italy and then (from 1941 to 1952) by Britain. The population are Muslims and Christians, and in the course of the struggle they have acquired a definite national consciousness.

The Eritrean Liberation Front was set up in 1961. It contained a wide range of political tendencies. At the end of 1969 its left wing split to create the Eritrean People's Liberation Front.

After 1972 the EPLF established close relations with the EPRP and the Tigre People's Liberation Front.

While the ELF is backed by the Arab states, the EPLF is mainly self-supporting.

Eritrea is more heavily industrialised than most of Ethiopia, with most industry imperialist-owned.

An Italian-owned textile works in the capital, Asmara, employs 4,000 workers. Another textile firm employing 2,000 is Israeli-owned, as are the three biggest meat-packing plants.

Most other big companies are Italian-owned. The mining industry is divided between copper

(Japanese-owned) and phosphates (US-owned).

Working class organisation has existed in Eritrea since 1946, but suffered setbacks when the British authorities dismantled factories and sent them to Kenya, Australia, Pakistan, and Sudan.

The first trade union was the Eritrean Workers' Syndicate, formed in 1952 and banned the following year. The port workers had an important strike in 1956, and two years later there was a general strike throughout Eritrea.

□ □ □

The Somali Republic was created in 1968 by the merger of Italian Somalia and the British Somaliland Protectorate.

But, as is normally the case in Africa, these imperialist-dictated boundaries did not correspond with the areas where the people of the country lived.

Somalis are the majority of the population in the Ogaden province of Ethiopia, the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya, and probably in Djibouti. The Ethiopian state was at war with inhabitants in the Ogaden in 1964, and a national struggle — for the most part a rather low-key one — has continued since then.

The West Somalia Liberation Front organises the Somali fighters in this area.

Organising to black Apartheid

THE MIDLANDS Anti-Apartheid conference, on Saturday 18th, laid a good basis for action in solidarity with South African workers.

Some delegates expressed dissatisfaction with the national conference held the week before [see WA 91], which did not get down to discussion of concrete rank and file action, instead stressing pressure on the powers-that-be.

Dick Scroop, secretary of the TASS Leyland Cars committee, took up this point in an excellent address to the conference.

His committee had sent a letter to the new chairman of British Leyland, Michael Edwards, concerning the recognition of the black workers' union MAWU in British Leyland's South African plants. The reply was: "We acknowledge receipt of your letter. It has been noted".

TUC and Labour Party policy calls for economic sanctions against South Africa. But nothing has changed.

What is required is a mass campaign of solidarity to educate workers in Britain, to forge links with workers in South Africa, and to force firms to end their involvement in apartheid.

The week of trade union action (March 13-21) is an important focus, though it can only be part of a long term perspective.

Scroop's insistence that no quarter should be given to British chauvinism contrasted with the speech from Peter Nicholas (also of Leyland)

at the national conference: 'If there is any spare capital, we want it in Britain'. Links between Anti-Apartheid and the fight against racism should be stressed, said Scroop.

In ending, he said that he had been worried when first raised the question in his own plant that the members might not respond. But when the issues had been debated at a mass meeting, there was overwhelming support.

Several other Leyland workers took part in the discussion,

and it was decided to set up a sub-committee to monitor and encourage solidarity work in Leyland and in other related Midlands firms, like Automotive Products and the car transport companies.

The conference decided to approach the Coventry Trades Council to set up a liaison committee with Coventry Anti-Apartheid to continue the solidarity campaign. And there were four proposals for the week of action.

■ The conference called upon workers in the Midlands to give full support to all blacking action against apartheid.

■ It called on shop stewards' committees and trade union branches to hold special meetings to consider solidarity action.

■ It issued a petition for workers to circulate in support of blacking actions.

■ The conference decided on mass distribution of leaflets calling for solidarity with the fight against apartheid.

DAVE SPENCER

AAM's television ad — 'The Rifle, the Saracen, and the Gallows', shown on Monday 20th and to be repeated on Saturday 25th — gave a good picture of AAM, as an octopus-like creature with each arm doing its own thing.

A Methodist said Apartheid was un-Christian. The UPW's Tom Jackson wanted trade union right for South African blacks, and stated that trade sanctions were an issue for workers here because they may lead to loss of British jobs — though he went on to support them.

A Tory MP, and Joshua Nkomo, warned British capitalism that its long-term interests did not lie with Vorster. NUS President Sue Shipman called on students to campaign for disinvestment in South Africa by their colleges.

And representatives of ANC and Sgweto called for support for the armed liberation movements.

The programme, like the AAM, was designed to have something for everyone. Once again it blurred the most urgent message: Whatever way the UN votes on sanctions, if workers refuse to pack and transport the guns and the Land Rovers, the radar equipment, computers, and Outspan oranges, they won't move.

★ The Leyland combine committee has pledged its support to blacking.

★ Solihull will black Land Rovers to South Africa during the week of action.

★ A TASS mass meeting at Canley endorsed the combine decision.

★ Bill Donald [T&G], from Alvis, said that 17,000 Alvis-made military vehicles in

South Africa can't move because parts won't be sent.

★ The APEX branch at Coventry Climax [which is part of Leyland] has sent a resolution to the union calling on it to support the recognition of MAWU.

★ Leicester Central USDAW have decided to refuse to handle South African goods.

MASSEY FERGUSON

Another capitalist flop blamed on the workers

WHILE WORKERS at Triumph Canley, Coventry, are pondering whether to participate in BL boss Michael Edwards' cannibalisation of the Speke no.2 plant, the Coventry press is using the plight of the local Massey Ferguson plant to beef up an anti-union atmosphere.

Share dealings in MF were suspended last week after reports of \$38 million losses and the announcement that there would be no March half-yearly dividend. The Financial Times wryly described "a very rough trading performance for 1977".

In Coventry, which is the centre of Massey's European

operations, rumours abound of sackings. As with BL's Speke plant, the papers are blaming the workers. (A spirited 12-week strike last year is said to have "crippled the order book"). But as with Speke, the big problems lie elsewhere, and if anything the lost production has eased the Company's crisis.

Masseys have cut their output by 15%. Their 450 suppliers are on short time, and workers at their Perkins Engines subsidiary in Peterborough have also been affected.

The main problems of MF have been a sharp downturn in demand in North and South

America for their tractors, agricultural machinery and construction equipment. In Brazil, for instance, the Government stopped credit facilities to farmers and Masseys were left holding 20,000 tractors.

This came just after MF's new product-launches in Europe where they invested heavily in construction machinery. In 1974 they had bought the German company Hanomag. Altogether in the past 4 years, MF have invested \$600 million, which is not far short of the investments of their US competitors Deere and International Harvester — both twice MF's size.

And then the market fell. Its competitors are feeling the pinch too, though they hadn't stuck their necks out so far. I.H. closed their farm machinery plant in Hamilton Ontario for 10 weeks in the summer, and 25% of their workforce will be laid off from next month. And 310 workers have been sacked at IH's Bradford plant.

So far, MF have announced no plans for sackings. If and when they do, workers must firmly throw back the blame where it belongs, and prepare to fight like hell.

DAVE SPENCER

How the law curbs abortion rights

GIVEN the massive resources the anti-abortion lobby is able to devote to advertising and publicising their activities, it was something of a relief to see the TV access programme OPEN DOOR given over to an organisation fighting for abortion rights. The Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) got TV time on Monday 13th, albeit late at night on BBC2.

The programme underlined the basic arguments for a woman's right to choose whether or not to continue with a pregnancy.

It showed that making abortion illegal doesn't prevent abortions, it merely drives women to unsafe abortions, self-induced or by shady illegal operators.

It stressed that equal legal rights and employment practices that don't discriminate against women mean very little if a woman can't control when and if she is to have children.

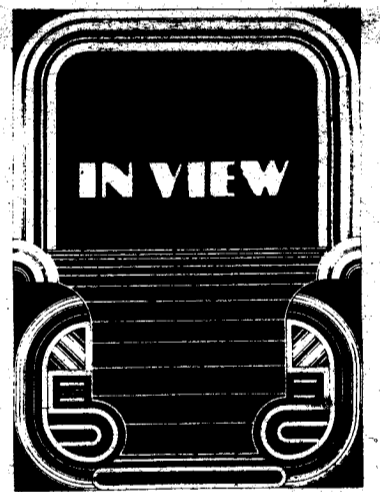
And it concluded: it is the woman herself who has to go through with the pregnancy and its consequences; she alone has the right to decide whether or not to continue with it.

ALRA helped to get the 1967 Abortion Act onto the statute books. In this programme they showed how this law has been abused by doctors prejudiced against women.

This was shown up dramatically by the way practice varies in different areas. Whereas in Newcastle 96% of all abortions are done on the National Health, in the south Birmingham area only 6% of abortions are on the NHS. This variation is due in large part to the attitude of the consultant gynaecologists in the area.

Many women have to face unnecessary delay, bureaucratic procedures, rudeness and hostile moralising from the doctors.

As gynaecologist Peter Huntingford pointed out, it is the present law and the way it is operated which causes these



problems. The majority of women seeking abortions do so very early in pregnancy, when it can be quick, safe, and involve the minimum of inconvenience and stress.

So ALRA is now putting forward another Bill to remove the ambiguities in the present Act and lay down the clear right of a woman to choose to have an abortion, irrespective of what the doctors and social workers may think; and it would be the duty of the NHS to provide for this.

They are also campaigning for out-patient abortion clinics throughout the country.

What the programme did not cover was the need for mass campaigning to enforce such reforms and to block attempts to restrict abortion rights any further, as the James White and William Benyon Bills tried to do. They failed narrowly, though the White Bill in fact generated an increased restrictiveness in abortion practices, and the campaigns around these Bills organised and galvanised the anti-abortion doctors. This very week another such Bill is due to make its debut, yet again threatening women's meagre rights.

GERRY BYRNE

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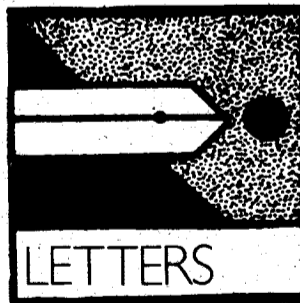
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Send to: WORKERS' ACTION, 49 Carnac St, London SE27



Another view on 'Destiny'

Dear comrades,
Although the criticisms of 'Destiny' that he makes are fair enough, I thought Ian Hollingworth's review [WA90] failed to stress the good sides of the play.

It showed very clearly the reasons why different groups of people are attracted to fascist organisations and what makes them tick. It not only stated, and showed, their Nazism — for the first time on British TV — but also emphasised the different strands of thought which exist among fascists. It was also a gripping play to watch.

Overall, a useful contribution to the fight against fascism, despite its limitations.

SIMON TEMPLE, Birmingham.

WORKERS IN ACTION

7,000 Police guard the junior fascists

THE YOUNG National Front held their first national rally in Birmingham last Saturday.

They needed a curfew in the streets round the hall, 2000 police (plus reserves rumoured to be as many as 5,000) and a surveillance helicopter, to allow them to go ahead. Even so they must have heard what the anti-fascist demonstrators thought of them.

Several thousand trade unionists and socialists, together with black groups and even Christians against Racism, assembled half a mile away in the Bull Ring. The organisers thought it would be impossible to break through the police lines and get at the fascists. They therefore decided to march round the perimeter.

In the event, the sealed-off area was much smaller than expected. The majority of the

marchers — including, surprisingly, the official Labour Party Young Socialists contingent — broke away from the official demonstration and headed for the civic hall. The rest were left marching round the Middle Ring Road.

The Civic Hall was surrounded by a huge force of police. The frustrations of a section of the crowd, mainly young West Ind-

ians, boiled over, and they started stoning the police, who quickly brought out their riot shields. They drove off a section of the demonstrators and sporadic fighting continued in the surrounding streets.

Meanwhile some Maoists were trying to incite the few hundred remaining demonstrators to attack a three-deep police cordon, protecting a

building packed with cops. Luckily they failed; but they did disrupt attempt to march the demonstrators off in a body to disperse away from the police lines.

After a good deal of marching to and fro between Digbeth and the City Centre, an orderly dispersal was finally achieved around 5pm.

20 people were arrested and

we were very lucky that it was not more.

But the balance sheet is not all negative. We established our right to picket fascist meetings, the YNF must have heard what we thought of them, and the City Council are unlikely to let halls to fascists in future.

One encouraging feature of the afternoon was the number of Aston Villa and Birmingham City fans who joined the crowd outside the Civic Hall when their matches were cancelled, and joined in the anti-fascist slogans in-between shouting for their respective teams.

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY. Picket the court where Alan Beddoe is being tried under the Criminal Trespass Law: 1pm at 176a Lavender Hill, London SW11. Alan Beddoe on December 9th, 1977, was the first person arrested under the Criminal Trespass Law (part 2 of the Criminal Law Act, 1977). After Battersea Squatters' Association had decided to oppose the eviction from a house in Abercrombie St, Battersea, in protest against the Council's refusal to offer adequate rehousing, he was arrested and charged under section 10 of the Act ('resisting or obstructing a bailiff or sheriff in the execution of his duty'). The leader of the Labour group on Wandsworth Council has called on the police to drop the charges, and the picket is supported by Battersea Squatters' Association, the London Squatters' Union, Wandsworth Trades Council, and the Campaign against a Criminal Trespass Law.

THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY. Middlesex Poly Students Union Irish Society and Troops Out Society present Pirate Jenny Theatre group performing Eamonn McCann's play, 'Mad Micks and Englishmen'. 8pm, Old Refectory, Middlesex Poly, Queensway, Enfield. Admission 50p.

SATURDAY 25 FEBRUARY. Pirate Jenny performs 'Mad Micks and Englishmen', 7.30pm at the Old Theatre, LSE, Houghton St, Aldwych. Adm. £1; all proceeds to the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland.

WEDNESDAY 1 MARCH. Public meeting to mark the second anniversary of the British Government's attempt to abolish political status for Irish prisoners. Speakers include a representative of the Belfast Relatives' Action Committee and Fr. Denis Faul. Chairman: Tom Litterick MP. 7.15pm, Committee Room 10, House of Commons.

FRIDAY 3 MARCH. Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre give a benefit performance of 'Divide and Rule Britannia' for the *Garner's Steak House Strikers*. 7.30pm at the TGWU district hall, 203-209 North Gower St, near Euston. Adm. 50p. Other contributions to the *Garner's Steak House Strike Fund*, c/o TGWU, room 84, 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC2.

SATURDAY 4 MARCH. Fund-raising social to pay off debts of the rank and file paper 'Building Worker' and enable us to print the next one. 8pm at 36 St Alphonsus Rd, London SW4. Tube: Clapham Common. Admission 50p.

SATURDAY 4 MARCH. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference. 11am to 3pm, Beaver Hall, Garlick Hill, London EC4. Credentials for trade union delegates 75p from J.Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Rd, Ilford, Essex.

WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH. Workers' Power public meeting, 'Marxism and the Trade Unions'. Speakers: Ron Haycock and Stuart King. 8pm at the Roebuck, Tottenham Court Road.

THURSDAY 16 MARCH. 'All London Teachers against Racism and Fascism' rally. 5.45pm at Central Hall, Westminster. Adm. 50p.

GEC STOREKEEPERS MAINTAIN SIT-IN

LAST WEEK'S mass meeting of 330 storekeepers from GEC's four Coventry plants overwhelmingly rejected a new company pay offer, and agreed to maintain their sit-in.

The storekeepers are aiming for a substantial increase in their £49.87 weekly wage.

Some months ago, convenors and senior stewards from GEC Coventry sent a letter to MPs and other notables concerning the very low wages paid at GEC Coventry compared to the District average. At the same time they pointed out the very high profits made by GEC, particularly from

Government contracts.

The letter said that 10% of nothing is nothing, and 10% of GEC wages doesn't amount to much more than that.

The storekeepers are particularly incensed as the nature of their job has changed because of new equipment introduced by GEC. Also, because of an anomaly in wage negotiations, storekeepers in the model shop at the Stoke (Coventry) plant doing exactly the same job get £2 more.

At the moment, the storekeepers have successfully blockaded the stores at all four Coventry plants. 1000 workers have been laid off so far. Some of them have joined the storekeepers, and

occupied the personnel and computer departments at the main Stoke plants.

The response of the company has been to use the Government's blacklist as a threat, claiming that if they break the 10% limit they will lose Post Office contracts. They offer to take the case to a mediator, probably ACAS.

Because the storekeepers refused this, the company have now applied for a court order to move the 300 workers and their supporters off the premises. Clearly the scene is set for a major battle.

Meanwhile 500 ASTMS members at GEC Stafford have voted to strike from mid-March.

60p IS NOT ENOUGH, SAY POWER WORKERS

POWER WORKERS' pay talks will resume on 2nd March. And even despite the power engineers accepting the employers' offer on 17th February, industrial action is not ruled out.

The unofficial shop stewards' committee which led the work to rule last autumn met in Doncaster on the 18th, and promised full support for any action called by the union leadership.

Four unions representing 90,000 power workers are demanding 10% rise plus an increase in productivity payments to raise them to £11

per week. This would give a wage rate roughly equal to surface workers in the coal mines.

On 15th February the unions rejected an offer which fell far short of this demand. 10% rise was offered, plus an offer on productivity which according to union leaders was worth only 60p: a rise from £3 to £3.60.

Leaders of the 29,500 power engineers had previously been holding back from making a settlement until they saw what the power-workers could get. But on the 17th they accepted 10% rise plus 2% increase in productivity pay.

tance against time, and records it on a paper disc. It can be used to provide a complete check on the vehicle's movement once its starting place and destinations are known.

It will destroy one of the few advantages that drivers enjoy — relative freedom from supervision. At present, provided the work gets down, most drivers are able to organise the job in the way that suits them best. That will all change. It will be like having a foreman constantly looking over your shoulder, taking notes of your work.

Some people — outside the industry — have argued that it will help drivers as it will stop employers forcing them to work excessive hours and break speed limits to keep to schedule. But the way to beat this problem, and it is a real one, is through strong trade union organisation, not by putting spies in the cab.

There have been sporadic strikes against the tachograph already, and they are likely to escalate if the government tries to impose the EEC ruling.

Alan Law, T&GWU road transport organiser in the West Midlands, has said that his members will refuse to drive any vehicle

fitted with a tachograph. This policy should be endorsed by mass meetings at every transport depot in the country.

Strike to get steward recognised

FOR SOME five months now, Nipa Laboratories Ltd, South Wales, have withheld recognition of a GMWU shop steward.

The official reason given has been that the steward is in a different bargaining unit from the majority of the workers whom he represents. The real reason is probably that the steward is too militant for management's taste.

After trying all the official procedures, on 15th February the workers went on unofficial strike. The dispute is also about back pay and differences in wage rises awarded last August.

The GMWU branch officials tried to get the workers to go back, promising another meeting between management, the union, and the Chemical Industries Association. The workers agreed to return to work when a definite date for the meeting was fixed — the 20th — but with the warning that they will be out again if the steward were not recognised!



is now in its 13th week.

The strike, in support of a pay claim, has led to the whole workforce at the plant being laid off. There are 1200 production workers, mostly in the T&GWU.

Beside the threat of closure, there have been threats of 450 redundancies before August which are also the fault of the strikers, according to the company.

The unions at the plant have seen through this. Just before setting off on a protest march against the planned redundancies, union spokesmen Joe Carberry said: "We have had a series of comments from them that the factory will close after six, eight and ten weeks of the strike. It is all a management ploy. We still feel that they created the whole dispute so they could make the job cuts".

After talks between the unions and management broke down, on 6th February, a union representative announced plans for a mass picket of the Kirkby plant and pickets of other Birds Eye plants in Hull, Yarmouth, and Lowestoft, to try to gain support.

The spy in the cab

THE COMMON Market Commission have given Britain two months to start the compulsory fitting of tachographs in lorries used for domestic journeys. They have been compulsory for international journeys since 1973. But this decision will meet with widespread resistance from drivers.

The tachograph is a device fitted behind the lorry's speedometer which measures speed and dis-

Birds Eye

THERE IS no future for Kirkby in our plans if the dispute goes beyond 12 weeks". So said Kenneth Webb, chairman of Birds Eye, in an article in the Liverpool Daily Post. He was referring to the strike by 110 AUEW engineers at the Birds Eye plant in Kirkby, Merseyside, which