

# WORKERS' ACTION

12 pages  
15p

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## Steel strike can beat the Tories

ON MONDAY 28th steelworkers will be marching with thousands of other workers in Cardiff against job cuts in Wales. The steel strike will join forces with a one-day general strike in Wales.

British Steel bosses last week announced that they intend to cut 6,900 jobs in Port Talbot and 4,500 at Llanwern. Those cuts would lead to thous-

ands more jobs being cut in the mines, on the railways, and in other industries. The Wales TUC reckons that 50,000 jobs are at stake.

In another move to take up the issue of jobs alongside the pay issue, a Scunthorpe steelworkers' Action Committee met last Saturday, 19th, and called for local Action Committees and a National Action Committee against closures.

The TUC General Council is meeting this week to decide action on the steel closures. Already the TUC leadership has pressured the Wales TUC into calling off a general strike against the closures, planned from January 21st. Far from moving to extend the steel strike into a general strike to stop the Tories, the TUC leaders will probably try to keep any action on closures separate from the present steel pay strike.

But more and more steelworkers are unwilling to accept that. More and more are becoming aware of the tremendous power of 100,000 workers mobilised for strike action — power which can win the full 20% pay increase and save the 50,000-plus jobs directly threatened by the BSC bosses and the Tories.

The miserable pay offers — originally 2% and then 8% with strings — and the job cuts are both part of the same Tory policy: BSC must make profits or die. The same working class action — all-out strike — is the right reply to both parts of that policy.

The strike can force the Tories to back down both on pay and on jobs. But if steelworkers let the Tories and BSC off the hook on jobs now, when they have the power of mass mobilisation, how will they ever beat them later?

The strike is biting hard. Since the unions decided officially to block the movement of all steel, last week, there have been closures or lay-offs at private steel plants in the Midlands and in Sheffield, and at Stanton Ironworks, Derbyshire. Stocks of steel at other factories are running lower

and lower. Pickets are spreading.

Now is the time to go for victory on both fronts, pay and jobs. That must be the call on Monday 28th, and that must be our demand on the steel union and TUC leaders

Over recent years, the steel jobs fight has been crippled by being sliced up. It was 'save Shotton' or 'save Corby', 'save Shelton Bar' or 'save East Moors'. Steelworkers in different areas competed with each other over whose plant was the most 'viable'.

And eventually each local fight collapsed in the face of apparently overwhelming odds. Any local action seemed hopeless in face of the scope of the steel industry's crisis.

continued p.6-7



SMELT  
DOWN  
THE  
TORIES

### STOP THE CORRIE BILL

Day of Action, Tuesday 5th February  
Mass lobby of Parliament and rally,  
2pm, Central Hall, Westminster  
A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!

### TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW!

Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration. Sunday 27th January, 2pm, Sparkhill Park, Stratford Road, Birmingham. Organised by Provisional Sinn Fein. Coaches leave London from York Way (King's Cross) and from Kilburn Square at 10am  
Political status for Republican prisoners  
Support the H-Block prisoners

## Tories' new threat: you'll pay for doctors' visits and for hospital

REMEMBER the Tories' promise, before the General Election, that they would cut waste and bureaucracy, but certainly not the Health Service?

Already they have 'sacked' one Area Health Authority for refusing to make cuts, and forced the closure of hospital units right across the country.

Then last week, Treasury Secretary John Biffen came clean with the Tories' programme.

"I am asking myself questions on prescription charges. Are they high enough? Should there be charges for home visits by general practitioners? Should there be charges for accommodation in hospitals? These are matters being looked at."

He summed up the Tories' promise: "Three years of unparalleled austerity".

The sort of charges Biffen wants are among the meanest examples of Tory meanness. They do not actually save the state much money, and they multiply form-filling and bureaucracy (so much for the Tories' promises!) But they hit cruelly at the worst-off.

Tory millionaires blandly declaim on the need for economy, and then squeeze the last 50p out of a sick old person's purse.

This is the Tories' philosophy. They cannot abide any breach in their golden rule of "the ability to pay". They loathe the idea of a service provided on the basis

of human need — of, as they put it, "something for nothing".

A spokesperson for the public service workers' union NUPE told *Workers' Action*:

"The NHS was set up to provide a decent standard of health care for all, regardless of their ability to pay. These policies are geared to completely undermining that aim.

"The Tories, through their public spending cuts, are doing their best to destroy the Health Service. With this statement they have come out into the open".

It is up to the labour movement now to save the Health Service. And industrial action to stop the Tories is the only way we will do it.

### Fund Drive

Each month we need £200 from our fund drive to keep the paper at 12 pages.

This week we have received £5 from Manchester and £10 from Haringey. The total so far this month is £37. The month's fund closes with the next issue of the paper, no. 166, which will be dated February 9th, since next week the Workers' Action staff will be helping to produce the February Socialist Organiser. Send contributions to Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

# AFGHANISTAN: WHY WE OPPOSE RUSSIA'S INVASION BUT SAY Don't join the imperialist outcry

## Why the Russians invaded

THE RUSSIANS took over Afghanistan on December 27th last because of three main reasons.

• A reforming regime, based essentially on the armed forces, and led by the Khalq faction of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which could be loosely described as a 'Communist party', Moscow-style, was faced with the prospect of being overthrown by a Muslim, right-wing, popular revolt, which seemingly had

could move with impunity to expand its area of direct control for the first time since World War 2, and without prior imperialist agreement.

The rulers of the USSR knew that in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate the capitalist rulers of the USA were in no position to move to stop them or to punish them, short of being willing to resort to nuclear war. In addition, the fall of the Shah of Iran, for many years built up by the USA as the major military power in the region, had destabilised the whole area.

• In addition, Russia may have moved into Afghanistan as the first step in a move to expand its direct control as far as the Indian

formation, one able to give an account of itself and able to claim with plausibility to be playing a necessary and historically progressive social role in the economy over which it presides.

The bureaucracy has no essential and irreplaceable role in the economy — as the capitalists had when capitalism was a progressive stage in the development of society, before it became monopolistic, imperialist, and unqualifiedly reactionary. It did not create that economy — as the ruling class of capitalist society created the economy of capitalism. It rules, on the contrary, having usurped power and repressed the creators and the natural rulers of the post October Revolution ec-

In a whole number of East European countries after World War 2 — countries agreed by imperialism to be within the sphere of influence of the Russian bureaucracy — Russia's army presided over social transformations of a peculiar sort.

On the one hand the Russian ruling caste presided over mass mobilisations against the existing system in those countries. On the other, it strangled those movements at a certain point, installing a viciously repressive and totalitarian system modelled on the Russian system.

## Why we oppose the invasion

When the parasitic ruling caste in the USSR has felt itself able to expand, as after World War 2 and as now, with the weakening of US imperialism and the collapse of Iran as a military power, it has used revolutionary movements, and then strangled them. In Afghanistan Russia can present its role as revolutionary, as going to the aid of the government whose reforms were in fact progressive.

In fact, given that it has physical control of the country, Russia can — if it decides to — probably carry through the reforms on the land and in society which the PDP/armed forces regime was unable to enforce against the armed opposition of Muslim reaction.

Given physical control and the vast resources of the USSR, it can probably collect the support of a sizeable part of the Afghan population over a certain time.

It will also kill as many of them as necessary, with the sort of savagery which has led the Russian ruling caste in the past to deport whole nations within the USSR itself (the Crimean Tartars, deported to Siberia, are the best known case).

Whatever the complexities of development in the period ahead or the tempo of events, it is a certainty that side by side with transforming Afghan society, the rulers of the USSR will erect a tyrannical, bureaucratic regime over the Afghan masses, to oppress them and to suck their blood, exactly as the peoples of the USSR itself are the victims of repression and parasitism.

Whenever the power politics relationships with imperialism have allowed the Russian bureaucracy to 'export revolution', they have simultaneously exported the Stalinist political counter-revolution. Whenever revolutionaries have welcomed the troops of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy as liberators, they have lived to learn better — or some of them have: one recurrent feature of the Russian interventions is the slaughter of revolutionaries, as for example the cadres of the East European CPs were slaughtered between 1948 and 1952.

If we ask ourselves who are the rulers in Russia, what their reasons are for now taking over Afghanistan lock, stock and barrel — if we contemplate the total-

itarian regime that they will most likely create on top of the society even if they overthrow or help overthrow the existing ruling class — then it follows that we must totally oppose the Russian occupation.

## Why we denounce the imperialist warmongers

Look at who they are fighting, and who their enemies' allies are, and the Russian bureaucracy seems almost enlightened by comparison.

The programme of land reform, educational reform, and some easing of the shackles on women which the PDP/armed forces regime in Afghanistan tried to carry through was necessary and progressive.

Its opponents were and are the landlords, the priests who batten on ignorance and superstition, the usurers — all the rulers of a medieval society — and, unfortunately, the mass of the ordinary people who are their dupes... and all of them collectively men who believe women are scarcely better than cattle, and who act according to those beliefs.

Their overseas allies are General Zia of Pakistan, presiding over the vast oppression by landlords and capitalists of the Pakistani people and minorities in Pakistan like the Baluchis — the Islamic president Zia who cuts off the hands of thieves in public, according to the ideas of the 7th-century Koran.

Then there is the Sultan of Oman; the Stalinist bureaucrats of China, currently still allied to the Khmer Stalinists who did to their own people what Hitler did to the Jews and gypsies; and the rulers of the USA, whose current paralysis is the result of their defeat after trying to bomb and napalm the people of Indochina into submission with a greater use of military might than in the whole of World War 2, and who back right wing dictatorships throughout the world.

Completing the alliance, there is Margaret Thatcher.

Anyone prone to Russophobia should have a look at the line-up against the Russians in Afghanistan.

Among the members of this anti-Russian line-up are the direct and immediate enemies of the working class and of socialism in Britain now.

The job of revolutionaries is to explain to the labour movement what the issues are in Afghanistan — as we have attempted to do in *Workers' Action* — and to explain how and why the present situation arises.

Our serialised background article, 'Behind the Kabul Coup', will be continued in the next issue of *Workers' Action*.

While explaining, we must expose and denounce the cold-warriors of the west, who will now step up their efforts to make themselves ready for hot war by increased arms build-ups and by strengthening regimes like Zia's.

We must explain that the imperialist denunciation of the Russians is not a matter of denouncing a great power for throwing its weight about, but of alarm that what the imperialists consider to be their own great-power prerogatives in relation to Afghanistan have been flouted.

We deny that the USA and West European imperialism have any rights in relation to Afghanistan.

## Oppose the invasion but don't join the imperialist outcry

*Workers' Action* does not support the Russian annexation of Afghanistan. We disdain to join the imperialist outcry for Russian troops to withdraw, but we are for the withdrawal of Russian troops, for the reasons we have explained above.

Anyone who argues that because of the backwardness of Afghanistan and the issues between the PDP/armed forces government and the reactionaries in the civil war, Russia is playing a necessary and progressive role, should logically denounce the Russian bureaucracy for not playing such a role fully and completely enough, and advocate an invasion of Pakistan and maybe even India.

Such an argument is implicitly a demand for World War 3. It is to identify the revolution against imperialism and capitalism and pre-capitalist conditions with the military-bureaucratic action of the Russian bureaucracy — which introduces its own reactionary political system wherever it rules or conquers.

The USSR's foreign policy, though anchored in a fundamental accommodation to imperialism, also includes rivalry with it and jockeying for position. In the last four-and-a-half decades it has known adventurist phases as well as accommodationist ones: for example, the siting of rockets in Cuba, almost sparking war, which was followed by a panic capitulation to US demands for their withdrawal under threat of war, even though the government of Cuba did not want them withdrawn. In every phase, however, the Russian bureaucracy continues its reactionary political role.

To demand support for the Russian takeover because of the specific issues in the Afghan civil war is to allow those issues to obliterate a principled and basic revolutionary Marxist assessment of the ruling caste of the USSR and its foreign policy.

JOHN O'MAHONY



the backing of the vast mass of the population of Afghanistan, 99% of whom are Muslim.

Had the Khalq/armed forces regime been toppled, it would not have been replaced by the type of regime that existed before the army/PDP coup of April 1978 (the so-called Communist coup) — a regime which was already a client state of the USSR, and had been so since the mid-'50s.

The regime that replaced the PDP and armed forces would have been anti-Russian, militantly Muslim, and marked by having come to power in a vicious civil war in which Russian money, arms, and some personnel had been committed to the PDP/armed forces regime.

Militant Muslim anti-communist reactionaries are already at the head of the mass anti-Shah and anti-imperialist upsurge of the Iranian masses. There is a great and perhaps growing wave of militant (and by definition reactionary) Muslim feeling in the region. In such conditions, the entrenchment of an anti-Russian militant Muslim regime in the former client state of the USSR might have had a destabilising impact on 50 million Muslims in Soviet Central Asia.

• For Russia to accept defeat for its allies in Afghanistan would have weakened its sway over other similar allies in many parts of the world, as far apart as Ethiopia and Cuba.

• Fundamentally, however, Russia moved into Afghanistan because it felt it

## The nature of the Kremlin ruling caste

Whatever the precise mixture of the basic reasons and motives outlined above, it is certain that the concern of the Russian bureaucrats was not the 'defence of the Afghan revolution', as the Russians claimed.

Russia is ruled by one of the most reactionary ruling groups that exists anywhere on earth, the Stalinist bureaucratic caste which seized direct political power from the working class and under whose rule Russia has become a degenerated workers' state.

By this term, we mean that Russia today — and the cluster of satellite and client states of which it is the centre and to a very great extent the ruler — retain the basic social and economic foundations created by the 1917 working class revolution, but that on that basis the rule has been erected of a monstrously undemocratic and parasitic ruling caste. The fundamental determinant of what that caste does in politics is its fear of and animosity to the working class, and first of all the working class in the USSR and Eastern Europe. For — unlike the bourgeoisie in capitalist society — this bureaucracy cannot present itself as a legitimate social

economic system which exists in the USSR and which has in a variety of ways been transplanted to a number of other countries.

The bureaucracy fears the working class because its privileges are in stark, immediate, and unjustifiable conflict with the working class in 'its own' states. Precisely because it has no legitimacy, but on the contrary attempts to justify itself in terms of socialism, to which its real relationship is that of murderer to victim, and because of its consequent fear of the working class, it has less social leeway than the capitalist ruling class and thus, for example, fears any form of free speech and democracy with the same intensity that it fears the working class, which would immediately begin to assert itself within a democratic system.

No. The ruling caste of the USSR and of its satellites does not export the socialist revolution. On the contrary, it has for decades been one of the twin pillars of counter-revolution on a world scale, the other being American imperialism.

However, because the ruling caste in the USSR presides over a social system which is the result of a great revolution, which owes essential features to the results of that revolution, and which is a qualitatively different system from capitalism, it can relate to revolutionary currents, and especially petty bourgeois nationalist currents, in countries threatened by imperialism, in a positive way.

NO RETURN TO BACKSTREET ABORTIONS

ON February 8th the Corrie Bill, which will drastically restrict abortion rights, will come up for its last vote in the Commons.

A few pro-choice MPs will be pressing amendments and trying to stop the Bill's progress, but in view of the big majorities Corrie got in previous parliamentary votes the best they can hope for in Parliament is to delay the vote.

Outside Parliament, thousands of women and supporters of women's rights will be protesting on Tuesday 5th. The National Union of Students is calling on its members to strike that day, and the town hall workers' union Nalگو is urging members to go to Westminster. The South East Region of the TUC and the Campaign Against Corrie are organising a big rally in Central Hall.

The protesters will point out that:

★ Under present law, abortion is legal if continuing a pregnancy is a greater risk to a woman. Corrie's amendment would require that continuing the pregnancy would mean serious injury or a substantially greater risk. This could cut out at least two thirds of presently legal abortions.

★ No-one knows exactly what 'serious' and 'substantially' mean. The decision will be made in court prosecutions against women who have abortions and doctors who perform them. Women's rights will depend on the arbitrary interpretations of aged, upper-crust, reactionary, male judges. Endless suffering will be caused.

★ The Bill would ban any links between abortion clinics and referral

agencies — thus crippling the charities that are the main source of safe, sympathetic advice and provision for women whose NHS doctors are uncooperative. Women will be forced to the backstreets.

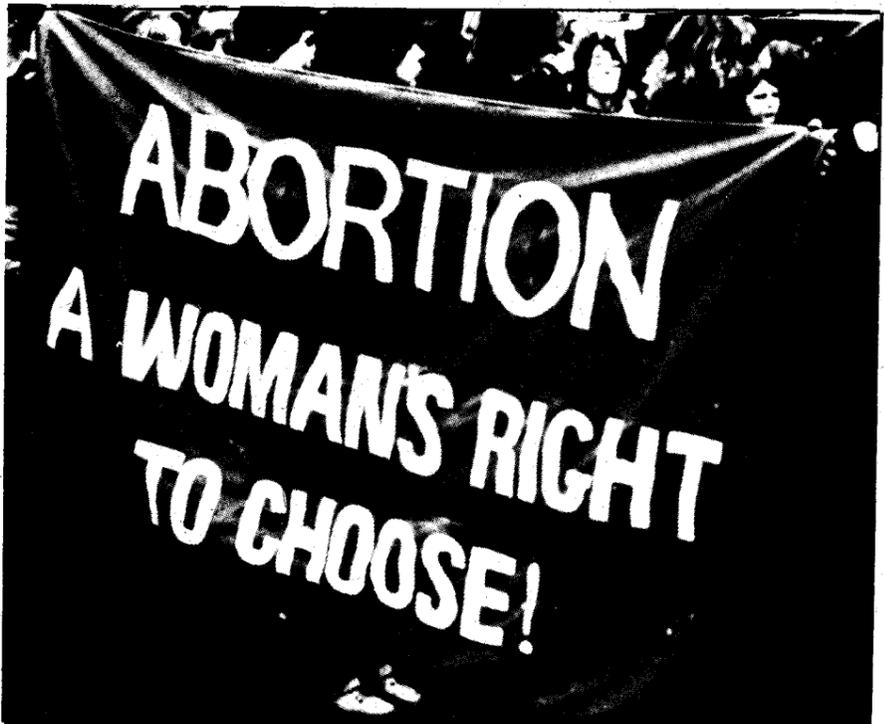
★ The Bill would reduce the upper time limit for legal abortions from the present 28 weeks to 20. Very few abortions are actually performed after 20 weeks: but doctors would interpret a legal 20-week limit as 16 to be sure of avoiding prosecution, and that could hit many women. The other restrictions in the Bill will cause many abortions to be left until later.

★ Before the 1967 Abortion Act about 30 women died every year as a result of illegal abortions. In 1977 only one died. In 1968, 3,110 women were treated in hospital for septic abortions; in 1977 there were only 610. The Corrie Bill would return abortion to the backstreets, and bring back the deaths, the injuries, and the anguish.

★ The only person who has the right to decide how to control a woman's fertility is the woman herself. A woman's right to choose cannot be sacrificed to the supposed rights of a scarcely-formed foetus, still less to the dignitaries and moralists who set themselves up as representatives of the foetus.

Despite the solid majority in Parliament for Corrie's Bill, the fight is by no means over. February 8th need not just be an unavailing protest.

Some MPs' attitudes can be changed by organised pressure, at least enough to force a



delay in the Bill. Previous restrictive Bills introduced by James White and William Benyon fell for lack of parliamentary time. That is less likely with this Bill, for the Tory government openly favours Corrie. But it is not impossible.

The campaign now can prepare the way for a vigorous defence of women and doctors penalised under the Corrie Bill if it becomes

law — a defence so vigorous that it can make it impossible for courts to apply the law consistently. In Spain, a recent trial of eleven women accused of having or performing abortions had to be shelved after mass demonstrations. Spain's ultra restrictive law is proving unenforceable.

That sort of vigorous fightback, which is possible if we keep the campaign moving and

growing, could also make sure that a new Labour Government, when re-elected, will be forced to repeal Corrie's restrictions and legislate free abortion on demand

Be there on Tuesday 5th. Tell parliament and the courts that they have no right to regulate women's personal lives according to their particular myths and moralities and bureaucratic rules.

## MASS LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER

TUESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 1.00PM ONWARDS

WOMEN WILL DIE IF THIS BILL IS PASSED

### How pressure can change MPs' votes

"I VOTED for the [Corrie] Bill in the first instance so that it would have an opportunity of being fully discussed in Committee. Practically every year since the '67 Act an Amending Bill has been introduced in the House of Commons, none of which has got anywhere. It is now hoped that this time there will be an opportunity for a full and frank discussion of the '67 Act."

"Nearly everyone agrees (whatever their personal views on abortion) that some aspects of the Act need to be looked at. My personal views on abortion are well known, but I do accept and recognise other people's rights to other views."

These words, from veteran anti-abortionist Michael O'Halloran, MP for Islington North, show the pressure he is feeling from the strong left wing in his constituency.

O'Halloran, Roman Catholic like many of his constituents, voted for the Corrie Bill at its second reading last year. But unlike many of the Catholic women in Islington who have encountered Islington NAC petitioning in the shopp-

ing centres and street markets (and some of whom have signed the petition, or expressed sympathy), he has not until now acknowledged "other people's rights to other views".

The CLP passed a resolution opposing the Corrie Bill, and in October last year held a public meeting addressed by Jo Richardson, MP.

Reselection worries will arrive sooner for O'Halloran than for most MPs, since the 3 Islington constituencies (all safe Labour seats) are to be amalgamated to two, and one of the MPs will have to go. The other two MPs, John Grant and George Cunningham, voted against the Corrie Bill at its second reading, and have publicly pledged their opposition to the Bill.

Pressure on O'Halloran from North Islington CLP, from Islington NAC, from the Community Health Council's Women's Health Working Party, and from other local organisations and individuals looks as if it could force O'Halloran, at last, to consider his constituents' views

PAT LONGMAN

### Why James White's CLP opposes Corrie

JAMES WHITE, MP for Pollock, Glasgow, is renowned for little — save his anti-abortion position. Yet even on this issue, he no longer has the backing of his own constituency Labour Party.

Pollock CLP now supports the position of the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, that abortion must be made available on request and that a woman must have the right to have an abortion without any medical or legal restrictions.

Cathy Finn spoke to WA on how she won Pollock CLP to the policy in an area where it is notoriously difficult to get an abortion. "I moved the resolution

supporting LARC's call against the Corrie Bill at the Pollockshields branch. At the subsequent CLP meeting, it was decided to leave the vote till the next meeting and invite James White to attend."

Moving the resolution, Cathy outlined the attacks which would be made on a woman's right to choose if the Corrie Bill was passed, and the need to oppose it. Other delegates spoke in support of the motion, and White, taking a generous 30 minutes to reply, spoke against.

"Surprisingly, he didn't come out with a load of horror stories — although he

did mention one which was based on an incident which happened at Stobhill, about 8 years ago, I think."

The real horror story was, however, White's complaint that foreign women were able to come to Britain to have abortions.

"He obviously accepts that women in Portugal and Spain should die through lack of facilities rather than come to Britain for an abortion."

The motion was passed by a substantial majority at the CLP and Cathy was delegated to the NAC conference organised by the Glasgow Trades Council and NAC, just before Christmas.

"White refrained from comment on the vote, apart from saying that he would take the views of the CLP into consideration, but I don't put much faith in that. I will be raising support for the February 2nd demonstration in Glasgow, and since the right wing seems to have backed down on abortion, I am hopeful that support will be forthcoming."

JOHN WILDE

March against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill, organised by the Scottish TUC, on February 2nd. Assemble 10.30am Blythswood Square, Glasgow.

### TOWN HALL UNION BACKS CORRIE PROTEST

AS A RESULT of pressure from members in Haringey (North London), the local government workers' union NALGO is calling on all its members to lobby Parliament against the Corrie Bill on February 5th.

At Haringey NALGO's AGM on 6th December 1979, members expressed overwhelming opposition to the Corrie Abortion (Amendment) Bill. The motion passed called on the union's NEC to officially endorse February 5th as a day of

action against the Corrie Bill, and to call out trade union members to support the mass lobby of Parliament.

In response to this initiative by Haringey, the national emergency committee of NALGO met on January 8th and changed the former NEC decision of January 4th (which merely supported the lobby) to a policy of authorising all members to attend. The NEC has promised backing to any NALGO member who

may be victimised as a result of participating.

Similar motions for action have also come from Camden and Tower Hamlets.

NALGO women's officer Tess Woodcraft told WA: "NALGO had one of the largest contingents on the anti-Corrie demo. Now we have sent out another circular to all branches pointing out that the union is giving official support and will defend any member who may face disciplinary action out of it. We are

expecting a good turnout from NALGO members, especially from London.

"We have also heard of several coaches coming down from outside London."

Haringey branch has produced a leaflet, and members of the women's sub-committee will be taking this round the workplaces, urging attendance at the lobby.

If other branches do the same, we can hope for a mass rally.

MARY CORBISHLEY

## EVENTS

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

**FRIDAY 25TH JANUARY.** Showing of film of 20,000-strong Iranian women's demonstration, at the Women's Arts Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, Chester Gate, London NW1. 8pm. The film will also be shown at St Ann's Hall, Venn St, Clapham, London SW4, at 7pm on Saturday 2nd February.

**FRIDAY 25TH JANUARY** London Workers' Action public meeting: 'Support the steelworkers, stop the Tories!' Speaker: Pete Radcliff (BSC Stanton). 8pm, 'Metropolitan', Farringdon Rd/Clerkenwell Rd.

**SATURDAY 26TH JANUARY** Islington campaign against the Cuts march. 11am Whittington Park (Holloway Rd) to Islington Town Hall.

**SUNDAY 27TH JANUARY** Bloody Sunday commemoration demonstration. 2pm, Sparkhill Park, Stratford Rd, Birmingham. Organised by Provisional Sinn Fein

**WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY.** 'Women Fight Back against the Tory attacks'. Meeting organised by the women's

subcommittee of Lambeth Trades Union Council. Speakers include Terry Marsland, deputy gen. sec., Tobacco Workers' Union. 7.30pm, Lambeth Town Hall, Lower Hall.

**FRIDAY 1 FEBRUARY.** Picket the Home Office to demand the children of Anwar Ditta be allowed to enter Britain. 12 noon to 3pm, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, opposite St James's tube station.

**TUESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY** Campaign against Corrie mass lobby and rally. 2pm, Central Hall, Westminster.

**FRIDAY 8TH FEBRUARY** Women's assembly (women only) against third reading of Corrie bill. 2pm, Central Hall, Westminster.

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

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

## British democracy in Zimbabwe:

# Whites armed to the teeth, blacks disarmed

THE 'FREE and fair' elections promised for Zimbabwe by the London agreement are due to take place under a state of emergency enforced by the old racist state machine.

Last week the British Governor, Lord Soames, renewed the state of emergency for another six months.

The state of emergency, in force since UDI, gives the regime draconian powers, including martial law, detention without trial, universal censorship, and political restrictions. There are still estimated to be over 5,000 prisoners detained under the emergency powers.

All the British officials have had to say about is cynical double-talk. The emergency powers will, they say, enable them to 'deal flexibly' with the situation.

The powers are 'not uniformly oppressive', and are necessary in order to 'provide accommodation for refugees and transport for guerrillas to the assembly points'.

This last excuse is especially cynical, in the light of the fact that Rhodesian armed forces recently murdered seven guerrillas whom they were transporting to an assembly point.

The British government is openly defending the presence of South African troops in Zimbabwe, despite the fact that it directly violates the London and Lusaka

accords, despite protests from Tanzanian president Nyerere, the Organisation of African Unity, and the Commonwealth, and despite the threat by Kenya to withdraw its troops from the monitoring force unless the South Africans are ejected.

Obviously the South Africans have just refused to move, and the Tories are unwilling to face them down. South Africa is giving notice that if the election produces results unacceptable to them, or civil disorder develops, they may step in on a larger scale.

South African whites have had their confidence boosted by the enormous wealth which the exploding price of gold has dropped in their laps, and they, along with their British Government allies, clearly have no intention of losing the initiative in Zimbabwe.

Soames continues to allow the Rhodesian armed forces and Muzorewa's auxiliaries

to roam at will, in direct violation of the London agreement. Regular reports of terror and intimidation are coming in from the urban townships, and from the rural areas which the Patriotic Front forces have vacated.

Finally, Soames is blocking for as long as possible the arrival of the election monitors. He is refusing to allow ZANU election literature in from Mozambique, and he seems to be trying to make the return of Mugabe and his ZANU comrades conditional on the release of political detainees in Mozambique. The British authorities have ignored threats by Mugabe earlier this week that ZANU would withdraw from the agreement.

As one of the British officials pointedly said, "With their forces in the main surrounded by Rhodesian troops, ZANU has been left with no options".

BOB FINE

## Zimbabwe picket

Zimbabwe Emergency Coordinating Committee  
Picket of the Foreign Office, Whitehall, from 12.30, Saturday Feb. 23rd.  
Workers' Action urges all readers to turn out in support of the picket's demands:

- Solidarity with the liberation movements.
- South African troops out
- End British collusion. No rigged elections,
- and of the demand:
- British troops out of Zimbabwe.

**barricade**  
NO. 1 JAN 1980 10 P  
YOUTH FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

**BRITISH JUSTICE?**

ITS THEIRS NOT OURS

**SMASH IT!**

'Barricade', a new youth paper produced by LPYS members.

Copies 18p each including postage, from 'Barricade', PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.



**Labour movement**  
**Fightback for Women's Rights**  
**A WORKING CONFERENCE**

Discussing: abortion after Corrie, women and cuts, maternity rights & the Employment Bill, legal rights & the immigration rules, and women in the labour movement

Participating: JCWI, Rights of Women, Women's Aid Fed, NCCL, National Council for One Parent Families, CPAG, Gingerbread, NUS Nursery Campaign, National Maternity Grant Campaign, LARC, and others.

Conway Hall  
Red Lion Sq WC1  
**Sat. March 22**  
**11am - 5pm**

**No nuclear waste in London!**

**Demonstrate**  
**SAT JAN 26**  
**ASSEMBLE 1.00pm**  
**PRIMROSE HILL FIELDS PLAYGROUND (Chalk Farm Tube)**

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## SOUTHALL: LATEST FRAME-UP FAILS

ON THURSDAY 17th January, 9 months after the event, the police had to drop the charges against Clarence Baker.

Clarence Baker, a member of the reggae group Misty, was one of the people accused of hurling bricks at the police from the community centre at 6 Parkview Road. He was charged with assault, carrying an offensive weapon, and breach of the peace under the Race Relations Act. All that after he had been so badly beaten by the police that he spent 10 days in intensive care with a blood clot on his brain — a blood clot that is still there and remains a permanent threat to his life.

The police were obliged to drop the charges against Clarence after a police witness had given a detailed description of what Clarence was supposed to have been wearing on April 23rd last year,



a description which bore absolutely no relation to what he was actually wearing in a photograph of him taken on the very same day. Four others from People's Unite, similarly charged with serious offences, had their charges dropped by the police too, at

a previous trial. The campaign to defend Southall goes on. On Saturday 19th there was a national day of action, with leafletting and street meetings held all over the country, explaining the latest situation. Fourteen people have so far been jailed,

though most have now served their sentences or won appeals and been fined instead. Two are still in Brixton and Wormwood Scrubs.

On Sunday 20th, there was a demonstration from Epsom to Pentonville jail, where some of the prisoners had been held, of around 800 people, followed by a picket of the jail. This was supported by the local ANL groups, Labour Party members, and trade unionists, including the Kings Cross branch of ASLEF, and Rail against the Nazis.

Just because most of the trials are over, and there are only a few more to be heard, that does not mean that the campaign to defend Southall is over. Unless we fight to win an inquiry into the death of Blair Peach, the disbanding of the SPG, and labour movement support for black self-defence, Southall could happen again.

JO THWAITES

## Yes, it's time for a general strike...

• The South Yorkshire Trades Councils have called a general strike in their area against cuts on Feb. 18th. Sheffield NUPE and the AUEW district committee have pledged support. Support is also expected from other areas.

• The Wales TUC has called a one-day general strike against threats to jobs in steel and mining, on Jan. 28th. A mass demonstration will assemble at 11am at Museum Avenue, Cardiff.

• The Wales TUC says it will call an all-out general strike from March 10th unless the Tories back down on the steel industry cuts.



"A GENERAL strike cannot be very far off", said Sid Weighell, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, last Friday. He was quoted by the *Financial Times* as saying, "We are within spitting distance of it."

"It's a 1926 situation... If [the TUC] don't get anywhere [in talks with the Government over BSC's closure plans], they will have no alternative but to call for some action. How you can call out just those directly involved, I don't know."

ISTC assistant general secretary Roy Evans agreed with Weighell. ISTC strike coordinator Sandy Feather, and general secretary Bill Sirs, have also been quoted in the press as predicting a general strike unless the Tories back down.

On January 21st the *Financial Times* reported: "The TUC General Council on Wednesday will decide whether to issue an ultimatum for the withdrawal of these plans [for cuts in the steel industry]. TUC leaders are taking very seriously the possibility of a backlash from a wide range of trade unions that could develop into something approaching a general strike."

It is typical of right wing union leaders like Sirs and Weighell that they choose to talk about a general strike to the millionaire press rather than to the unions' rank and file. It is a scarecrow to persuade the Tories and the bosses, rather than a call to action for the workers.

As in 1926, the Government and the bosses are set on a general class offensive which compels the working class to organise general action in response, or to go under. As in 1926, the union leaders spend their time bleating about how much they fear confrontation, imploring the hard-faced Tories to reconsider, and making feeble threats, instead of facing up to the

situation and acting resolutely.

The central position of steel in British industry means that the huge cuts there threaten tens of thousands of jobs in mining, the railways, and other industries. The steelworkers,

and the pits will be shut, the working class communities will be devastated, and the "three years of unprecedented austerity" promised by the Tories will have taken their toll.

All those affected — steelworkers, miners, rail-

or Fisher — do not betray it like the TUC leaders betrayed it in 1926.

Betrayal can be prevented only if there is a rank and file leadership strong enough to keep the movement solid when the union top brass tries to sell out. Shop

Labour parties.

To take the attitude that a general strike is impossible unless we are all perfectly prepared for it is to wait forever. Only the will to fight now, to hit back as fast as the Tories are hitting us, can provide the necessary drive for effective preparations.

While arguing for direct action, however, socialists must popularise and organise round an overall political reply to the Tory and bosses' offensive.

■ Against the closures, we argue for the full nationalisation without compensation of the steel and car and components industries, and their reorganisation under workers' control. We call for the lifting of the burden of interest payments and payments to former shareholders, and the nationalisation without compensation of the banks and financial institutions.

■ We say: cut hours, not jobs. Work sharing without loss of pay and under workers' control, and a 35 hour week now.

■ Against wage cuts, we call for automatic pay increases in line with inflation, £1 rise for each 1% jump in a working class cost of living index.

■ We assert the right to picket, in opposition to the Tories' anti-union Bill. We uphold working class law and order against bosses' law and order. We say the workers should rule society, through directly elected workers' councils, overthrowing the military, police and bureaucratic apparatus of capitalist power.

In the struggles to come, a great deal will depend on winning substantial sections of the labour movement to support this class struggle programme. For Sirs' and Weighell's declarations are evidence both of the urgent need for action facing the labour movement — and of the movement's present leaders' complete unfitness to lead that action.



### ...but not like 1926

After the First World War, British capitalism was in a crisis as severe as today's. The employers launched a determined offensive. In 1921-2 they locked out the engineering workers, and succeeded in crushing the shop stewards' movement in that industry.

After a series of skirmishes, the capitalist class went for a confrontation with the miners — then by far the strongest organised section of the working class — in 1926. They demanded a wage cut and a longer working day, and the coalowners promised a lockout unless the miners accepted.

The miners refused. The TUC leaders called a general strike in solidarity. They had dithered, begged and pleaded all the way up to the strike call, instead of preparing the worker's organisations for class war. As soon as the strike got under way, the leaders were terrified. They called it off after nine days, while the strike was still growing, though they had won nothing.

The general strike, by its very nature, began to challenge not just one capitalist policy, but the capitalists' overall control in society. As the TUC leaders saw that, they hurried to put control back into the capitalists' hands.

stewards' committees, combine committees, trade union branches, and Trades Councils must discuss the perspective of a general strike, explain the issues to their memberships, and strengthen their links — including links with local

like the miners in 1926, also face a wage cut, though in these days of inflation it takes the form of a pay offer way below the rate of price rises.

Workers at BL face the same sort of Tory attack as the steelworkers.

It is no use waiting 4½ years and hoping that a new Labour government will be elected and bring some improvement. By then the steelworks, the factories

workers, BL workers — need to fight back now, and fight back together.

The logic of the situation is pointing towards a general strike. We should start organising for it, and demand the union leaders start organising for it. But one of the most important parts of rank and file organisation for a general strike is organisation to make sure that leaders like Weighell and Sirs — or even Evans

## Left MPs, London LP oppose witch hunt; but RIGHT WING STEPS UP RED-BAITING

ANOTHER BATCH of long articles 'exposing' Militant appeared last week in a continuation of the witch hunt carried out by the national press with the support of the Labour Right.

The Sunday Times devoted its centre page to 'Labour's Civil War', and more specifically to Militant's activities in Liverpool. Another nameless 'defector' explained how Militant had recruited a school-boy who, as a result, "is behind with his school work and divided from his family".

The Guardian devoted a second editorial to the situation inside the Labour Party, arguing that an ORC opinion poll showed Labour voters were worried by Labour's leftward move (in fact, 39% said they were, against 41% who didn't), and that the Party should therefore publish the Underhill report and 'let the outside world draw its own conclusions'.

The witch hunt has gone far enough for the Tories to intervene directly in support of the Labour Right. Norman St John Stevas made a speech calling for Callaghan to publish the Underhill report over the head of the National Executive Committee (NEC), and tried to extend the red-baiting to a general witch hunt against all Trotskyists on the grounds of 'national security'.

The New Statesman published a long article on Militant with a blurb on the cover: 'How Militant undermines the left'. Written in a snide tone, it appears to attack Militant for its sectarianism from a left-wing viewpoint; and it comes down against a witch hunt. But the article is written so as to provide ammunition for anyone else to use against Militant.

It argues that "it has been conclusively proved in the last week that there is a party within a party breaking Clause II" (of the party constitution), and chimes in with David Owen's claim that Militant is an "authoritarian tendency" (not like your friend the Shah, eh, Dr Owen?).

A number of leading left MPs have come out against the witch hunt over this last week.

Eric Heffer, chairman of the NEC's Organisation Sub-Committee, explained why the NEC did not publish Underhill's report in 1977. The NEC set up a commission of inquiry which had its report approved by the 1977 conference. It did not publish the documents Underhill had provided because their authenticity had not been proven. Heffer also argued that the fuss over Militant had been stirred up by the press to damage Labour's electoral chances.

Underhill replied to Heffer

by repeating his threat to publish the documents in the press. According to Militant, the Sun has already offered to print the documents if the NEC refuses to make them public.

A number of other left MPs, including Tony Benn, have also condemned the witch hunt. Michael Meacher MP pointed out that the witch hunt is an attempt to attack the left as a whole and the recent conference decisions to democratise the party.

Others, such as Ian Mikardo, also opposed the witch hunt, but with arguments skirting round the central reasons why the press and the right wing are out for Militant. In the Sunday Times Mikardo wrote that Militant can safely be ignored because it is not a threat. He described the witch hunt as a 'roaring joke' and 'calling up heavy artillery to swat a fly'. Richard Clements' response in Tribune was similar.

Not all of the left MPs have clearly denounced the witch hunt. Frank Field, in a letter to the Guardian, argued in favour of publishing the Underhill report on the grounds that it would show to Labour voters that the party is prepared to apply the same principles on secrecy to the party as it argues should be applied to a government. Field chose not to mention that the effect of

publishing the report would be to plunge the party back into the period where views out of line with those of the party leadership would put people in line for discipline or expulsion.

The Greater London Regional Council has passed a resolution proposed by Militant's Bob Labi, which condemns the 'coordinated attempt of the Tory press to begin a witch hunt against the left of the Labour Party and fully supports the decision of the Party's NEC Organisation sub-committee not to revive

the so-called 'Underhill report'. The GLRC is the first major party body to have publicly committed itself to oppose the witch hunt.

To put the Right back on the defensive, we need a campaign to commit labour movement bodies to oppose the witch hunt, to press the party inquiry not to take up the issue (it appears that the union APEX will submit evidence to the inquiry on Militant's finances), and to call instead for implementation of the last conference's decisions on democratising the party.

Militant's own response to the witch hunt has been somewhat complacent. They write, "This new attempt to stampede the Party into an anti-Marxist purge will be resoundingly defeated... The press

and media attacks will rebound, convincing even more workers of the rightness of Militant's Marxist policies".

Militant assume that the Right will be unable to push home the witch hunt because of the left majority on the NEC and the Inquiry. However the Right — who in Militant's view have already given up and decided to split off and set up a 'Centre Party' — still have a number of tricks up their sleeves.

We must make sure that their plans are defeated by actively mobilising the party rank and file against bans and proscriptions and for the democratisation of the party. Those who have already come out against the witch hunt must begin this fight now.

BRUCE ROBINSON

### YS Democracy campaign opposes witch hunt

SOLIDARITY with the Militant against the attempts to stir up a witch hunt in the Labour Party came from the Campaign for Young Socialists Democracy conference last Saturday 19th.

The conference called upon the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party to denounce the witchhunting activities of the right wing and their allies in the bosses' press, to affirm its support for the right of political tendencies to organise in the Labour Party, and not to extend the scope of the

Party Inquiry to include the activities of political tendencies. A full copy of the resolution passed has been sent to Labour Weekly, Tribune, New Statesman, New Society, The Morning Star, The Times, and Militant.

The CYSD, set up to fight (often against Militant) for greater democracy in the YS, agreed that all the left must unite to fight the witch hunt.

The CYSD also discussed the LPYS leadership's submission to the Party Inquiry, which says that a growth in

membership from 4,000 to 50,000 is possible if Transport House makes a massive injection of funds into the YS and agrees to raise the age limit to 30. The CYSD will press for the YS submission to be open to discussion, and voting, at YS national conference.

It was also agreed that CYSD should organise a working conference for all CYSD supporters and YS members on building the LPYS, to be held in April after the YS Conference.

NEIL COBBETT

# 2000 in Sheffield say: general strike!

A DEMONSTRATION of 2,200 organised by the ISTC and including ISTC, T&G, GMWU and AUEW members and the Firth Brown Shop Stewards' Committee marched through Sheffield last weekend. The demonstration called for 20% now, Thatcher out and a general strike to kick out the Tories.

At the rally which followed Arthur Scargill expressed

solidarity from the Yorkshire Miners and made a militant speech calling for BSC to take over some of the profitable private sector and not just already crippled industry. He supported the call for 20% now, which had been taken up by the marchers, and defended the rights of the strikers to carry out secondary picketing. He drew the comparison between the steel workers

now and the miners in 1972 and 1974. There was a united struggle then as there is with the steel workers now — the strike then was a political one as is the steel strike now. Bill Sirs then addressed the rally. He said that the Government had picked on the steel workers because of their peaceful record and the Tories had thought that they would be a push-over. Sirs maintained that he was a

moderate and that he would negotiate for a decent offer from BSC. At this point the rank and file in the hall were demanding the full 20% now. Sirs replied that he would settle for something decent that would suit everybody and chose to ignore the stormy response from the floor. ISTC co-ordinator Keith Jones criticised the national leadership, saying that it

was the Yorkshire strike division that had led the way from the beginning and that it was only through their example that the leadership was coming around to their way of thinking and realising the political nature of the strike. He added that the members would not settle for anything less than 20%.

RAM PAUL

## Sheffield: Pickets go further afield

WITH THE news that the private steel sector will be called out to support the BSC strikers, picketing at private steelworks in Sheffield has been on a lower level than last week. Picketing of ports and stockholders has been stepped up, and coachloads have gone as far as Dover and Folkestone. Other targets have been stockholders in the Midlands and the smaller ports on the East Coast, Kings Lynn and Boston. The strike call for the private sector has been greeted coolly by many private sector workers. There are even rumblings that some will not come out in support of BSC. But the

general feeling is that most will respond, though perhaps reluctantly. At Johnson Firth Brown, the largest private sector works in Sheffield, the shop stewards' committee has called on the workers to back any calls by the ISTC for support. As Stan Platts, the works convenor and chairman of the ISTC private sector committee, said on Monday: "Although a majority in the private sector locally are against a strike, this is by no means unanimous". The Sheffield and Rotherham strike committee continues to push the ISTC leadership nationally to pursue the strike in a more determined

fashion. Already at least one ISTC member from Rotherham, Roy Hoult, has been ordered to appear before an ISTC disciplinary committee for ignoring a dispensation note and preventing a load of reinforcing rods being moved. On Saturday 19th, an ominous note was added when rumours came out from Dunford Hadfields that Lonrho (which owns Hadfields) may make a takeover bid for the profitable parts of BSC. At the moment it is not known whether the rumours are true, but steel unions should be on their guard against any Tory attempts to hive off parts of BSC. JOHN CUNNINGHAM



# How the steel can win on

THE steelworkers' argument is simple — indisputable even: whatever the profit or loss of the industry, the workers need to be paid a living wage; you can't feed your family on balance sheets. The BSC's argument, which is also the Tories' argument, is simple too — watertight, you might say: if there's no profit there can be no pay rise; any rise the workers get will have to be paid for by the 'economies' the workers themselves bring about. Each argument has its own logic — the logic of working class needs and the logic of

capitalist profitability. The fight of the steelworkers, whatever Bill Sirs or Hector Smith says and whether the steelworkers like it or not, is a fight against the logic of capitalist needs. Of course there has been mismanagement by the BSC board. But that is not the chief factor in the industry's downturn. The central problem is capitalism itself. That is why the problems that British steelworkers are facing now (and have been facing for some years) are exactly the same as those being faced by steelworkers in France, in Germany, in the USA

and — yes — even in Japan, where the steel industry's productivity is the highest in the world. In 1974 the world production of crude steel had passed the 700 million tonnes mark. The capitalists were cock-a-hoop. In Britain there were plans for upping output to 32 million tonnes. But by 1977, world steel production had fallen back to 670 million tonnes and there were no signs of an end to the recession this drop was a part of. Intensified competition led to forced-pace modernisation, and forced-pace modernisation meant huge expenditures and an inc-

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THREE pickets were arrested at Cashmore Stockholders in Risca, outside Newport, and charged with obstruction, last Tuesday, 15th.

The police had attacked one of the pickets, and more steelworkers were called in from the Whitehead works and from Llanwern. The police numbers then swelled to 50, but they were vastly outnumbered by the picket of 270 steelworkers.

After the arrests, 250 of the strikers marched on the local police station where the three pickets were being held and demanded their release.

There is now a picket on GKN steel stocks in Cardiff, and it has stopped lorries leaving the place. Five of the drivers have gone on the sick rather than obey bosses' orders to go through the picket lines.

The ISTC locally has organised a march in Newport, starting at the Cattlemarket at 10.30am on Friday 25th January.

# Steel strike can beat the Tories

continued from p.1

Now the fury and speed of the Tory onslaught has united steelworkers in national action. That united national action has the power and scope to impose a workers' answer to the steel crisis. Steelworkers should have a decent wage — the 20% rise now, and a clause guaranteeing automatic pay increases in line with the cost of living. The whole steel industry should be nationalised, not just the unprofitable sectors, and it should be reorganised under workers' control. The drain of interest payments should be stopped. Hours should be cut, not jobs: the work should be shared under

workers' control no loss of pay, be made with in other countries. The key to the demands to win the fight well as the fight democratic control over the strike, with ion among all of the demands. The strength so far has co rank and file ing matters in hands — the first went to the other firms, the who went to and to Dover ports. It was thro



# Steel strike pay and jobs

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markets. The US negotiated a similar agreement (and unilaterally introduced limits where no agreement could be patched together). There were even schemes — doomed ones — to devise a global long-term steel plan. But the slide didn't stop. Capitalism does not work by agreements but by fiercer and fiercer economic war — sometimes taking national form, but always directed against the working class. The EEC countries saw 70,000 sackings in the year 1976-7. The USA saw the same figure. In West Germany, the main weapon against the steel workers was

not sackings but short-time working. In 1978 it was the same. Nor was Japan spared: there 16 out of the 59 biggest furnaces have been shut down and there is to be a 15% reduction in the capacity of the smaller producers which will mean further axing of the workforce. The only answer is to reply to capitalism's economic war against the working class with labour's economic and political war against capitalism. Thus the answer is not to work out a way of making BSC profitable, but to work out a way of defending workers' jobs and living

standards. So far, the biggest fights in the steel industry have been put up by the French steelworkers. They have occupied works, they have marched on Paris, they have set up their own radio station to broadcast their case and they have fought the attempts by the police to break them by force. British steelworkers must win their struggle for wages. But they must win it without selling jobs, and without giving up their rights and practices. There's no point making BSC work if you can't work in it.

ANDREW HORNUNG

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from the rank and file that Bill Sirs and the ISTC leadership were forced to call out the private sector workers from the 27th. It is the pickets' militancy that has won the support of miners, dockers, drivers and railworkers at rank and file level. And, in turn, the support of other workers is vital in giving the steelworkers the confidence to win not only on pay but also on jobs. It is vital in strengthening their conviction that the workings of the capitalist market economy and the bosses' drive for profit are not all-powerful — that a rival power exists, the power of the working class in struggle, with a rival idea of how to run society.



Sirs haggles and dithers, but this strike can win

**'As long as it takes to win'**

**FLYING PICKETS** from South Yorkshire have been sent to Birmingham and Dover to stop the movement of steel. In Birmingham the 5/35 Branch of the T&GWU [which represents drivers in the area] has passed a resolution supporting the steelworkers and has collected £116 for the strike fund. The Labour Party offices in Birmingham have been handed over to the ISTC for the running of the strike and Selly Oak Labour Party are organising a public meeting in support of the steel strikers.

Two of the pickets who have come from Yorkshire to Birmingham spoke to Workers' Action:

□ How do you feel about the strike so far?  
■ Well, it's obviously not just a strike against BSC, but against the Government as well. It's becoming a very political strike. Thatcher and Joseph seem determined to beat us as part of their whole attack against all unions.

We see the strike lasting as long as it takes to win. If Bill Sirs and the leadership had called out private steel from the beginning, as they should have done, then the strike would have been won by now.

□ How is the strike being organised in your area?

■ We have a strike committee of shop stewards. They are running the strike alongside the union officials and we are well enough organised to get about 100 flying pickets down to Birmingham and send pickets to Dover and the areas round the main stockholders in Yorkshire.

□ What is the importance of Birmingham?

■ Basically we want to stop the movement of all steel in the West Midlands. The steel stockholders are loaded up to the roofs with steel, having been given plenty of notice of the strike by the ISTC leadership. We've been picketing stockholders and we've shut down Herringhaws Steels in Saltley. We had a mass picket of Bore Steel in Wednesbury last week and we stopped most of the lorries going in... We're not picketing British Leyland or any of the other users because the divisional officers have called it off, though officials are talking to senior BL stewards.

□ What sort of response are you getting on the picket lines?

■ At present, not a very good one, but we hope for improvements. The T&G seem to be giving us more support than before and we are hopeful of persuading more drivers to turn around. In Dover, the pickets have had support from the Kent NUM, who are putting them up.

## 600 PICKETS SWAMP BSC PLANT THAT WON'T STRIKE

IN BLIZZARD conditions, 600 pickets swamped the Stanton (Derbyshire) works of BSC last Monday, 21st January. Coming in coach loads from Port Talbot, Llanwern, Consett, Shotton, and Sheffield they blocked the 16 gates at Stanton.

The immediate aim was to block the movement of iron and concrete pipes out of the works. Two weeks of constant picketing had not reversed the local T&G official's instructions to its drivers to cross the NUB picket lines.

The TGWU, like the GMWU (the main production workers' union at Stanton), has rationalised its scabbing policy on the grounds that Stanton pay is negotiated separately from the general steel agreement — though in practice the rates are always very similar.

Appeals to Moss Evans to override the local official, Ray Thorpe, have merely led to Moss Evans backing the scabbing of the T&G at Stanton. So the flying pickets took matters into their own hands and not one pipe got through their lines.

G&M production workers, despite the laying-off of half their membership, remain under the same instructions from their officials to cross the picket-lines and work.

In pursuit of this policy every trade union principle was broken by Stanton G&M in the three weeks prior to the mass picket. "Emergency work procedures" were accepted — in other words; doing the striking NUB workers' jobs of bringing up iron to the spun plants and melting it down; loading up scab lorries, which had ridden through the NUB's pickets; and in the end accepting partial lay-offs of 950 G&M workers.

The acceptance of lay-offs was bought by the bosses promise that, if the "emergency works procedures" continued then unemployment benefit would be assured for those not required for strike-breaking.

Only mass pickets, bring the Stanton workers out on strike, can now stop the strike-breaking, and salvage the integrity of Stanton G&M workers as a credible union.

Although a considerable number of G&MWU production workers squeezed their way past the picket lines, on the first day of mass picketing, future mass pickets are planned and will continue until the strike-breaking at Stanton stops.

PETE RADCLIFF (G&MWU, Stanton)

- Black all steel
- Don't cross steelworkers' picket lines
- Support the pickets. Help defend them against police attacks.
- Take collections.

## Clydeside: The mood hardens

"THE TORY government picked on us because they thought we were a soft touch. The government's attitude has hardened the men. They are now more determined than ever", Andy McGowan, the ISTC branch secretary at Clydebridge, told WA.

He blames the right wing union leadership for the ISTC's past record, and believes that the rank and file are no longer prepared to stand by while jobs go with no real strategy for a fightback from their leadership. "They have seen themselves slide down from 3rd to 18th position in the pay stakes".

He feels that the rank and file have gained a real awareness of their own strength. "After this I think the men would strike at the drop of a hat".

The Clyde Area Joint Committee of the ISTC, made up of local branch officials, is organising and coordinating the strike action from Motherwell. Pickets at Rutherglen reported that the stockholder managers have been up to some strange tricks.

Managers are using private cars to carry steel out past the pickets, and it is being picked up by vans at other

points. As one car drove out from GKN (Rutherglen) its boot opened and some of a load of steel (plates 2ft by 1ft) spilled out as the driver sped off, not daring to stop until he was safely out of reach of the angry but amused pickets.

The strike committee has been in touch with the TGWU trade group secretary, Mr Talbot. He said he'll make an inquiry, and is not at all happy at the thought that some of the van drivers could be T&G members.

A watchful eye is also being kept on the Hoovers factory in Cambuslang. The factory does not use much steel, but last week they tried to move in steel from Hamilton, so the pickets are on the alert for any future attempts.

Support for the strike has now come from the craftsmen, and TASS also came out on strike last week. The effects of the strike are being felt at the Redpath steelworks in Carnbuslang, where men are being laid off.

Donations and messages of support to: ISTC Strike HQ, Glen Café, Ravenscraig, Motherwell.

IAN McLEISH

# STOP THE CUTS NOW!

## The Tory vice for Labour councils

LAMBETH Council is now faced with a series of Tory measures which place it, and any other council opposing the cuts, into a vice. Interim measures for 1980-81, as well as the Local Government Bill due to become law for the financial year 1981-2, aim to destroy the autonomy of local councils and impose drastic cuts:

★ The 1980-81 Rate Support Grant represents an overall cut of 2¼%, skewed to hit the inner city "big spenders" much more than the shires.

★ Cash limits imposed assume a maximum inflation rate of 13% — since wages and prices are bound to go above that, the councils have to find the extra money from somewhere.

★ And there will be "a reduction in entitlements made in November if there are local authorities who overspend substantially".

★ The Local Government Bill has 3 main prongs:

1 Direct Labour departments will have to make a "satisfactory" profit. They must compete with private firms for contracts above a certain size, and are not allowed to take on projects outside their council's area. Heseltine has the power to disband departments and sack building workers.

2 Central government will place ceilings on councils' capital spending.

3 Councils who overspend will have their funds from central government cut off, with penalty clauses clawing back whatever extra funds local councils raise by putting up the rates.

★ There is a strong possibility that the government will link housing subsidies to rent increases. [Lambeth council has been criticised by its auditors for not raising rents for three years, and for having a £2.4 million rent arrears].

## Lothian Labour says: no rate rise

OPPOSITION TO rate rises has been gaining ground in Lothian following the Labour controlled council's stand against cuts in services and staff.

On Sunday 20th January Lothian Regional Labour Party held an aggregate meeting to enable the party as a whole to decide policy on rate increases.

First the meeting backed the Labour group's 'no cuts' policy and endorsed their growth budget of £4.8 million extra spending. Secondly, the

our group majority's proposed 46-47% rate increase was rejected and a no cuts, no rate increase policy adopted. This was then confirmed by the Regional Labour Party meeting which followed the aggregate.

The task now is to fight for the Labour group to implement this policy and make the council a real focus of working class confrontation with the Government.

MIKE BROWN

## 'NO-CUTS' APPEAL

★ New signatories this week for the appeal for support to Labour councils which go for no cuts and no rate rises are Derek Robinson, the victimised convenor at BL's Longbridge plant, Ron Brown, MP for Leith, and Eleanor Mc-

Loughlin [Edinburgh district council].

The appeal is sponsored by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. Send new signatures to John Bloxam, c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

## SHEFFIELD

SHEFFIELD'S RATES will go up by 50% from April 1st, despite cuts which have already saved £9 million.

This rate rise policy has met virtually no opposition at all in the labour movement, and major unions, like the

Sheffield and Rotherham AUEW, and Sheffield NALGO, have given it their full support.

These rises could mean paying up to £370 in rates for a semi-detached house in Sheffield.

J.C.

## Edinburgh Labour takes to the streets

ON SATURDAY 19th January, Edinburgh North CLP organised a demonstration against the cuts through the streets of Pilton, one of Edinburgh's most run-down housing schemes.

Pilton is the worse for wear as a result of the policies of Edinburgh's Tory-controlled District Council. Hundreds of the houses are now derelict and one in four of the houses in West Pilton Circus are now boarded up.

Pilton has also been a focus for resistance to the Tory District Council, with local community action groups spearheading the Edinburgh Dampness Campaign.

Saturday's demonstration was small but energetic, winding for 1½ hours through streets and leafletting passers-by. Disappointingly there were few trade union banners, despite official support from the Trades Council. However, the demonstration, and the rally that followed, show the type of campaigning that can be done when local wards and parties take to the streets.

The rally was addressed by MP Ron Brown, Harry Selby, and Des Loughney, secretary of the Trades Council.

Alex Wood, secretary of Lothian Regional Labour Party, spoke on the need to oppose rate rises. "Labour councillors should be breaking the law. Our movement was

built by people breaking the law. The Poplar councillors were released from jail after three days because the local people were out on rent strike, but we won't get the rent strikes if we sell them down the river by taking the money out of their pockets through rate rises.



"It is the job of Labour councillors to break laws that are framed in the interests of the ruling class, and we must rely on trade unionists, like the steelworkers, to back them up".

JOHN McDONALD

by Cheung  
Siu Ming

## 'Fightback' opposes rate rise Lambeth debates

THE LABOUR Group of Lambeth Borough Council will have some hard decisions to take at its meeting on February 19th, when the Council's budget policy for 1980-81 will be drawn up.

The council's no cuts policy during this year, and its national reputation as the rebel Marxist-led council defying the Tory government, has placed it at the top of Tory Minister Michael Heseltine's chopping list.

Council leader Ted Knight has produced a paper which was discussed at a Labour Group meeting earlier this month, and has since been circulated in the four Lambeth CLPs. It begins:

"The economic facts of life under the Tory Government could mean a 56.3% domestic rate increase in April" (a 47.2p rate).

### Problems

This is the amount required "based on the current policies of the Labour Group and assuming:

\* all current programmes, both capital and revenue, will proceed.

\* no rent increase next year.

\* filling of staff vacancies to proceed as planned".

"...The main reasons for the large projected rate increase are:

\* inflation in pay, prices and interest charges.

\* Government cuts in the Rate Support Grant which completely fail to recognise the problems of inner city areas like Lambeth.

\* inescapable growth inherent in our existing programmes — particularly in our housing programmes."

"Unless cuts in services and jobs are to be considered, there are only two fundamental options open to us:

1. Maintain our current programme in full, resulting in the 56.3% domestic rate rise;

2. Maintain our current programme but exclude

all or part of any uncommitted growth."

Knight's paper then points out that the second option only has the limited effect of reducing the rate rise by 6.9% to 49.4% (which will still put Lambeth's rates way above the level which could lead to Heseltine withholding funds in November).

Knight rejects that option, and also argues against cuts in services and jobs. Cuts would break the council's manifesto commitment

uniting with other inner-city councils... over their right to raise the rates.

"While Lambeth may have been seen to be fighting something of a lone battle, the picture has now changed. The cutback in the Rate Support Grant, coupled with the Government's refusal to underwrite the full cost of pay awards, price increases and huge interest rates, faces every Labour borough with inevitable high rate increases.



Council leader Knight: 'fight to raise the rates'

ments, and provoke industrial action from council unions.

"If we fight, as I believe we should, we are forced into the position of asking the people of Lambeth for a substantial rate increase next year (1980-81). It is essential to win their support and to explain fully that the increase is a direct result of Tory economic policies."

The paper's strategy is that Lambeth can avoid isolation and defeat by

"There is no way that Labour councillors can make the cuts that will satisfy this Government, so Heseltine's threat of using the 'penalty clause' in the RSG settlement is no longer directed at Lambeth alone and will unite all inner city authorities."

"Throughout London and the major cities, Labour councils will be taking similar decisions and there is no doubt that they are looking to Lambeth for a lead."

The right wing of the Labour Group has yet to show its hand fully. So far, one other paper has argued for the 49.4% rate increase and for cutting uncommitted growth items. Other proposals from the right wing include increasing the level of staff vacancies from 10% to 20%; cutting consumer advice services (previously paid for by central government funds); and rent increases of about £1.50.

### Logic

The net result of these policies would be to lower the rate increase to around 40%.

In a sense, there is actually more inner logic in this position than in Knight's. The right will argue that if the chosen confrontation with central government is over the right to raise rates, then Lambeth must do everything to avoid being singled out by the Tories, in order to fight on the rates in a united front with other inner city boroughs.

The rent increases, although they would only lower the rate rise by a mere 2%, are considered necessary to avoid being deprived of the housing subsidy from central government, a subsidy without which the council's housing programme will grind to a halt.

The right wing also points out that unless Lambeth makes some cuts, its rate increase will still be 10-15% higher than other boroughs. For example, Islington will have a 41% rate rise and a 15% rent rise. This means that Lambeth can be singled out by the Tories.

But, the right wing argues, Lambeth can get away with a moderate rate rise. Even Tory Wandsworth Council, elected on a manifesto of

no rate rises, is having to put up its rates by about 40%, according to the *South London Press*.

Apparently, the Wandsworth Tories, despite swingeing cuts and a 33% rent increase, still cannot balance their books because they got less money than they hoped from central government (surprise, surprise) and because they underestimated not only the precepts payable to Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority, but also to the Tory GLC... and the police!

Heseltine's system is one where he can choose whether to penalise councils.

"I will use these transitional arrangements only if high spending authorities set out to challenge the government", he said in Parliament last Wednesday, 16th. When asked by Opposition spokesman Roy Hattersley to clarify how he would define councils challenging the government, Heseltine replied: "It will be quite clear, in view of the very restricted number of authorities affected, from the speeches they have made and the decisions they have made."

### Safe

So the right wing can argue that a 40% rate rise will be safe provided that Lambeth seems to be co-operating with the Tories.

Knight is correct in what he says against the right wing. But there is no way that Lambeth can have no cuts and no rent rise and expect to avoid being singled out by the Tory axe. And if Lambeth does put the rates up by 56.3% and is singled out in November, even a supplementary rate rise cannot delay much longer

## TEACHERS PLAN STRIKE AGAINST CUTS

TEACHERS IN the Nottingham City and South Nottingham associations of the NUT may be striking against the suspension of Mrs Eileen Crosbie, a local nursery teacher.

Mrs Crosbie was suspended on 11th January for refusing to work with inadequate staffing. The issue has implications for all teachers, beyond the question of individual victimisation.

After Nottinghamshire County Council's cuts of £1.8 million in education last year, 144 nursery nurses found themselves without jobs. Eileen Crosbie, at Robert Mellors primary school, Arnold, was left with only one nursery nurse instead of two to help look after 36 children. And there was the prospect of more children coming, bringing the numbers up to over 40.

The recommended ratio for one to five year-olds, according to the Department of Education and Science, is one adult to 13 children. Mrs Crosbie felt that it was only a matter of time before there were serious accidents with climbing frames or equipment, with the children in an old school

metalwork shop.

After gaining no satisfaction from the authorities, and after seeking union advice, she refused to supervise the children.

The reaction of the authority was immediately to suspend her 'until she resumed normal working', and to employ a probationary teacher in her place. The other NUT members in the school struck and remain on strike with her.

The only class still going at the school is Mrs Crosbie's, being run by the probationary

teacher. All the parents bar four are refusing to send their children to school until Eileen Crosbie is reinstated, but the authority have dug their heels in.

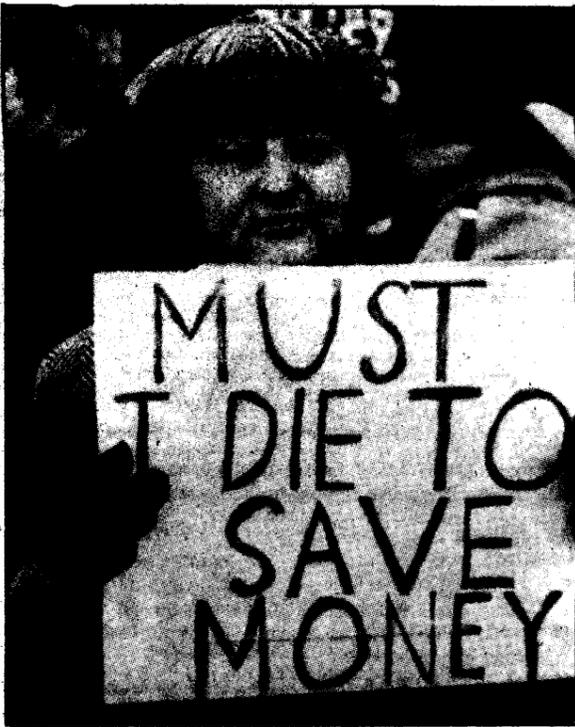
It is clear that if the NUT loses this battle then the way will be open for victimisation of any teacher who makes a stand over class size, health and safety, minimum temperatures, or any other basic conditions of work.

There will be a meeting of all members in the two main

associations in school time on the afternoon of Wednesday 23rd January. At the end of the week there will be a ballot of all members on strike action.

The demand must be for the reinstatement of Eileen Crosbie and for the original staffing ratios prior to the cuts. There must be no truck with the compromise of cutting back the numbers of children in the nursery classes: we are fighting for the common interests of parents, children, teachers, and nursery nurses.

IVAN WELS



## GOOD HOUSEKEEPING OR A FIGHTBACK NOW?

A MOTION demanding that the Labour-controlled city council in Leicester should refuse to implement cuts in public spending, and should refuse to raise rates or rents was defeated by a single vote at the January meeting of the Leicester South Labour Party General Management Committee.

At the GMC, as in the previous ward meetings, the discussion polarised around the alternatives of a fightback in the here and now, and the hope that a future Labour government may reverse the cuts.

Left-wingers pointed out that there could be no ducking of the issue. Either we confront the Tories' attacks on

working class living standards head on, or we capitulate and see Labour councils acting as executors of Tory government policy.

Cuts and rate/rent increases are not different options, but two sides of the same coin, since both lead to a decline in workers' living standards. We need to reject the logic of capitalism, which demands that workers suffer so that profits prosper, and build a mass campaign in the whole labour movement to defeat the Tories' offensive by direct action.

The other side of the debate attempted to transform a political struggle into an arithmetical problem. The question for them was how to

balance the books, not how to build a movement to beat back the Tories' attacks.

In fact, rate and rent rises, they argue, are a gain for the working class, since not to impose them would reduce the council's budget to a state of chaos, and that would mean hardship for working class families.

Militancy, they claimed, was not something to be rejected out of hand; it was simply that "The time is not yet ripe". In twelve months' time, though, working class unrest would be high enough to justify the adoption of militant policies and actions. But how much militancy will be left after twelve months of class collaboration between

Labour councils and the Tory government?

In the coming fights against the cuts, the councillors have shown clearly where they stand. It was they who were most vociferous in lecturing the GMC members about why a fight against the cuts was simply not on.

The task of socialists in Leicester South, and elsewhere, is to help build a fightback against the proposed cuts now. The fight will not just be a fight against the Tory government — it will also be a fight against Labour councils which elevate 'good housekeeping' above the interests of the working class.

STAN CROOKE

Left: kidney patient threatened with death by the cuts. Below: on Lambeth's big march in November



# the cuts fight

the final crunch — make cuts, go bankrupt, or go for an all-out fight.

By that time, how much working class support for the council against the Tories will there be, after three big rate rises in two years?

The left wing alternative to both Knight's position and the Right is a policy of no cuts, no rent increases and no rate increases.

## Crunch

So far, this position has been adopted by Lambeth NUT, Lambeth Trades Council, CPSA Brixton DHSS branch, and most recently by a policy-making meeting of the Lambeth Fightback Campaign attended by over 100 activists. The Fightback Campaign has adopted a delegate structure, and so far has 25 affiliations from local unions, tenants' associations, community groups, and political organisations, including Norwood and Streatham CLPs.

The immediate consequence if the Council adopted this policy would be that the Council's books for next year will not be balanced. This has never happened before, so it is not easy to predict exactly how the Tories and the banks will react.

The council officers will no doubt cover themselves by pointing out to the Council how unreasonable this proposal is, and that any creditor of the Council can, under the present law, bring in the Receiver to ensure that their debts are covered. The Council cannot even begin to function into the new financial year. The councillors may face surcharges or legal injunctions, and be replaced by government officials.

Whatever option the

Tories choose, the crunch will be very quick indeed in April.

This policy therefore means that a campaign must be built for industrial action and solidarity, both in and beyond Lambeth — demonstrations, non-cooperation with government officials, strikes and occupations of council property.

The idea of a rate rise in line with inflation would merely reinforce the idea that inflation is just some unstoppable monster that workers must just accept. If such rate rises are reasonable, then what about prices in shops, bus fares, rents and interest charges? If anything needs to be increased with inflation, surely it is wages, pensions and social security benefits.

The resignation tactic would mean an election period when the Labour Party relates to its working class base as atomised, passive voters; it means fighting on a terrain where the bourgeois press has hegemony.

Even if council workers were pushed into taking industrial action against the Tories, the Labour activists would be busy canvassing, and the struggle would be diffused.

Even if Labour were returned with a landslide majority, then the councillors would be faced with the same situation as before the election! The council *already has a mandate* to defend and improve the living standards of Lambeth workers and residents. What it does not have is a mandate to pass on the burden of the Tory attacks by cutting or putting up rents and rates.

The stand of no cuts and no rate rises is the only principled position and the one around which the maximum support can be built. Once the council caves in over the

first major test of political will, the right wing will gain the ascendancy not only on Lambeth Council, but in every Labour Council up and down the country, and cynicism and demoralisation will set in.

It is therefore of major importance that this position has been won in the Trades Council and in the Lambeth Fightback campaign. The first delegate meeting of Fightback, due soon, will decide whether to ratify the policy and plan the campaign.

The strongest opposition at the Fightback meeting to freezing rates came from the local Communist Party.

When the possibility was discussed of the Council raising rents to appease the District Auditor and avoid a surcharge, or to appease central government and get the housing subsidy, the entire meeting voted to oppose rent rises, except the CP who abstained.

## Bans

The Socialist Workers' Party's position, judging from contributions by their members from the CPSA Brixton DHSS branch, is broadly that of no cuts and no rent and rate rises. They correctly focus on the central importance of direct action by workplace and tenant groups.

However, when arguing for a delegate structure for the Fightback campaign, they opposed the affiliation of political organisations on the grounds that they are further removed from the direct struggle than workers', tenants' and community groups who are immediately affected by the cuts.

In practice this meant excluding Labour Party delegates from Fightback: the

attitude that it is not the job of trade unionists to worry about where the boss (in this case, Lambeth Council) finds the money to pay wages, is simply inadequate.

The key task now facing activists who support the no cuts, no rate rise policy is to fight for this in the GMCs and in the council workers' unions. Of central importance is obtaining pledges of industrial action against a Tory takeover. In fighting for this, a lot of work has to be done to persuade council workers to go beyond narrow, sectionalist attitudes and to take a united political stand against the Tory government.

The following could be organised now:

- tenants' associations to meet and plan a rent and rate strike against a Tory takeover,

- the council workers' shop stewards committee to lay plans for industrial action

- much more financial and technical support should be organised for *Fightback News* — pledges of money and help with circulation and articles should be asked for from every affiliated group. More groups should be persuaded to affiliate to Fightback.

- individual activists should argue for their workplace union groups to support the fightback,

- activists outside Lambeth should get speakers from Lambeth to address meetings,

- the three Labour MPs should be persuaded to lend their clear and full support.

## Links

The Trades Council has passed a motion from Lambeth NUT for a national support conference for Lambeth. This initiative must be pushed forward energetically, and through it strong links must be made with council workers in workplace groups, with the council shop stewards' committee, with the local Labour Parties, and with local tenants', community, and political groups. We must have the organisation to stand up to a Tory takeover.

SWP was exhibiting its blind spot on the Labour Party yet again. To fight reformism by bans and proscriptions is indeed a curious idea.

The real test for the SWP will be the policy adopted in Lambeth NALGO, where they are influential. The SWP has dismissed as irrelevant the struggle inside the Labour Parties last year which got Lambeth Council

to reverse its original intention to cut £3 million. They claim that Ted Knight was forced to back down mainly by a mass meeting of over 1,000 NALGO members.

Now it will take a hard political campaign to win NALGO (and the other council worker unions) to the no rate rise policy, since it will be their jobs on the line when the Tories move in. An

## 'BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS'

JANE FAIRFAX and MARIAN MOUND review the new edition of 'Beyond the Fragments', a book in which Hilary Wainwright, Lynne Segal and Sheila Rowbotham have put forward many of the arguments most influential in the socialist-feminist current of the women's movement

# Cutting down the goal to suit the movement

by Jane Fairfax

IN A sense, Sheila Rowbotham and the other *Fragments* authors have won their argument. Their book is an expression and summary of the prevalent attitudes of a swathe of women — and men — who are so bitterly disillusioned or repelled by the far left that suspicion and hostility to it almost outweighs their hostility to capitalism itself.

It is almost impossible to take up the *Fragments* arguments without confirming and hardening the divide it articulates. To argue, to reason, to point to confusions, self-contradiction, errors of fact, or reformist implications, is to confirm the accusation that the far left is out to dominate the women's movement, to displace its feelings and insights with 'correct' ideas dictated from on high, to impose democratic centralist discipline even on 'groups of women artists or groups of women setting up a creche', to infiltrate and change every cherished tradition of a movement that has fought for its autonomy.

During the current spate of witchhunting hysteria about far left moles 'infiltrating' the Labour Party, have women with these ideas felt all their suspicions and fears to be justified and strengthened? Or have they wondered whether there might not be something terribly wrong about the fact that their accusations against Leninism so closely coincide with the rantings in the *Sun* and the *Mail*? Can the women's movement and the rabidly sexist bourgeois press really have a common enemy in the revolutionary left?

Reading *Fragments*, especially Sheila's essay, I was struck by the many echoes to be found in it of cold war style red-baiting. She talks of 'the covert control of front organisations or the use of smear tactics to defeat any opposition from non-aligned socialists' — an accusation which is as slanderous (and unsubstantiated) as it is familiar from the likes of Woodrow Wyatt and Bernard Levin. Later she comes up with the hoary old caricature of the typical lefty, 'a lonely character without ties, bereft of domestic emotions, without the time or ability to express loving passion, who cannot pause to nurture, and for whom friendship is a diversion ... a professional elect who can muster these eccentric qualities. Membership of this elect will ... be predominantly male. (They) will tend to see the people around them as at worst bad, lazy etc, ... needing to be hauled to a higher level'. Comradeliness and support are only to be found in the women's movement, whereas for Leninists, it's everything for the party, no fun or jokes, total grim dedication. And so on.

This hostile caricature is never directed against any other groups of people who decide to concentrate their energies for a difficult goal, such as sport, music, chess playing, etc. In these fields, single-mindedness is always admired and understood to be necessary. That revolutionaries are singled out as targets for hatred and caricature is because their goal is decried.

There are many unnecessary counterpositions in *Fragments*, principally that between a movement and its ways and methods, and a party and its methods. But there is one important real divide, and that is about our goals.

Leninists stress the overriding need to change the system of society we live under. We are not at all opposed to reforms, nor to self-help — but we do point to their limits under capitalism, and to the qualitatively greater transformation and liberation that a revolution consciously made by the vast mass of ordinary people can achieve.

In any of the recent revolutionary situations, all of them tragically unfinished (such as Portugal, Nicaragua, France '68, etc) the degree of liberation, the changes in outlook, have been so swift, so widespread and so radical, the spontaneous actions of self-help and self-organisation so bold, as to make the achievements of the last ten years of the WLM (and they are considerable) look like chicken-feed. Even in the most sexually repressive, macho societies, respect for women has grown and flourished overnight.

Yet Sheila pours contempt on the left's seemingly unaccountable 'emphasis on moments of confrontation' and 'concentration above everything on the central task of seizing power', ie making these revolutionary situations secure and permanent.

She appears to do this on two counts. First, that to achieve the seizure of power entails a form of organisation — the Leninist party — which is very different from the women's movement. Second, that it excludes 'most people, including most women, from their (the Leninists') version of history'.

Both are illogical — which is perhaps why we see illogical thinking elevated to a principle in this book.

To take the second first. The most conspicuous thing about 'points of confrontation', and the reason they frighten the ruling class so much, is precisely that they involve the mass of the people in conscious activity and class solidarity. The idiocy and cretinism foisted on the working class by capitalism — racism, sexism, patriotism, every mean and petty self-interest, the servile worship of monarchy, and what Marx impatiently summed up as 'all the old crap' — falls away and is burned up in a matter of days. Even far short of revolutionary confrontation, such recent events in the history of our class as the closing of Salford gates in the 1972 miners' strike, the freeing of the 'Pentonville five' three months later, or the Grunwick strike, saw thousands of ordinary people taking selfless action to further class rather than personal goals.

How can Sheila talk of emphasis on such times as 'excluding most people'? She even cites the 1926 General Strike as

another of these 'points of confrontation' that Leninists are so dogmatically obsessed about. It makes one wonder whether the talk of 'sources of love' and caring about the real lives of ordinary people isn't rather cheap. The British working class didn't regard the general strike so lightly. They had far too much at stake.

Not only do such 'points of confrontation' involve millions in probably the most momentous events of their individual lives. Victory or defeat at such times has enormous and lasting effects on the quality of those individual lives for years and decades to come.

As for our inexplicably continuing interest in 1917, Sheila thinks it's 'a nostalgic and romantic yearning for pristine clarity. How often do we need to say we are not in Russia in the early twentieth century before it becomes a felt reality? The Tsar is dead!'. This is a profoundly nationalist statement, unable to see beyond the shores of liberal Britain to places where the Tsar is alive and well, and where leftists (and feminists) need to be very hard and disciplined or they would endanger their own and others' lives. It could be so here in the future. It certainly is so in northern Ireland.

So little can Sheila understand the need to examine and learn from 'points of confrontation' that she even constructs psychological motives for Trotskyists' analyses of victories or betrayals: it's all because of a need for a 'historical placing of self'.

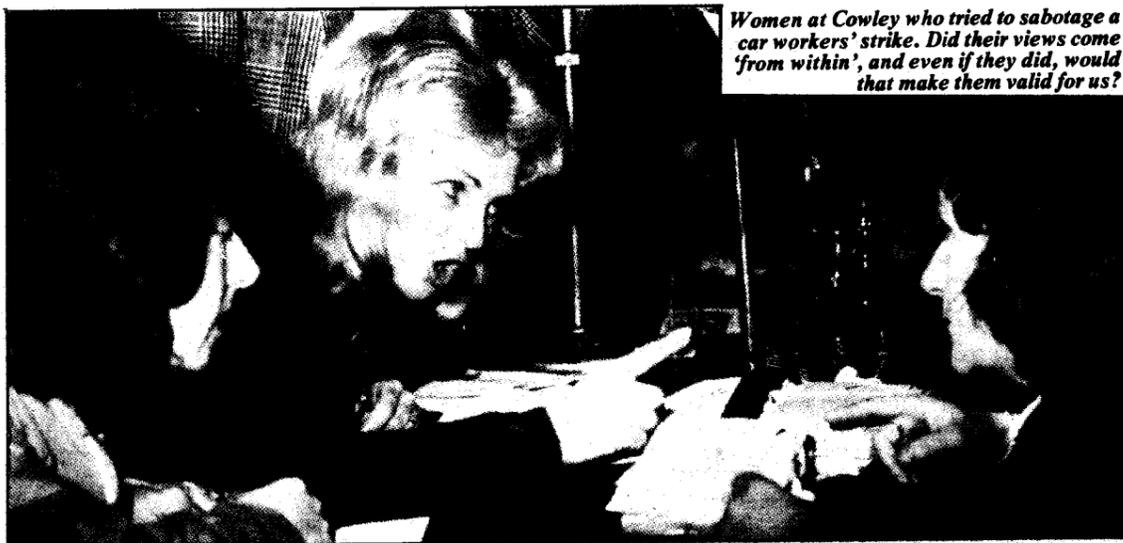
Despite the constant emphasis on the importance of experience, Sheila ridicules Leninists' attempt to learn from social experiences like the General Strike or the Chile debacle in our determination not to repeat mistakes that lead to crushing defeat for millions. Even this concern with preserving a collective memory is depicted as something sinister if not comical — a 'history teaches us' approach, as

that for example groups of women artists or groups of women setting up a creche or on the sub-committee of a trades council can decide for themselves what structure it most useful — as if Leninists want to impose democratic centralism right down to the nursery; and as if the criteria for running a nursery are comparable with those for making a socialist revolution!

Methods are not to be related to goals. Indeed, early on she attacks the 'assumption that the end justifies the means we use in organising'.

We would argue, rather, that goals *dictate* one's means. Above all, the goal of victorious socialist revolution dictates honest, objective thinking, clarity of ideas, and unrelenting combat against misleading ideas and all the befuddlement that capitalism and its agents in the labour movement use to keep the working class servile and confused. If there are different assessments of what these ideas are, or how to organise for them in any given situation, they should be resolved by force of argument, not by organisational measures or manipulation. This holds true within parties as well as between party and class.

Such concerns bring a stream of abuse from Sheila about Leninists and their 'correct ideas'. One wonders if there is any idea she thinks is correct (such as the liberation of women, or anti-racism, or the ideas in her own essay) as she doggedly defends subjective thinking: 'our views are valid because they come from within us and not because we hold a received correctness'. The trouble is that what seems to come from within has often been received too, as most people's views have been formed by years of conditioning, education and mis-education under capitalism. Are the views of a racist valid if they seem to come from within? Or are only certain views valid, and if so, who is to decide and



Women at Cowley who tried to sabotage a car workers' strike. Did their views come 'from within', and even if they did, would that make them valid for us?

if the desire to master past experience and learn from it is an act of dominance, yet another example of rape by a male dominated left: 'they claim history'.

The other objection to the Leninist party is just as illogical. Sheila chooses not to present the arguments for the Leninist party (briefly, that it is crucial to victory or defeat at such points of confrontation, and often at other times too) and attempt to refute them. She seems instead to accept them, and therefore to reject the entire goal of revolutionary socialism because it necessitates a revolutionary party.

In an exaggerated version of 'the movement is everything, the goal nothing', she enters the shadowy world of 'pre-figurative socialism'. She seems to know there's something very wrong with it: 'I am not suggesting we can evolve to socialism through self help', she protests, and elsewhere worries that 'feminist politics can become preoccupied with living a liberated life rather than becoming a movement for the liberation of women'. And yet again and again it is her answer to socialist revolution.

Constantly, the comforting cosiness, the looseness and the fluidity of a movement is contrasted and counterposed to the homogeneity and combativeness of a party, without considering that movements and parties may serve very different purposes. As against democratic centralism, she writes: 'As women encounter feminism they can make their own kinds of organising depending on their needs. It is this flexibility which it is extremely important to maintain. It means

how?

'It is very important to be able to say 'I don't know' and 'nobody knows, we need to find out' without being dismissed as stupid'. This, she says, is what the 'closeness and protection of a small group and the feeling of sisterhood' is for, in contrast to 'most left language which is constantly distinguishing itself as correct'. (Though elsewhere she admits that sisterhood can have the opposite effect, becoming 'a coercive consensus which makes it emotionally difficult for individual women to say what they feel'.)

First, it should be said that 'I don't know' etc are very often heard in Leninist parties without provoking contempt. Sheila confuses a search for the right answer with a pompous pretence of having the right answer even if you haven't. Many of us would say that such a pretence is utterly destructive to Leninist functioning.

And then, she is quite right that a movement of self-organisation by oppressed people does need to enable people to open up and speak very freely, exploring their feelings and experiences and letting new ideas and insights come to the surface unhindered.

But we have to ask if this aspect of the women's movement should be *exclusive* of attempts to reach clear conclusions on some issues, the better to equip it for a fight against its enemies.

Having gained confidence from 'closeness and sisterhood', women have also to be able to go out and argue their

## TWO REVIEWS

case coherently among people who won't be very convinced by 'I don't know'. Without a certain grounding in well tried ideas and arguments, there is a danger of simply stomping away in frustration, ever more convinced of the intransigence and hostility of the rest of the world. Nor is ignorance something to glory in — there lies the path of prejudice and bigotry.

Women need a movement, not a cocoon. There is nothing new in the idea of women who can only deal in feelings and insights, who are sensitive rather than clever, who know all about relationships but can't cope with political argument. That Sheila Rowbotham can expound all this old male chauvinism as an example of the new thinking of the women's movement is a mark of that movement's one-dimensionality. Again, the assertion that a party made up of trained and experienced cadres 'excludes most women' looks like an attempt to fit women back into the old sugar and spice stereotype of the soft, weak creature, out of place in the rough world of politics. Many women will find it quite insulting.

The effect of all this is to confirm and defend the women's movement, as it is, as being sufficient. The paranoid fear of any sort of fighting structure as 'male' places extreme limitations on the movement. Sheila is in fact quite conscious of these limitations, as is Lynne Segal in her essay. But both are predisposed to forgive: my movement right or wrong. The chief concern is to articulate the fears of and hostility to any more combative structures, rather than to explore positive ways to improvement or change.

This all leaves the women's movement as a very good vehicle for its members to sort out and understand their oppression, but one that is ill equipped to fight that oppression or to take on what most of them agree is its primary source, the capitalist system. Moreover, far from allying itself with the left in its fight against capitalism — and for women's rights — the *Fragments* authors regard it as the movement's worst enemy.

If you claim to be a socialist but reject revolution, the only solution is to hope to reform capitalism bit by bit. Social democrats look to parliament and the trade unions. Sheila Rowbotham and Hilary Wainright look to 'pre-figurative socialism'.

Sheila takes the healthy, vigorous impatience of refusing to 'wait until after the revolution' or to shelve the question of women's liberation until capitalism has first been dealt with, and elevates it into a theory. Not a new theory, but again a very old one: thus we have a flirtation with utopian socialism, now denying any attachment and protesting innocence, now rushing to embrace it. And this is as near as she gets to outlining a programme for socialism and the liberation of women.

One of her historical models is of a period when the socialist movement ran such 'extra-curricular' activities as fellowship evenings, Esperanto classes and cycling clubs. But these were never counterposed to a socialist party, in the way that Sheila and much of the women's movement counterpose themselves as an alternative form of 'living socialism now'. It is at the point of theoretical counterposition such as this that life styles become life-style politics, which elevates life-style into being a form of socialism, and in doing so satisfies itself with a second-best 'socialism-within-capitalism', dressing it up as a superior alternative to revolutionary socialism.

Put like that, and given that it is patently no threat at all to capitalism and incapable of affecting all but a tiny minority of women, and probably the least oppressed at that, 'pre-figurative socialism' can have little appeal. However, it recommends itself above all because it suits and fits in with the women's movement as it is. The goal is thus cut down and tailored to methods which have already been chosen.

In a parting nasty crack at the left (and for all the humbug about being nice, the book is full of them) Sheila says: 'They fight dirty — with a quick sneer and the certainty of correct ideas'. However conciliatory one might like to be, one has every right to respond that Sheila's essay is a quick sneer based on prejudice, unreasoning hostility and boasted ignorance.

Instead of a serious analysis of the revolutionary left in Britain, there are pages and pages of imaginative depiction, some of them only a little less primitive than the popular press's bra-burning picture of the women's movement.

Some of it is fanciful in the extreme. Some will ring true (not least because it is already so current in the bourgeois media). If any of it is true, is it because of Leninism, or because of a failure to apply the standards of Leninism consistently or at all? If there has been a failure to apply these standards (which we are never even told about in *Fragments*) is this to be blamed on Leninism itself, or on something else?

None of these issues is tackled at all, let alone seriously or honestly. Trotskyism is equated with stalinism, or jumbled in with it by sleight of hand. Democratic centralism is never even explained as a model, it appears throughout in ignorant caricature — which makes it a splendid Aunt Sally, but tells readers nothing and gives those who don't know what it is no choice but to reject it out of hand. Finally in yet another take-up of cold war myths, the methods of organisation of a party fighting to overcome capitalism are equated with the organisation of life under socialism.

Instead of this rather primitive and uninformative outburst, we would all benefit from a proper discussion about the relationship of women's liberation to socialism, with a scrupulous and loyal comparison of methods and goals.

If there is no women's liberation without revolution, and no revolution without women's liberation, isn't it time a constructive alliance was made between liberationists and revolutionaries, each respecting the other's right to organise for themselves in the way they see fit, and having the right to criticise and to argue for ideas without meeting outraged denunciations?

## The working class as an afterthought

A NEW edition of *Beyond the Fragments* by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainright has just been published; which is to be welcomed in that it makes more accessible some of the arguments of the socialist feminists and therefore clearer the issues being debated.

Sheila Rowbotham, the first contributor, sets out to discuss how Leninist and Trotskyist approaches to organising are flawed, what is wrong with their assumptions about what it means to be a socialist, and what the women's movement can offer to the building of a strong and popular socialist movement. Sheila very noticeably avoids saying whether she thinks the strong and popular socialist movement can replace a Leninist party in fighting for socialism, or if it is just a good thing in itself to make life a lot better now.

She writes that she is 'focusing on the points of conflict which have developed between Trotskyist forms of Leninism and the women's movement'. But if you don't state what your perspective is, whether or not you think it is at all possible/important to build an organisation to lead a fight for state power and for socialism, then it is extremely confusing to discuss methods of organisation. Obviously the type of organisation depends on what it is designed for.

Sheila's piece is in fact an incredibly inverted mud slinging exercise, littered with caricatures of the left, and making very few real points because it is so abstract.

Sheila quotes approvingly E.P. Thompson's interview in *The Leveller*: 'Recovering the Libertarian Tradition', where he strongly criticises 'the unreconstructed Leninist and vanguardist strategies which once again situate a sectarian leadership proclaiming themselves to be the embodiment of the proper revolutionary consciousness of the working people, and not inquiring very closely into what the actual demands and needs of the people are'. Sheila agrees, believing the new forms of organising of the women's movement have much to contribute. She describes herself as a reluctant contributor to the process of sustained re-evaluation of the tradition of Lenin and of Trotsky in particular: reluctant because this realisation is still in its early days with confusion and doubt, muttering and mumbling on one side — and on the other, of the Trotskyist and neo-Trotskyist leaderships, doctrinal purity and a pother of rhetoric.

## United barrage

This is in fact extremely dishonest. Anyone who has ever been to a women's liberation conference and tried to put forward even remotely Leninist ideas on organising, such as elections or a steering committee, will know from the hostile reception that very many socialist feminists and feminists in general are very vocal and entrenched in their ideas. It is in no way a question of a united barrage of doctrinal abstract beliefs battering away at reasonable open-minded people.

It is important to expose this myth, because it has persisted in the women's movement for ten years now, and crops up again and again in *Fragments*: that all Trotskyists have dogmatic, closed minds, believing they alone hold the truth, while all feminists relate their ideas to the real world and are willing to learn. Sheila's remarks 'our views are valid because they come from within us and not because we hold a received correctness' and 'the women's movement has had a great reticence about blowing trumpets', etc. are not only dishonest, they are a very sly way of claiming to have ideas that should be listened to more, that should be granted more weight than other ideas. She is playing with words — in the abstract it does sound as if 'valid' ideas from personal experience should not be dismissed in favour of arrogant 'correct' ideas.

In reality, socialist feminists and other feminists do hold sets of beliefs — it is just that they are not so conscious of the origins and history of their ideas, whereas Trotskyists clearly and openly acknowledge where their traditions lie.

The point is that many Trotskyists appear completely united in their beliefs simply because they believe in organising collectively. This doesn't mean there aren't differences of opinion between them. Socialist feminists do not act in a concerted, collective manner but as individuals — which does not mean each of them has her own completely individual set of beliefs! Sheila's own ideas, for instance, appear to owe something to the early IS, the New Left of the '60s, to feminism and libertarianism as well as to Eurocommunism, all of which have a history.

One of the basic concepts for Trotskyists is that of the party. And clearly, if your goal is not to make a socialist revolution but to have an organisation or movement which will make life 'more socialist' now, you will want to see a very different organisation from that of the Trotskyists. If you want to concentrate on immediate relief from the hard, tough, cold world capitalism is, then you don't want to be in an organisation that is fighting for the proletarian seizure of power.

The women's movement, with consciousness raising groups and self-help groups such as women's health, Women's Aid, rape crisis centres, is not geared up to the seizure of power. The problem is that Sheila and the social-

ist feminists generally evade this question. They claim they want to see the creation of a new kind of socialism. They claim to be more concerned about stamping out inequality than the 'hierarchical' left is.

Lynne Segal comes up against the problem of this new socialism when she writes that some parts of the women's movement tend towards 'cultural feminism' or 'cultural libertarianism', which they believe show the possibilities of new and better ways to live. But, Lynne writes, 'exactly how they relate to the building of a combative feminist and socialist movement is something that remains ambiguous both historically and in the present.'

This 'cultural feminism' and 'cultural libertarianism' pervades the ideas of socialist feminists, including the authors of this book. They call it 'prefigurative politics' but the idea is exactly the same: they believe their political life now should contain elements of the socialist society they want to live in. (Lynne calls it 'total politics'.)

Again, Sheila Rowbotham writes: 'Violent demonstrations, mass pickets, torture and the consolidation of the power of the state to suppress radical resistance have stretched the resources of feminist organisational structures which were devised for quite different kinds of politics'. Sheila has admitted it herself, that 'prefigurative politics' are not best suited for bringing down capitalist society and for ending oppression and exploitation once and for all. Sheila then goes on to admit that theoretical leaps are needed to approach issues such as 'anti-fascism, Ireland, mass working class confrontations like Grunwick, legal repression or imperialism'. That is a more than formidable list to find your political framework unable to confront.

Like Sheila, Lynne and Hilary want to see socialism, but are reluctant to help to build a strong, centralised organisational fighting for it. All the talk about the exact form of political organisation necessary, the need to build a new popular socialist organisation, the nature of feminist consciousness being such that it is not merely an item to be included in a programme, is all pure evasion of the real issues.

## Social networks

One of the most damning criticisms of the women's movement must be of its elitist, cliquish nature. Sheila admits this 'our lack of structure can make it difficult for women outside particular social networks to join. It can lead to cliquishness and thus be undemocratic'. And Lynne says that it may be necessary to go outside of your women's group to involve working class women, who were 'outside of our friendship networks' and wouldn't know how to get involved.

Yet Sheila and Lynne are arguing for these shortcomings to be incorporated into their new perspective for building socialism. Hilary, similarly, wants the values which underlie the women's movement's ways of organising, to be integrated into a new socialist organisation. All three want in effect an organisation which, by their own admission, will exclude the majority of women!

Again and again, the authors mention the problem of going 'beyond the fragments', but never with any answer beyond hoping that the 'fragments' will merge together in a broad movement. The Leninist approach is caricatured as wanting to have a party *instead of* the fragments, or to *impose* a party's leadership on 'the fragments' — and therefore rejected.

Lynne writes about the evolution of her own ideas: from a strong belief in the need to 'organise around your own oppression' she is now forced to see that 'there cannot be local victories against the forms oppression is taking; for example cuts in the NHS are nationwide' and she believes that forms of organisation with national and international links and perspectives are necessary. She also believes it is more urgent than ever to ally with the traditional institutions of the labour movement, and that the tendency of libertarians and feminists in the past to by-pass trades councils and union branches was never really justified. Unfortunately, this is not followed through logically.

Hilary Wainright has a different aim: she wants to see the working class and other oppressed groups develop a level of consciousness, sense of purpose and degree of self confidence to remake society. She believes a socialist organisation should develop that consciousness together with a vision of an alternative society.

## Popular party

Hilary finds the basis for grouping together an alternative to social democracy in people who are 'organising directly for control over political and industrial decisions, and who are contesting the state in almost every sphere'. These groups organise around their specific oppressions and experiences, without the means to develop a general theory and programme for social change. Who are these people? 'Left wing trades councils, socialist resource centres, socialist women's groups, theatre groups, left bookshops, militant shop stewards' committees' carry out already the functions of a socialist party, Hilary argues, but without the coordination and long term perspectives of a party.

In an incredibly schematic and simplistic fashion, Hilary thinks a number of local struggles and activities can be brought together. She believes that unity at a local level is then sufficient to create a popular socialist party.

The immense theoretical problems to be solved are dismissed. Somehow, local alliances will 'coalesce and develop'. Although Hilary equates votes for Labour with 'the mass influence of socialist politics' in her introduction to the book, in her concluding essay she largely ignores the problem of the Labour Party in relation to the building of a new popular socialist party.

While Hilary and Lynne want to see the building of a new socialist party, their ideas do not contribute anything to the building of such a party.

**Marian Mound**

## What the LCDTU should do

OVER 800 trade union delegates, according to the latest reports from the organisers, will be attending the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference this Saturday, 26th.

The main purpose of the conference is to organise opposition to the Tories' Employment Bill, a Bill which would make most of the picketing in the present steel strike unlawful. The Liaison Committee, in which the Communist Party has a leading influence, played a big role against the Industrial Relations Bill in 1970 and 1971.

Last time the Tories were beaten by mass action. It must be the same this time.

The Liaison Committee must organise to demand TUC leaders break off their talks with the Tories on the Bill, withdraw their 'Guidelines'

on picketing issued last winter, and stop all collaboration with the Tories.

• It should begin a campaign for the 'Rank and File Code of Practice' on picketing adopted by over 1000 trade union delegates at the 'Defend Our Unions' conference last June.

• It should assert the right of workers' self defence against all police attacks on picketing.

• The Liaison Committee should be built into a real campaigning movement, with a democratic debate at the conference and with local groups set up.

**Saturday 26th January**  
Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference on the Tory anti-union bill.  
Friends House, Euston Rd, London, NW1. Credentials: c/o 137 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex.

## SPY IN CAB: A REARGUARD FIGHT NEEDED

LORRY DRIVERS in the TGWU have voted by a three-to-two majority against industrial action to prevent the introduction of tachographs in British lorries. It is said that the Humber and Northern Ireland regions were the only ones to vote for action in the ballot conducted before Christmas.

This means that only rearguard action is possible over the 'spy in the cab'.

We need to organise to stop the introduction of the tachograph being tied to any form of productivity scheme, and we must insist on a policy that tachograph records are solely a matter between the driver and the Department of Transport. The employers must not be allowed to use them for disciplinary or any other purposes.

We do need to fight for an increase in basic rates to compensate for the worsening of our working conditions: the tachograph implies (£25 has been suggested by Peterborough drivers as a possible figure). But in all the talk among drivers about negotiating some sort of bonus deal in return for accepting the tachograph, the big danger is that the bosses will use this as a lever to get a package deal which will allow them to use the tachograph to monitor all the drivers' work, cut out rest breaks, and even check on what revs the engine is being run at, on fuel economy, etc.

The tachograph manufacturers and trade papers such as Motor Transport reckon that this will lead to big savings for the bosses. But the increased strain on workers faced with these mechanical tyrants will only be measured in more accidents and ultimately in an even higher rate of heart disease among drivers.

It will take a big battle to win our demands, but what is at stake is the working conditions and to some extent the wages of lorry drivers for many years to come.

SIMON TEMPLE

# Workers' ACTION

## Will CPSA be a soft touch?

WHEN Nicholas Ridley prepared his report in 1978 on the options facing an incoming Tory government, he named the rail unions and the civil service unions as being the 'soft' targets after the steel workers.

The prediction about the steel workers has proven so far wildly inaccurate, and now the civil service unions are due to be put to the test.

The annual pay cycle for

the civil service unions (mainly CPSA and SCPS) has already started. A settlement is due for April 1st on the basis of the 'Pay Research Unit' (PRU) comparability system.

The first indications from the evidence released to the unions are that this year's PRU study should call for between 18 and 20% increase for the clerical grades represented by the CPSA, and between 22% and 25% for the higher

grades represented by SCPS.

Civil service workers reckon there is little likelihood of the Tories paying out such rises willingly. It would undermine their plans for public sector pay (apparently based on a norm of about 14%). Both the SCPS and the CPSA leaderships have committed themselves to preparations for industrial action, and have organised over 100 membership meetings to sound out opinion.

But there are weaknesses. The cuts campaign has crumbled with the unions' failure to beat back the mass suspensions in the Department of National Savings and in Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) offices, and a move to lift the overtime ban in Newcastle Central Office of the DHSS. The PRU pay targets are divisive, setting 25% for the better-paid, and 20% (of less!) for the lower-paid. And the civil service unions' bureaucracy is wary of a fight with the Tories.

The Tories also have the possibility of exploiting the popular misconception about inflation proofing of pensions to try to isolate civil servants fighting back.

But the biggest factor influencing civil service pay will be whether the steelworkers win or not. And the civil servants' unions nationally have done very little to ensure that a solid campaign of support has been built.

What civil service workers must do now is build support for the steelworkers and develop unofficial conferences at regional and area level to coordinate those activists willing to try to organise a fight on pay. Any such campaign will have to understand that the pay fight this time is as political as the last one. It is about confronting the government over its economic strategy.

RAY SAUNDERS



## Dates to organise for

• Saturday 2nd February  
Labour Party Young Socialists National rally against the Tories.  
Porden Road, near Brixton tube, South London, 12 noon.

• Monday 18th February  
One day general strike against the cuts, called by South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils.

• Saturday 22 March  
Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights conference.  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. 11am.  
Inquiries: c/o 41 Ellington St, N7.

• Saturday 9th February  
Rally and demo against the cuts, called by S.Yorks. Association of Trades Councils

• Sunday 9th March  
TUC national demo against the cuts and the anti-union Bill.

• Saturday 22nd March  
National conference against the cuts, called by Liverpool Trades Council and District Labour Party.  
St. George's Hall, Liverpool. 11am.  
Credentials: T. Harrison & A. Dodswell, 70 Victoria St, Liverpool 1, (delegates' fee 50p).

### Workers' Action public meeting

**SUPPORT THE STEELWORKERS! STOP THE TORIES!**

Speaker: Pete Radcliff (BSC Stanton).  
8pm, Friday 25 January, at the Metropolitan, Farringdon Rd/Clerkenwell Rd, London.

## WATER UNIONS DRAW UP STRIKE PLANS

THE prospect is looming larger of a water workers' strike in which the Government may use 15,000 troops as strikebreakers.

The water and sewage workers' unions point out that their pay is £10 a week below the gas and electricity industries. They are claiming £15 a week straight increase, £10 to catch up, a 35 hour week, and other improvements.

The employers' offer of about £10 on pay [and nothing on hours] has been re-

jected in a ballot of TGWU members, and other unions, including the GMWU, the largest in the industry, have also given the go-ahead for action. They are approaching the supervisors' union, NALGO, for support.

Talks with the employers are still going on. But if the water workers take action, the labour movement must be ready to give full support to them against the strikebreakers in uniform.

GERRY BYRNE

## Penguin NUJ blacks books to save jobs

PENGUIN Books are planning to cut their workforce by 20% (100 jobs) in the next year, as part of a plan to cut their losses by £1.8 million.

For some time, Penguin has not been filling vacancies, and now the management says there will be 50 redundancies and 50 unfilled vacancies will be converted into permanent job cuts.

The NUJ chapel has said that it will resist the job losses, though the other two unions involved, ASTMS and SOGAT, have yet to make their position clear. The NUJ had already decided to black 200 titles in protest against the unfilled vacancies, and that action is now going ahead, while members wait for more definite news on the management's intentions before deciding on whether to escalate it.

JAMES RYAN

## NUT: a 10pc claim that's worth 70p

IN APRIL 1979, teachers accepted a pay deal made up of a 9% rise, a promise that our pay would be brought up to 'comparability' by the Clegg Commission, and £6 a month 'on account' of the final settlement.

When leaders of the National Union of Teachers, the main teachers' union, were arguing for this deal to be accepted, they said it was the only way teachers could get a decent increase, and that Clegg was virtually certain to restore 1975 pay levels.

Clegg was supposed to report on teachers' pay in time to pay out the first instalment in January 1980, and the second in August. But now it turns out that the commission will not be reporting until April.

### Interim

The NUT leadership has finally decided to put in for an interim 10% increase, payable from the 1st January. The employers will be re-

plying to the claim on January 24th and it is possible that they will agree. However, the £6 on account was agreed only for the 9 months from April '79 to January '80. Payment is due to stop as from December '79; and as the increase was on account, it has to be deducted from whatever interim claim is negotiated.

### Stages

The union is proposing that it be deducted in three stages at the rate of £18 a month. Calculations done by Dick North, a left wing member of the NUT executive, show that with the 10% increase, a teacher at the bottom of the pay scales would stand to gain 70p a month in January '80 over December '79. The average teacher's pay would only increase by £19.20 a month, while the increase for top head-teachers would be £72.20 per month!

The NUT has kept very quiet about pay recently, not

surprisingly since the reference to Clegg has turned into a farce. Nor has a claim for April 1980 been submitted, even though this was supposed to be independent of the comparability commission's findings.

Demoralisation is setting in over pay, with many members talking of leaving the NUT. The rival National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers has been claiming all along, though without proof, that teachers could have got 28% by going to arbitration last year.

### Win

Militants have to step up their efforts to win the union to a policy of flat rate increases (about £1000 a year increase would be the minimum to take account of inflation in 1979/80); reliance not on arbitration or comparability studies but on industrial action; and cost of living increases.

PETE FIRMIN