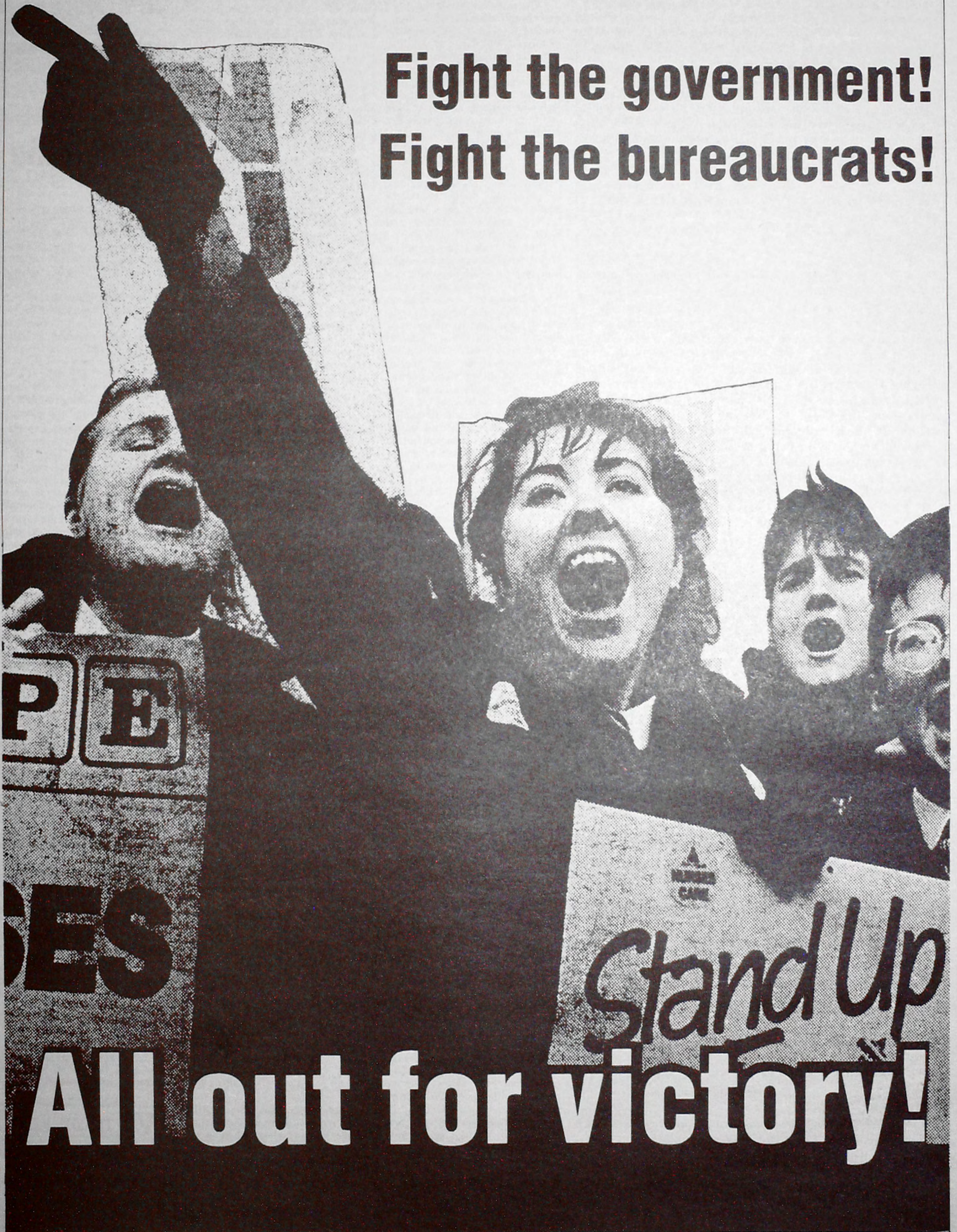


# THE LENINIST

**Fight the government!  
Fight the bureaucrats!**



**All out for victory!**



Fortnightly paper of the Leninists  
of the Communist Party of Great Britain

THE PRESENT upsurge in working class struggle shows that the time is ripe for great change. There is a gut feeling in the working class that now is the time to strike back against the Thatcher government. 'Enough is enough' is a popular expression. Something must be done to stop more cuts in the NHS and education, the poll tax and Clause 28, workfare and the latest attempt to emasculate the trade unions.

We say the willingness of miners, firemen, Lucas and Vauxhall workers to take militant *illegal* solidarity action with the health workers shows the way to do it. Such actions multiplied a thousand fold will bring the Thatcher government and all its reactionary legislation crumbling down. We say: Fight for all out, illegal, general solidarity strikes in support of the health workers and against the Tories anti-trade union laws! Fight the government, the bosses and the bureaucrats!

Not surprisingly the official leadership finds itself far behind the mood of the masses. The labour bureaucracy has no strategy, no answers, it does not even believe in the possibility of electing an openly pro-capitalist Labour government, let alone bringing down Thatcher.

Today we see – as never before – a yawning gulf between the fighting determination of the rank and file and the miserably spinelessness of the official leaders. Where Thatcher leads her class with a singleminded determination, Judas Willis huffs and puffs while trailing safely behind events ever ready to fulfil the TUC's traditional role of knifing workers in the back.

Ramsay MacKinnock wants to listen to the stock exchange not the militant working class – Labour's NEC overwhelmingly voted *against* Benn's proposal to lend moral support to the NHS strikes. But if Willis and Kinnock are the field marshals of capital in the labour movement, then the majority of trade union general secretaries are its lieutenants.

There is a huge reservoir of support for the health workers. The bureaucrats have refused to tap it. The RCN's Trevor Clay is little better than the UDM's Roy Lynk, but what of Hector McKenzie of Cohse and Rodney Bickerstaffe of Nupe? They are no scabs, it is true. Nevertheless they are misleaders of the first order.

Their boast about *not leading* hospital strikes and protests in early February is a direct result of their kowtowing to so-called public opinion. This will do health workers no good at all. A PR campaign will not shift Thatcher. Health workers need working class *solidarity* not fickle public *sympathy* – courtesy of the pro-Tory media.

There are plenty of recent examples of what results from such misleadership.

The pit deputies have been forced to fight on ground chosen by British Coal. Haslam feels perfectly confident about openly declaring that he will use the scab UDM to break the power of the deputies in order to facilitate the privatisation of profitable pits. This is in no small measure due to the fact that the Nacods misleadership stood aside in 1984-5 (in spite of a huge majority in favour of strike action) and allowed the NUM to go down to defeat.

We saw similar misleadership in the NUS. As soon as the courts threatened the union's funds Sam McCluskie wrecked the unity that had brought virtually every port in the country to a standstill. No wonder the judge praised him. The same bureaucratic sabotage wrecked the Fords strike.

This shows the burning need for *genuine communist* leadership. Militancy is not enough. We are confident that the abject failure of the bureaucrats will call forth a new generation of leaders – militant rank and file leaders. The inevitable question they will face is whether to break with reformism and turn to the programme of communism. We have all seen the treacherous results of reformism. Only communism offers the working class a fighting programme, a programme of working class struggle leading to working class rule.

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### 'Angels'?

Below is a copy of the letter I sent to the *Morning Star*, re the "Care for them, they care for you" editorial, which they have to date not printed:

"As a nurse and health worker I was both alarmed and disappointed to read the *Morning Star* editorial (February 4) entitled "They care for us, care for them".

"While it is correct that public support and sympathy is important and that 'the strikes, protest meetings and working to rule in hospitals across the country were not just for the nurses, but for us all', I am amazed that you have not seen the sectionalism of your argument – this is a health worker's dispute, not just nurses. The *Star* should be informing the public about the health workers' dispute and the back-peddaling of the Labour and union leaderships.

"Also your derogatory and insulting drivel of 'a caring vocation', is playing into Tory hands and discouraging any further strikes or action. Health work is a job, at the end of the day you cannot eat dedication, and devotion to duty doesn't pay the bills. What is needed is a non-sectionalist leadership with a clear line in opposing health cuts and fighting for workers pay and conditions. All health workers work 100% as a team. This could and should be built upon – remember the slogan 'unity is strength'? This cannot be built by a 'crocodile tears for overworked Angels' approach to the dispute.

"While calling for 'everyone's full support', you have failed to take the initiative of uniting health workers. All too often nurses have crossed picket lines, using the same arguments as your editorial as justification. That editorial says a great deal about how you see the dispute and your whole position on class issues – all this from a paper which has criticised the Communist Party for abandoning class politics!

"Congratulations, applause and sympathy are neither a class approach nor a winning approach. It smacks of the *Sun* and the *Daily Star* rather than a workers' paper.

"In conclusion – stop patronising and dividing health workers; get down off the fence and offer leadership – save the applause and congratulations for when we win and provide free health care for all."

This was posted on February 9 and has yet to be printed.

Rob Rodgers  
Notts

### NHS Fight

As a health service employee/student nurse I am in a good situation to gauge the feeling of nurses over the present period. The general feeling is of being pushed too far; nurses have constantly "played fair", "cooperated" and "exercised patience" (no pun intended) as regards wages, conditions and cuts in the mistaken belief that good times were just around the corner and that we were soon to be rewarded.

The strike action in Manchester showed the way for nurses and was, and still is, a great surge of militancy. The message is loud and clear, ringing out in all area of health work – we want action – strike action!

Typically, the RCN issued statements arguing for political pro-

tests, placard waving outside Downing Street and bizarrely, enough, sending Valentine's cards to the PM. This had a tremendous effect on nurses – they tore up RCN membership cards and joined Cohse and Nupe, as they do not have an anti-strike policy – a clear indication of what nurses want.

Kinnock's approach has been one of "don't rock the parliamentary boat". The nurses' reply again is clear; Labour is not to be trusted, they started the cuts! We want action not parliamentary debate and name calling.

The result of this is that all health workers are relying on the unions to organise the dispute: but the unions are not coming up with the goods. They waver between arguments of ethics/professionalism – the blood on our hands approach – and campaigning for more publicity (Nupe), or the bureaucratic approach of fudging the issue – NHS defence/nurses' pay – not organising effective ballots, poorly publicised meetings etc (Cohse). Both paths fall little short of open betrayal of the members.

This however throws open great possibilities for Leninists. We must point out that health service workers must organise themselves – pressuring the unions into taking a militant stand. Initially this means demanding ballots and open, well publicised meetings, even if we Leninists have to publicise them ourselves. Pressure must be brought to bear on the TUC to give supportive action – not just gestures and sympathy.

It must be made clear that a fight for the health workers pay is a defence of the entire working class – a defence of their health and preservation of jobs!

We must organise grassroots activity for strike action – with no clauses and safety levels organised by the strike committees not management. This is a great opportunity for Leninists to take the lead in this action and earn the respect of all health workers. Here is the Leninist challenge – take it!

Mike Cronin  
Manchester

### Fords

The role played by Steve Hart, Executive Committee member of our Party and T&G shop steward at Dagenham during the Fords strike was deplorable.

While comrade Hart could speak on the BBC of "silly strikes" during the 1960s and the need for negotiation and conciliation with management, thousands of Ford workers were fighting for decent living standards and against exploitation.

Not surprisingly, comrade Hart supported the T&G bureaucracy's stand in supporting management's offer. Let it be stressed, the management offer of a two-year deal and negotiations on changing work practices is, in essence, no different to all previous offers! The working class doesn't need to be told what these negotiations mean. Most workers know what happens when their union (mis)-leaders buddy up to management at negotiations – nasty, stinking deals are done!

When nurses and other health workers are fighting for the health of the working class; when even Nacods strike; when rank and file seamen bravely fight for jobs and working conditions, and when General Motors workers vote for industrial action, comrade Hart, instead of seeking to forge links with these workers and raise the

level of class struggle, puts the Ford's account books first!

Ford workers don't deserve brown-nosers like Steve Hart, instead they need militants and a genuine Marxist-Leninist CPGB which will fight for what the working class needs, and not for the trade union bureaucracy.

Pat Collins  
Essex

## Against Iran, Against the West

Since 1979 Iranian comrades have been assaulted by pro-Moscow parties which decry their struggle and, doubtless, they see through such mouthings. But when socialists and communists independent of the Soviet diktat misguidedly add their voice of disapproval, our Iranian comrades will suffer – and not only in their morale. At a time which has seen the rise of the right wing in Iran, our comrades are presently fortunate to be languishing in low morale rather than in jail or a grave.

The struggle against expansionism and militarism is an international one and the Iranian socialists are spearheading that fight against their own expansionist regime. Socialists internationally should be supporting the comrades in Iran – both in published articles and in action. One area of action which lends support is the continued pressure to bring about the end of military intervention in the Gulf: intervention which only strengthens the hand of the reactionary governments.

Rather than the abandonment of the class struggle, which the SWP appears to propose by their condemnation of strike action in Iran, we demand support for the Iranian working class and call for the working class internationally to follow the lead of our Danish comrades and stop the export of arms to both Iran and Iraq.

We stand against military victory for either Iran or Iraq, and against imperialist intervention. Further, we see the way forward in the defeat of both the reactionary regimes and imperialism by the efforts of the working class: rail-workers refusing to transport arms to docks; dockers blacking ships carrying arms to the Gulf; seamen blacking ships which carry arms to either Iran or Iraq. It is action such as this which will bring victory to the Iranian working class and the working class world-wide, not misguided mouthings against 'western imperialism'.

Glasgow University International Socialist Society and Association of Iranian Students  
Glasgow

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

### WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

# 300% and no strings

**In late January and early February Aynar Karaaslan – one of Turkey's leading rank and file militants – toured Britain and Ireland under the auspices of the militant Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union. Just before she returned home she gave 'The Leninist' an exclusive interview.**



Showing solidarity with Dunnes

**A**YNAR KARAASLAN started working for the Migros supermarket chain as a cashier ten years ago. Almost immediately she took an active role in the trade union movement and now she is chair of the No.3 branch of Tez Koop-Is shopworkers union in Istanbul. She has recently been voted one of the ten most popular figures in Turkey and its most popular trade unionist by readers of *Nokta*, the country's largest circulation news magazine.

But Aynar Karaaslan is no Turkish version of Brenda Dean, ready and willing to sell workers' jobs and conditions for the sake of 'new realism' and the search for bourgeois respectability. Nor is she a doyen of feminism. She thinks it is wrong to organise women in separate sections and insists that men and women have to fight together or fall together.

No, Aynar Karaaslan is one of the new generation of trade unionists in Turkey – a militant rank and file leader, dedicated not to personal advancement but to her class.

This was proved by her leadership of a bitter 134 day strike by the 850 trade unionists employed by Migros supermarkets. On December 31 1987 it came to a victorious conclusion with a 80% wage rise backdated to May 1 1987, as well as an additional 40% in May 1988 and a host of other social concessions which add up to a tripling of the workers take home pay.

The strike was of great importance. The final settlement is one of the highest since the 1980 coup. And the fact that the Migros stores are part owned by Koc Holdings, one of Turkey's biggest monopolies, means that it will set the pattern in turn for all Koc workers and the entire working class of Turkey.

How did the strike achieve such a resounding victory? Aynar gave two main reasons. Firstly preparation. Of those who under the law could be unionised, that is 850 out of 875 workers, 100% were in the union. But even with what amounted to a closed shop the leadership knew that Koc would be

no pushover.

As a result Aynar told us that they held meetings at every workplace to ask the workers to tell the branch leadership what they needed, what they wanted to see changed. "Our shop stewards committee used these meetings to formulate the package of demands we were to present to the employers." The branch therefore went to the employers with a package which began with wages, but included elements of workers' control over hiring and firing as well as guarantees against any victimisation of leading militants after the strike ended.

Aynar summed up the workers' demands as "Bread and democracy". She also made the very important point that: "without an ideological basis to the strike there was no hope of success"

Having got the rank and file to take an oath to strike till victory at every stage in the negotiations with the bosses the leadership reported back "all changes and developments." In this way the rank and file were kept in control and kept solid. But preparation went further.

"We also ensured that we had the support of the families as well." Before the strike the branch organised a picnic for all the union members and their families. "We told them that if there was going to be a strike, it would be a long and hard one, and that the strike would only succeed with their support, including the support of the children."

This thorough preparation was well worth it. When it came to voting for strike action it was unanimous. And now we come to the second reason why the Migros strike was so successful – the recognition that to win it was necessary to "wage our strike not according to the law but despite it"; ie to break the law.

Turkey, like Britain has an awesome array of anti-trade union laws. Abiding by the letter of the law could only lead to defeat. The law makes effective trade unionism impossible. Of course, also like Britain, the trade union bureaucrats in Turkey prefer to play by the bourgeois rules of the game.

Because of this it was essential to ensure that at every stage of the strike it was the rank and file which exercised the initiative and control, not the officials from Tez Koop-Is' head office. "You must understand" Aynar insisted "that the national executive did not run the strike. The strike was run by the local branch, we were fully responsible for the strike."

Naturally the bureaucrats constantly tried to capture the leadership of the strike and get a quick settlement with the bosses. The strike was attacked by the bureaucracy for being an "ideological strike – not primarily concerned with economic, but political issues." In Aynar's words "they got up to all sorts of tricks." The strike was in fact a combination of fighting both the bosses and the bureaucrats.

The branch constantly guarded against the bureaucratic knife in the back. When the bureaucrats tried to "grasp the authority of the strike" active counter measures were taken including "arresting" the Tez Koop-Is leadership in the union's head office and confiscating the agreement they had been working on with Koc to end the strike. In such ways secret deals were blocked.

Even then they succeeded in limiting the scope of solidarity organised by other workers. Hence the branch had to shoulder the prime responsibility for generating funds and supplying the strikers and their families with the where-withall to survive for 134 long days.

Food was delivered to the picket lines by sympathetic local workers, revolutionary youth and democratic organisations by the boxfull while the strikers raised money in all sorts of imaginative ways; including a mass solidarity concert – which was a sell out with 4,000 in attendance – the sale of specially produced 'solidarity' match boxes and other souvenirs.

Another important source of income came from abroad, including the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union – whose general secretary, John Mitchell, visited the Migros workers' picket lines in Istanbul – as well as migrants from Turkey, not least those in Britain organised by the Union of Turkish Workers. The money they sent in sterling and other hard currencies could be quickly doubled in value through Turkey's thriving black market.

During the 134 day strike the workers had to face constant police intimidation, media attack and slander from the bureaucracy. But because of iron determination, spirited leadership and a refusal to be cowed by the law victory was obtained. There are lessons here for workers in Britain.

**Rank and file teachers** are learning some bitter lessons about those forces who claim to represent their interests. On March 8, all ILEA unions will out on strike against cuts to be imposed by the authority. Over the next two years, over 9,000 jobs are to go including 3,000 teachers. In the lead up to the action however, the hopelessly mis-named Action Committee of the NUT announced that it would *not* be supporting the action, effectively stabbing the other ILEA unions – Nupe, NAS/UWT and so on – in the back. The Action Committee proposed instead one NUT member per primary school and two from each secondary school should attend the protest! If their advice had been followed, then NUT would have been the only union *not* taking action on March 8. Such leadership will not stop the ILEA cuts and by such disgraceful shennanigans the Action Committee would have only helped spread confusion and demoralisation. In spite of this, the NUT executive was deluged with protests from associations which have voted to strike against both the ILEA bosses and the NUT bureaucrats. So against the wishes of the leadership March 8 looks set for being the biggest unofficial strike in NUT history, with even rightwing areas and individuals like the Eurocommunist June Fisher (president-elect of the NUT) supporting the revolt. The crisis that affects the 'official' leadership of the union also affects those like the SWP who pose as a 'left' alternative.

**An attempt to sabotage** this year's London May Day demonstration by the Communist Campaign Group influenced South East Region TUC has been thwarted by the intervention of militant Turkish workers' organisations and the South African Congress of Trade Unions. Originally, the staid SERTUC time servers were planning through their Joint London May Day Committee to ditch the May Day march altogether in favour of a 'festival' at Alexander Palace. This disgraceful move reflected first the intense embarrassment of the SERTUC bureaucrats that the May Day marches for at least a decade have been dominated politically and numerically by organisations from Turkey, in particular organisations sympathetic to the Communist Party of Turkey. Secondly, it illustrates the organic conservatism of the CCG types. Instead of reaching out to all sections of the working class that have been and are in struggle, agitating to build a fighting symbolic unity of all workers on May Day, these spineless misleaders opted for a tame festival, *a la* the Eurocommunists of the 1970s.

**Land Rover's 6,000** hourly-paid workers have stopped production at the Solihull plant dead in its tracks. The company's two year pay deal, worth only 8% in new money, was decisively rejected by carworkers and the solidarity of their strike front testifies to the determination the rank and file have to win a decent pay award. It is generally recognised that the Land Rover workers have taken inspiration from those at Fords who broke the ice of so-called 'peace' in industrial relations that has reined in the car plants since the '70s. But there is more to be drawn from the Ford workers' battle than simply inspiration: there are very real, concrete lessons. (See back page). Above all, the Land Rover workers must insist that the running of the dispute is in their hands, not the exclusive property of the sectional-minded union bureaucrats. Once this is done, they should be looking to form solid organisational links with all workers in the car industry who are now, or will be in the near future doing battle with their bosses ie those at Renault Trucks in Dunstable, Vauxhall Motors, Peugeot-Talbot, the Austin-Rover Group, Jaguar and Nissan. Workers should strike single-mindedly for their interests: the fact that Land Rover is only recently recovered from recession and is still barely profitable is of no concern to the workers.



• May Day 1988 can and must be a demonstration of working class unity and internationalism

## Always needed

As we go to press, the fund for February has gone over the £600 target, with a figure of £616. This is the first time in a while that our readers and supporters have achieved this, so let's hope it's a healthy upward trend. Certainly, pleased as we are to reach this figure, it does not meet our growing needs or the increasing demands of the class struggle. Equipping our comrades to cover actions like the health or car workers' disputes, and making contacts through the paper with militants involved in the current wave of industrial militancy all puts strain on our financial resources. As does mailing *The Leninist* and other revolutionary literature into Irish political prisoners' hands, an area of work we have expanded on recently. Revolution is not a cheap business. So, come on comrades: dig deeper still. We know you can afford it; you know you can afford it. And we'll always need it.



# All out for victory!



Days of action must be used as a springboard for all out action

**So far one of the main strengths of health workers has been the spontaneity of the dispute. But what has been a strength will soon become a weakness. Health workers must organise and develop a political programme. This is no luxury but a burning necessity**

**N**URSES ARE slowly coming to see themselves, not as professionals, but as but workers. Together with other health workers they have flung themselves into the fray against the government's refusal to increase funding for the NHS with actions which go way beyond what the stuffy union bureaucrats had planned.

This is something that has been confirmed by a straw poll we conducted amongst trade union militants in the health industry. Marie McLoughlin, staff nurse and Cohse member, told us that the national leaderships are "totally removed from the ordinary members. The real leadership is coming from the rank and file". How true.

According to this spokesperson for the Charing Cross Hospital joint strike committee the unions have attempted to sabotage the fight through their slothful and inefficient approach. "Our leadership have tried from the beginning to thwart this action because they're not controlling it."

Other militants such as Tom Butler, Cohse shop steward in Hackney Hospital in London,

and Rob Rodgers, a student nurse and Nupe militant in Notts, confirmed this. Rob Rodgers told us how the bureaucrats had 'fought' in his area. The 'strike ballot' was "phrased along the lines of 'Do you want protest action, or to have a day of protest, or to write to your MP ... or perhaps a strike?'. They tacked on the strike option right at the end and gave it no lead."

All militant health workers recognise that the officials are only interested in token gestures. Yet time and time again where the bureaucrats have organised totally useless protests which have only had effect when the health workers themselves rebelled against union diktat, workers in one area after another are, we were told, saying 'we don't care what the union says.' Excellent!

Such militant determination is an example to all workers. But we must not get carried away. As we have said such spontaneity can only maintain its dynamic for only so long before it is transformed from the dispute's main strength, into a crippling weakness.

So what is needed? We say demonstrations

on Saturdays are not enough. There must not be a rerun of 1982 when union and TUC days of action dragged on and on and led only to demoralisation. We need all out action which draws in all health workers as well as other sections of the working class.

To achieve this it is essential for rank and file health workers to take the lead and isolate the trade union bureaucrats. There is every reason why this will happen. Union stewards made clear to us that what prompted the current upsurge was rank and file anger, not the leadership of the union bureaucrats.

One militant put it like this: "Previously there had just been demoralisation and an acceptance of the cuts. Then there was the nurses' action in Manchester and a climb-down from the government the next day. People looked at that and said for years we've been taking it, well we don't really have to take it anymore."

## Class politics

The ideal way to coordinate rank and file

action is to organise rank and file action committees which cut across myopic sectional divisions which exist between workers in different unions. Strike committees must be transformed into action committees made of elected and recallable delegates. They should be organised in all hospitals and through them all hospitals should be linked.

In London things have already taken a step in this direction. The strike committees, where they exist, are well organised and solid. But they only cover about 10 hospitals. And although as many as 25 hospitals have been represented at the London Strike Committee, considering there are about 200 hospitals in the capital, this is a low representation.

So this type of organisation must be spread and fully developed in order to really counteract bureaucratic sabotage. The energy of the rank and file must not be dissipated in an endless series of Sunday afternoon 'Days of Action' and token protests, which Marie McLoughlin points out were simply "demoralising" at the end of the day.

This is clearly the way that the leaders of

the Labour Party and their co-thinkers in the health union bureaucracies envisage conducting the dispute. And that is why it is an urgent necessity for rank and file health workers to take the running of the strike into their own hands and begin to singlemindedly campaign for all out action!

Rob Rodgers in Notts agrees with this. "To take the next step forward, needs a political intervention." Organisation in other words should not be seen as an end in itself. It would be a fatal mistake to make a fetish out of rank and file organisation.

Action committees are simply an organisational form that will allow health workers to prosecute their war with the government more effectively if and only if they are organised on an independent political platform.

The rank and file need a battle plan for their fight. The Tories, for example, have suffered badly from their lack of a viable alternative to the health industry as presently constituted. The strike action of the nurses and ancillary staff therefore, has caught the Tories on the hop.

Now, instead of waiting until a fourth possible term of office in order to attack health care provision for the working class and the pay and conditions of the workers in the industry, the Tories found themselves propelled into battle ill-prepared and disorientated.

During this initial period of dither, the responsible ministers John Moore and Edwina Curry - the Burke and Hare of the Tory party - have been left to take most of the considerable amount of flak whipping around. Indeed, the discontent has rained in on the government from all quarters, with a growing call from the BMA, the Royal College of Surgeons and Tory backbenchers, including the Tory dominated select committee on health, for more money for the NHS.

The government has been surprised by the anger and support for the health workers. They have also been surprised how this has produced a knock on effect in the Tory party itself. In the face of this Thatcher has not stood still. There is a broadly familiar pattern developing. Thatcher herself has drawn parallels with the Tories' previous shifting of the ideological goal posts in order to attack housing, education and local government finance and this is exactly what she is now setting about doing with health.

The Black Report of 1980 made it clear that the working class suffer far worse health and die earlier than the rich. Undoubtedly, after a period of debate and internal review, the government will come forward with proposals which will further shift the balance against the working class. Plans are already afoot for the privatisation of certain profitable areas of health. This would leave the NHS as a cash strapped safety net shorn up by do-gooding charity mongers: a US style Bupa-isation of health.

On top of that the Tories are attempting to increase the divisions among nurses. This April a 10 grade scale will be introduced which will widen the differentials between nurses, leaving non-specialist nurses at the bottom of the pile and clearing the way for the introduction of £30 per week YTS slave labour into the health service. This will be capped by a GCHO-type operation. Nupe and perhaps Cohse would be banned and nurses forced to sign a no-strike pledge.

This prospect shows the burning necessity for health workers, in fact the burning necessity for all workers to take up the political cudgels now. Health workers must develop their own working class battle plans. If they are unable to do this then the initiative will have been lost to our class enemy, the Tories will have things their way and health workers will be in for a pasting.

The history of all of the major disputes of the last few years or so illustrates that rank and file bravery alone is no substitute for a clear-sighted strategy for victory.

It is a safe assumption to make that given the spinelessness of the official union apparatus, rank and file strike/action committees will spread. The verve, enthusiasm, the get up and go is all coming from the rank and file. But their independence from the poisonous effects of the bureaucracies will be purely formal, an illusion, if it remains simply organisational, not first and foremost political. And the essence of our political battle plan must be the fight for the wages health workers need to lead decent lives, and for sufficient resources to be allocated to allow a dramatic improvement in working class health care.

In concrete terms what does this mean? • Student nurses need a minimum wage of £180 per week.

• Ancillary workers and qualified nurses need a minimum of £240 per week.

• The waiting lists must be abolished.  
• No private patients must be allowed in NHS hospitals. The fight must be pursued singlemindedly; there should be no other considerations and we should fight for this platform irrespective of what the bosses and their government say the system can afford!

Lawson's budget will provide nothing extra for the NHS. On one level, this was fairly surprising. Given their present weak position on the NHS, health workers might have expected the Tories to at least try to buy off a section of them with a financial sop. Nonetheless pleading to Lawson to allocate some of his 'spare' £3 billion to the NHS is dangerous.

What we should take as our starting point is not the budget, like the *Morning Star* and *Socialist Worker*. No, we must take as our starting point not socialist fanciful playing with Lawson's books, but the harsh reality of the miserable wages that nurses and ancillary staff are expected to live on (between £6,250 and £7,750 for qualified nurses, much lower for other health workers), and the scandalously shoddy - and rapidly deteriorating - standards of health care that our class has to make do with.

The attacks on the NHS and on the livelihoods of the workers in the industry are not the result of the perverse psychology of the Tories, or their innumeracy: it is a direct, an inevitable consequence of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall which is again asserting itself and threatening to cripple British capitalism. It is simply madness therefore, for workers in any industry to tie their living standards to an economic system that is so obviously going down the plughole.

We must wage the fight with only one consideration: our interests as a class! And this means uniting all workers in a struggle against capitalism. That is the way forward, not shifting Tory wets or electing a Labour government. For all Kinnock's hype it is important to remember that under the last Labour government there were swinging cuts in real health spending which went down from 5.1% of Britain's GNP to 4.8%. But since 1979, when Thatcher was elected, Britain's relative decline has speeded up. So even more so than in the past, for the capitalist class the NHS in its present form no longer makes sense.

Since the 1970s, financing it has represented a constant drain. And given the changing demographic make-up of the population the demand for health has been constantly growing. The problem for the system is that hip operations, removing cataracts and arthritis treatment for the over 70s just do not make economic sense.

Of course, the Tories boast that they have increased spending in real terms every year since 1979. This is true. Health now accounts for 5.9% of the GNP. And yet their half a percent yearly spending increase means a real cut in what is needed. Just to keep up with existing demand there must be a 2% increase per year. With new medical technology, with the growing threat of AIDS we need much more than a 2% increase per annum. We say if the Thatcher government refuses to countenance this they must go and go not through a parliamentary vote but working class action. In other words the struggle of the health workers must be channelled into the struggle to overthrow the Tory regime.

### Overcoming sectionalism

We must overcome sectionalism. The scale of our task demands it. United like the five fingers of a fist, Britain's one million health workers can face up to the government. If present divisions are allowed to continue the Tories will turn one section against another and triumph. So the fight for unity is essential.

Rank and file action committees in themselves represent a powerful blow against sectionalism but clearly things need to go further; unity must be cemented in the form of one union in the health industry for all health workers.

Every militant worker we have talked to has given us depressing instances of sectionalism that is daily hampering the fight back. For example on February 3 the protest action became little more than a political football for the sectionalist bureaucrats.

Nupe has said that it wants just a nursing dispute and that they did not want other workers involved. Cohse has sought to cash in on Nupe's lack of militancy, and both Cohse and Nupe have vied with each other in taking members from the RCN. This is a shop keeping approach to politics.

The sectionalist tussle between the health industry unions would be farcical if it were not so damaging. No wonder there is a healthy

cynicism about the official leaderships.

Militants need to ensure that their committees do not become embroiled in the officials' petty competition. We are not interested in seeing Cohse members leaving their union and joining Nupe, or Nupe members leaving and joining Cohse. Of course, this chopping and changing reflects the disillusionment of many health workers with the way the bureaucrats in their unions are running the dispute, but it hardly helps to build a united front.

There is a general hope that, as Rob Rodgers says: "At the end of this dispute there'll be real moves from the rank and file to end the problem. Certainly, among the membership of my district, that is the way people are looking at it. Calling for one union in the health industry is absolutely correct." But it is no good waiting until after the dispute ends to fight for unity. If the dispute is to be won it will be because the rank and file have scored a victory over sectionalism and united against the government, the bosses and the bureaucrats.

Health workers need to fight now for one union in the industry, a single organisation that includes all workers from ancillary staff, through nurses, to technicians, but which excludes members of the health industry establishment like consultants and management.

Another question that must be fought for now is workers' control in the health industry. The issue of emergency cover in fact poses the necessity for workers' control point blank.

A few organisations on the British left have got themselves a little flummoxed (to say the least) on this question. Either, like *Workers Power* they have sought to pose as ultra-'leftist' by arguing for no cover - an economic cop out - or alternatively, like the *Morning Star* for cover on management terms.

For leading militants on the ground however, the issue is clear cut. They see the need to fight for workers' control when it comes to providing emergency cover. The power of the management to decide on the levels of staffing during strike action must be usurped. Rob Rodgers agreed emphatically with this and spelled out the consequences of not fighting for such a tactic:

"I think that is more than a good idea. I think that is absolutely essential. For example, when it comes to emergency cover in a hospital under normal circumstances, the management will give you a really low figure of nurses required; they expect one or two nurses to run a ward. But when it comes to a strike, then management say that they need, say, six nurses as a minimum! And then the union will just accept that!

"If action committees were formed, in my opinion they are the ones who should be deciding the levels of emergency cover. That one issue alone has crippled the nurses in the past disputes and it will cripple them in this dispute if they don't take a sensible attitude to it."

We say that if the management object, lock them up in a broom cupboard and we will see if they change their mind. Naturally the bureaucracy will hate such militant action. But they have no winning alternative. In fact the 'leadership' has really been conspicuous through their lack of leadership, seeking to simply portray nurses as 'angels', as victims. So it is up to the ordinary members to seize the initiative and take the struggle on to victory.

### The way forward

We must not fall into the foolish trap of ripping the health industry dispute out of context and looking for easy, formal parallels between this class fight and those of the 1970s. The stakes are far higher.

Since their election in 1979, the Tories have carefully constructed a whole apparatus of highly repressive anti-working class legislation, beefed up should workers decide to defy the law by a nationally organised, armed to the teeth, police force. While the leaders of the official trade union movement have looked on and whined, the Tories have created a situation today where effective trade unionism is illegal.

We understand this. That is why we say to be a good trade unionist you must break the law!

Political life in Britain today is very different from the 1970s. All strikes in support of the health workers are illegal. Yet it is precisely this type of 'secondary' action that health workers should be looking for from other workers in order to win their battle. Truly, united we will win! Divided we lose! This must never be forgotten!

We have no time for facile and clumsy com-

parisons between the industrial disputes of the late 1970s that papers like *Socialist Worker* and the *Morning Star* are keen to present as 'analysis'; we say workers need to fight in a harder, more conscious and openly political way. This is what conditions in 1988 demand.

The miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 was fought by the NUM leadership using the industrial and political weapons of the 1970s: against the British state, streamlined and tooled up by the Tories for class war in the 1980s. heroism was not enough. If we do not want to go down to yet another defeat, we must not approach the health workers' fight in a blinkered way, hampered and restricted by the politics of the past. To win in the 1980s, workers need to fight in a new, united way. All struggles must be fused!

Like the fat cat trade union leaders at Fords, like the bureaucrats in the seamen's union, the leaders of the health workers' unions, not least the non-TUC RCN, have been anxious to divert the struggle into tokenistic 'days of action' and a campaign to net that nebulous thing, 'public sympathy'. This will only produce a re-run of the 1982 fiasco.

The studied determination of the trade union leaderships not to lead presents the shop stewards and strike committees with the duty to take the lead themselves.

Health workers must involve other workers in their dispute. They must see their fight as part of a broader working class counter-offensive against the government and reach out to other groups of workers not just for 'sympathy', but for solidarity action.

It is vital to use the TUC's March 5 demonstration and the March 14 day of action called by Cohse as a springboard towards all out action in the health industry and massive illegal strikes by other workers. This will really shake the Tories. And who can doubt that the basis for such widespread action exists?

The health workers need the solidarity action of other workers if they are to win. The only way to win the arguments, to bring out other sections of workers is to approach them with militant class arguments rather than TUC-type moralising. Marie McLaughlin is spot on when she says "We have to have solidarity action from other workers! As far as I'm concerned 'public sympathy' is not much good to us, it hasn't done us much good in the past. 'Sympathy' does not pay your rent!"

According to the editorial of the *Sun* of February 4: "One thousand miners stopped work yesterday at Frickley Colliery. They were supposed to be supporting the nurses. The pit is losing money and in danger of closing. All that the men achieved was to lose £100,000. Miners used to be such level-headed practical fellows. At Frickley, they must be as thick as a bag of nutty slack!"

Behind the feeble insults of that scabby rag, there are real fears in the British establishment that the current wave of industrial action in solidarity with the health workers could be the beginnings of a united fightback by British workers.

The Frickley miners have not been unique. Workers from Vauxhall Ellesmere Port, Halewood Ford workers, Thorn EMI and Lucas workers, UCW members, Royal Ordnance Factory workers, firemen, seamen, power station and local government workers - these and other sections have already taken solidarity action with the health workers.

Such action under the Tories anti-trade union laws, is illegal. And in a very important decision on February 15, the All-London Strike Coordinating Committee voted to call London health workers out on strike on March 14 and to appeal for solidarity strike action from workers outside the health industry.

Clearly the dispute is at a very important turning point. From what we have been told by militant health workers there is a feeling that the forward impetus in the dispute has slowed to a certain extent. But surely this is temporary. As Tom Butler, Cohse shop steward in Hackney Hospital in London put it, "the anger is there. It's just waiting to be tapped". And he and others agreed the key question now is how to direct that anger into an effective winning strategy.

The TUC sponsored demonstration of March 5 and the March 14 Cohse day of action must be used as a springboard for all out action, for upping solidarity action by a power of ten, up to and including a general strike.

In the fight for this, the biggest enemy of health workers, besides the government, is the trade union bureaucracy. That is why we say: fight for all out action, fight the bureaucrats! Fight for all out solidarity action! Unite all workers' struggles against the government!

Ian Mahoney



## CLAUSE 28

# Beating the bigots, Tory and Labour

### Gays and lesbians are today faced with the greatest attack on their rights since male homosexuality was criminalised in the last century

The normally steely hearts of The Leninist bled a little when we read of 'James' of Luton who wrote in to the Sun's problem page on February 3. The poor child claims he is the "victim of a communist regime right here in Britain". His red tyrant of a father apparently insists on being called "my comrade father" and "is so extreme that he reckons the Communist Party is not strong enough." (We suppress a shudder). We could forgive 'James' father all of that however, but when we learned that "the only newspaper allowed in the house is the Morning Star" our tolerance dried up. From our next issue, The Leninist will also feature a problem page for other children of Morning Star supporters who are having problems relating to their parents. And if we don't get any, we do what the Sun did and make one up.

According to Straight Left's Harry Steel, there is "a great deal of common ground between people who on balance are for or against abortion". Being a wonderfully 'balanced' man himself, Harry warns against "abortion triumphalism" which can "alienate support" from people as equally 'balanced' as himself. After all, Harry points out, once you give women abortion rights, there may be "pressure to exercise" them! Steel concludes his balanced thoughts on the subject with the hope that in the future "many more parents would be able to choose not to have an abortion." Coming at a time of vicious attacks on women's abortion rights, of a wave of bourgeois reaction against women's rights in general, we thought Harry Steel's article was, on balance, thoroughly chauvinist.

The Guardian's front page picture on February 18 was interesting. It features a seated Christian CND protester, complete with translucent cross, being gently removed by police from outside the Ministry of Defence. What a bore, you may think. Ordinarily we would agree, but closer examination revealed that said heavenly peacenik was none other than the Communist Campaign Group's favourite ex-nun and leading CCG 'philosopher', their very own Irene Brennan. This rather underlines our urgent message to militants in the CCG we think: "Repent! For the day of judgement, when there will be a great wailing and a gnashing of teeth, is near at hand!"



Labour will not stop the clause

THE LIMITED gains won in the 'liberal' sixties, such as the very limited decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, are now being wiped out through a full scale attack from the Tory government and the bosses' media.

The papers have been furiously whipping up anti-gay hysteria; most noticeably and eagerly *The Sun*, which used the pretext of the murder of Stuart Gough by a gay man to ominously warn campaigners for homosexual rights to "shut up" or face "a terrible backlash". Assaults on gays and lesbians have increased exponentially, both by the police and 'freelance' thugs, and in December the offices of *Capital Gay* were fire-bombed.

Under the pretext of Aids prevention many gay men have been victimised by their employers, one well known recent case being the sacking - upheld by an industrial tribunal - of a projectionist. The tidal-wave of bigotry that, if unchallenged, threatens to engulf the gay and lesbian community has forced many homosexuals back into the closet, and compelled many others to heed *The Sun's* warning by retreating into the gay community ghetto. But, encouragingly, it has impelled many into action.

The state has gone in feet first against homosexuals. The Public Order Act is the first piece of legislation to infringe on lesbian rights, now putting them in the same invidious position as gay men, who are only 'permitted' homosexual relations in private when they are over 21. Now lesbians can be arrested for "behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace" if they kiss, or even so much as hold hands, in public (as was proven to many on the lesbian and gay rights march on January 9).

But, of course, the piece of government legislative thuggery that is most explicitly aimed at gays and lesbians is the infamous 'Clause.28'. Clause 28 (formerly Clause 27) - proscribes "the promotion of homosexuality" by local authorities. What this means to you and I is irrelevant. What it means to the state is that it enables it to go in harder against gays than it ever has done since '67. We do not need to elaborate on this here - just pick up a left wing or gay/lesbian publication and that will give you the nasty, sordid gist of

this reactionary legislation.

So the Tories are intent on doing some judicial 'queer-bashing' - alongside the physical stuff the scum in blue have always done. This should surprise few, after they have gone in and done miners, printers and black and Irish people, to reel off only a few on the Tories' hit list. What some might expect, however, is that their rivals on the other side of the House of Commons will attempt to do what their parliamentary title suggests and oppose. No chance.

You may remember that the Labour Party fought the last election on the ground of defence of lesbian and gay rights. Even if the banner of gay rights in the hands of Kinnock, Gould and Hattersley fluttered somewhat limply, Labour left-wingers could at least point to the commitment being there, in black and white, in their election manifesto. Judas Kinnock and his yellow crew have shown how shallow this pledge would have been in office through their performance in so-called 'opposition'.

Initially, the Labour Party tops decided not to oppose the clause in parliament. Because of the resulting outrage that this provoked from their own party ranks and from homosexual rights activists they have been forced to shift their position from one of shutting up and hoping that no one would notice that they had supported it through silence. Now, pushed into the daylight of political exposure they have resorted to their familiar vacuous blustering and whining.

To those who demand action from these scabs, they bleat that of course they think the bill is 'unjust' and of course they will do their utmost to oppose it. But, for the Tories and bourgeois public opinion, they get up on their hind legs and explain that of course they have no more sympathy for the "promotion of homosexuality" than any fine, upstanding archbishop. Kinnock and Co just want a little more subtlety in the way the government persecutes gays and lesbians.

From its inception the Labour Party has shown itself to be a party committed to capitalism, a party of the bourgeoisie. Today, capitalism demands that its basic social unit, the nuclear family, be strengthened to batten down the hatches for the oncoming crisis.

This is the role of Thatcher's

'Victorian values', or in the US 'moral rearmament'. It means an assault on abortion rights, 'promiscuity' (hence the strange discovery of 'condom culture' by John Selwyn Gummer), and the community targeted as immutable enemies of the family and all things holy, homosexuals. As a capitalist party, Labour must comply with the diktat of capitalist necessity. If this means the sacrifice of homosexual rights on the altar of capital, then so be it.

Certainly, Kinnock and Co. are desperate to avoid association with anything that would tarnish their "straight as a die, family men" image. As Kinnock has said, he is an unashamed reactionary when it comes to the family. He wants to be well rid of the albatross of the 'London effect' from the 'loony left', which he claims lost Labour the election.

To anyone who expects any support from these closet bigots, let alone any leadership, we extend a hearty 'welcome home from the planet Mars'. The Tories crucify homosexual rights while Labour plays Pontius Pilate. But the stains of their own foul bigotry cannot be washed out.

But not all Labourites are such slimy apologists for 'queer bashing'. Many councils and MPs, fingered by the Tories as 'promoters of homosexuality' have been more resolute in their opposition to clause.28. But what alternative for the campaign do they offer?

Chris Smith MP is a good example of this trend. And one, you would think, who is well placed for the job, being an open gay man who increased his electoral majority in the last election. An interview he gave in the 'left' Euro-communist *7 Days* of February 6 illustrates not only his personal view but the approach of the Labour left in general.

Chris argues that (a), the "climate is changing", and that (b), "we have to ... stand up and be counted against this climate." Hardly very profound and no concrete proposals either.

This is unsurprising, as in reality all that Chris can see workers, whether gay or straight, doing is turning out on the occasional demonstration. No fighting strategy - indeed, no strategy at all - is put forward to mobilise and organise working class action. Instead, he looks to the Labour Party to provide the answers. The parliamentary opposition must be more resolute. He "hopes" that local authorities will refuse to enact attacks on the lesbian and gay community. The presence of celebrities on 'Stop Clause.28' platforms is also seen as a sign of success.

With such a limited 'plan of action' it is unsurprising that he must underestimate the threat posed by the anti-gay offensive. The climate may be changing, but in Chris' eyes it is not changing that much. British people will remain as solid and sensible as ever: "The public isn't stupid. The Sun can go on and on but there are some values that the British people still hold."

He argues that, win or lose this

campaign, the size of the campaign will make the Tories retreat from further attacks: "Whatever happens to the clause it will make them think twice about rolling progress back even further." Such complacency is very dangerous.

The state will not back off from further attacks, anymore than it did from the miners, who mobilised many more people. The knife that the government has placed at the throats of gays and lesbians cannot be wished away so easily. Unless it is fought resolutely, basing the struggle among gay and straight workers, that knife will cut deep.

Chris Smith's social democratic approach dovetails neatly with the populist outlook of the lesbian and gay organisations leading the campaign, such as the Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (Olga).

They share Chris' orientation to parliamentary debate, pressure on the House of Lords and collecting celebrities. Neither the Lords nor the Commons are noted for their unflinching partisanship of homosexual rights, and whereas there can be few objections to Ian McKellan speaking out against the clause, he hardly points the way to victory.

Olga's perspective of restricting the defined limits of the 'promotion' definition through the courts is to admit defeat before battle has been joined in all force. It disarms and demoralises activists while they wait for ageing and inevitably reactionary judges to decide their future. There can be little doubt in whose favour this will be decided.

Labour MPs, 'left' Labour councils who today are making cuts and redundancies, the Lords and the courts provide no basis for a campaign in defence of gay rights. Homosexual rights cannot be bargained for with liberals' support so as to reach some middle ground on which gays can oppose Clause 28. Such an approach must be resolutely rejected by activists.

The campaign must orientate itself to council workers who will be put in the position of implementing Clause 28. Uniting the defence of gays and lesbians with council workers' own struggles is a fight that can be won at a time when the council workers themselves are under attack, very often from the Labour councils that Chris Smith and Olga look to for support.

This can and must be united with a full fight for complete gay and lesbian equality. Clause 28 is only one attack on homosexuals. They were attacked before the clause and, win or lose, they will be attacked after. Clause 28 can and must be linked with the fight for a full decriminalisation of homosexuality.

The most resolute ally of lesbians and gays in this fight is not Neil Kinnock, Lord Denning or Linda Bellos. It is the working class. The struggle must be taken into that class by homosexual workers to mobilise them in defence of gays and lesbians, whether to strike against the victimisation of homosexual workmates or to take to the streets against Clause 28.

- No reliance on the bourgeois state and bourgeois parties! For workers' action against Clause 28!
- Defend and extend lesbian and gay rights!

Sean Quinn



# Communism and the Irish War

The League of Communist Republicans, *Congress '86*, number 2, pp16, 50p

IN ISSUE 54 we reviewed a publication, *Congress '86*, written by Irish political prisoners, erstwhile IRA Volunteers, who had formed themselves into a distinct communist group. We welcome the production of this second issue of *Congress '86* because it, like *Questions of History* (written by republican POWs) and the IRSP's *Starry Plough* raises the level of debate in the revolutionary movement in Ireland. The more debate the better. However, this does not mean we do not have important disagreements and criticisms, and it is these we shall concentrate on here.

The journal primarily directs itself to the formation of a republican congress, modelled on the anti-imperialist united front of the same name formed by ex-leaders of the IRA in 1934. We agree with the criticisms levelled at this perspective by the unnamed reviewer of *Congress '86* in *The Starry Plough* No.1, who insisted on the priority of building the vanguard party.

The comrades from the LCR would say that there is no contradiction here; that it is a dialectical process in which the construction of the revolutionary party facilitates the building of a republican congress, and vice versa (see letter from the LCR in *The Leninist* 57 and comrade Tommy McKearney's letter in *The Leninist* 58). We disagree.

In our view before there is a well established communist party such a united front project would dissipate the energies of communists in Ireland. The Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922 explained this in its thesis on the anti-imperialist united front:

"The workers' movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries must first of all establish itself as an independent revolutionary factor in the anti-imperialist united front. Only when its importance as an independent factor is recognised and its complete political autonomy secured can temporary agreements with bourgeois democracy be considered possible or necessary." (*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, p416).

For the LCR comrades a republican congress is not a temporary but strategic alliance, and it is germane to note that the original republican congress folded precisely because of the absence of leadership from a strong Marxist-Leninist communist party. Revolutionaries must learn from past mistakes, not

emulate them.

We also have criticisms of the article, *Critique of the Propaganda War*. In it Liam O'Connor looks at the armed struggle in the Six Counties. He says it as a campaign whose "target ... is British 'public opinion' more than actual British armed might. The purpose behind any attack is ultimately to change this 'public opinion' ... It is this strategy of attempting to undermine the 'will' of the enemy rather than his physical ability which makes this struggle a propaganda war." (p6).

Comrade O'Connor argues that because the armed struggle does not challenge Britain's rule in a direct sense it is "doomed to failure" (p7) and as an alternative argues for an abstract "people's popular war" (p8). In spite of his abstractness there is an element of truth here.

The IRA leadership does seem to have a utopian strategy which aims at shifting 'public opinion' in Britain. But is there a choice between the present form and level of armed struggle? If there was then comrade O'Connor's call for a "people's popular war" might be correct. Unfortunately there is no choice at the moment.

Today, whatever the class nature of the leadership of the revolutionary struggle in the Six Counties, it would be forced to conduct a relatively low level guerilla struggle - a large scale engagement, a "people's popular war", would with the present balance of forces only lead to disaster. This is ABC in terms of military art.

Marxism recognises in theory all forms of struggle. Living revolutions - because of their constant ebb and flow, because they take place on national terrains - dictate different strategies and tactics; eg Russia's October insurrection and China's protracted guerilla struggle.

Marxism, wrote Lenin "admits the most varied forms of struggle ... generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise themselves in the course of the movement. Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the mass struggle in progress ... Marxism, therefore, positively does not renounce any form of struggle."

Lenin showed in his article *Guerilla Warfare* how armed struggle, even if carried out by few people, can be of a genuinely mass character. Guerilla warfare, of the type we see today in the Six Counties, arises in between the "big battles" comprising "a large number of small clashes during these intervals." Communists, he said, have a duty to participate and take the lead in such struggles.

Lenin went on to use the example of the guerilla struggle waged by Latvian communists and insisted that their tactics should in no way be seen as isolating the vanguard. The truth of this could be seen in the fact that the Latvian comrades had a paper with a circulation which ran into the tens of thousands, incidentally as does the republican movement's *An Phoblacht* (albeit with its different class politics).

The task of communists is not to dismiss or belittle the armed struggle in the north but point out how the lack of proletarian leadership leaves the struggle open to being compromised; how a communist leadership would direct all their actions towards the establishment of a Socialist Republic of Ireland and not some bourgeois Thirty-two County half-way house.

Fundamentally, it is the problem of winning communist hegemony over existing forms of struggle and, through this, qualitatively developing them. Recognise the problems of the armed struggle as it exists, yes; but do not abstain from it in favour of an abstract "people's popular war". Such a war can only be produced from the existing situation and the development of existing forms of struggle.

This article, like comrade Sean McGlynn's *Ireland Today and Tomorrow* (p10) - which frankly veers towards bourgeois economics with its talk of capitalist crisis resulting from workers' high wage levels eating into capitalist profitability - leaves the door open to reformist conclusions.

As we wrote in our review of the first issue of *Congress '86*, there is much that we find encouraging in the views of the LCR. Ireland needs a communist party, and while no organisation as yet contains all the theoretical answers and moral authority to actually be it, through open and comradely debate we are certain that the leadership of such a party will emerge.

Alan Merrick

## Belfast War

Holy War In Belfast, Andrew Boyd, Pretani Press 1987, pp243 £3.50

*HOLY War In Belfast* charts the course of the conflict between the Catholic and Protestant communities in that city, from its modern beginnings in the early 1800s to 1987. Though it is a detailed and well-documented work, the analysis of the conflict is inadequate. Belfast, being the industrial centre of Northern Ireland, presents the problems of the north in a concentrated form, and it is clear that those historical causes which have been at work in the region as a whole must also be evident in its main city. For Boyd, the causes of the troubles are simply the religious differences between the two communities, fanned into greater and greater hostility by demagogues such as Ian Paisley and his counterparts of previous generations. No attempt is made to examine critically the economic development of Belfast during the period. For a book which offers an explanation and interpretation of the events it documents so well, this is a serious failing. From a Marxist perspective, it is obvious that the growth of Belfast's industries, the link with Britain, the increasing conflict between Catholic/nationalist and Protestant/loyalist are all indissolubly connected. In the early nineteenth century, with Britain the 'workshop of the world', the burgeoning industries of Belfast could only be assured survival by continued access to the free market of Great Britain and her colonies. Thus it was imperative for the Northern bourgeoisie to resist the growing Home Rule movement.

Well into the Twentieth century, industry in the Six counties benefited from the British connection. This is shown most clearly during World War II, when the demands of the British war effort were a great boost for an economy still struggling after the depression of the 'thirties. A comparison with the difficulties in which Free State industry laboured during "the

emergency" is instructive. Clearly, the northern bourgeoisie could see no profitable future in Irish independence.

However, as is made abundantly clear by a study of the rise of the bourgeoisie historically, to exert influence and gain power it must exercise hegemony over other sections of society. This general principle was concretised in the case of north eastern Ireland in the way in which the common ideological ground of radical protestantism linked the mass of northern workers to their own bourgeoisie (in a similar fashion the Home Rule movement in the south was led by the Southern petty bourgeoisie).

This is not to say that this religious current was consciously promoted by the ruling class to fulfil their own ends. Rather, it fulfilled an objective historical need of the time for a means of unifying the classes into the tail of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, it is incorrect to speak of the sectarian divide as if it were an historical accident unconnected to the essential nature of the north east of Ireland.

The support of the loyalist workers for their bosses was of course not due solely to religious sympathies. Preferential treatment for loyalist workers pervaded, and still pervades, society in the Six Counties statelet. This is manifested primarily in lower unemployment rates among Protestants, higher average wage rates, better quality housing and so on.

A significant factor in much of the rioting so graphically described by Boyd was competition between Catholics and Protestants for what jobs were available. Discrimination practised against the catholic populace in matters of employment, housing etc, backed up the primitive prejudice inspired by fanatical ministers of religion with a material basis.

This persistent discrimination has continued from the early nineteenth century up to the present day, so that the loyalist working class, though Irish in every real sense of the word, is similar to the French colonies in Algeria in its relationship to the 'native' strata.

The objective role of the sectarian divisions in the north has been, and continues to be, to divide the working class. Historically these divisions have been used by British imperialism to ensure its continued control of Ireland.

It has been argued that these historical causes, valid though they may have been, are now irrelevant. British imperialism, it is argued, no longer wishes to retain political domination in the Six Counties; indeed, it is said that international capital would wel-

come a Thirty-two County state. This is the line peddled by both the official leadership of the CPGB and the breakaway Communist Campaign Group. Such an abstract, formalistic view exposes graphically the opportunistic nature of both of them.

In reality, as the more perceptible sections of the British bourgeoisie themselves recognise, the withdrawal of Britain from the Six Counties would turn Ireland as a whole into a cauldron of social ferment and change. This in turn would have profound effects in Britain. The results of having a Cuba fifty kilometres offshore can be imagined!

By hanging on in a part of Ireland, imperialism can hope to stultify the development of the class struggle. Yet to maintain a presence in the Six Counties, imperialism requires the cooperation of sizeable groups of the population.

Historically, this support has been gained by discriminating in favour of the Protestants, granting the loyalist workers material privileges over the catholic masses. With the decline in the Six Counties' industrial base, the benefits to be shared out become ever smaller, even with huge subsidies from Britain. Therefore it is pointless to talk about ending discrimination against Catholics within the context of the statelet, since the very existence of this vestige of the old British Empire is based upon buying off a section of the working class at the expense of Catholic workers.

Thus we can see that for Marxists the 'sectarian divide', though very real, does not define the essence of the situation. Ultimately, the Irish problem is a problem arising from imperialism and can be solved only with the defeat of imperialism. It is incumbent on British communists to support the anti-imperialist struggle being waged against their own bourgeoisie by Sinn Fein and the IRSP.

It must be recognised that in Ireland the national and social questions are inextricably linked, and to formalistically insist on their separation only leads in practice to abandoning any serious involvement in the class struggle.

Of course, since Andrew Boyd, unlike the British communist 'experts' on Ireland, does not claim to be a Marxist, he can hardly be blamed for not subscribing to a genuine Marxist-Leninist analysis of the events in Belfast. However, because he is a bourgeois liberal, the wealth of material he has assembled in *Holy War In Belfast* remains in his hands a terrible catalogue of senseless horrors with no explanation, ultimately, other than in the defects of 'human nature'.

Peter Clancy

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# Fords: Against the bosses and the bureaucrats

**T**O TURN a 88% vote in favour of strike action into a demoralised return to work is no mean thing, not least after a 100% solid ten day strike. The *Morning Star* – the daily voice of the labour bureaucracy – tries to fool its readers that “Ford workers have won a terrific victory” but this is just miserable sucking up to AEU bureaucrat and possible ally for Tony Chater’s dull paper (February 19, 1988).

Fords was always more concerned to achieve a trimmed down flexible workforce than it was with ensuring a three year deal. The agreement “in principle” not to implement major changes in working practices “without local agreement” plays into the bosses hands lining up as it does weaker plants and sections for the ‘casualisation’ process. This can only set worker against worker. Nevertheless, the Fords management did offer certain concessions. So while it was not the ‘terrific’ victory it could and should have been, it was no humiliating defeat.

The militant minority of Ford workers, the 30% who voted against the second compromise deal, will be very bitter about the outcome of the strike. But they should not only criticise the sellout merchants on the Joint Negotiating Committee, they must also criticise their own shop stewards.

True, they scuppered the bureaucrats’ first attempt to call the strike off and rallied the workforce to vote, 60% for strike action. But then they handed the strike straight back to the bureaucracy. The result was a foregone conclusion. So there are important lessons in the Fords strike for the future, not least car workers at Land Rover.

During the strike the high Tory

*Economist* reported that “competition in the world [car] market is growing tougher” and that business had flown into Britain and car production there burgeoned because a “British worker is estimated to cost 45% less than a West German one.”

In other words, the Ford workers were in a strong position to win an outright victory. The company had too much business dependant on Britain and competitors breath too hot on the backs of their necks to allow them very much time or room to manoeuvre.

Instead of the bosses picking the time and the place of the confrontation, as had Murdoch and MacGregor before, the harsh dictates of the world car market had forced Fords onto a sticky wicket. By mid-February the British management was on the ropes, with the American directors standing at the ringside reaching for the towel.

So what went wrong? To be brief, the bureaucrats are what happened. Ford rank and file workers were robbed of victory not so much by the bosses but by their own negotiating team.

Jimmy Airlie, AEU chief negotiator, and Mick Murphy, holding the same post for the TGWU, never made any secret of the fact that they regarded the whole affair as rather unfortunate, and that if only Fords could be a little more reasonable, then the whole affair could be cleared up in a jiffy. In this they were echoed by their national leaderships, not least the AEU’s Bill Jordan and the TUC. The ones who did not seem so keen on striking this gentleman’s agreement were the militant rank and file Ford workers.

But the bureaucratic wheeler dealing of Airlie and Co. wore down and demoralised the original

militant majority, as represented by the original 88% vote for strike action. This was deliberate. The last thing the trade union bureaucracy wants is a strike wave on its hands. As a result what it fought for was cosmetic changes to the original Fords offer. At no time did they fight for the needs of their own members – a one year 10% deal with no loss of jobs, no ‘flexible’ working, no casual workforce and no strings.

The two year deal was no victory. Yet who can doubt that a victory was possible. The rank and file shop stewards in the plant, who acted and started to organise as the militant voice of the anger that had developed among the rank and file, had few illusions in their own leadership.

Airlie and Co. had negotiated away 14,000 jobs at Dagenham alone in the last eight years, the two year deal negotiated in January 1986 meant in effect a pay cut and it was the bureaucrats, just as much as the bosses, who were responsible for cutting it. The bureaucrats even supported the original three year offer. With such a ‘leadership’ what should have been done?

Workers in Fords should have gone into the strike not only fighting the Ford bosses, but also their own union bureaucrats. Rank and file strike committees, linked up nationally, would have provided a powerful counterweight to the bureaucracy. Indeed with the mass involvement of the rank and file the strike committees could expropriate the negotiating functions of the bureaucrats. With regular report backs to mass meetings and open and above board negotiations, the rank and file would have settled for nothing less than complete victory.

One thing was always certain. The bureaucracy was never going to deliver a victory. They are in the bosses’ pockets, or as one of the strikers placards put it: “Mick Murphy sleeps with Ford motor Co.” Because of this the shop stewards had a duty to seize the leadership of the strike from the bureaucracy. The reason they failed to do this was the lack of a clear communist lead in the form of communist organisation in the Ford factories – the consequence of the lack of communist organisation is now plain to see.

Our perspective sees the necessity for genuine communist leadership. Nonetheless, for all our criticisms of the shop stewards, there can be no question that we side with them against the machinations of the bureaucracy. This cannot be said of the opportunists who pass themselves off as ‘communists’. Among those on the Joint Negotiating Committee were three members of the CPGB – Steve Hart, Jack Adams and good ol’ Jimmy Airlie.

We need not demand to see the minutes of the negotiations to know which way they were arguing and voting. The message of the CPGB Executive Committee to Ford workers, through their trio on the negotiating committee, was “you’ll take what you’re given and like it”.

This is of no great surprise to those who know the history of our Euro dominated Communist Party. Yet some may find the triumphalist position of the ex-CPGB ‘left’ dissidents around the *Morning Star* surprising. Instead of denouncing the treachery of Airlie and Co, using it as a polemical cudgel to bash the CPGB leadership, they acted as the undying allies of the bureaucracy through all

its twists and turns.

The *Star* of January 27 quotes approvingly from Jimmy Airlie and lauds Mick Murphy as, they write, he “pulled no punches”. Yes, but who was he hitting?

On February 17, after the sellout, this so-called communist paper presented the sellout as a ‘victory’ in a lead article “Ford Saves Face”. Militant Fords workers may be forgiven for asking how the *Star* has the face to print this dishonest crap.

It also argued for support for the strike on the grounds that “Fords can afford it” (*Morning Star* February 16). This argument is the opposite side of the coin to that which is argued by Thatcher and her monetarist ideologues. They have in the past argued that workers should be paid in accordance with profitability. As now does the *Star*.

But why should capitalist profitability be of any concern to workers? If Fords cannot afford it, should their workforce take a cut? Of course not! This is reformist nonsense, with the most reactionary conclusions. No wonder the *Star* finds no difficulty in tailing toe-rags like Airlie.

Ford workers, all car workers – indeed all workers – need to free themselves from the touching concern that the *Star* shows for the bosses’ bank balances. We should fight for what we need, not what they and their system can afford. And if their system cannot afford it, then their system must go.

That is the perspective with which workers need to fight the oncoming struggles if they are to win. Against the bosses, against the bureaucrats and their reformist lick-spittles like the *Morning Star*!

Sean Quinn

## TV-am: All out to win!

**O**N FEBRUARY 16, TV-am sacked the 229 technicians it locked out last November for refusing to agree to new working practices. The company has since announced its intentions to recruit an alternative scab workforce, although early reports indicate that they are having difficulties here. This situation can change however, and if TV-am succeed in recruiting a new labour force to replace the technicians, this will be a major defeat for all workers in the industry.

The technicians’ union, the ACTT, has let them down badly. Alan Sapper, ACTT general secretary, has been only concerned to present the union as eminently ‘reasonable’. He refuses to consider the hard tactics that would win a victory because: “We’re not that sort of union!” What a pity!

Sapper, in typical bureaucrat’s fashion, has been anxious to offload the blame for the current disastrous situation onto the other unions in the industry. He has criticised unions at TV-am for failing to take solidarity action in support of the technicians, including in his attack the Beta studio and clerical

staff union, currently holding talks with ACTT over a merger.

Sapper wrote correctly in the union’s journal that: “Other managements elsewhere must be looking closely at the development of this particular dispute, and may very well be ready to take full advantage of the lack of solidarity in other shops”.

True, but it really is disingenuous rubbish for Sapper to turn around and make this point now. The roots of the current dispute go back years. The ACTT bureaucrats have prevaricated with typical sluggishness and sectionalist shortsightedness until this crisis blew up in their faces.

Although their attitude is very wrong, it is understandable that other unions are wary of joining the technicians in a dispute that from where they stand may look like too little, too late. The cowardly union fat cats are too blame for the current fragmented and sectionalised state of workers in the industry.

Even at this late hour however, the workers themselves can save the day if they learn some lessons from some of the class battles that

have been fought in the past few years or so.

The TV-am dispute has many similarities to the printers’ fight in Wapping. Like the printers union, the ACTT is a craft union, organising very well paid workers. It, like the NGA and Sogat, has become accustomed over the years to cosy collaboration with the bosses. This has seriously hampered the unions’ ability to fight for its members’ interests when it comes to the crunch.

The similarities do not stop here, however. Like Wapping, TV-am is a test case. If the company can force through its attacks on the technicians and recruit scab labour then the way will be open for other companies (including the BBC) to force through attacks on the pay and conditions of all workers in broadcasting.

As the Financial Times (February 15) commented, “The fire-works at TV-am ... has obscured a wider pattern of discussions throughout the ITV network to reduce staff levels.” All 16 ITV companies want:

- The elimination of minimum crew levels.

- The elimination of ‘golden hour’ payments.

- ‘Flexibility’ between grades both for studio staff and technicians.

- A running down of staffing levels in the central technical areas of stations in the preparation for deregulation.

Whether it is the ‘softly-softly’ approach adopted by companies like Yorkshire (with which the ACTT is actively conniving) or the confrontationalist stance of TV-am, the essence is the same: attacks on the working conditions and pay levels of the workers. Indeed, Sapper’s main gripe with the company appears to be that, as he wrote in the union journal, they are imposing new working practices “by diktat rather than negotiation”.

However there is more at stake than the bruised feelings of union bureaucrats. Whether their pay levels and conditions are negotiated away, or taken from them by “diktat” is irrelevant to the TV-am technicians and the other workers in the industry. We say: To hell with the Tories anti-trade union laws! Fight for illegal strikes.

Other workers in broadcasting must be won to stand with the TV-am technicians because they are in the front line in the fight to safeguard all TV workers’ jobs and livelihoods.

They all need to beat off the attacks of the ITV companies. We say stop the bosses in their tracks.

- Form a joint action committee involving all workers in the broadcasting industry.

- Spread the TV-am dispute.
- Bring out the BBC workers – if the TV-am technicians go down all workers in the industry will get the Wapping treatment.

- Hit the ITV companies where it hurts – in their advertising revenues. Occupy all ITV studios, stop all advertising, barricade the buildings using the most expensive equipment – dare the police to break in, begin broadcasting messages of support for the health workers and pro-working class films!

- All out for victory! That will put the fear of god into all ITV bosses and get them falling over themselves to sue for peace.

Ian Mahoney