

# Socialist Action

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## DEFEND OUR UNIONS!

Tim Robinson (NALGO)

Slashing social services to the bone, holding down wages, creating mass unemployment (as at British Steel) - this is what the Tory government has in store for the 1980s. Whole areas of the country are to be reduced to the industrial wastelands of the thirties.

But they face an obstacle in their attacks. That obstacle is the power and strength of the trade unions seen, most recently, in the 100,000 strong steelworkers' strike. Despite threats, police brutality, witch-hunts in the press, that strike has halted the Tory offensive dead in its tracks.

### ALL OUT MAY 14th!

On May 14th, the TUC has called a national day of action against the Tories' attempts to curb trade union rights.

Clearly the action reflects the growing mood in trade union ranks as wider and wider layers are pushed into head-on battles with the Tories to defend jobs and living standards.

The steelworkers' strike, the mass anti-cuts actions around the country, the mini general-strike in South Wales last February - all show a growing refusal to allow the Tories to close down services and turn whole areas of the country into industrial deserts.

While the TUC action is merely a one-day protest, all trade union and Labour Party members should begin mobilising for it now. May 14th has to be turned into a day of mass defiance of Tory policies to lay the basis for an ongoing campaign.

### EMPLOYMENT BILL

Now, in order to muzzle the unions, the Tories have republished their Employment Bill. Key among its proposals are attempts to

- \* smash the right to picket by making union members open to court action;
- \* undermine the closed shop by making it dependent on a two-thirds ballot of members;
- \* erode the right to a job by halving the statutory period of redundancy notices.

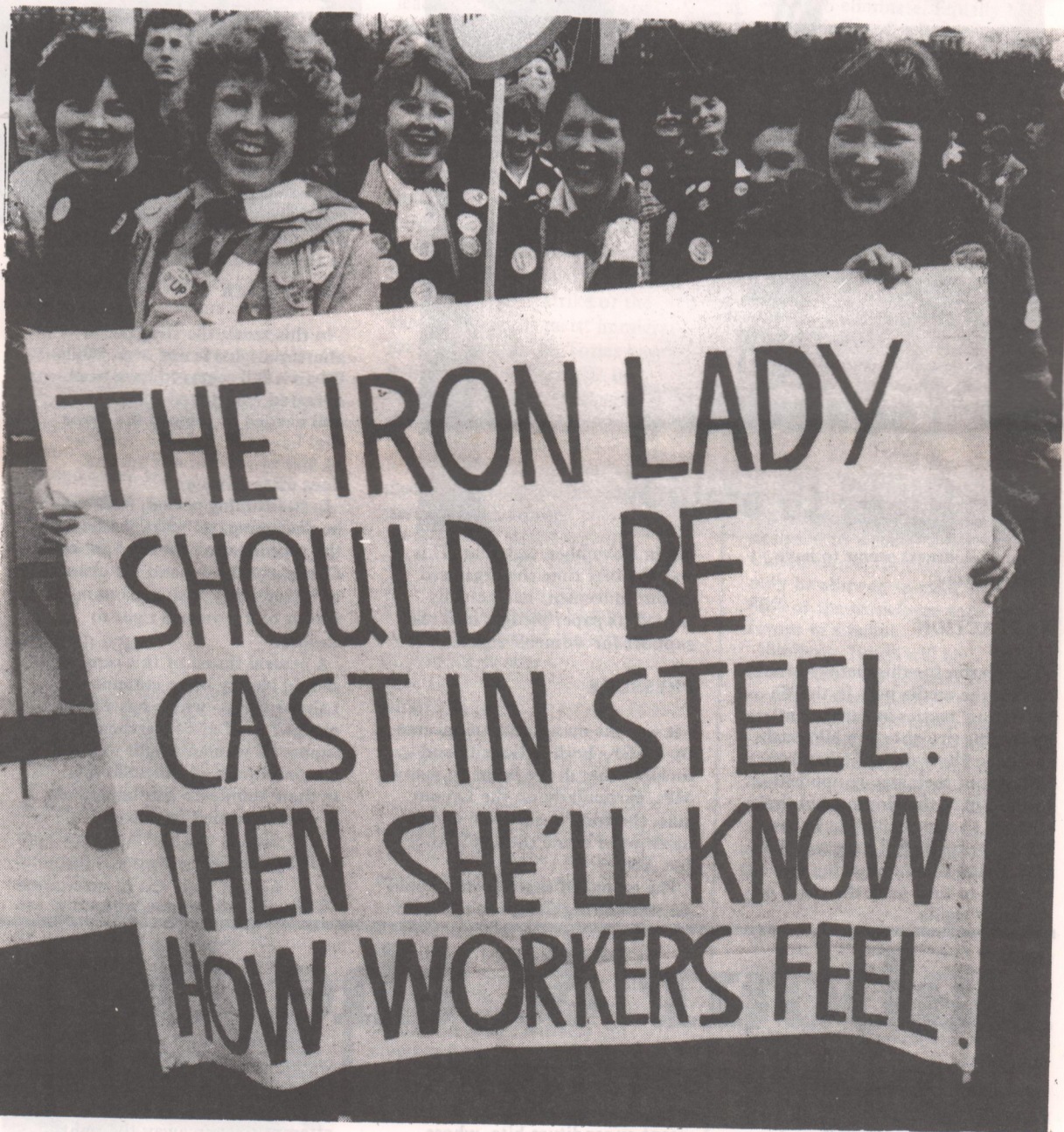
More recently, under pressure from the Tory 'hawks', Thatcher has gone one step further and has threatened withdrawing benefit from strikers' families.

The aim of these undemocratic moves is crystal-clear. Only by curbing the right of unions to defend their members can the Tories hope to shift the burden of the present crisis onto the back of working people.

### GAMBLE

Whether or not the Tories get away with their undemocratic moves is, of course, dependent on the resistance offered by the Labour leaders. Already there has been a lot of fighting talk and, under growing pressure, Len Murray has called for a one-day stoppage against Tory

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Workers on March 9th demonstration show their attitude to the Tory government

## STEEL PICKETS VICTIMISED

P.B. (Birmingham)

Over the past month, the Tories have tried to whip up a campaign of hatred against the steel pickets. As thousands of workers have descended on private plants - such as Hadfields or Sheerness - the press has had a heyday denouncing 'union bully boys'.

No doubt, if the strike had been limited to British steel plants, the outcry would have been more muted. The British steel bosses - backed up by Keith Joseph - would simply have tried to grind down the steelworkers in a prolonged stoppage.

But the extension of the strike

to private firms - and the support drummed up from other unions such as the miners - has driven the government and its press lackeys into a frenzy. After all, they might win.

### POLICE

Not only has a major press barrage been directed against the pickets but the police have also been told to pull no punches. As Winston Campbell, ISTC picket from Rotherham, put it: "The government has given the police a free hand to lay in".

In fact, the Tory government

has given the police the green light to use 'intimidation' and other criminal charges freely against pickets. The results have not been pleasant. Dozens have been arrested, carted off to the courts and fined.

Many more have been subjected to police thuggery. At Sheerness, for example, women pickets - wives of striking steelworkers - were punched and kicked, and at Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, the assaults were so serious that the ISTC issued a formal complaint against the police for injuries inflicted on 4 pickets.

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BSC Steelworkers picketing Hadfields private company John Sturrock (Report)



# Mass action stops Corrie Bill

by LIZ EASTON (NUS)

The Corrie Bill has been consigned to the dustbin - where it belongs. Despite attempts by the Tory MP to cobble together a last-minute compromise, it is now clear that the Bill has been stopped in its tracks and, with it, the proposal to curb the time limit on abortions from 28 to 24 weeks.

Although Corrie tried to obtain extra time on March 15th to get parts of the Bill through, the threat of women being faced - once again - with having children they do not want or returning to the horrors

But the real reason for the defeat of the Bill was the mass opposition that developed throughout the country in the preceding months and which reached a climax in the 70,000 strong TUC demonstrat-

readings of the Bill, when mass protests continued to be held. On Feb 5th, over 20,000 pro-abortionists - including a contingent from the NUS - mobilised outside Westminster, mass meetings took place and a petition of 200,000 names handed in to anti - Corrie MPs.

The fact that CAC continued to mobilise support right up to the last minute was vital in keeping pressure on MPs and 'stiffening' their resolve to fight the Bill.

## DANGERS

While Corrie seems to have lost the battle, he hasn't given up the war. Speaking on Feb 5th, when it looked as if his Bill was doomed he openly stated that he would continue to oppose the 1967 Act and, if the chance arose, introduce another anti-abortion Bill. Corrie's stand reflects the determination of the anti-abortion lobby organised in SPUC and LIFE.

Three times they have tried to get anti-abortion Bills through Parliament - the White, Benyon and, most recently, Corrie Bills - and they have only been stopped in their tracks by the mass action mobilised against them.

Their offensive has already led to certain parts of the Act being eroded and we can be sure that new initiatives will be mounted in the period ahead.

## FIGHT-BACK

In this sense, the struggle for abortion rights is not over. While Corrie's Bill seems to have been defeated, continued action is still needed to remove the curbs that have already been introduced and to prevent any further ones materialising.

In the coming period, NAC will be discussing out what should be the way forward - in the light of Corrie's set-back - and the chance of introducing positive laws in favour of a woman's right to choose.

A central thrust of this campaign should clearly be to commit the Labour Party - which has already pledged itself at conference to support a woman's right to abortion on request - to include this in their Manifesto and implement it when returned to power.

## CONSCIENCE?

This will not happen without a

## CUTS & NURSERIES

Carol Rees (Southwark CLP)

As the Tory axe descends on local authorities, guess what are the first facilities to disappear? Nurseries. Already, councils from Nottingham to Wandsworth have decided that, in their 'priority list', the already inadequate nurseries for the under 5s will have to go.

What this means, of course, does not take much imagination. Thousands of working mothers around the country will be forced either to leave their children with un-qualified staff - if they have the money - or walk out of their jobs to look after them.

## EQUALITY

The closure of the limited nursery provisions councils provide will be a severe set-back for women's rights. Thatcher might claim that women already have equality with men - before the law - but, in practice, this is just not true.

In this society, it is not men who have to face the burden of rearing children. That responsibility falls entirely on the shoulders of women who are thereby faced, when a child is born, with the agonising conflict of whether to pursue her career or stay home and look after the child.

The only way women can escape from this dilemma is by the state taking over the responsibilities of child-care, thus releasing women to participate freely in society alongside men.

## EXTEND

Thatcher might be the first women Prime Minister but the present Tory policies, far from solving the process, will only worsen it. Thousands of working mothers will be forced out of their jobs to become financially dependent on their husbands. For thousands more single-parent families, it will mean living on a pittance doled out by the state.

Far from closing nurseries, what is needed if women are to have a chance of fulfilling themselves, is to extend them. Such a move would not only be of interest to women but also children who need the stimulation of contact and play with other children in the under 5 age-range.

There needs to be a comprehensive system of state care which includes nursery classes, mother and toddler groups and child-minder drop-in centres under one roof.

## ORGANISE

This will not happen by itself however. If the Thatcher government is not to be allowed to push women back into the home, we need to organise. This coming July, a conference is to be held in London to organise a national child-care



campaign which has the potential of drawing wide layers of women into action.

While fighting around a specific aim, such a campaign could also become part of the general fight-back developing against the Tory cuts. It could raise the issue in the unions and Labour Party and call on Labour-controlled councils to oppose all cuts (particularly those which include nursery provisions).

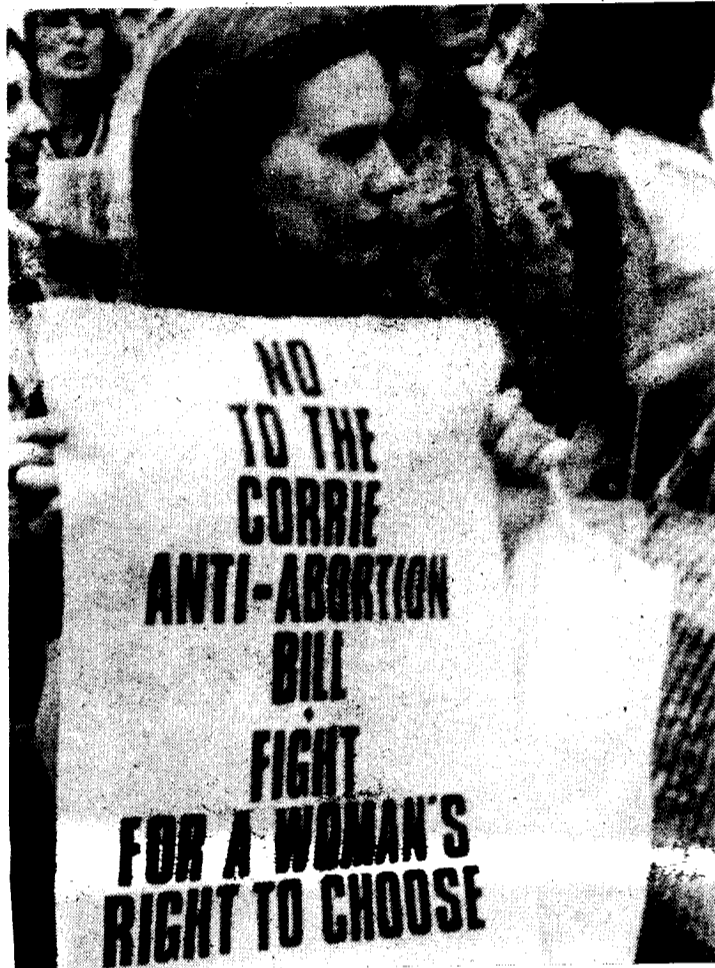
Such a campaign, taken into and fought for in the labour movement, could play a serious role in protecting the rights of women and children.

fight. None of the Labour MPs who spoke at the CAC rallies have yet pledged themselves to make abortion rights a key part of Labour Party policy. That will only develop by continuing to build NAC and fighting for its aims in the local Labour Parties.

It is not just a question, however, of trying to make abortion a key plank in Labour Party policy. It is also a question of fighting to ensure that the next Labour government - when it is

elected - implements it.

Labour MPs have to be told in no uncertain manner that abortion rights cannot be left up to individual 'consciences'. It is a class question on which they are expected to abide by the democratic will of the majority of the labour movement. And the mass action by the TUC on November 16th, last year, is a clear indication of where the labour movement stands on the issue!



the backstreets seems to have been removed.

## MASS ACTION

The reason for this victory is not, as the media puts it, the 'filibustering' tactics in Parliament by leading pro-abortion MPs such as Renee Short or Jo Richardson. No doubt their strong opposition to the Bill in the House - and their struggle to win vacillating Labour MPs to grasp its full dangers - did play a vital role in blocking this attempt to turn back the clock on women's rights.

ion in November, last year. This was the first time the organised labour movement had actually turned its paper pledges into real support for women's rights.

## PRESSURE

It was the mass action pioneered by CAC\* - both nationally and locally - that drove home to many MPs, particularly on the Labour side, the wide hostility to Corrie's attempt to erode the 1967 Abortion Act.

The extent of this hostility could be seen during the second & third

late lamented Corrie Bill. It is a key aspect of all Thatcher's policies. As the cut-backs in government expenditure bite, whose jobs will be first on the line?

Those in which women tend to predominate - teachers, cleaners, social workers, librarians and cooks. Cutting back on women's jobs will not only lower family income - something the Thatcher government was supposedly so concerned about - but will hit single-parent families particularly hard.

As services are cut back by the local councils, who will increasingly be affected? Women. Day nurseries, on which many working mothers depend, will be the first to be axed as will hospital facilities which will make abortions harder to obtain.

## EMPLOYMENT BILL

Latest in line of these attacks

on women's rights is the Tory *Employment Bill*. Among its anti union provisions are some which attempt to strip away the right that presently exists for women to obtain maternity leave and reinstatement to their jobs.

The Bill not only exempts firms with five or fewer employees but also those who do not find it "reasonably practicable" to make such a provision, and those where the woman is offered an alternative and "unreasonably refuses"

Not only have the Tories tried to force women to have children they don't want (under Corrie's Bill), but they're also trying to make sure that, when they do have them, they can't legally get their job back!

## FAMILY

As they attempt to push women back into the home through cut-backs in nurseries, redundancies



and legal curbs, the Tories will, of course, escalate their talk about 're-affirming' the values of family life. In the pre-election build-up, both Thatcher and Callaghan put great store on preserving the 'trad-

itions' of the family.

But the family life the Tories want to preserve is one in which women are reduced to the status of man-server and baby-minder, without any rights of their own

# Labour & the fight for women's

When Corrie's anti-abortion Bill came before Parliament, Thatcher slapped a one-line whip on all Tory MPs to vote for it. Even though some rebelled, it is clear that the Tory government saw the Bill as in line with their general strategy.

By attempting to reduce abortions by up to 80,000 a year, the Bill was aimed at whipping up a climate to ease women out of the workforce and back into the home - where they 'belong' - bearing and rearing children.

At a time of rapidly rising unemployment, Corrie's Bill thus had a natural attraction for the Tory leaders. Removing women from the workforce could be justified by rhetoric about defending the 'right' of the 'unborn child'.

## DEFENSIVE

This attempt to push women out of the workforce has not been limited, however, to the happily

# Labour's Leaders must adopt FIGHTING POLICIES

On March 9th, over 100,000 responded to the TUC call for a mass demonstration against the Tories' Employment Bill. Chanting slogans from 'Support the steelworkers!' to 'Thatcher out!', miners, engineers & car-workers left little doubt as to their attitude to the Tory anti-union curbs.

Such a mood reflects the growing feeling among wide layers of trade unionists, up and down the country, who have been drawn into bitter battles with the Tory government over cuts, wages & - as with the steelworkers - jobs.

## VACILLATION

The militancy of the marchers could be detected most clearly at the end of the rally in response to the TUC leaders' speeches. Murray's offer to sit down with the Thatcher government to 'discuss' the problem was drowned in a barrage of heckling.

No doubt the demonstrators recalled that - apart from giving support to the anti-Corrie march last November - the TUC has revealed a masterly inactivity in the face of the Tories' offensive.

Refusal to organise the growing opposition to the cuts has been matched by refusal to support the steelworkers (if not actual sabotage of solidarity actions - such as that planned by the S. Wales TUC last February).

Now, when the unions themselves are under threat of being taken back to the days of Taff Vale, the TUC intends limiting its activity to trips back & forth to Downing Street to negotiate with Jim Prior. Calling on the Tories to drop their legal curbs, they have promised to deal with 'militant pickets' themselves

## POSTPONE

The reason for the TUC refusal to give a fighting lead is, of course, because they see the situation in electoral terms. As far as they are concerned, hope lies in gritting one's teeth before the Tories' attack and waiting for the return of a Labour government in five years.

Such a perspective is also that of



their allies in Parliament who - while denouncing Thatcher in words - have argued against mass actions and have actually denounced the steel pickets for their defence of wages and jobs.

Unfortunately, unless the labour leaders can be pushed into action - or replaced by those who will make a fight of it - there will be no jobs or social services left to defend in five years time. What is involved is a life-and-death struggle to defend working people from the most class-conscious government for decades.

## ORGANISE

No doubt as a response to growing pressure, the TUC has now called another one-day 'protest' action against Prior's Bill on May 14th. While calling such an action, however, they have tried to limit its effect by leaving it up to individual unions to decide whether to strike or not.

This weak-kneed approach has

already been denounced even by trade union leaders like Sid Weighall of the NUR who has called for it to be turned into a one-day general strike.

Such a demand must clearly be taken up and raised in trade union and Labour Party branches up and down the country. The labour leaders must be forced to turn May 14th from a one-off protest into the start of a long-term campaign to stop the Tory anti-union curbs in their tracks.

## FIGHTBACK

Pressure on the labour leaders should not be limited, however, to taking a stand on the Prior Bill. They should also be forced to spearhead opposition to all aspects of the Tories' anti-working class policies. They should be urged to organise the mass opposition to the cuts; to lead the fight against unemployment by pioneering the demand for the 35-hour week, and to fight

for wage increases to keep pace with the rise in inflation.

Moreover, they must also be forced to support the struggles of layers doubly victimised by Thatcher's policies. The TUC support for the mass anti-Corrie rally last November is a clear example of what is possible.

Under the mass pressure from women - both inside & outside the labour movement - the TUC was forced to throw its decisive weight behind a movement that stopped the anti-abortionists in their tracks. Similar pressure must be brought to bear to make them support the fight against racist immigration laws and to get the troops out of Ireland - now!

## LABOUR PARTY

The fight to make the labour leaders act in the interests of their members cannot be limited to the unions. It must also be carried into the Labour Party where figures from Callaghan to Tony Benn must be put to the test.

Where do they stand on these issues? Are they prepared to turn their anti-Tory rhetoric into concrete action now? Will they support the anti-cuts fight, the steelworkers' strike or the campaign against racist immigration laws (which the Tories have considerably tightened)? It is only by pressure to make the labour leaders act - or to replace them by those that will - that a really united defence can be mounted against the Thatcher government's attack.

It is also the surest way of guaranteeing that, when a Labour government is returned to office, it will be committed to a programme of action in the interests of working people.

## DEMOCRACY

As part and parcel of this fight, the question of democracy will come ever more to the fore. It has already raised its head in the Labour Party as the last conference dramatically revealed.

It is only by fighting to extend democratic control over labour leaders - in the unions as well as the Labour Party - that we can ensure that they will carry out policies in their members' interests and that they can be replaced if they won't.

## ORGANISE

The mass opposition developing to cuts in social services has also to include real guarantees to preserve - and extend - nursery facilities and women's right to a job. The opposition building up to Whitelaw's Immigration proposals has also got to include real antagonism to its blatant discrimination against Black women. And the mounting fight-back to Prior's *Employment Bill* has got to be based on pledges to restore women's rights to maternity leave.

Such moves will not develop by themselves. It is only by women in the labour movement organising and fighting for their rights that the unions and Labour Party will begin to take them up.

Sabina Roberts (Streatham CLP)

## PRIOR'S ANTI-UNION BILL

The main aim of the Tories' Employment Bill is quite simply to destroy the ability of trade unions to win a strike.

Key among its provisions is an attempt to curb 'secondary picketing' used so successfully in the 1974 miners' strike (that brought the Heath government down) or by the steelworkers today. Under Prior's Bill, workers will only be able to picket outside their place of work - picketing of suppliers, customers or other depots being made illegal.

In order to give the Bill bite - and intimidate union activists - Prior proposes that illegal pickets be taken to court and sued for damages by companies who can prove business has been affected.

## SOLIDARITY

It is not only secondary pickets, however, that the Tories want to eliminate. Equally high on their list of priorities is solidarity strikes. Under the Bill, the support of the miners for the steelworkers this year - or the support of wide layers of trade unionists for the Grunwick workers last year - could become illegal.

The Bill leaves the decision on this question up to the courts who will have to decide whether solidarity actions are likely to 'further' the dispute or not. Considering the anti-union bias of the Tory courts - as in Denning's recent decision against the steelworkers - there is little doubt what the outcome will be.

## DEMOCRACY

Other provisions in the Bill, while less important, are also designed to weaken union power. Closed shops, for example, will only be allowed to exist after 80% of the workforce vote in favour in a ballot.

Similarly, funds will be provided by the government to allow 'secret ballots' on all major calls by the union for strike action. The aim of this is clearly to erode the democracy of mass meetings by 'isolating' union members & thus opening them up to the propaganda of the mass media and the bosses.

## RIGHTS

It is not just union rights as a whole, however, which the Bill seeks to whittle away. It will doubly affect certain strata such as women members. At present, all women are guaranteed maternity leave and the automatic right to re-employment afterwards.

The new provisions indicate that women will have to give a much longer written notice if they wish their jobs back and, even then, will not be guaranteed them. Small firms, in particular, will be entitled to offer 'suitable alternatives' which, if not accepted, could leave women without any employment at all.

## GAINS

It is clear that the thrust of the Bill as a whole is to render unions ineffective in fighting back against the offensive being currently launched by the Tory government.

Whether or not the government is allowed to get away with it - and implement any section of it against union members - depends on how seriously the labour movement campaigns to stop the Tories in their tracks.

Jane Davidson

# rights

and economically dependent on the husband.

And what type of family life do the Tories want to maintain? The family life of people crowded 10 to a room in Liverpool or a Glasgow slum? The family life of wife-beating or child-battering?

## THREAT

If the Tories succeed in their offensive, it will not only be a setback for women's rights but for the whole labour movement. The Thatcher government knows that by creating the climate that a woman's place is in the 'home', they can weaken and divide the labour movement in its fight-back against their policies.

They know that it will be easier for them to turn 'men' against 'women' in the scramble for jobs that will increasingly open up as their unemployment plans begin

to bite.

They also know that, by making women economically dependent on their husbands, they can set up a reactionary brake on the militancy of male workers and their readiness to strike. The action by wives of Hadfield steelworkers - who refused to support the ISTC strike - is the type of situation the Tories want to encourage in the years ahead.

## COMMON FIGHT

This is why the struggle against the Tory offensive is not just of concern to women - who stand to lose most - but of the entire labour movement. It is only by that movement taking up & pioneering the rights of women that the Tories' divisive tactics can be defeated and a united resistance mounted.

The support for the anti-Corrie Campaign by the TUC last November was a massive step in that direction. For the first time, the token pledges of support were



turned into mass action, drawing thousands of Labour Party and trade union activists into the struggle against attempts to take women back to the stone age.

That step forward has to be built upon. It is not just a question of fighting to get the Labour Party to include abortion rights in its Manifesto - and to implement that Manifesto when it is returned to power. Other issues are also at stake.

# Cuts Debate:

It is a pity that rate increases have dominated the fight against the cuts - to the exclusion both of working out a strategy to take the campaign outside the 'far left' and also to challenge the bureaucratic way services are run.

Dave Mcleod's attack on my article in *Socialist Organiser* - which is also the position of the *Chartist Group* - bristles with so many errors and misconceptions that I must take the opportunity to defend our views.

## WHO PAYS?

In the first place, in many Inner London boroughs, businesses pay the majority of the rates - 75% in Camden, for example. In the second place, the scale of rate increases we support rule out all cuts (which hit the neediest workers harder than rate increases hit workers) & rent increases (which penalise one section of workers, without affecting the rates too much).

Thirdly, maintaining services by putting up the rates does "challenge the basic assumption that workers shouldn't shoulder the burden of the present crisis" by declaring that they should not have to suffer a decline in services but - rather - that these services should be improved.

Of course, we demand that the central government cough up the money for this and - when they don't - blame the Tories for the rate increases.

## INSULTING

It would be grossly insulting, if it were not so comical, for Dave Mcleod to equate the *Chartist* position on rates with Jim Callaghan's policies of cutting back on services. It is even more astonishing for him to suggest that rate rises would receive the same response from council workers as Callaghan received last winter.

Actually, council workers in Lambeth (who, we are sure, are not exceptional) support rate increases because they believe it will save their jobs which would be decimated if the council went bankrupt.

## CONFRONTATION

Council workers have very little power to hit their bosses more



than working class residents if they go on strike. Tower Hamlet Council were unmoved as rubbish decomposed in the East End markets and even when they were locked out of their own offices.

New tactics have to be devised which overcome these weaknesses, as town hall workers will not be able to avoid all-out confrontations indefinitely. But do the *Socialist Action* supporters suggest that councils enter into this confrontation now against their own workers and with tenants looking on indifferently?

## ALTERNATIVE

We do not know how *Socialist Action* supporters in Lambeth can claim that increasing rates is an alternative to mobilising against the Tories. What about the 10,000 strong march through Lambeth last November organised by the council and for which they gave out thousands of leaflets?

Certainly, more can be done and certainly the council would buckle without constant pressure from council workers and Labour Parties - and other councils who also refuse to cut. Rate increases are not an alternative to fighting but a means of prolonging the fight and preparing for the situation where, if Heseltine carries out his threat to penalise councils who overspend, rate increases will be

impossible and the choice will either be cuts - or bankruptcy.

If we argue that the latter way is preferable, then we must ensure that those who will suffer most are aware of the consequences & willing to enter the struggle.

## B. Misrahi

Cde Misrahi is correct to argue that it's a pity that the issue of rate increases has dominated the anti-cuts struggle. As he points out, the central question is building a broad fight-back campaign and on this we have complete agreement.

The point remains, however, on what basis should the anti-cuts campaign be launched? It is here that the question of rates raises its head and the differences begin to emerge.

## ALTERNATIVE

The essence of Cde Misrahi's position is that rate increases - which hit businesses harder than working people - are a temporary means of offsetting cuts in service ordered by the government. As my original article stated, this misses the point.

The aim of the Tory cuts is to make working people pay for their crisis. Tax concessions for the rich are to be paid for by

As the Tories' axe has fallen on local authorities up and down the country, Labour councils face a dilemma. Wanting to fight back - yet frightened of going bankrupt - they have voted for massive rate increases. The size of these increases - as in the case of Lambeth which has raised them by 49% - is necessarily huge.

But are rate increases the answer to the Tory cuts? Do they resolve the problem or do they merely pass the burden onto working people? Below Bernard Misrahi (*Chartist Group*) and Dave Mcleod (*Socialist Action*) debate the issue.

working people through less jobs, hospitals and schools. Does putting up the rates, as Cde Misrahi argues, challenge this?

On the contrary, it merely passes the burden onto them in a disguised way. Tax concessions are to be paid for not through cuts but by taking money directly out of workers' pockets in increased rates. Maybe small businesses do pay more, but that is little comfort to a council house family forced to pay out an extra few pounds a week at a time of galloping inflation.

## CALLAGHAN

However Cde Misrahi tries to justify it, his position violates a basic socialist premise: *that working people didn't create the crisis and shouldn't have to pay for it*. It is, in essence, the same position as that of the last Callaghan government - an analogy which Cde Misrahi finds 'insulting'.

But what is the difference? Jim Callaghan argued that it was better to have a Labour government making cuts than a 'brutal' Tory one. And what is the argument in favour of rate increases? That it is better to have a Labour council in power - making huge rate increases - than nasty Tory commissioners who would be far worse.

I can assure Cde Misrahi that Labour voters will treat these councils - such as Lambeth who recently upped the rates by 49% as well as rents by £1.50 - in the same way as they treated Jim Callaghan last year. They won't blame the Tories but the council that was prepared to do the Tories' dirty work for them.

## COUNCIL WORKERS

Cde Misrahi argues that council workers - such as those in Lambeth - could not be won to a 'no cuts/no rate increase' argument because it would mean the loss of their jobs. His argument is wrong because it falls into the Tory 'divide and rule' trap.

One cannot fight the cuts - and threatened redundancies - by making Peter pay Paul, by bleeding dry one section of workers (council tenants) to prop up another (council workers). The only way to protect jobs is to start

from the premise that no workers should have to pay for the Tory crisis and fight for a united campaign.

This position has to be fought for in the local council unions as the only way to safeguard jobs. This year, councils like Lambeth have upped the rate by 49% and still have been forced to cut back on job opportunities. Next year, when the Tory axe falls even heavier, what will they do? Put up rates even higher and cut back even more savagely on jobs?

## FIGHT

The problem with Cde Misrahi's position is that it ducks the need for this fight. Everything he says is to suggest that people 'aren't ready' for a confrontation, that it's 'too soon'. Rate increases - propping up services and jobs - becomes a substitute for a real campaign against the Tories.

The point is that, unless socialists take a lead - and fight for councils to take a firm stand - it will never be time for a fight-back. Whatever Cde Misrahi may say, councils are using the 'rate increase' tactic as a means of getting off the hook from a real fight-back.

Lambeth council, interestingly enough, proves the point. They led their mass struggle against the Tories on a 'no cuts/ no rate increases' position forced upon them by the local Labour Parties. Now that they have decided to increase the rates - to avoid going 'bankrupt' - they have dropped the semblance of a campaign.

## NO WONDER

And it's no wonder. It is impossible to launch a mass action fight against the Tories when the council leading it is actually doing their dirty work by making workers pay for the crisis.

If councils adopt such a policy - and many have - it will only put off a confrontation with the Tory government and ensure that when it does occur, it will happen after thousands of trade union activists have become demoralised by councils telling them that a fight-back can be avoided.

**D. Mcleod**

# Lambeth Council Backs Down

by Ralph Wood (NUPE)

When Labour-controlled Lambeth announced last year that it was going to make swingeing cuts - in response to the Tory reduction of the rate support grant - the reaction of the local Labour Parties was sharp.

The majority affirmed, at a specially-convened meeting in November, that Labour was elected on a programme to extend the social services and not to reduce them in line with the Tory cuts' programme. A resolution - calling for a campaign around a no cuts/no rate increase position - was adopted.

Despite the councillors' vacillation, that position was accepted and a bold fight-back launched to mobilise Lambeth opinion against the Tory axe.

## BACK-TRACK

It was clear from the beginning, however, that the Labour council - led by Ted Knight - only launched the campaign under

pressure. As the time approached for the council to draw up its budget for 1980-81, it increasingly began to have cold feet.

Worried that its no-cuts position and its national reputation as the 'marxist rebel-led' council had placed it at the top of Heseltine's chopping list, it began to back-peddle. Quoting the dangers of confronting the Tories in isolation, Knight summed up the situation when he announced: "The strategy of a no cuts/no rate increase means that independent authorities would face bankruptcy".

Instead, in a document widely circulated to the four Lambeth Labour Parties, Knight argued for a substantial rate increase a way of maintaining services and avoiding an isolated confrontation with the Tories.

## UNDERMINED

In the event, after discussion, the council decided not only to

put up rates by a mammoth 49.4% but also rents by an average of £1.50 a week and to cut back on 'uncommitted' growth items. The net result of this about-turn will be to set back the whole campaign Lambeth so vigorously launched and to undermine its standing among wide layers of Labour supporters in Lambeth.

However the Council poses it, these increases - at a time when inflation is soaring around 17% - will pass onto working people the burden of the present crisis. Working people will be expected to fork out more so that the Tories can make their tax concessions to the rich.

Moreover, while Labour has been able to 'balance its books' this year, what about next when the Tory axe falls twice as sharply? Will it raise the rates yet again by an even larger amount while imposing yet more rent rises and making bigger cuts?



Ted Knight - reversed positions.

## FIGHTBACK

It is quite clear that, whatever Knight may say, it is quite utopian to think it will be possible to continue mobilising people against the Tories on the basis of cutting their living standards. Why should Lambeth residents support a Labour council which, instead of standing up to the Tories, actually ends up by implementing their dirty work?

Fortunately, the decision by

the Labour council has not diffused the struggle. Many Labour activists support a no cuts/no rate increases position as does Lambeth NUT, Lambeth Trades Council, CPSA Brixton DHSS branch and the Lambeth Fightback campaign.

## SUPPORT

The key task now facing Fightback - and Labour activists generally - is to continue to fight for a no cuts/no rate increases policy within the Labour parties and in the council worker unions. A bold attitude must be developed which can knit together wide forces to force Lambeth's Labour-controlled council to adopt a real fighting programme in the period ahead.

Unless this campaign is developed, the right-wing in the Lambeth Labour group will gain increasing ascendancy and there will be a growth of demoralisation and apathy.



# Joseph Blames Blacks for Jobless Total



Joseph's speech will incite attacks like these on Black people.

Mike Rodney (NALGO)

Last month, Keith Joseph dropped another bombshell. According to the 'guru' of Tory industrial strategy, Black immigrants are the cause of the mounting jobless total. Employers in the cities, it seems, have no incentive to move to depressed areas because of the ready supply of Black 'cheap labour'.

Joseph's novel idea should come as no surprise. It is merely the latest installment in a general campaign launched by the Tories against Black people. Just before the election, Thatcher was warning of the country being swamped by an 'alien culture' and Whitelaw was busy promising new curbs to the 1971 Immigration Act to limit entry still further.

The aim of the campaign — given its latest unsavoury twist in Joseph's speech — is clearly to whip up racist feeling in the labour movement. As the jobless total soars, the Tories hope to pin the anger and resentment on Black immigrants as a convenient 'scapegoat'.

## CHALLENGE

What makes Joseph's outburst

dangerous is the fact that, over the years, Labour leaders have done nothing to counter such racist trends. Indeed, far from challenging them, they have tumbled indecently over each other in attempts to introduce ever-harsher curbs against Black entry.

Wilson's 1965 White Paper and Callaghan's 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act were introduced with the boast that they would do more to keep Blacks out than anything by Enoch Powell. In the last government, Callaghan was so eager to bring in tighter curbs to the 1971 Act that Alex Lyon — Labour under-secretary — resigned in protest.

Moreover, this cowardly retreat before racist pressure has even seeped into the TUC. Instead of seeking to defend Blacks victimised under the immigration laws, the 1978 Congress actually proposed police and immigration services "... should be afforded substantially more resources to trace overstayers and to tackle all aspects of illegal immigration".

## DANGERS

The fact that Labour leaders have capitulated to racist moods has

created the danger that, in the difficult years ahead, white workers could fall victim to demagogues like Joseph and see Blacks not as allies but as a threat to wages and jobs.

The possibility of such developments can already be seen in a number of examples over the past years. The struggle at the Red Star Textile Mill in Preston in 1965 is a classic case of the threat to the whole workforce that can arise when employers can play on racist moods.

In that year, the employers tried to ram through a deal increasing productivity in the tyre-cord spinning department by 50%. While the majority of workers in that section — who were Black — went on strike, white workers backed by local T&GWU officials refused to support the action, claiming it was 'racially inspired'.

## SET-BACK

The result was not only that the strike was broken after 3 weeks and the deal rammed through. It was also that, only a short time after, the employers forced the white workers — not originally subject to the speed-up proposals — to accept similar conditions.

## UNITY IN ACTION

"Our struggle has taught us also that Black workers must never for a moment entertain the thought of separate Black unions. They must join the existing unions and fight through them. Where unions fail in their duties to Black workers, they must be challenged to stand up for their rights. The union is an organisation of all workers, regardless of race, colour or sex. We believe in the unity of the working class. This unity must be solidly established in deed and not only in words. It is the main task of the trade union movement to create this unity".

(Statement issued by the Asian Workers' Strike Ctte after the Imperial Typewriters' Dispute)

In other words, by playing on racial prejudice in white workers (and the union officials), the employers were able to divide the labour force and carry through a deal which undermined the working conditions of all workers in the mill.

As, indeed, a T&GWU shop steward later recognised, "... by accepting dual standards and giving up trade union principles, the white members of the union allowed the dispute to be turned into a coloured strike".

## UNIQUE?

The dispute at the Red Star mill is not unique in this respect. Other examples could be given such as that at Imperial Typewriters nearly a decade later when Asian workers struck against low wages and poor working conditions.

The employers were able to defeat the strike because, once again, local union officials refused to back it and because white workers were actively encouraged to cross the picket lines.

It is clearly this type of situation that the Tories would like to see develop on a mass scale. By playing on racial prejudice to divide and weaken the labour movement, they hope to be able to ram through productivity deals and high unemployment which will be to the disadvantage of all workers

## CAMPAIGN

If the Tories' 'divide-and-rule' offensive is to be defeated, then a serious fight has to be waged within the labour movement to force its leaders to stand up to these racist tactics.

Central to such a fight has to be a campaign to win Trade Unions and the Labour Party to a clear rejection of the racist 1971 Immigration Act (and the proposals to tighten it still further Whitelaw has placed on the statute books). It is this Act which, by denying Blacks entry on the grounds of colour and denying those who do get in elementary

rights, legalises racism in Britain.

Far from implementing such acts when in office, the Labour leaders must be forced to abide by Labour conference decisions and repeal them immediately.

## CARL

Moves in this direction are already underway. Last November, CARL (the Campaign Against Racist Laws) mobilised over 20,000 in a mass protest against the 1971 Act and Whitelaw's latest proposals. Supporting it were not only Black organisations but the Labour Party NEC and over 30 Labour MPs (including Tony Benn who spoke at the rally).

That was a major step forward — but still only a step. The aims of CARL have now got to be taken into all trade union and Labour Party branches and the passive 'acceptance' of racism by the labour leaders challenged head-on.

It is only by the labour movement pioneering the rights of Black people against racist threats of the kind issues by Keith Joseph that it will be able to enter the struggle ahead in a united way.

## NORSCARF PLANS ACTION

Last month, a well-attended meeting of Labour activists and anti-racists met in Stoke-on-Trent to discuss plans to combat Whitelaw's racist plans. Chaired by Naill Rodgers - president of the North Staffs Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (NORSCARF) - representatives from the local Asian community, Labour Party & CARL were present.

All three speakers stressed the need to build real opposition in the area against the Tory plans to tighten the racist curbs of the 1971 Immigration Act. Bhagor Taggar, a local councillor, explained the implications of these curbs & the fear they inspired in many people from the Indian sub-continent.

Gwynneth Dunwoody, MP for Crewe, went further than just attacking the present Tory proposals. She correctly pointed out that previous Labour governments were equally at fault - by implementing racist immigration laws - and pledged her support for any action against laws restricting entry to this country on the basis of colour.

Bob Swart, speaker from CARL, pointed out that it was not enough just to oppose these laws but that a mass campaign - rooted in the labour movement - was needed to fight them. Referring to the successful demonstration organised by CARL last November, he went on to explain the need to set up local support groups around the country to win forces in the period ahead for more determined action.

Everyone in the meeting agreed that the key task in the coming months was not countering ultra-right fringe groups such as the NF but opposing the racist thrust of the Tory government. It was agreed that, to go forward, the NORSCARF should concentrate on winning support in the local Asian community and the labour movement on this issue.

MIKE WILLIAMS

## CARL VOTES FOR MASS CAMPAIGN



Phil Moore (South London CARL)

The mass CARL demonstration last November — which brought over 20,000 onto the streets — was a break-through in anti-racist activity. For the first time, wide layers of the Black and labour movements joined together in common action against

the racist immigration laws.

The demonstration clearly showed the potential for building a mass, ongoing campaign that can begin to challenge the whole logic of Acts which legalise racism in Britain and create the climate off which ultra-right groups (like the NF) feed.

## CONFERENCE

The conference held in London on March 22nd was designed to do just that. Attended by over 100 delegates from Black, Labour & anti-racist bodies, a wide-ranging debate took place on how to take the campaign forward.

Agreeing that the focus for the campaign should be around the 1971 Immigration Act, a number of national initiatives were discussed for the coming months.

## ACTION

Key among these was support for the April 27th demonstration in Southall - called to commemorate Blair Peach - and support for the Bradford Asian Youth Movement's 'March for Freedom' on June 28th.

Building actions such as these, it was felt, would help to gain publicity for the aims of CARL and draw wider layers around it.

## LOCAL GROUPS

In order to extend the campaign into local areas, it was also agreed to set up a number of regional committees - where possible - to co-ordinate activity and involve trade union and Black community support.

Such initiatives have, indeed, already been taken in a number

of areas - from South London to Leamington - and delegates from local CARL groups reported on the success of their activities to date.

## PUBLICITY

In order to help gain grass-root support, it was also agreed to publish a regular CARL bulletin. Many delegates explained how important it was to expose the lies and falsifications in the Tory press on immigration and to get the real facts into peoples' hands.

The bulletin, it was agreed, should be the responsibility of a steering cttee elected at the conference. To ensure the widest representation on the cttee, it was also agreed that all organisations affiliating to it would be able to send delegates along.

# What We Stand For

Socialist Action sees as its central aim building, within the labour movement, a class-struggle left-wing fighting for socialist policies against those which lost Labour the last election and disillusioned thousands of Labour supporters.

Such a left-wing should support not only policies in the interests of working people but also their allies among the youth, Blacks, women and oppressed national minorities. It is only by showing that Labour champions the rights of all the oppressed and exploited that a really united offensive can be organised against the Tories (and their right-wing allies in the labour movement).

Socialist Action believes that a fighting left wing should be built around the following demands:

- \* Hands off the unions! No curbs on the right to strike or picket!
- \* For the 35-hour week! End unemployment by work-sharing (with no loss of pay) and introduce a mass public works programme for those already on the dole.
- \* Oppose all wage curbs. For wage increases tied to the cost of living to offset inflation.
- \* Open the books of all companies claiming inability to pay a decent living wage or threatening redundancies. Nationalise those that put profit before people.
- \* Tax the rich not the poor. No cuts in the social services — for social spending to be tied to increases in the cost of living.
- \* For women's rights. For the right of all women to abortion on demand, free nurseries, equal pay and opportunity. Support NAC.
- \* Fight racism. Repeal all racist immigration laws. Defend the right of Black people to organise as they see fit in the community & labour movement.
- \* For the right of all oppressed nations to determine their own future — Get the troops out of Ireland now!
- \* For a safe environment. End nuclear reactors and base an energy strategy on coal. Explore alternative energy resources.

Socialist Action supporters, while fighting for the above demands, seek the widest possible unity of all forces in the labour movement around concrete issues. They also seek to encourage the widest democracy in the labour movement to allow all currents to argue for their point of view and for decisions to be mandatory on Labour leaders.

If you would like to find out more about Socialist Action — or contribute to it — write to: Socialist Action, c/o 58 Auckland Road, London SE19.

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# SOCIALISTS LABOUR PA

A. D. Scott

For a whole period - from the mid sixties to early seventies - the left in Britain grew up outside the labour movement. Its forces were based in the radical student layers drawn into politics around such issues as the anti-war movement to the fight for women's rights.

Whilst instinctively hostile to the pro-capitalist policies of Labour leaders like Wilson or Callaghan, these layers tend to have a one-sided and unbalanced view of the labour movement. Under-estimating the loyalty of working people to their organisations, they felt that a mass socialist movement could take place by by-passing the labour movement.

While it was correct to help pioneer the struggles launched by these layers - in the interests of all working people - the left began to 'adapt' to its sectarian schemes. This was reflected most clearly in groups like the SWP which openly proclaimed itself the 'revolutionary party' and counterposed itself to the Labour Party at a time when the Labour Party retained the mass allegiance of trade unionists.

## CHANGE

Locked within the sectarian schemes of its 'student' days, the left has therefore found itself unable to come to grips with the radicalisation opening up in the labour movement as a result of the Tories' onslaught on the unions. They have been unable to deal with a situation in which sectors of the unions play an increasingly decisive role not only in defending jobs and living standards but even the rights of oppressed layers (as when the TUC led the mass anti-Corrie rally last year.)

The reason for this is not hard to discover. As sectors of the labour movement begin to radicalise, they do not look as did the unattached radicals - to the peripheral organisations such as the SWP for a solution but to their traditional organisations: the unions and the Labour Party.

The thousands who marched on the anti-cuts demonstration last November or the hundred-thousand who supported the TUC Day of Action on March 9th look for leadership not to small groupings at this stage but to the party they built, vote for and finance: the Labour Party. They know that, in the real world, it remains the

only opposition to the present Tory government.



STRUGGLE

This turn towards the Labour Party is not accompanied, however, by support for Callaghan and his pro-right-wing policies. On the contrary, as layers of workers look towards their party, they seek to bring pressure on it to make it adopt policies in their interests.

It is this pressure from the trade unions which explains the major struggle opening up within the Labour Party at present and its major move towards the left. The decisive victories chalked up against Callaghan on the question of democracy at the last conference, the identification of the Labour Party with the mass actions opening up (such as the anti-cuts rally last November or the anti-Corrie rally), the formation of left-wing groupings such as the LCC are all indications of the response to this mass pressure.

This process - which is only in its embryonic stage - will deepen in the years ahead as Thatcher's hammer blows escalate the friction between left and right on issues of policy and party democracy. The fight for a new leadership is being hammered out within the unions and Labour party as ever-wider layers of workers seek to make it adopt policies in their interest and a democratic mechanism for ensuring those policies are carried out.

## IRONICAL

It is, ironically enough, this development which explains

most clearly the crisis of the left. Its disunity, loss of members and confusion stems from the fact that its sectarian policies place them outside the mainstream of radicalisation and impotent to influence it.

Unlike in the late sixties and early seventies, it is no longer the left which launch the mass struggles. It is not the 'left' which launched the mass anti-cuts demonstration or the mass rally against Prior's Employment Bill. It is those organisations - under mass pressure from their members - which groups like the SWP wrote off a few years ago as 'living corpses'.

What is even more significant is that even on those 'social' issues such as women's rights or the anti-racist question, the labour movement is increasingly coming to play a central role as it becomes clear that, without its backing, democratic rights cannot be maintained (let alone extended).

## BANKRUPT?

Far from learning from the process, many groups such as the SWP seem to be reaffirming their sectarian course. The major turn to the left in the Labour Party over the past few years - under mass pressure from the unions - is written off as mere 'reformist trap'.

It is, of course, true that for many leading figures on the left in the Labour party, the opposition to Callaghan stems less from considerations of socialism but pressure from the rank and file. It is also possibly true that many of them have shifted to the left in order to be in a better position to 'head-off' the radicalisation and direct it down safe 'parliamentary' channels.

This is not, however, the point. For thousands of workers — both inside the Labour Party and the unions — the new Labour left, headed by Benn, represents a political alternative to Callaghan to which they are increasingly adapting. It is not the SWP but Tony Benn who is seen by these figures as the major force for change.

## DENOUNCING?

Revealing the limitations of

# STEEL PICKETS cont. from P. 1



enable them to introduce their *Employment Bill* as a means of restoring 'law and order'. In reality of course, such a Bill is aimed at destroying elementary union rights to make victory almost impossible. As Winston Campbell again put it: "They want to smash flying and secondary pickets so that effective strikes become impossible".

## FIGHT-BACK

There can be no doubt that the Tories see the steel strike as a test case. Only if they win this one can they introduce their anti-union laws and bring the axe down on workers in a number of other plants.

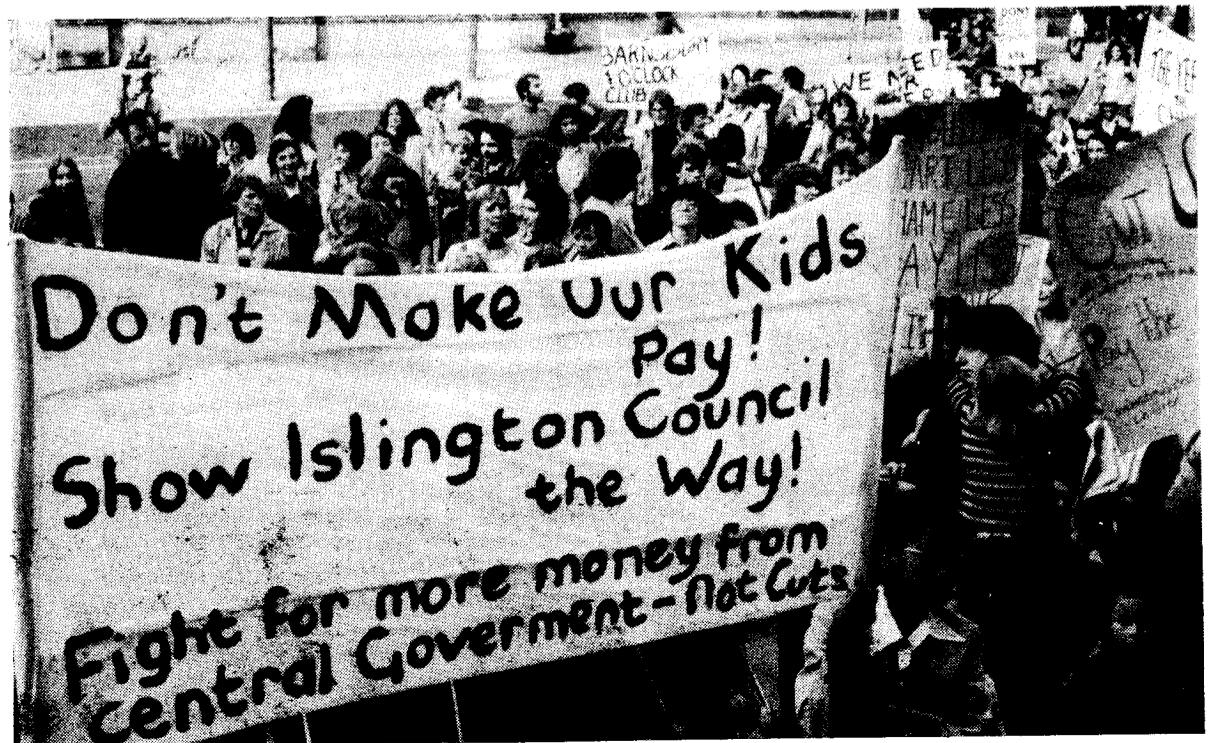
Thatcher faces quite a problem, however. The strike action by steelworkers — the first in over 50 years — has given them a first-hand experience of the Tory government, its courts and its police. It has made them more determined than ever to win a strike in defence of the right to work.

The best way to ensure that the struggle is won is to extend support throughout the labour movement. The support given by the miners — particularly those from South Wales and Yorkshire — showed the possibility of united action. In the coming period, that united action has to be extended still further. The steelworkers mustn't be left to stand alone.

## CAMPAIGN

The aim of the Tory campaign is quite clear. First of all, they want to intimidate the pickets by the use of press smears, the courts and open brutality. The police are being encouraged to use the same tactics on steel pickets as they used — only a year ago — on Black Youth in Southall who were beaten up in large numbers and then carted off to the courts.

Secondly, they want to whip up an anti-union hysteria that will



# & THE PARTY

Benn cannot be achieved by denouncing Benn sectarianly from the sidelines. Such ultra-left antics merely separate the SWP from those thousands of workers who are beginning to listen to his arguments and who see in the LCC a forum for debating out an alternative socialist strategy.

If the SWP believes that Benn is a 'reformist trap', then they should be a part of the labour movement fighting shoulder to shoulder with wider forces around concrete policies that can put Benn to the 'test'.

The sectarian attitude of counter-posing themselves to the Labour Party reveals, at the same time, a curious refusal to be involved in real struggle. If the SWP believes that Callaghan — and Benn — are leading working people down a blind alley, do they think they can solve the problem by abstaining from the fights against them in the Labour Party? Isn't their attitude towards the Labour Party letting both the right and — in their terms — the Benn left 'off the hook'?

## LEFT-WING

The key place for socialists is not out in the wilderness proclaiming the need for a 'revolutionary party'. It is in the Labour Party fighting to build a class-struggle left-wing which can unite the widest forces around an action programme opposed to the right-wing. Such a left does not have to be confined to passing 'pious resolutions' in party wards.

On the contrary, such a left should be active on the streets building the anti-Corrie demonstrations, the CARL rallies and the actions to defend union rights. It is only by rooting the struggle in the Labour Party around mass actions outside that it will be possible to build a serious opposition to the right-wing around living policies.

The sectarian antics of groups like the SWP — turning its back on the mass party of the working class and counterposing itself to it — will increasingly lead to its cutting itself off from radicalising layers in the period ahead. Its already declining membership will decline still further and lead it into growing isolation.

## UNITY

Surprisingly enough, it is only by adopting a serious orientation to the Labour Party that the

potential will be laid for overcoming the disunity that already exists among the left.

It is only by charting a non-sectarian course towards the Labour Party that socialists, in a common organisation and through comradely debate, can begin to work together and build up unity in action. In co-operating to build a class-struggle left-wing, with all different forces on concrete issues, the potential will be created for a more lasting unity.

Certainly by remaining on the fringes of the labour movement — isolated from the ongoing radicalisation — the fragmentation that currently exists will deepen rather than begin to be overcome.

## TEST

In the years ahead, the left will face an acid test. Everything will depend on whether they can begin to break out of their sectarian links with the past — the links with the student vanguard which still linger on — and develop a mass orientation towards the labour movement.

The attacks the Thatcher government is now launching will escalate in the coming years. The radicalisation this creates — as wide layers seek to defend their living standards and democratic rights — will increasingly be reflected in the Labour Party as part of an attempt to hammer out and test out all the leaderships.

For socialists to stand outside that process will not lead to a step forward. It will lead to a deepening crisis in which more forces will be lost, the divisions will deepen and the confusion increase.



## TORY LAW & ORDER

"The police arrived and they marshalled the waggons into a convoy & escorted them out of the plant. At this point, three pickets were arrested for criminal damage and resisting arrest..."

The police marshalled another 10 to 15 lorries into a convoy & forced the pickets to make a gang-way for them to pass through. During the course of this, several pickets were pushed to the ground and kicked by the police.

One picket was dragged by his ears through the police cordon into the gatehouse where 10 to 12 SPG were located. Apparently, the manager locked the door behind them.

The picket was then coshed and beaten by the police until he was unconscious. He was then dragged from the gatehouse, literally dumped in a police van and taken to Good Hope Hospital in Sutton Coldfield..

After examination, he was discharged into police custody by the doctor. Then he was whisked out of the back entrance to Erdington Police Station where he was charged with assaulting a police officer during the course and execution of his duty...."

(Report by an ISTC official at the picket lines at Pressed Fisher Steel, Castle Bromwich in Birmingham).

# STEEL STRIKE



## Terry Viney (NUT)

Last February, the Rotherham headquarters of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation were fire-bombed. For once, Bill Sirs — General Secretary — got it right when he put the blame for the arson attack fair and square at the government's door.

As he put it, Thatcher and her cronies were behind it for "leading people to believe that we are evil when we are only trying to find a reasonable way to get our just demands". Sirs' comment is dead on target.

The arson attack is the direct result of the hysteria being drummed up by the Tory government against the steelworkers in particular and trade unions in general. Arson attacks have gone hand in hand with denunciations in the press and police brutality on the picket lines.

## CONFRONTATION

Such a witch-hunt is clear proof of how desperately the Thatcher government needs to win the steel strike. Originally, they chose the steelworkers for a 'confrontation' because they were convinced they would provide no obstacle to pushing through their 'rationalisation' plans.

After all, the union leadership had shown its weak-kneed attitude in the past, agreeing to plant closures and erosion of working conditions that had already led to drastic cuts in the workforce.

Where better — they calculated — than in steel to implement their industrial strategy of making workers pay for the crisis? Fearful of taking on the miners — who had brought down one Tory government only a few years earlier — the steelworkers looked 'easy meat'.

## NEUTRAL?

It is pure hypocrisy for Joseph — and other Tory ministers — to pretend that they were in no way behind the dispute. It was Sir Keith Joseph who, last year, told Sir Charles Villiers to limit his pay offer to an insulting 4%. It was Sir Keith Joseph who was behind the announcement — the same week — that plants would have to be closed all over the country and the workforce slashed by 52,000.

Moreover, it was Sir Keith Joseph who deliberately chose not to take the £70 million offered by

the EEC as a means of 'delaying' closures and who refused a 'reappraisal' of the £450 million offered in the pay area.

The reasons for Joseph's actions are crystal-clear: the Tories were planning a confrontation with the steelworkers from the beginning. They calculated that, having defeated them, this would serve as a precedent to demoralise other workers destined to feel the Tory axe in the years to come.

## SUPPORT

But, as did Heath with the miners in 1974, they miscalculated. Far from crumbling before the Tory offensive, the reaction among steelworkers up and down the country was so strong that they forced their vacillating leadership into action.

Not only has the strike been 100% solid — among public sector steelworkers — but it has also drawn behind it the support of thousands of other unionists aware that defeat for the steelworkers places their heads on the block next.

Railway workers have refused to transport steel and dockers to handle it. Miners have instructed the NCB not to buy steel during the dispute and have (in South Yorkshire) held pit-head collections. Most important of all, thousands of workers — from the mines of South Wales and South Yorkshire — have manned the picket lines of private steel corporations as at Sheerness and Hadfields.

## WEAKNESS

Any weakness in the strike so far doesn't come from the rank and file whose determination to see it through has grown and which has encompassed ever-wider layers — as last February 28th when over 250,000 workers in South Wales downed tools in solidarity.

Any weakness that has emerged can be placed at the door of the leadership of the union movement. There can be no doubt that the TUC, if it had swung behind the steelworkers earlier, could have ended the dispute within the month. But instead of backing the steelworkers, it has attempted to undermine their struggle and prevent solidarity actions by other workers.

Isn't this what happened in South Wales when the Welsh TUC

called for a general strike from January 28th onwards to oppose closures? Far from backing this, the British TUC called on its Welsh cousin to postpone the call. More recently, it has declared a 'day of action' of its own on May 14th. But this is too little, too late. What the steelworkers need is solidarity action now.

## DETERMINATION

Despite the lack of support, however, the determination of the rank-and-file steelworkers is strong. The longer the strike goes on, the more resolute they become that the Tories will not succeed in 'rationalising' steel at their expense. The original demands of a decent wage have begun to extend to jobs.

As Brian Molyneux (Stockbridge and Tinsley Park Strike Cttee) put it: "We are for 20% index linked with no productivity strings at a national or local level, and no redundancies". If rank and file steelworkers stand firm on this, they will cut the ground out of any compromise Sirs may be tempted to make with the government.

For us, in the wider trade union movement, our task should be to fight within our unions to get the maximum solidarity possible. Such solidarity should range from fighting for financial contributions to the strike funds to supporting the pickets wherever possible. The steelworkers strike is our strike. If they lose, we're next in line.

## FOR 20% INDEX-LINKED!

NO REDUNDANCIES! WORK-SHARING WITH NO LOSS OF PAY!

## CAPITALISM: A BALANCE SHEET?

"What threatens mankind — and it is as large a peril as that — is a lethal and unpredictably volatile mixture of starvation, inflation, escalating unemployment, international monetary disorder, protectionism, major tension between countries competing for energy and food and raw materials, advancing deserts, over-fishing, pollution of the air and water, and the arms race".

(Sunday Times: 17.2.80)



# NO WITCH HUNTS!

Dave Mcleod (T&GWU)

On March 22nd - the day after Lord Underhill published his witch-hunting report into the Militant tendency - leading Labour right-wingers pitched into the internal debate in the Labour Party.

Adding his voice to the campaign being waged by figures such as Shirley Williams and David Owen, Neville Sanderson proclaimed that "...the worm has eaten so far into the apple that it is now rotten". His witch-hunting speech, which called for the expulsion of the Militant tendency, was published widely in the Tory press, anxious to support their right-wing allies.



## DESPERATION

The heat in Sanderson's attack is a measure of the desperation now creeping into the manoeuvres of the pro-Callaghan right-wing. While singling out the 'Militant' current for special venom, what they are really hitting out at is the overall shift to the left that has developed in the party in revulsion at

## TOTTENHAM TAKES LEAD!

Last January, Tottenham CLP passed the following resolution opposing the witch-hunt being launched against the 'Militant' tendency. *Socialist Action* urges all Labour Party members to back such a resolution & pass similar ones through the local branches.

*'Tottenham CLP, noting the present orchestrated campaign by the media, Tories and some right-wing sections of the Labour Party to start a witch-hunt against the Militant tendency,*

*\* strongly condemns this campaign as an attempt, by enemies of the labour movement, to cause disruption in the party and begin a counter-attack against the democratic gains of the Brighton conference;*

*\* affirms our opposition to any bans or proscriptions, and our support for the right of political tendencies to argue for their ideas in the Labour Party, which is the broad party of the British labour movement;*

*\* congratulates the NEC for its decision not to give way to this campaign and reopen the 'Underhill Report' case, & urges it to issue a clear statement on the lines of the points above'.*

Callaghan's pro-capitalist policies.

These policies - which lost Labour the last election - alienated thousands of Labour activists and supporters. Moreover, that alienation has deepened as it has become increasingly obvious that Callaghan has no intention of leading a real fight-back against the Thatcher government.

On the contrary, while limiting opposition to Parliamentary debate-scoring, he has directed his main criticism against those trade unionists - such as the steel pickets - fighting to defend their jobs and living standards.

## CONFERENCE

Opposition to the Callaghan leadership could be seen most clearly at the last conference where significant victories were chalked up against him on the question of democracy. To curb MPs calmly overturning conference decisions, mandatory re-selection was agreed upon and discussion even extended to the question of whether conference - and not the 300-odd MPs - should elect the party leader.

Moreover, since the conference, further moves towards internal democracy have occurred. The NEC for example, recently voted against the proposal to publish Underhill's witch-hunting report into 'infiltration' of the party. Even worse, for the right-wing, was the NEC decision to put that vote into practice by rejecting the expulsion of Ted Heslin, one-time EC member of the Oxford CLP and self-proclaimed Trotskyist.

Such moves show the increasing isolation of the right-wing as the mainstream of the party accepts the need for democratic internal debate as the way forward in deciding party policy. The fact that Eric Heffer, speaking at last month's YS rally could refer to Williams and her friends as a Tory 'fifth column in Labour's ranks' shows just how isolated they are becoming.

## DENUNCIATION

It is in response to this situation that Sanderson & his allies - backed up by the capitalist press - have embarked on their shrill denunciations of so-called 'marxist infiltration'. The aim of these 'denunciations' is to intimidate the broad left and warn them that - whatever differences they have with Callaghan - they have more in common with him than marxist 'authoritarians'.

Naturally enough, such denunciations have been launched under the fig-leaf of preserving 'democracy'. But what type of democracy is Sanderson and his media backers trying to preserve? The democratic right for a few MPs - conniving with unelected civil servants and bankers - to overturn Labour conference decisions and launch vicious attacks on working people who voted them to office?

The democratic right of these same MPs to censure and expel all those in the party who don't agree with them and who aren't prepared to sit quietly while they ram their anti-working class policies home? Is this the type of 'democracy' the right-wing are trying to defend?

## ALTERNATIVE

Unfortunately, for Sanderson & his friends, however, his scare

tactics are not likely to succeed.

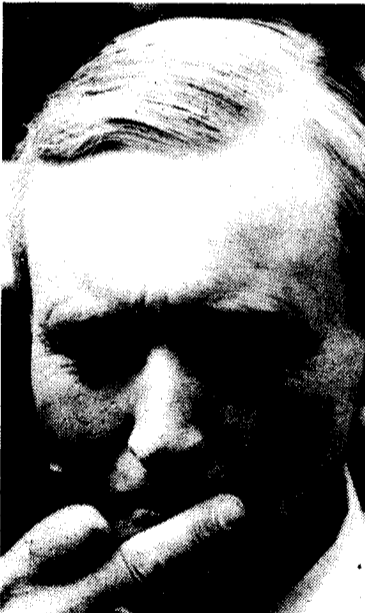
Labour party and trade union activists are - after the experience of the Callaghan government - beginning to view democracy in a different light. They are learning that it means MPs abiding by the wishes of those millions of members in the party which they represent.

Equally, it means ensuring, for all currents in the labour movement, the right to present its ideas for debate free from witch-hunts, gags and censure motions. Freedom of speech - while alien to Sanderson's notion of 'democracy' - is being seen by more and more labour activists as an elementary right.

## LOYALTY

Williams, and her allies on the right, might find such moves profoundly disturbing. But then, as the *Guardian* recently reported, they have already been preparing an escape route. Figures from Bill Rodgers to Roy Jenkins are, it seems, already sounding out 'moderate' opinion on the possibility of splitting from the party and either allying with the Liberals or setting up a third party.

Just how many potential Mayhews and Prentices there are sitting on the opposition benches does not figure in the *Guardian* report. What does figure is the clear contempt for democracy among Labour's oh-so-democratic right-wing. As far as they are concerned, if they can't dictate to the party, they will wash their hands of it and walk away.



As Eric Heffer so correctly said, just who are the 'fifth column' in Labour's ranks? The marxist left, which has remained loyal through thick and thin, or these pro-Liberal figures who are willing to split and compete against it if they can't railroad their policies through?

## DEEPER

Whether the right-wing decide to cut and run or not, one thing is certain. As the Tory attacks deepen in the period ahead, growing pressure will be exerted on the Labour Party to stand up and fight for working people who built it, finance it and vote for it.

And, as policies in the interests of working people are hammered out, the question of democracy will be becoming ever-more relevant. More and more activists will want to ensure that democratic decisions are not just voted for but implemented. If Mrs Williams and her friends find this deplorable, they are indeed in the wrong party.

## IRELAND:

# LOYALISTS CALL FOR CRACK DOWN



by GRAHAM WEIGHT

On March 15th, over 15,000 Ulster Loyalists marched through the streets of Belfast to demand sharper curbs from the Tory government against the republican movement.

Called by the bigoted Orange Order, the demonstration called for major changes in the law which has already been 'adjusted' (as in non-jury trials) to crack down on the democratic rights of the national minority. Chief among these is an attempt to make it a crime - punishable by imprisonment - to remain 'silent' under police interrogation.

## CRACK-DOWN

The demands for increased repression are not limited to the Orange bigots. They coincide with those of British army chiefs who have also called for more 'flexibility' in dealing with the nationalist forces.

The feeling in army circles was summed up by a major currently serving in the North who told the *Guardian*: "Some people believe in selective internment. I believe in selective assassination".

No doubt the army - and their Loyalist allies - are worried by the growing confidence and unity emerging among the oppressed minority as it seeks to struggle for its rights. This was reflected most clearly last February when over 10,000 marched through Armagh in protest against the treatment of prisoners denied political status in the North.

## NEUTRAL?

The convergence of thinking between the army and Orange bigots clearly gives the lie to the myth that British forces are in N. Ireland to 'keep the peace'. Far from being a neutral 'peace-keeping force', they are there to aid the loyalist forces in maintain-

ing a system which - for over 50 years - has discriminated and oppressed the Catholic minority.

Their main thrust - since their entry in 1969 under 'sunny Jim Callaghan' - has been to destroy the struggle for democratic rights launched by that minority by a mixture of intimidation, internment and murder (as on Bloody Sunday).

As Thatcher's much vaunted 'constitutional conference' falls apart - as so many other British initiatives have - the voice of the army chiefs and the Loyalist bigots could once again prevail and the repression in the area escalate.

## TROOPS OUT

This is why it has become increasingly vital that the campaign to remove the troops from Ireland be stepped up. The army is not there to prevent a blood-bath (as the popular media protest). Its very presence in the streets of Derry & Belfast - upholding a brutal and repressive system - constantly creates the possibility of one. Only removing the army and leaving the Irish free to determine their own future can escape continuing violence in the future.

Fighting to get the troops out means fighting to break the Labour leaders from their bi-partisan block with the Tories which, instead of defending democratic rights, actually ends up on the same side as the Orange bully-boys. This is true not only for Callaghan but also Benn who, despite his verbal support for a 'united Ireland', opposes the withdrawal of troops.

We have to fight to win the labour movement to grasp that, protecting the rights of the Irish people today is the surest way of protecting their own democratic rights tomorrow when the Tories begin to employ troops over here against strikers and other working class struggle.

# London Labour calls for troops out

by Phil Edwardes

On March 2nd, the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party voted, by a 10 to 1 majority, for troops out of Ireland. After a lively debate, a resolution was passed calling on the Parliamentary Labour Party to "commit itself to a policy of withdrawal from N. Ireland".

The movers of the resolution disassociated themselves sharply from the 'bi-partisan' policy of the Labour leaders who, over the past ten years, have aped the Tories in pouring troops into the 6 Counties to crush the right of

the nationalist minority to self-determination.

The resolution, it is true, did not call for a 'troops out now' position and no doubt its success was partly due to the fact that many were able to support it without committing themselves to an active campaign today.

Nevertheless, it was a major step forward in condemning the pro-Tory stance of the Labour leaders and calling for a serious debate in the labour movement on the question of Ireland. It is up to all socialists to echo its call on the NEC to open up a wide-ranging debate on the question in the period ahead.



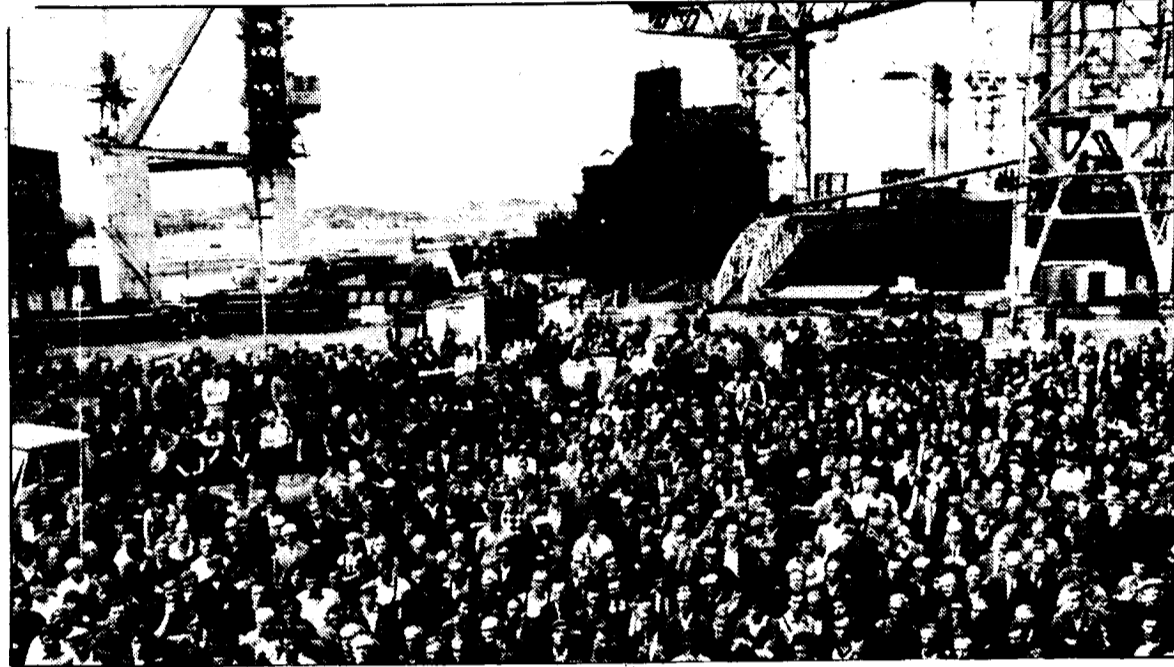
# JOBLESS TOTAL SOARS

Len Wagstaff (ASTMS)

When 100,000 steelworkers downed tools last January, it was not only in reply to BSC's insulting 4% wage offer. It was also in response to Charles Villiers' statement that 52,000 jobs were at stake. Areas like S. Wales were to be reduced to the industrial deserts they were at the

in search of new sources of labour. But capitalism cannot expand indefinitely without leading to a crisis. As each industry manufactures and sells more goods, markets inevitably become 'saturated'. There aren't enough customers. Production is cut back and workers begin to be laid off. Isn't this what is happening not

merely exports 'unemployment'. This will not only lead to workers in different countries competing with each other instead of uniting in a common struggle against an ailing system. It will also provoke similar measures in France, or W. Germany, leading to a 'trade war' in which workers of all countries lose out.



Mass action needed to stop closures

height of the 1930's slump.

The BSC is not alone, however, in trying to recoup its losses by closing plants and throwing thousands on the dole. German steelworkers, only last year, struck for 7 weeks against redundancies and, slightly earlier, French steelworkers led a 100,000 strong protest against plant closures. Nor has Japan been spared. 16 out of the 59 biggest furnaces have recently been shut down.

But what is behind these lay-offs? Is it because of a shortage of steel? Is it because raw materials are not reaching the plants? On the contrary thousands are being thrown on the scrap-heap because there is a 'glut' of steel in a rapidly shrinking market. And what is true of steel is also true — as the dole queues show — for engineering, textiles and coal.

## OVER-PRODUCTION

This problem of 'over-production' has its roots in the end of the post-war 'boom'. Building on the ashes of the war — and using the technology developed in the war years — industry expanded. More and more workers were hired as Tory ministers scoured the colonies

only in steel but, for example, in cars? Why is British Leyland threatening 40,000 workers with the sack? Because, as Michael Edwards recently put it, there are too many cars in a 'glutted' market. And these workers, when laid off, undergo a decline in purchasing power which means sales are cut back elsewhere. A vicious circle is set up and the economy spirals into depression.

## COMPETITION

In a situation of world recession, however, British industry is at a sharp disadvantage compared with its 'foreign' competitors. Its old-fashioned and outdated techniques mean that, in the sharper competition that develops for declining markets, it increasingly loses out.

The Thatcher 'solution' to this problem is worse than the disease. In its attempts to make industry more competitive — through rationalisation schemes, mergers and speed-up — it will only create more unemployment. The new techniques brought in will not improve working conditions but — as at British Steel — be used to throw thousands on the dole.

Moreover, financing these new schemes means diverting money from the social services — from health, education and housing — to help ailing firms. This will only increase the jobless total further as thousands of nurses, teachers and other public employees are thrown onto the dole queues.

## FIGHTBACK

The only alternative to the Tory strategy is to fight for bold socialist policies. Unfortunately, the TUC and Labour leaders — while opposing Thatcher's remedies — do not propose anything radically different. Calls for 'greater aid' to companies in distress and for 'import controls' are no solution to mounting dole queues.

'Import controls' — which the TUC is now tenuously pushing for — are an attempt to protect workers' jobs at the expense of workers in other countries. It

Likewise, calling upon the state to pour more money into ailing industries is equally utopian. Pouring in state aid to 'rationalise' such firms merely takes place at the expense of jobs. What happened in 1976 when the Labour government was urged to pour over £55 millions into Chrysler to stop it going bankrupt? It 'rationalised' itself at the expense of . . . 10,000 jobs!

## FIGHTBACK

The only way to begin the fight against unemployment is by starting from the premise that workers did not create the present crisis and should not have to pay for it. Why should thousands of workers be thrown on the scrap-heap because of inter-capitalist competition as recession looms?

A central demand should be that, where redundancies are planned, 'work-sharing' should be introduced with no loss of pay. Workers are not against the introduction of new machinery. On the contrary, it is to be welcomed if it benefits the workforce — who produce all the wealth — and does not lead to thousands of them being thrown on the scrapheap.

This demand, already popularised by many unions — such as the POEU — in the call for the 35-hour week, is central if jobs today are not to be slashed tomorrow. If industries maintain that they cannot afford present manning levels, then the demand should be raised for 'opening the books', so that representatives of the workforce can find the real state of the company's finances.

If the company is in difficult straits, then the call should be made for it to be nationalised under workers' control. Why should thousands be thrown on the dole because of the 'inefficiency' of a given employer?

Equally important, the unions must campaign and fight for those already on the dole. In order to unite the employed and unemployed in a common struggle, the unions should boldly campaign to increase — not decrease — public expenditure on schools, hospitals and other services which would provide jobs for tens of thousands of skilled workers at present sitting idle.

# LEYLAND WORKERS AFTER ROBINSON

Bob Swart (T&GWU)

Recently, Leyland workers voted 9 to 1 against strike action to reinstate victimised Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson. Robinson's dismissal is a major triumph for 'whizz kid' Michael Edwards who made it into a clear battle for power. What went wrong?

When Derek Robinson was sacked last November — for signing a pamphlet attacking Leyland management's 'recovery' plan — the response of the workforce was immediate. The very next day, Longbridge closed down. Canley, Castle Bromwich and Brown's Lane had walk-outs and mass meetings were held in many other plants.

The size of the action was so great that even the press — which was solidly behind Edwards' move — began to have doubts that he may have miscalculated in taking on such a key figure as Robinson.

What undermined this militant action was, quite simply, the intervention of the AUEW Executive. Refusing to make the strike official — despite requests from the workforce and other unions, such as the T&GWU — they ordered the men back to work and announced their own inquiry into Robinson's activities.

## DISRUPTIVE

They then sat on the issue for over two and a half months to allow the steam to go out of the affair. When they did eventually publish their findings, it was in such a way as to provide Leyland management with enough ammunition to keep Robinson sacked.

While critical of Leyland for sacking Robinson — and calling for his re-instatement — the bulk of the union report turned its fire against their own convenor. The three-person inquiry team criticised Robinson for 'disruptive action', said he had no right to sign the pamphlet and concluded that he had been guilty of 'serious failings and lack of responsibility in relation to his duties as convenor'.

Edwards actually made use of much of this criticism by reprinting it on leaflets management handed out to the workforce in an attempt to fuel a shop floor resistance to any form of 'reinstatement strike'.

## SURPRISE

Moreover, while the report called for strike action to get Robinson his job back, it carefully underlined the fact that it would understand if the workforce took no action and that no disciplinary measure would be used against them.

Naturally enough, after undermining the initial response to Robinson's sacking, sitting on a report for almost three months and then making the bulk of it a criticism of their own convenor, the Duffy leadership were hardly spurring their members into action.

This was reinforced by the fact that they warned that strike action would be 'extremely damaging' and that it would, in any case, be limited to the Longbridge plant alone.

## KILL

The Edwards' management, sensing the demoralisation among the workforce from this lack of leadership, moved quickly in for the kill. Just

before the vote on the Executive's proposals was due to be held, they announced that 50,000 jobs might have to be laid off because of the low sales performance of BL cars.

This threat was intended as a clear warning to workers in Longbridge that, if they were to strike, its impact would be negligible and they might not be re-employed anyway.

Is it any wonder that, with jobs at risk and with a union leadership that couldn't even defend that of one convenor — let alone 50,000 workers — the Leyland workforce voted overwhelmingly to stay at work?

## THREAT

There can be no doubt that the dismissal of Robinson is a real blow for rank-and-file organisation in Leyland. It is already being used by a victorious management to prepare for even stronger attacks on the workforce.

The recent deal proposed by Edwards — a meagre 5-10% increase coupled with a whole series of productivity strings — is clearly designed to erode still further union rights and working conditions. Clearly, Edwards sees the back-down over the Robinson dismissal as the 'green light' to a management offensive.

In order to ram home his proposals, he is still keeping the threat of mass redundancies and plant closures over the heads of



the workforce.

## POLICY

Despite the Robinson dismissal, however, Leyland workers obviously do not intend to take this lying down. In a recent ballot of the members, over 90% voted for a clear rejection of the deal.

What Leyland workers lack is not militancy but a clear policy to defend jobs and working conditions — something that the AUEW Executive, and even the shop stewards Combine headed by Robinson, were unable to provide.

Indeed one of the reasons Leyland workers refused to strike in favour of Robinson is that, quite simply, they had no answer to the threats of plant closures he was dangling over their heads.

These answers have been provided by the steelworkers who have been faced by the same problems only on a bigger scale. Instead of backing down before closure threats, they have declared mass action in favour of a decent living wage and in favour of work-sharing (with no loss of pay) against redundancies.

## New from Pathfinder:

What Working People Should Know About the Dangers of Nuclear Power





# STOP THATCHER'S WAR DRIVE!

Last month, Carter's call for a boycott of the Olympic Games — due to be held in Moscow this summer — was endorsed by the House of Representatives. The boycott 'tactic' is merely the latest move in the anti-Soviet witch-hunt launched by Washington since the intervention in Afghanistan.

It has been backed by the cutting of trade and diplomatic links with Moscow, threats to re-introduce the 'draft' and calls to boost NATO. Naturally enough, such sabre-rattling has won the support of Carter's most strident ally — Margaret Thatcher — who has herself floated the idea of bringing back conscription.

The attempt to whip up anti-Soviet hysteria has, of course, been carried out on both sides of the Atlantic under the guise of protecting the 'independent Islamic people' of Afghanistan from Moscow's 'expansionist policies'.

## DEMOCRACY?

If such moves were not so dangerous, they would be laughable. Is it really credible that a government which spent over 10 years pounding the Vietnamese into the ground is concerned with the 'right' of the Afghan people to self-determination?

Is it really believable that governments which have propped up the military butchers of Chile and



military spending and a 'pliant' public opinion will, it considers, equip it for more resolute action against liberation struggles that challenge its interests and enable it to intimidate more openly workers' states like the USSR.

Another key aim of the anti-Soviet drive is to defuse growing opposition, in the capitalist countries, to attacks on living standards and democratic rights as the recession begins to bite.

Holding down wages and slashing social services can be 'justified' by the need to pour money into defence spending to secure the nation against Soviet 'expansionism'. Isn't this exactly what Thatcher is doing? At the very time of lopping millions off health, education and housing, she has proposed 'upping' defence spending (on Polaris missiles) to the tune of £4000 million.

## DEFENSIVE

Unfortunately, far from challenging the cold war hysteria being whipped up by a Carter or Thatcher, Labour leaders have meekly gone along with it. Jim Callaghan and other front-bench spokespeople have been only too willing to add their voices to the chorus denouncing the USSR intervention as a 'threat to world peace'.

It is not, however, the USSR which is a threat to world peace. Despite Moscow's bureaucratic methods, its intervention in Afghanistan last December was motivated on defensive grounds. It was to protect the Amin government's progressive social measures from being overturned by US-backed reactionary guerrillas.

The real threat to world peace comes from London and Washington now so energetically beating the war drums. The aim of such a campaign is clearly to prepare the ground for military action abroad and to undermine, at home, mounting opposition to their anti-working class policies.

## THRUST

**It is for this reason that socialists completely oppose the hysterical calls in the press on the USSR to withdraw its troops. Whatever differences may be held with the bureaucratic methods of the Kremlin, the advance of the Red Army was to defend the gains of the Amin regime against a right-wing backlash.**

In a civil war — such as the one developing in Afghanistan today — socialists must take a clear position. Certainly, they do not call upon forces aiding the fight against reaction to withdraw from the battlefield and leave it open to US-backed monarchists and other reactionary forces.

# AFGHANISTAN

What attitude should socialists take to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan? Are the Labour leaders — and certain forces on the left — correct to call for their withdrawal as a violation of Afghan rights? Or, on the contrary, is the intervention a boost to the Afghan revolution. Below, Pete Henning takes up the issue which is being debated through the labour movement.

The pro-Moscow PDPA came to power in 1978 on the backs of growing unrest with the repressive Daud regime. Despite its narrow base of support — it had only 10,000 members at the time of the uprising — it pushed rapidly ahead with a programme of social measures to break the grip of the Afghan landlords.

Such measures included land reform, a literacy campaign, legal recognition of trade unions and the introduction of elementary rights for women. Taraki, the new PDPA president, announced the programme as the beginning of a 'national democratic revolution'.

## OPPOSITION

Naturally enough, the measures introduced by the PDPA met with deep hostility from those layers in Afghanistan whose privileges were undermined. Landlords, usurers, former military officers and drug peddlers began to organise armed resistance.

Operating from bases in neighbouring Pakistan, these 'freedom fighters' (as Washington dubbed them) became a growing threat. Hit-and-run attacks were made against government offices, military outposts, schools, villages and even mosques. Anyone favouring the regime's measures became a potential target.

Such actions were not only confined to outlying areas. In mid-March 1979, rightist forces provoked a brief rebellion in Herat, the third largest city, in which 120 PDPA members and their families were massacred. Smaller armed actions were

seizure of power — when only 'controlled' demonstrations were promoted — and in the way they tried to push through their programme of reform.



Right-wing guerrillas backed by Washington

carried out in Kabul itself.

## BACKING

From the outset, these forces won the unbridled support of Washington, deeply concerned over the Afghan development. A little more than a month after the 1978 uprising, 270 generals, admirals and diplomats met at the NATO Atlantic Command in Annapolis to assess the impact of the revolution and to discuss a possible response.

The first step was to cut off all economic aid to the new regime. The second was to mount a mass propaganda campaign to portray it as 'repressive' (carefully hiding all mention of the progressive measures it was introducing). The third was to begin aiding the reactionary forces based in Pakistan (under the benevolent eye of the military dictator General Zia).

According to the Washington-based magazine *Counterspy*, US aid to these guerrilla forces included financial support, equipment and the use of CIA members in the training of combatants.

## INADEQUATE

Faced with this growing menace, the PDPA regime proved itself to be quite inadequate in defending the Afghan revolution. The leaders of the party — Taraki, Karmal & Amin — were Stalinist by training and experience. Like their mentors in Moscow, they thought the revolution should be 'contained' within a national democratic stage (which meant tying the working class to a bloc with the 'progressive' sectors of the ruling class).

What this meant in practice was that the PDPA regime constantly sought to limit the revolutionary development within the 'scheme' they had set out. They were frightened of mass mobilisations of the workers and peasants in case their actions 'got out of hand' and went further than intended. This was evident both in the

## LIMITED

There can be no doubt that these reforms were progressive in their attempt to break the back of the old land-owning class in Afghanistan. Instead of relying on the masses to carry them out, however, the PDPA government used the forces of the state. This bureaucratic method only alienated many workers and peasants who became open to the propaganda of the 'rebel' forces.

Under the literacy campaign, for example, PDPA activists who went into the villages to organise classes immediately tried to introduce co-education without regard to the problem of so doing in areas where women were traditionally segregated from men in public life.

Similarly, in carrying out land reform, insufficient attention was paid to organising the provision of agricultural assistance to the new peasant owners who had previously relied on landlords for seed, fertilisers etc.

## REPRESSIVE

Morgover, the regime resorted more and more to repression to combat any forms of dissent. Criticism of bureaucratic methods used was met with dismissal from posts, imprisonment or execution. The Aqua, a secret police force assisted by Soviet advisers, was set up to deal with any opposition.

This lack of democracy — combined with the bureaucratic methods of the regime — alienated a large amount of potential support and ensured that the popularity of the PDPA remained narrow.

Its ability to combat the reactionary forces was further weakened by the intense factional struggle that emerged within its ranks and which sapped its morale. It was as part of these struggles that, in 1979, Taraki was deposed and Amin came to power.

## DISSENT IN ITALIAN CP

Leaders of the Italian CP are meeting wide-spread anger from rank and file members over their 'condemning' of the Soviet decision to use troops against reactionary forces in Afghanistan.

The CP leaders call the intervention a 'violation' of the principle of self-determination. But their real considerations are less lofty. As the *New York Times* pointed out, the chances of the Italian Stalinists getting into the government "...will depend largely on convincing non-Communist Parties that they are independent from Moscow".

This is the real reason behind their position which they have tried to force down the throats of the party mass base. Letters to the CP daily are said to be running 5 to 1 against the leadership position. These worker militants joined the CP because they were looking for a party that stood on the side of the oppressed against capitalism.

Their revulsion at the CP leaders' pro-imperialist line — as on Afghanistan — will, in the period ahead, open their minds increasingly to those who do oppose class-collaboration and imperialism.



Brazil, backed the apartheid regime in South Africa and kept an army of occupation in N. Ireland are worried about the 'democratic rights' of the Afghan workers and peasants?

Hardly. Concern for human rights is the furthest thing from the mind of Carter and Thatcher as they seek to build up a cold-war atmosphere against the Soviet Union. Their concerns are more sinister.

## WORLD COP

One of the main aims of the anti-Soviet propaganda spilling out of the press at present is to undermine the mass anti-war feeling that grew up in the USA (and elsewhere) in the late 60s in response to Washington's genocidal war in Vietnam.

The depth of this anti-war feeling has been a major handicap to US governments in their role as 'world cop' over the past decade or so. It has helped prevent them directly intervening against liberation struggles around the world — as in Iran, Nicaragua & Zimbabwe — which threaten imperialist interests.

By trying to pose the USSR as an aggressive power, it hopes to change this opinion and free its hands on the world arena. Increased



# The facts

## MOSCOW

As the PDPA regime grew increasingly unable to deal with the rightist offensive, it appealed to Moscow for support. While the latter was willing to despatch military and economic advisers, it refused to commit itself openly at first in the hope that the reactionary revolt would be crushed.

By late 1979, however, when it became obvious that the PDPA regime was unable to deal with the situation – and that an openly pro-imperialist regime might be established on its borders – it decided to act.

Deposing Amin in typical Stalinist fashion, as a 'scapegoat', it sent in 70,000 troops in December 1979 to crush the incipient take-over which it clearly saw as a threat to its own borders.

## SUPPORT

There can be no doubt that the bureaucratic methods employed by the Stalinist PDPA was serious hindrance to the defence of the Afghan revolution. There can equally be no doubt that the way Moscow intervened in the situation also hindered its defence.

The deposing and execution of Amin as a 'CIA agent' and his replacement by Karmal has obviously made it easier for Washington to whip up a campaign to politically isolate the USSR and the new Afghan regime.

Nevertheless, despite Moscow's bureaucratic methods and conservative motives, the dispatch of troops to Afghanistan was an important aid to the revolutionary process there.

## RED ARMY

The aim of the Red Army was not to destroy the social gains of the workers and peasants but to defend – in however bureaucratic a fashion – those gains against reactionary forces backed by Washington.

Karmal's new government has made it clear that it intends basing itself on the programme of the April revolution and to defend the social gains that have already been achieved.

Moreover, a campaign has been conducted to convince the population that arbitrary arrests will be halted and that 'bureaucratic mistakes', made in the implementation of the reform programme in the past, will be corrected. Clearly, these measures are intended to win the new regime wider support.

## WITHDRAWAL

It is clear that, despite the press hysteria in the West, the entry of the Red Army halted in its tracks a mass pro-imperial-

## ABSTENTION

The situation that exists in Afghanistan today is not entirely new. A similar situation arose in the late 30s when the Kremlin 'invaded' Finland.

Outrage at this invasion was not confined to Western governments but also infiltrated the socialist movement who called for the withdrawal of the Red Army.

Trotsky, who analysed the situation in some detail, drew different conclusions which would be worth the study by those on the left today who call (in however muted a form) for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Warning of a tendency to 'abstentionism under the cover of ultra-radical slogans', he wrote:

"In order to punish the Stalinists for their questionable crimes, the resolution... does not mention by so much as a word that the Red Army in Finland expropriates large landowners and introduces workers' control while preparing for the expropriation of the capitalists.

Tomorrow the Stalinists will strangle the Finnish workers. But now they are giving – they are compelled to give – a tremendous impetus to the class struggle in its sharpest form. The leaders of the opposition construct their policy not upon the 'concrete' process that is taking place in Finland, but upon democratic abstractions and noble sentiments.

The Soviet-Finnish war is apparently beginning to be supplemented by a civil war in which the Red Army finds itself at the given stage in the same camp as the Finnish petty bourgeois and the workers, while the Finnish army enjoys the support of the owning classes, the conservative labour aristocracy and the Anglo-Saxon imperialists.

The hopes which the Red Army awakens among the Finnish poor will, unless international revolution intervenes, prove to be an illusion; the collaboration of the Red Army with the poor will only be temporary... We know all this now and we openly say it as a warning.

But in this concrete civil war that is taking place on Finnish territory, what concrete position must the concrete partisans of the Fourth International take? If they fought in Spain in the Republican camp, in spite of the fact that the Stalinists were strangling the socialist revolution, all the more must they participate in Finland where the Stalinists are compelled to support the expropriation of the capitalists".

(In *Defence of Marxism*, Pathfinder Press, p. 57-58)

ist movement which could have overturned all the progressive measures introduced to date.

To continue the defence of the revolution – and to definitively destroy the US-backed reactionaries – much more needs to be done. Above all, the workers and peasants will have to be mobilised and organised to advance their class interests against those of imperialism (and the local exploiters).

Any effort by the new Karmal regime or Moscow to hold back the revolutionary process will only further endanger the gains already made.

# EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS Industrial Workers



"Why do socialists single out industrial workers as the most decisive sector of the working class?", writes P. Whitlock of N. London. "Why are they considered more important than white collar unionists who have been much more active in the fight-back against the Tory cuts?"

The answer to Cde Whitlock's question is simple. In the political struggle against capitalism, certain sectors of the working class have far more power than others. Steelworkers, for example, have far more leverage than teachers – a point that has been evident during the recent steel strike.

Although millions of workers have taken action against the Tory cuts – teachers, civil servants etc – it has been the action by the 100,000 strong ISTC which has had the biggest impact and brought the government up short.

## ECONOMIC

From a purely economic point of view, there are two aspects to this greater power. The first is simply that, without the operation of basic industries, the economy of any modern country will rapidly grind to a halt.

You have only to cast your mind back to the 1974 national coal strike – which brought down the Heath government – to see the truth of this. Within weeks of the strike being declared, power stations, steel plants and factories – all dependent on coal or coke – were threatened with closure.

Without the production of coal – or steel, machine tools etc – everything comes to a stop. If coal is not dug, power stations close down. If steel is not produced, car factories lie idle. If the trains do not run, goods cannot be transported.

## PROFIT

Moreover, these basic industries also represent the biggest single source of profits for the British ruling class. They are the main source of all those revenues that are used to keep the government, service and 'professional' sectors of the economy going.

Because of this, as the ruling class seeks to increase its profits and to improve its competitive position on the world market by driving down wages, the brunt of its attack must increasingly be directed against the industrial workers.

The attack by Thatcher on the wages & jobs of workers in the service sector – which we are witnessing at present – represents only the preliminary skirmishes in the class battle that is shaping up.

## POWER

But, just as the industrial workers represent the main target of the ruling class, they are also in the best position to resist. This is true not only because of their economic weight but also because of political considerations.

Workers in basic industry, for example, tend to be concentrated in huge factories to a far greater extent than workers in other sectors of the economy. When 20,000 steelworkers are brought together in a plant, it magnifies their social weight and makes it easier for them to organise collectively.

This aspect of the power of the industrial working class has been furthered by the historical fact that basic industry tends to be more heavily unionised than other sectors of the economy and has a much stronger 'militant' tradition.

## REGIONS

Another point is that industrial unions such as the AUEW or the NUM wield decisive power not only in specific industries but also within whole regions of the country.

During the steelworkers' strike recently, for example, all of South Wales was directly involved in one way or another. There was hardly any person who didn't have a direct personal stake in the outcome of the strike (in terms of their job prospects).

That's why, of course, the South Wales TUC was able to call a mass strike in support of the steelworkers on January 28th which brought out over 250,000 workers. Other solidarity actions took place in other parts of the country by workers in sympathy with the steel strikers.

## DEFENCE

Of course, there is nothing new about the strategic weight of the industrial working class, as Marx and Engels pointed out over a century ago. This weight will become increasingly important, however, in the period ahead in defending the rights and living standards of all workers against attacks from the Thatcher government.

Capitalism is no longer offering increased prosperity. Instead, we are told that growing unemployment, cutbacks in social services, lower wages and worse working conditions are necessary if British industry is to compete successfully with its foreign competitors.

This line is being pushed by governments throughout the capitalist world. And just as the crisis forces the employers to turn on workers to bail them out, so the world working class is being forced to defend itself. Key among the working class will be the power and strength of the industrial workers.

by DAVE MCLEOD



Dear Cde,

I was very impressed by Graham Weight's article on the LPYS in the last issue of *Socialist Action*. In my opinion, one of the big problems of the YS is that it has never really got involved in campaigns which can attract young people.

Graham mentions the need for the YS to become a campaigning organisation, taking up issues such as the cuts, women's abortion rights, nuclear power and Ireland. I would agree, but I would add another which I think is becoming increasingly important: youth unemployment.

Like him, I think that if the YS were to become involved in these issues, it could grow very rapidly. Unfortunately, to do this will mean a big struggle against the Militant tendency which presently dominates the organisation.

Yours comradely,  
PL (Richmond)

Dear Cde,

In the last issue of *Socialist Action*, Dave McLeod took Cde Misrahi roundly to task for his position of supporting 'rate increases'.

## POST BAG

While I would agree with Cde McLeod's analysis, I think it was unfair to publish such an article without allowing readers a chance to see the article that was being criticised.

In matters of debate, readers should always be allowed to see the two views and to make up their minds on the merits of the argument.

Yours comradely,  
Dave Purser (North London)

Dear Cde,

I read your article on Afghanistan in the last issue and was frankly amazed. It read like something out of *Soviet Weekly* rather than out of a paper supposedly defending democratic socialism.

Do you really believe that the Red Army was sent into Afghanistan at the request of the government to defend the 'democratic' constitution against the 'reactionary' forces of the 'feudal' lords?

It is a pity that the paper is not more open to the views of its readers. I would be glad to see a more balanced and open discussion of these issues.

troops was a violation of the rights of the Afghan people. They were sent merely to defend the Soviet borders and to gain access to the 'warm waters' of the Indian Ocean.

While I do not support the hysterical outbursts in the Western press, I equally do not support apologetics for the Kremlin bureaucrats who gave up defending working people years ago.

Yours comradely,  
Steve Alderman (Brighton)

Dear Cde,

I'm glad to see that at least one paper – *Socialist Action* – didn't join in the hypocritical chorus denouncing the Soviet Union for intervening in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the press hysteria even seems to have contaminated sections of the left who should have been campaigning for the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

I would be glad to see a more balanced and open discussion of these issues.



# Socialist Action

## Zimbabwe:

# Which Way for ZANU?



The election results in Zimbabwe in early March were a stunning victory for the liberation forces. Despite the manoeuvres and intimidation organised against them, Robert Mugabe's ZANU won 63% of the vote (57 seats) which has given them a clear majority in the new Parliament.

This victory was a major set-back for the Thatcher government - & its white racist allies in Salisbury and Pretoria - who had seen the election as a last-ditch attempt to contain the growing struggle for Black independence and majority rule.

After Smith and his 'puppet' Muzorewa had shown themselves unable to stem the growing pressure, the Lancaster House accords were clearly aimed at allowing Imperialism a chance to manoeuvre a 'safe' government into power.

### WEIGHTED

From the start, the dice were clearly weighted against the Patriotic Front. Not only was the white minority guaranteed a disproportionate number of seats

in the new parliament (20 out of 100) and continued control over key areas of power such as the police, army and civil service.

Worse still was the fact that - during the elections themselves - the liberation fighters were expected to report to 'assembly points' while the white security forces - openly backing Muzorewa - were free to roam at will.

What this meant, in concrete terms, was a systematic intimidation of the Black population, including the murder of liberation fighters in cold blood, attempted assassination of ZANU leaders and repression of Black voters on a mass scale (as reported by the *Catholic Institute for International Relations*).

### NEUTRAL?

Lord Soames, the British governor sent out to ensure 'fair play' during the elections, encouraged this intimidation of ZANU and its mass following. He himself gave permission for breaking up ZANU electoral rallies & banned ZANU candidates from running

in the elections on trumped-up charges.

The aim of these methods was crystal-clear. It was to isolate and discredit Mugabe in order to manoeuvre into power a coalition government - possibly headed by Joshua Nkomo - which would be more 'pliable' to British interests and less likely to act as a spur to the struggle for Black rights in neighbouring South Africa.

Even the United States - no lover of liberation movements! - felt compelled to support a UN motion moved by Black African states condemning British bias in Zimbabwe.

### BREAK-THROUGH

Undoubtedly, the fact that the liberation forces won such a resounding victory - despite the intimidation campaign - is a major defeat for Imperialist ambitions in the area. It clearly reveals the mass support for what the Tory press labelled as 'isolated terrorists' and will greatly strengthen those forces in Namibia & South Africa fighting the apartheid monster there.

While ZANU has won a major victory, however, it still has a long way to go to satisfy the aspirations of its mass base in the towns and in the bush. The liberation struggle was not only for Black majority rule but for land redistribution, the right to a job and decent living standards for everyone.

Such gains cannot be won without coming to grips with the economic power structure still concentrated in the hands of the white 3% of the population (and their Imperialist backers). Until the land and industries are taken over - and run in the interests of the mass of people - the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe will remain uncompleted.

### THREAT

What stands in the way of such moves is clearly the Rhodesian security forces - backed up by the South African military machine on the borders - who are now watching the Mugabe government with an eagle's eye.

This almost certainly explains why Mugabe, even after winning a decisive electoral victory, has gone out of his way to assure the white minority that radical policies will not be introduced. Promising that private industry will remain untouched, he has included 2 white representatives in his cabinet and appointed General Walls as overall commander of the integrated armed forces.

He has also met with the South African Foreign Minister to reassure his neighbours that the government will offer no aid or sanctuary for anti-apartheid liberation fighters wishing to form bases in Zimbabwe.

### DANGERS

Mugabe's ultra-cautious moves - playing down ZANU's radical election programme - are clearly motivated by this fear of a white back-lash backed up by the armed might of the South African war machine. The 3% white minority may have lost the election, but they haven't stopped holding the Black majority to ransom yet.

However Mugabe's government opts tactically to deal with this situation in the period ahead, one thing remains clear. Sooner or later, the Zimbabwean people will demand that their hopes & aspirations - aroused during the long war of liberation - are met.

They will demand that the land the white settlers stole from them - and the resources they, and their Imperialist backers, have monopolised - are returned to them and used for the benefit of all people. They will demand that Black majority rule means majority rule and not the economic domination of a tiny, white minority. Indications that this is already beginning to happen can be seen in the wave of militant strikes among Blacks for higher wages.

In this sense, the struggle in Zimbabwe is far from over. For us, in Britain, as the tensions develop, our central task should be campaigning in the labour movement to ensure that the Tory government can never again intervene in Zimbabwe to back the forces of reaction.

Pete Marais

## Let Anwar's Children In!

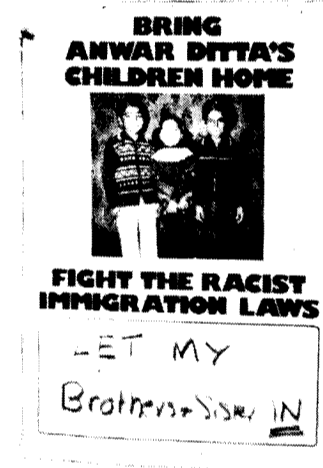
Jenny Dodd (CAIL Sec)

Anwar Ditta was born in Birmingham and brought up in Rochdale. She went to Pakistan as a child where she grew up and had three children. In 1975, together with her husband, she returned to Rochdale - leaving her children with a grand-parent until they found work and a job. When they sent for their children - some time later - they were refused entry on the grounds that they could not prove that they were, in fact, the parents.

### EVIDENCE

The fact that Anwar has clear documentary evidence - birth certificates, medical records and photos - to show that these are her children cuts no ice with the Home Office.

The reason is clear, Anwar's children are Black. While white immigrants are free to enter the country, the Tory government is prepared to use every trick in the book - even tearing families apart - to keep



Black people out of Britain.

### CAMPAIGN

Anwar's heartless treatment, however, has spurred a growing campaign against the Home Office decision. On February the 1st, CAIL helped organise a picket of the Home Office to hand in a mass petition protesting the situation. On March 1st, several hundred people - coming from as far afield as Leeds and Liverpool - marched through Rochdale calling on Raisin to let Anwar's children in.

Further actions are planned, included a major demonstration in Manchester on April 26th and a protest outside the Appeal Court in Manchester on April 28th when Anwar's case comes up again.\*

### ISOLATED

Anwar's case is not, of course, unique. She is just one victim of the racist 1971 Immigration Act. Now that Whitelaw's proposals toughening the Act still further have been passed, thousands more innocent victims will be created.

Fighting for Anwar's children to be allowed in the country is an immediate priority of anti-racists. Fighting to repeal the 1971 Act is also central if thousands more Black people are not to suffer under its racist curbs.

\* For further information, contact: Anwar Ditta Defence Cttee (Rochdale 39832)

## DEFEND OUR UNIONS! cont. from page 1

anti-union moves on May 14th.

It will need more than words, however, to stop these proposals going through. What determined the defeat of Heath's *Industrial Relations Act* was not brave words issued from Congress House but mass action - notably that of the miners

- in the streets.

It is such action that is needed today and not the trips by TUC members back and forth to Downing Street to 'negotiate' with Jim Prior. We have to make it clear to our leaders that, as far as we are concerned, none of our hard-fought

for rights are 'negotiable'.

### CAMPAIGN

Rather than discussing with the Tories, what the TUC should be doing is preparing mass resistance to the Prior proposals. We should call on them to let the government know that any attempt to use these proposals against trade unionists will meet mass opposition.

Moreover, Labour leaders should also not be let off the hook. Will they also agree to support mass action against Prior's attempts to curb the unions? Will they also guarantee to repeal these laws (if passed) when they get back into office?

It is resolutions along these lines that need to be urgently pushed through trade union and Labour Party branches in the coming weeks and months.

**HANDS OFF THE UNIONS!  
MASS RESISTANCE AGAINST  
TORY CURBS!  
MAKE LABOUR PLEDGE TO  
REPEAL THE ACT!**

## FUND DRIVE

Last month, our fund drive netted £64.50 This was quite a bit short of the previous month and means that - unless more cash comes in - we won't reach our £2000 target by the end of the year.

We therefore urge all supporters and readers to send in a donation for the March issue - however small. It all helps.

Donations received from:

MR (Sussex)	.... £5.00	P.B. (Birmingham)	.... £10.00
Kenny Webster		JR (South London)	.... £4.00
(S. London)	.... £5.00	J.H. (Stoke)	.... £4.50
Steve Randell		Carol Cooke	
(S. London)	.... £1.00	(Margate)	.... £2.00
Mike Rodney		Frank Viney	
(N. London)	.... £20.00	(Bromley)	.... £2.00
Ralph Mak		Liz Easton	
(Chelmsford)	.... £10.00	(Wimbledon)	.... £1.00