

Socialist Challenge

DEBATE OF THE DECADE



'Come on, Bill, let's bring down the Tories'

'Steady on, Arthur, there's another 4 years to the next election...'

**INSIDE: 8 page supplement
REFORM OR REVOLUTION?**

*** NAMIBIAN URANIUM — the skeleton in Tony Benn's cupboard (page 7)**

*** OUR COMMON CAUSE — why the International Marxist Group will be fighting for a fusion with the Socialist Workers Party (pages 10 and 11)**

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions offer solutions that are in the interests not of the workers but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character, grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

- To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Eurocommunist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us.

- I am interested in more information about activities in my area.
- I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs. (Delete if not applicable)

Name.....

Address.....

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HOME NEWS

Maggie, Maggie,



Steelworkers say '20 per cent — No surrender'

AMY, Jackie, and Paula are steelworkers for the British Steel Corporation at Stocksbridge in Sheffield, and are members of the ISTC. They spoke about the role of women in the strike.

Paula works in the typing pool, Jackie is a clerk-typist, and Amy works in the steel strip department.

'There are three shifts in the strip department, where we prepare steel for making into razor blades. There are about 40 women altogether, but on my shift there are only 14 women and about a hundred men. All the women are behind the strike,' Amy explains.

'About 20 women do regular picket duty in the Sheffield area. We go down to Barnsley quite regularly, and we do Hayden Nilos, a private steel firm.'

Paula and Jackie went down to Sheerness on the Women Against Scabs contingent and were shocked by the violence of the police. 'We didn't see the anti-strike women through — either they stayed away or the police kept us apart. Before that they'd been down there every day shouting names at the pickets and even throwing tomatoes.'

'When we heard that we thought we better get some of our women down there to give them a bit of the same. But they didn't turn up.'

Although women from Stocksbridge were behind the strike it had been difficult getting office workers on to the picket lines. Jackie and Paula were about the only two who did regular picket duty. Some efforts had been made to contact the wives of male steelworkers but only a few had played any role on the picket lines.

As to their attitude to the ballot and BSC's latest offer, their placards said it all: '20 per cent — No surrender'.



'The following is there for a general strike'

CRIES of 'general strike' mounted steadily during Len Murray's speech in Trafalgar Square. South Yorkshire miners and striking steelworkers were in especially full voice as the end of the TUC general secretary's speech was drowned out.

What sparked off the anti-Murray chorus was a fiery speech, made without any sound equipment from the back of the square, by Johnny Edwards, father of the chapel at Dickenson's in Kirby. Johnny won the ear of all those around him as he persistently challenged Murray's weak-kneed speech.

Later he told Socialist Challenge why he spoke out: 'I stood up there for all the people who'd come down on the demonstration. They turned up in their tens of thousands. We want to have a real go at Thatcher. If we're going to attack, then let's attack.'

'But people like Murray aren't being nearly forceful enough. I work in Kirby. It's being decimated. But we don't want funeral marches. We want to do a 1974 job when we kicked out Heath. The problem is that Murray's got no intention of calling a general strike. But the following's there.'

'I was speaking to show that we didn't come to hear the things that Murray had to say. We've got to build real action.'

Reports by Jude Woodward, Geoffrey Sheridan, and Jonat

THE TUC told the press that Sunday's march was a central part of its 'Campaign for Economic and Social Advance'. According to the leadership of the trade union movement, marchers were there to call on the government to 'change course now'.

But contrary to the hopes and wishes of the TUC, the most popular slogan on the march, which took three hours to leave Hyde Park, was 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, out, out, out'.

And when a string of union leaders took the microphone at the rally in Trafalgar Square to put forward their plans for economic and social advance, centring on the need to persuade the Tories to talk to them, it was calls for 'action' and 'general strike' which drowned them out.

The roll call of the trade groups, marshalled into 20 columns before the demonstration set off, brought home the message — if anyone listening had been in any doubt of it — that without the working class nothing could be produced in this country.

Celebrity

Unions representing every industry, and service had their contingents and banners. But it was the steelworkers who displayed the most evident sense of solidarity. Each time the roll call came over the loudspeakers, the mention of 'Iron and Steel' brought cheers from the strikers lined up in column seven.

And it was the steelworkers, festooned with badges and stickers, who received the celebrity treatment from on-lookers, who applauded as column seven marched past. Coins dropped into red buckets labelled simply '20%'.

The position of the steelworkers, halfway along the demonstration, spelt out plainly enough the view that the TUC takes of the strike. Bill Sirs, the ISTC general secretary, was the only union leader to refer to the strike at the rally, and his semi-apologetic speech

was the only one to be cheered by the throng in the square.

The TUC had announced that it expected a quarter of a million trades unionists to be on the march. On the day they said that 140,000 were there, compared to the police estimate of 30,000. A count by Socialist Challenge put the figure at 60,000.

Brass

There were more people than the 40,000 who joined the TUC-led march against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill last October, but Sunday's demonstra-

HUGE DEMO AGAINST TORIES ON 9 MARCH

tion did not have quite the same vitality. The brass, pipe, jazz and steel bands that accompanied many of the trade union contingents lent a cheery air. And the large number of women on the march made valiant efforts to sing, chant and sloganeer — there is no question that women made up some of the most militant sections of the march.

But there was nothing like the atmosphere that went with the Anti Nazi League carnivals. Nor did the



Maggie: Out! Out! Out!

...berman. Photos by G M Cookson

Normally moderate...

'Normally,' said a steelworker indicating her school-student daughter, Julia, 'if I say anything about her she tells me I'm showing her up. Now look at her.' Julia was yelling along with the rest of the contingent of steelworkers from South Yorkshire: 'What do we want — 20 per cent. What have we got — fuck all.'

'She was of a quiet disposition,' her mother, Jennifer, added. 'But she's becoming all militant out of this lot. We brought her along to the march to see how we feel.' Her husband, Harold, who is also a steelworker,

nodded. Their eldest son is also a steelworker.

'We live, eat, drink, and sleep this strike until the early hours,' Jennifer said. 'We're really quite moderate, but since this has come along everything has changed. We go out picketing. We'll not settle into a normal domestic life after this.'

'You've become politically aware at last,' Harold said to her, somewhat patronisingly. 'Once you get political you never change.'

At which point Jennifer started the chant: 'What do we want...'

labour movement display the militancy shown in the 1971 march against Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

Part of the reason could be determined from the press reports of Sunday's demonstration. While *The Times* duly recorded the sustained heckling of the platform speakers, the *Morning Star* made no mention of it. For the Communist Party's daily newspaper, as for the party's organisers at the demonstration itself, the words of the General Council were good enough.

The fact is that Len Murray could hardly make himself heard when he attempted to tell the rally: 'We have made clear to Mr Prior again and again our willingness to sit down and talk with him. We are still willing to talk to the government.'

Drowned

The opening remarks of Moss Evans, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, were drowned out by calls to 'stop your lorries' from the thousands in the square who wanted an end to the

picket breaking in the steel strike.

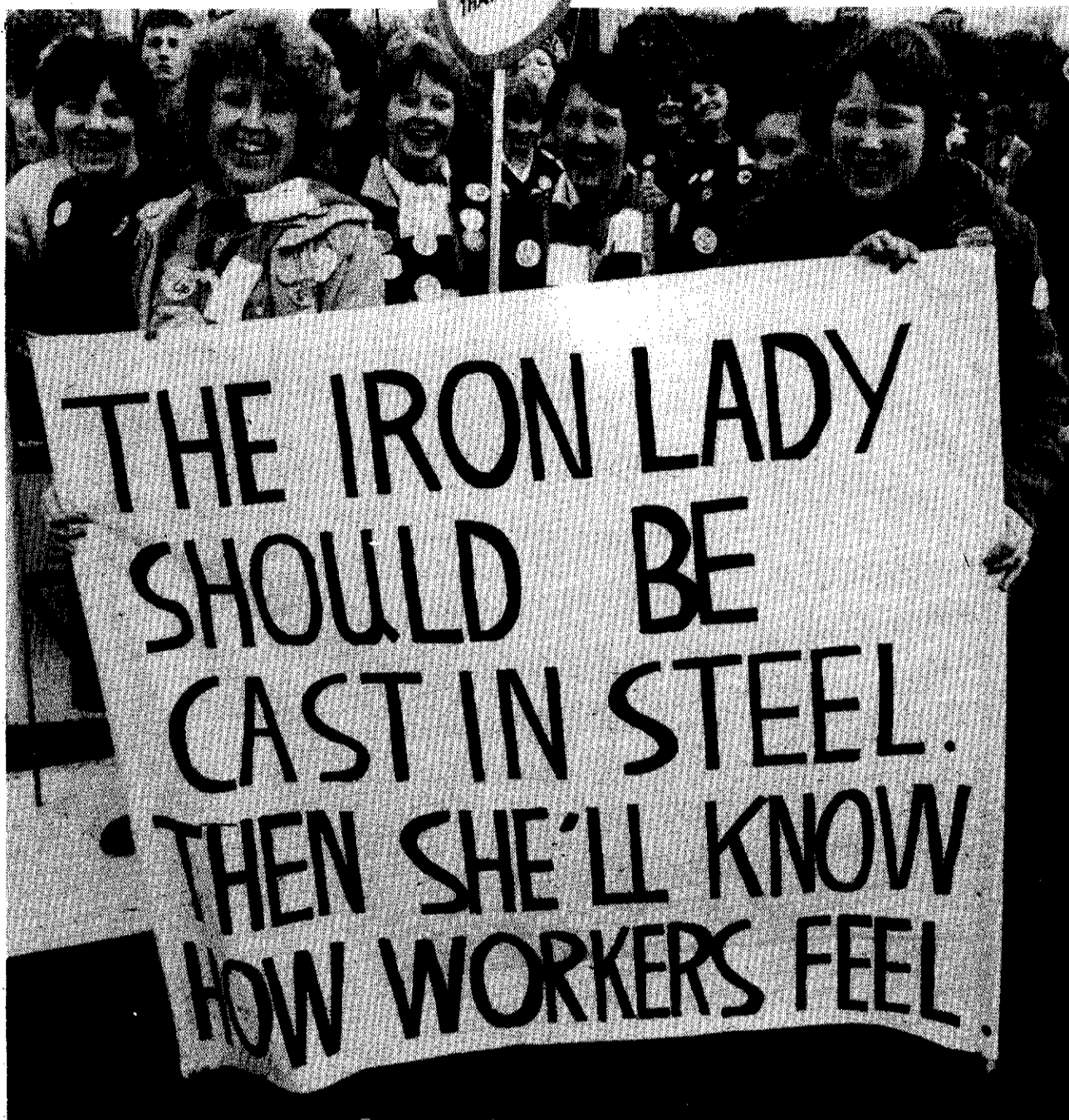
When Ken Thomas, general secretary of the Civil and Public Services Association, told those demanding a general strike that they were living in a fantasy world, he had no detectable support from those filling the square.

Fantasy

The demand came from South Yorkshire miners, from among the steel strikers, and from sections of the revolutionary left.

But it was evident that if we are to break into the fantasy world of the labour movement leaders, whose inaction must be a relief to the government, we need an alliance of the rank and file across the unions to co-ordinate the fight to bring down Thatcher.

The TUC describes 14 May as a 'day of action in the regions'. The objective of all those who have had enough of Margaret Thatcher's policies should be general strike action on 14 May and beyond.



Come and join the working class

AS THE marchers wound their way from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square it was clear what they wanted. 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, out, out, out' was the continuous chant.

A contingent of women garment workers had their own version of the same theme:

'Come and join us, come and join us
Come and join the working class.
We'll tell Maggie Thatcher
To kick Keith Joseph in the...'

One section of the demonstration kept up a fairly rousing rendering of the Red Flag — it certainly sounded more militant sung on the way to Trafalgar Square than it does when they sing it at the end of Labour Party conferences.

The biggest contingent on the march was undoubtedly the Transport and General Workers' Union, but the miners, steelworkers, print unions, textile workers, and public sector were also well represented. It was a real parade of the British trade union movement as all the different banners and placards went by — virtually every union imaginable was represented.

But as usual the TUC leaders had marched them all the way to Trafalgar Square, only to send them back home again.

Help the police — beat yourself up!

WHITE ribbons lined the route of the demonstration all the way from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square to keep the marchers from straying off their allotted ground. But the police did not rely on ribbons.

A couple of steel strikers who went on to the pavement in Piccadilly with collection buckets were pushed back in to the march. Moments later two marchers were dragged off for reasons best known to the police.

It came close to a punch-up. The steelworkers took up the picket-line chant of 'Maggie Thatcher's boot boys', to the tune of the rumba. The badge, which many of them were wearing, 'Help the police — beat yourself up', also became a chant.

The anger at the police's containment policy resulted in the portable 'islands' supporting the ribbons being kicked over as the marchers went past.

Left-wing paper sellers were another target for police operations. A ban on selling literature in Hyde Park was rigorously enforced, though not always successfully. Just outside the park, two Socialist Challenge sellers were arrested for 'obstruction'.

The Tories' 'freedom within the law' had come to town. When a police officer was asked if it was true — as rumoured — that an army unit was on stand-by in the Hyde Park underground carpark, he replied, 'Yes, what's it to you?' The entrances to the carpark were sealed off.

STRIKE NEWS

Steel for Fords, courtesy of the Transport Union

WHY, 11 weeks into the steel strike, is much of manufacturing industry virtually unaffected?

Members of the International Marxist Group in Dagenham report on how the car company has secured its steel.

THERE was a lot of hollow laughter on the night shift at Ford's Dagenham on Wednesday of last week.

Earlier in the evening Ron Todd, the Transport and General Workers Union's chief national negotiator for Ford workers, had appeared on TV alongside Bill Sirs in a demonstration of official union 'solidarity' with the steel strike.

It is a subject with which Ron Todd is well familiar. Since the strike began, steel from Belgium and Germany has been flooding in to Ford's private dock at Dagenham.

There have been as many as seven boats in the dock in a week, instead of the usual one or two. General service workers are working twelve hours a day, seven days a week to shift the cargoes.

Coils

The steel isn't just for Dagenham. Transferred to Ford's own rail system, steel coils are transported across the estate, loaded into containers and despatched to the Halewood plant in Liverpool. The loading is courtesy of TGWU members, and delivery is by ASLEF-powered British Rail.

Some Ford workers have said that the covered wagons are falsely marked to disguise the origin of their load.

When confronted with this evidence, Ron Todd said: 'I have had no information given to me about special rail carriages or false markings and if we find out that the company has been using devious means, there will be trouble.'

But on the same night as Todd appeared on TV, members of the TGWU 1/1107 Ford central branch were told a different story by engine plant deputy convenor Johnny Davis.

Todd did know about the steel, Davis said, and the TGWU and ISTC approve shipment because Ford owns the steel!

Docks

For 11 weeks there is meant to have been a ban on the movement of all imported steel. Indeed, on 3 January, a day after the strike began, one boat which docked at Dagenham was boycotted.

But within a couple of hours the message came back from the TGWU to unload the boat. Apparently, the ISTC leadership didn't think that Ford was involved in the struggle at that stage.

National union officials gave Ford management a

solemn warning that no more steel would be unloaded on Dagenham dock if it was ordered after the strike began!

In response to this the 1/1107 branch wrote to the TGWU regional vehicle trade group, and through it to the union executive, asking for a definite date for firm action on the movement of steel and in support of the steel strike. This was eight weeks ago. To date there has been no reply.

Cynical

Meanwhile, Ford is buying every piece of steel it can lay hands on, whatever the price. The company must by now be one of the largest private steel stockholders in the country. The press shop at Dagenham, where vehicle bodies are stamped, has been on permanent overtime since the start of the year.

In a recent union branch discussion, TGWU official Mick Murphy argued strongly in favour of import controls on foreign-built Ford cars. Replying to criticism from supporters of the Ford Workers Group, Murphy said: 'You've got to have a degree of cynicism about international solidarity. Look at the steel strike. There's more steel coming in than ever.'

What he didn't add was that the leadership of the TUC, and in particular leaders of the TGWU, are responsible for this situation. The steelworkers need this kind of solidarity like a hole in the head.

No truck with scabs

'THE Transport Union needs to be much more ruthless with its own members who are carrying steel,' says Chris Adamson, a TGWU member who has just been laid off for refusing to cross a steelworkers' picket line.

Chris, who works for Daniels Transport, a small haulage company in Birmingham, says that solidarity by the TGWU has been 'pathetic'.

'Quite a number of drivers in the haulage industry are not in a union, but a lot of those who are members are simply passive. The union has to rigorously enforce its instructions.'

Stop the sell-out and halt all steel!

BILL Sirs was autographing placards in Hyde Park just before the start of the demonstration last Sunday. He wrote: 'Good luck, Bill Sirs'.

'With his leadership,' commented a group of steelworkers, 'we'll need it.' After 11 weeks of non-leadership, Sirs has hatched a sell-out.

Appearing on the front page of the latest Steelworkers Banner under the title 'A reasonable compromise to end the deadlock' is a set of proposals which would wreck the union organisation of steelworkers more effectively than the frontal assault by the Tories has managed to do.

'Practically all the important principals demanded by the Corporation have been conceded,' the article acknowledges.

'It will not be easy for us,' the article continues under the sub-heading 'sacrificial path'. 'It will mean surrendering many customs and habits. It will mean negotiating away many jobs...'

Peace

'These concessions will provide both sides of the Corporation with the springboard from which we can launch the industry into a period of peace, growth, profitability and prosperity.'

Profitability and prosperity for whom? Certainly not for the steel towns of Corby, Consett, Shotton, Hallsid, Port Talbot, Newport. Nor for the 52,000 steelworkers and their families condemned to the dole for years, or the tens of thousands of workers in related industries.

Sirs talks about all this being necessary to save one of 'our' basic industries. But while the steelworkers have produced all the wealth of the steel industry they are being thrown on the scrap heap in the interests of profitability.

Basic

It is not the steelworkers' industry. If it was, it would be run in their interests. The workforce would be kept on and the available work would be shared with no loss of pay.

Workers have no control over the economy and therefore no responsibility for the world economic crisis which is causing the worldwide cutbacks in steel production.

'We have gone as far as we possibly can in order to reach a compromise and so avoid the imminent destruction of a basic industry,' Sirs writes.

Yet it is the Tories and the BSC who are threatening to destroy the steel industry and thousands of lives with it.

What are the steelworkers being offered in return?



Apart from the fact that it is a blank cheque for job cuts — 'We accept that these deals shall be self-financing and shall fund a significant proportion of the national award' — the claim is 15 per cent for 15 months, equivalent to 12 per cent for the year.

Blatant

It is already 13 months since the last pay deal, since when inflation has risen by over 20 per cent.

Sirs knows this. That's why he's put together the iron and steel co-ordinating committee behind the backs of the constituted negotiating structures of the union. It is a blatant attempt to coerce the democratic structure of the national negotiating committee, which threw out the last offer after only 20 minutes.

The conference last week of the steel union negotiating committees was a washout. Brian Molyneux, a member of the national negotiating committee, says he put forward various proposals — for withdrawal of safety cover; tightening up of the private sector; contacting other industrial sectors to strengthen picketing.

'In my naivety, I thought it was a conference to strengthen the strike. Their reaction was: "This idiot seems to think there's a strike going on".'

The unofficial national strike committee which met last Friday has called for a national rally of steelworkers and will organise this itself if necessary. The committee needs to organise action against

the sell-out by co-ordinating the efforts of all the local strike committees around two major focuses.

There has to be the biggest possible mass lobby of the ISTC national negotiating delegate meeting which considers any deal arising from this week's negotiations.

Secondly, the strike needs a national picketing focus to regain the initiative for the rank and file. This should be a big target in manufacturing industry to be picketed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Too much steel has come through the ports and private suppliers to choke off industry simply by pickets on the steel stockholders.

New steel must be stopped going in and finished products coming out. The car industry, large scale engineering firms, and North Sea oil production should be hit.

Movement

To make this picketing successful, the TGWU and other transport unions must be forced to respect steelworkers' pickets and stop the movement of steel.

Pickets should be placed on regional union offices demanding clear written instructions to transport union members not to cross the picket lines.

The fight for 20 per cent and no strings is also a fight to keep the 52,000 jobs that are threatened. The national strike committee should aim to maintain the strike until all jobs are guaranteed. And it should support initiatives such as the South Wales youth unemployment march.



EXPOSED! TORIES DEMAND £500m FROM BSC

By Geoffrey Sheridan

THE Steel Corporation has been told by the government to sell off assets and hand over £500m to cut the public sector borrowing requirement.

This astonishing demand is contained in a confidential letter from the Industry Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph, to Sir Charles Villiers, BSC's chairperson.

A copy of the letter, headed 'Financing regime for BSC in 1980/1', has come into the hands of Socialist Challenge.

The letter states 'We do not intend to finance operating losses', and reiterates the government's requirement that BSC

should make a profit in 1980/1. The present round of closures involving 52,000 redundancies are a consequence of this policy.

But evidently this does not go far enough for the government. Having handed out hundreds of millions of pounds in tax cuts to the rich, it is now looking to the nationalised steel sector to subsidise schools, hospitals, and other public expenditure.

Referring to 'a reduction in your physical stocks and the disposal of assets', Joseph says: 'On disposals the government are anxious that at least part of the proceeds should be available to contribute to their target of reducing by this means the PSBR (public sector borrowing requirement) by a total of £500

million.'

The prosperous private steel sector, which has leached off the Steel Corporation since the partial nationalisation of the industry by the 1964-70 Labour government, welcomes a hiving off operation so that state-financed investments can further boost its profits.

Joseph's letter goes on to suggest that part of the proceeds of hiving off assets could go to meet redundancy payments in the first half of 1980/81. In other words, the workers who have created the industry should now accept the dole queue in return for boosting private sector profits, while de-nationalisation further exposes the industry to the anarchy of the capitalist market.

REFORM OR REVOLUTION

DEBATES between the Labour left and the Marxist left, such as that on 17 March at Central Hall, Westminster, are rare events. As such they provide a useful opportunity to examine the differences that have separated the two sides since 1914.

This eight-page supplement to *Socialist Challenge* is devoted to a critique of left reformism.

Labour has formed a government on seven occasions since 1924. Three of these governments had an overall majority, and

once had an overwhelming mandate for bringing about social change. On every occasion Labour has acted as the collective lieutenant of British capital. Each time the left has either been marginalised or integrated.

In the Thirties, Sir Stafford Cripps was calling for the abolition of capitalism. In the Forties he was a Labour Chancellor, preaching the virtues of austerity.

In the Forties, Aneurin Bevan's rhetoric often expressed the class hatred which dominated the Welsh valleys. In the Fifties,

Bevan had made his peace and surrendered.

In the Sixties, Michael Foot was the 'darling of the party' and its radical conscience. In the Seventies he had become a loyal supporter of James Callaghan. Will the eighties be any different?

On the first page of this supplement, TARIQ ALI looks back on the tragic fate of Salvador Allende and the 'Chilean road to socialism'. He argues that the events of 1970-73 reveal that it is reformism which is utopian and Leninism which is practical.

SOCIAL democratic parties have formed governments in Britain, Australia, West Germany, Norway, Belgium and Holland over the past six decades. In none of these countries have they ever seriously contemplated socialist measures to bring about a fundamental change in society.

Chile was the only exception. The lessons we should learn from that experience are not that Allende and the Popular Unity government went too fast, but rather that they had a utopian view of the Chilean state and its coercive apparatuses: the army, navy and police force.

The election of Allende in 1970 was seen as a tremendous victory by the Chilean working class. Through a series of structural, social and economic reforms, the Popular Unity programme pledged to take Chile towards socialism.

In an interview with the French writer and journalist Régis Debray, Allende explicitly rejected the Popular Front model of the Thirties: '... (in the 1930s) we consciously entered into a coalition in order to form the left wing of the system — the capitalist system, that is. By contrast, today, as our programme shows, we are struggling to change the system... Our objective is total, scientific Marxist socialism.'

In the Thirties the Popular Front had been designed to fight off fascism by preserving bourgeois democracy. Franco's Spain and Vichy France were the fruits of that particular enterprise. The changed relationship of class forces on a global scale in the Sixties necessitated a new project.

Popular

Popular Unity was a reformist project which excluded the major bourgeois parties. It could be characterised as a reformist united front, which brought together the two major working-class parties in Chile: the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. Of the two, the Socialist Party had a more radical stance and its left-wing prevented most attempts to shift the locus of Popular Unity by offering a place to the Christian Democrats.

The importance of the Popular Unity experience is that its electoral victory provided us with the closest equivalent of a workers' government since the Second World War.

In its first year in office the Popular Unity government carried out a number of important measures, which increased its popularity with the most oppressed stratas in Chilean society. Beginning with the free distribution of half a litre of milk a day to every child, a series of laws was promulgated to develop the social services.

A ceiling was placed on all government salaries; political prisoners were released; the riot police were disbanded. There was a 60 per cent increase in wages and most prices were fixed. A large proportion of the textile, iron,



History is on our side

automobile, and copper industries was taken into public ownership.

In July 1971 an important threshold was crossed. The copper mines were nationalised, including those owned by the United States. No compensation was paid. The right-wing press went berserk and the army exerted pressure, which Allende resisted. The Chilean President went on the attack:

'Here are four numbers the people should remember. These companies invested the sum of 30m dollars. In fifty years they have taken out 4.5 billion dollars... We will not compensate Anaconda, or Kennecott, or El Salvador, but the debts of those companies are 736m dollars and it is logically foreseeable that we will have to assume those debts.'

'Thus we will be paying an indirect indemnity of 736m dollars to the copper companies who over a period of fifty years took out 4.5 billion dollars.'

The masses were convinced. The army chiefs and the bosses were sullen and the US State Department intensified its efforts to

'destabilise' the Allende government. What was lacking was workers' control in the nationalised industries. If it had been established it would have transformed a legal decree into a concrete measure, changing the overall relationship of class forces by drawing the copper miners — traditionally right wing — closer towards Popular Unity.

In the following year, 1971, two multinational companies (Fords and a subsidiary of the Northern Indiana Brass Company) threatened mass redundancies. The workers occupied the plants and demanded nationalisation. The government acceded to the workers' demands.

In May 1971 the workers seized 14 textile mills. They were nationalised. The Chilean capitalists were alarmed. Their monopoly in the sacred manufacturing sector had been smashed. The confidence of the workers increased tenfold and saw a growing class polarisation in the country.

In the autumn of 1972 the bourgeoisie went 'on strike' by imposing a lock-out. The workers occupied many of the plants and an embryonic

dual power came into existence. In the March 1973 elections Popular Unity obtained 44 per cent of the vote, a clear indication that the working masses were prepared to fight.

The military were disgusted with the results and six months later they attacked. Allende died fighting. Within a fortnight 30,000 workers had been butchered in cold blood. Only a week before nearly a million supporters of Popular Unity had marched past the Moneda Palace chanting: 'Allende, the people are defending you. Hit the reactionaries hard.' But it was too late.

Inevitable

Was Allende's defeat inevitable? No. What was inevitable was a settling of accounts with the armed might of the Chilean state. It was not inevitable that the generals should have had the initiative. In fact the reactionary offensive could have been contained much earlier by a combination of economic measures and mass mobilisations.

There was another novel feature in the experiment. We saw how the existence of a reformist workers' government within a bourgeois state unleashes a more far-reaching extra-parliamentary mobilisation of all social classes than does a strategy of direct moves to dual power, short-circuiting the bourgeois democratic regime.

Thus the occupation of over a thousand factories, the networks of popular supply committees, and the participation of the masses were far more advanced than anything seen in other parts of Latin America.

The situation was far more precarious than in France in May 1968; the extra-parliamentary mobilisation of the bourgeoisie was much greater. It is these facts which make the strategic errors of the workers' parties all the more reprehensible.

State

We oppose the bourgeois state in all its forms because it maintains the class division of society. That is its main function. Within its framework the majority of the people can never exercise real power. Any political party which implements structural reforms which damage the interests of capitalism finds itself confronting the armed forces of the state.

The revelation that in 1974 there was open talk among senior British army officers of a coup should give the utopian reformists some food for thought. There is no such thing as British exceptionalism any more than there is Chilean exceptionalism.

History, despite all its detours, is on the side of Lenin and Trotsky rather than Dubcek or Allende. Revolutionary Marxism is more practical than even the most radical reformism. That is the lesson of Chile.

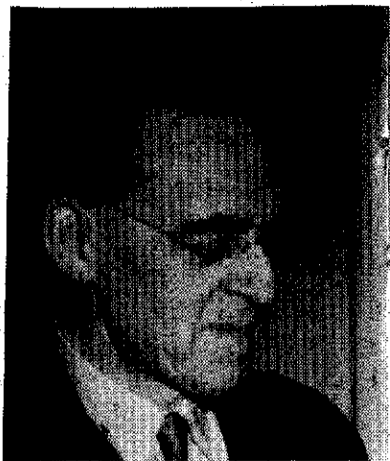
The Labour left in the Eighties 1

By Celia Pugh

IN 1932 the left wing of the Labour Party founded the Socialist League. It called for 'the immediate nationalisation of the banks, land, mines, power, transport, iron and steel, cotton, and control of foreign trade'.

The leader of the League, Stafford Cripps, proposed to the 1933 Labour Party conference that the party's national executive should be instructed to 'specify the means to be adopted by the next Labour government' to ensure that 'a rapid transition to socialism may be carried through constitutionally, and dictatorship avoided'.

The Socialist League thought that the anti-working class National Government would inevitably fall in the next election. Accordingly, it saw no need to link up with mass struggles against the National Government. The league did not back the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and it failed to fight the



Stafford Cripps

Labour Party's refusal to join a united front against fascism.

Cripps and friends thought their role was to give Labour a left-wing manifesto for the day it came to office. That day never came. In the 1935 general election there was a Tory

landslide victory.

The Socialist League was only one of a long line of left social democratic groupings which saw parliament as the only road to change, and therefore subordinated mass struggle to inner-party manoeuvres. Not all Labour lefts have taken this road.

In the 1920s the National Left Wing Movement was set up to fight the drift to the right and the expulsion of Communist Party members. It had clear class policies and active links with the Minority Movement in the unions.

The National Left Wing Movement refused to compromise these principles, but sadly it was suppressed by the Communist Party in 1929.

Will the Labour left of the 1980s draw any lessons from the past?

In an interview in the *Leveller* last October, Tony Benn remarked: 'When they accuse me of being a left talking reformist I plead guilty. They have denigrated the exceptional radicalism of reform. The problem is we have not reformed enough.'

Others are more radical. Francis Cripps wrote in *Labour Activist*. 'The central point about the alternative strategy is that it requires a seizure of power by a democratically elected government from international institutions like the IMF, the EEC, and foreign companies and banks.'

But it turns out that this power will be seized by the Labour Party fighting the next election on the basis of the Alternative Economic Strategy. What do we do in the years between? What do we do now?

It is mass struggle not elections which decide whether governments fall and power passes into working class-hands. This is what finished off Heath. This is the test that awaits the Labour left.

Can they throw the Labour Party's resources into the struggles against the Tories, be they on the issue of cuts, the defence of union rights, the mounting campaign for British withdrawal from Ireland, or the pressure for general strike action?

There are indications of a desire for change. In a paper for its 22

March conference, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee's executive argues: 'We do not believe it is sufficient to rely on electoral politics alone to win socialist advances.'

It emphasises the need for solidarity campaigns and strikes against Tory policies; the setting up of workplace branches of the Labour Party; the use of party offices as community action centres, and campaigns on women's and black rights in collaboration with the women's and black movements.

Plans are also afoot for a rank and file movement at the base of the unions.

These steps should be welcomed. But vital tests confront the new left forces. Will they be compromised by inner-party diplomacy — in other words bow to the party bureaucrats — into avoiding active unity of all working class forces?

Or will they, like the National Left Wing Movement, decide that class unity is more important than party manoeuvres?

The Labour left in the Eighties 2

By Alan Shevek

THE LABOUR Party is racked by internal struggle. The mass media is full of reports of 'Marxist left's bid for power'. Would a left takeover change anything?

One answer comes quickly to the lips of many workers with bitter memories of the Wilson-Callaghan government — if the left do what they did in the last Labour government, the difference will be hard to notice.

But this quick answer isn't good enough. A new left is emerging.

It claims to have broken with the past. It wants a new alliance between the unions and the Labour Party lefts; to break the stranglehold of the block vote and the Parliamentary Labour Party; and to pave the way to a new beginning.

Where does this new left come from, and what can it do?

Its best-known figures aren't so new. Tony Benn, who heads it, has been around a while. But for the past ten years he has been trying to forge a strategy which combines parliamentary legislation with what he calls 'workers democracy'.

When he was Industry Secretary in the last Labour government, Benn's basic idea was that workers should take part in investment decision-making.

The government would conclude 'planning agreements' with firms in which unions and management would share power. A new body — the National Enterprise Board — would supervise planning agreements and extend public ownership.

The capitalist class went hysterical. It forced an immediate retreat. Benn was moved to the Department of Energy. All reference to compulsory planning was dropped.

The NEB was put in the charge of Leslie Murphy, a merchant banker, who said its function was to 'supply finance for industrial investment'.

And the government concluded exactly one planning agreement — with Chrysler UK, which reneged two years later and pulled out with £37m of taxpayers' money.

The new left argues that this shows planning agreements worry the capitalist class. But it was not Benn that the bosses feared. It was his effect on workers' actions.

After three years of occupations and a near general strike, the bosses feared that workers would take

matters into their own hands by occupying and trying to run industry themselves — just as the Chilean working class did in 1973.

Benn never fought for such moves. He refused to leave the Cabinet and campaign for workers' action in defence of their rights. Amid an unprecedented economic and political attack by world capital, the government just wilted.

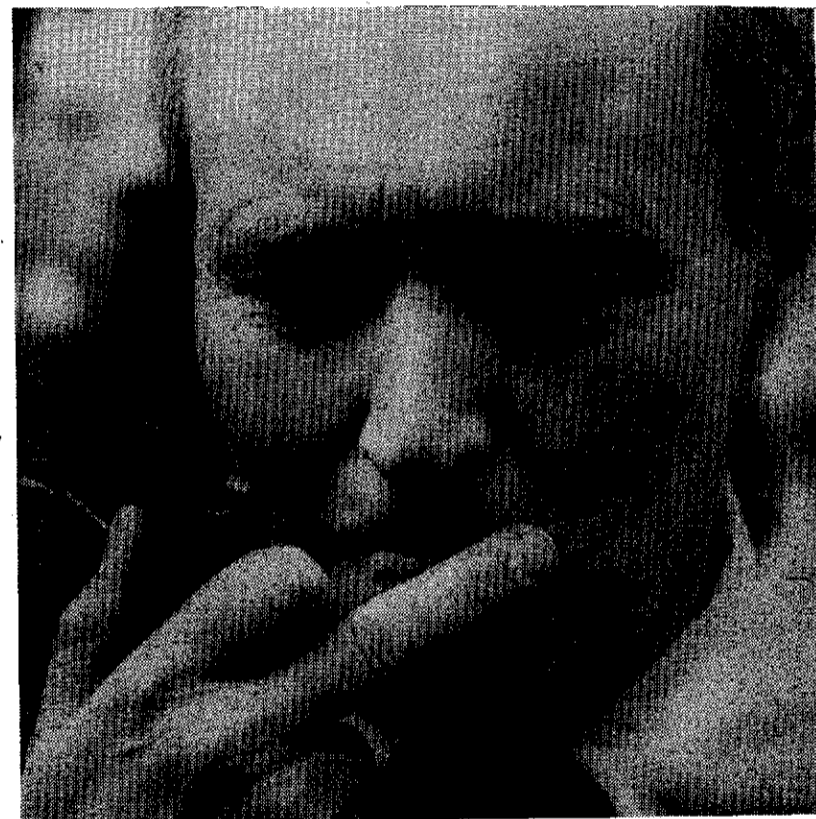
Nor was this a tactical choice on Benn's part. It was built into his strategy.

He hatched elaborate schemes for sharing power between workers, owners, and the state. He was looking for a partnership between capital and labour, overseen by the state.

These schemes are absurdly undemocratic. They put 18m workers not to mention the rest of the working class on an equal footing with a half million owners, top managers, and civil servants. And they are utopian. The bosses accept participation under their terms.

Benn had two choices: accept the bosses terms, or fight them, explaining what was at stake to the working class.

Instead he moved quietly on to the Department of Energy.



The Labour left in the Eighties 3

TONY BENN is not the only force on the Labour Party left. A whole gamut of left forces is emerging.

These include some like the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, which are taking a bit more seriously the idea of mobilising the working class for action.

They call for the Labour Party to become a campaigning party, and to develop direct rank-and-file links between the trade unions and the party.

In a sense this is a backhanded compliment to the revolutionary left. We showed why and how to fight the capitalists under the last Labour government. The Anti Nazi League, the abortion campaign, and the cuts struggles found their leadership outside the ranks of the Labour Party.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee acknowledges this when it debates us.

At the centre of the left's strategy
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today is the 'Alternative Economic Strategy'. This covers policies which vary from the TUC's 'campaign for economic and social advance' to quite radical versions such as those of Labour MP Stuart Holland.

However, the proposal is misnamed. It is not an alternative; it is not economic, and it is not a strategy.

The core of the alternative economic strategy is state intervention into a 'mixed' capitalist economy. After the war, all Western governments used these policies to build up welfare services, and to overcome the worst effects of slumps.

Today the alternative economic strategy is proclaimed by Holland as 'the basis of the 1974 manifesto'. The only real change from pre-1974 policy is 'planning agreements'. In effect, the new left is fighting to implement the 1974 programme.

But why did the 1974 government not carry out its manifesto? The reason is simple — capitalism cannot accept it.

In a period of economic boom the capitalists could afford and even encourage the welfare state. But the



Eric Heffer

boom has come to an end.

The 1974 government faced rocketing inflation, a tremendous trade imbalance, and the spectre of boycott and sabotage by world finance.

So what would confront a government committed to the policies of the alternative economic strategy?

The first response would be a refusal to invest. Hot money would rush out of the country. Money that stayed in would remain idle. International moneylenders would refuse credit.

The next stage, as in Chile, would be active sabotage of production, plant closure, and profiteering. The government would be unable to control the economy because it could not force the capitalists to invest or produce.

The revolutionary answer was discovered by the Chilean economy minister, Pedro Vuscovic, in 1972.

He said that the Popular Unity government should hand over the factories to the workers council, disband the hierarchic and corrupt state apparatus, and hand over state power to the workers' and neighbourhood councils.

Vuscovic called on the government to 'initiate a huge mobilisation of the masses with concrete objectives to control the production apparatus and to prepare themselves for a military confrontation between classes.'

He was sacked.

Do we have to wait five years before the Labour left learns the same lessons, and meets the same fate? We can learn these lessons now. The only force in which we should place confidence is the organised working class.

This is what the alternative economic strategy fails to do. It still identifies the capitalist state apparatus as the main policy instrument, in spite of the fact that no one elects this apparatus and that it is run by a clique of powerful mandarins who are dedicated to private interests and to profit.

The state apparatus has blocked working class advance under every reformist government. The left's own book, *What Went Wrong*, is full of testimony to state sabotage.

The real government of the country was never parliament. It was Whitehall.

Yet the Labour left still asks us to put our heads on the chopping block. We say, No. It is time for workers to take their destiny in to their own hands.

NAMIBIAN URANIUM

The Skeleton in Tony Benn's Cupboard

By David Wax

IN 1966 the UN voted to end South Africa's mandate to govern Namibia. Member states were asked to recognise South Africa's presence as illegal and 'refrain from any acts and in particular any dealings with the government of South Africa implying recognition of, or the legality of, or lending support or assistance to, such presence and administration.' Any permits to exploit Namibia's mineral wealth were prohibited by the International Court.

The British-based multinational, Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ) defied the UN. Tony Benn, Minister of Technology in 1969, secretly authorised RTZ to supply nearly half of Britain's uranium imports from Namibia. This, the largest single investment in Namibia, aids the illegal and brutal occupation of the country.

Open government?

Benn did not disclose the details of this controversial deal. Even the Cabinet thought that only one, rather than two, contracts were involved.

In 1970 the Labour Cabinet's 'Overseas Policy and Business Committee' (note the mix) met to reconsider the deal. Its results were not disclosed. A 'secret inquiry' was conducted by Barbara Castle to discover how the Minister of Technology had 'authorised the contract'.

No reasons were given for continuing the contract, indeed it was specifically decided to keep it under wraps during the 1970 General Election.

In 1976, when Benn was Secretary of State for Energy, he refused to disclose details regarding the use, supply routes and payments on the contracts. After all it would have been a breach of the National Security Acts of the apartheid state and the British Official Secrets Act!

Labour Party democracy?

The contract finally became public under the Tories! A campaign was mounted in the Labour Party for termination of the contract and the 1973 Labour Party Manifesto promised to end the contract. But surprise, surprise, it was not included in Wilson's election manifesto.

After a few inquiries, the issue was relegated to the party branches. In 1976 the Labour Party executive characterised the contract as 'shameful', 'illegal' and called for its termination. The Labour conference endorsed the call.

The Cabinet refused to give way, despite RTZ having broken price and deadline agreements.

Even if Benn was 'outvoted', he certainly did not make public the chain of secrecy, the civil service manipulation, the subsidy to the South African regime, the sponsorship of the RTZ monopoly, and so on. He certainly did not consider the flouting of international law and LP conference decisions as a sufficient reason to resign.

Socialism?

The national liberation movement in Namibia is led by the South African People's Organisation (SWAPO). It has been engaged in a bloody and escalating armed struggle

THE LABOUR Left is today without a foreign policy. Instead of even attempting to develop an internationalist strategy, the left in the last Labour Cabinet defended the Foreign Office and the interests of British capitalism.

Nowhere was this more obvious than in Namibia. And no Minister was more involved than Tony Benn. The inside story

of Britain's secret contract for Namibian uranium is told in 'The Rossing File', released this week by the Campaign Against the Namibian Uranium Contracts (CANUC). It makes sorry reading. It shows how Benn disregarded 'open government', 'party democracy' and 'socialism'.

our bodies are covered in dust and one can hardly recognise us... the nearest clinic is 130 km. to and from Swakopmund... and... it is very complicated to be consented to absent from work for medical purposes.

'We are accommodated eight to ten people in one cell... there is no transport to the clinic... there is no hospital, bathing... or any recreational facilities. There is no privacy and we are not allowed to discuss matters of our mutual interest... we the workers of Namibia lodge our appeal to you to cease your lifting of uranium to Britain.'

Our fire

We have concentrated our fire on Tony Benn for one major reason. He is the most important leader of Labour's left-wing. The chief architect of Labour's policy was, of course, James Callaghan, first as Foreign Secretary and later as Prime Minister. Callaghan and the French government decided to reject the International Court ruling and the Security Council resolution.

Callaghan explained in 1974 why Britain did not abide by the UN decisions. He brushed aside six separate judgements by the International Court on Namibia and countless UN resolutions.

The leader of the British Labour Party explained that while the South African occupation of Namibia was 'unlawful', it was nonetheless 'de facto'. Compare the acceptance of 70,000 South African troops in Namibia to the hypocritical howls of outrage on Afghanistan. Callaghan's obscenities encountered no real opposition from the Labour left.

After a trip to Lusaka in 1974, where he met some SWAPO officials, Callaghan claimed that they had agreed to the contracts. SWAPO issued a series of virulent denials. But Labour ministers continued to use these lies to justify their illicit trade.

In 1919, a Russian revolutionary leader, V I Lenin, stated:

'When they (the imperialists) talk of handing out mandates for the administration of the colonies, we know very well that it means handing out mandates for spoilation and plunder...'

Product

Since 1945 over 35 per cent of Namibia's Gross Domestic Product has been sent abroad. A British government publication lists Namibia as having the highest rate of profit.

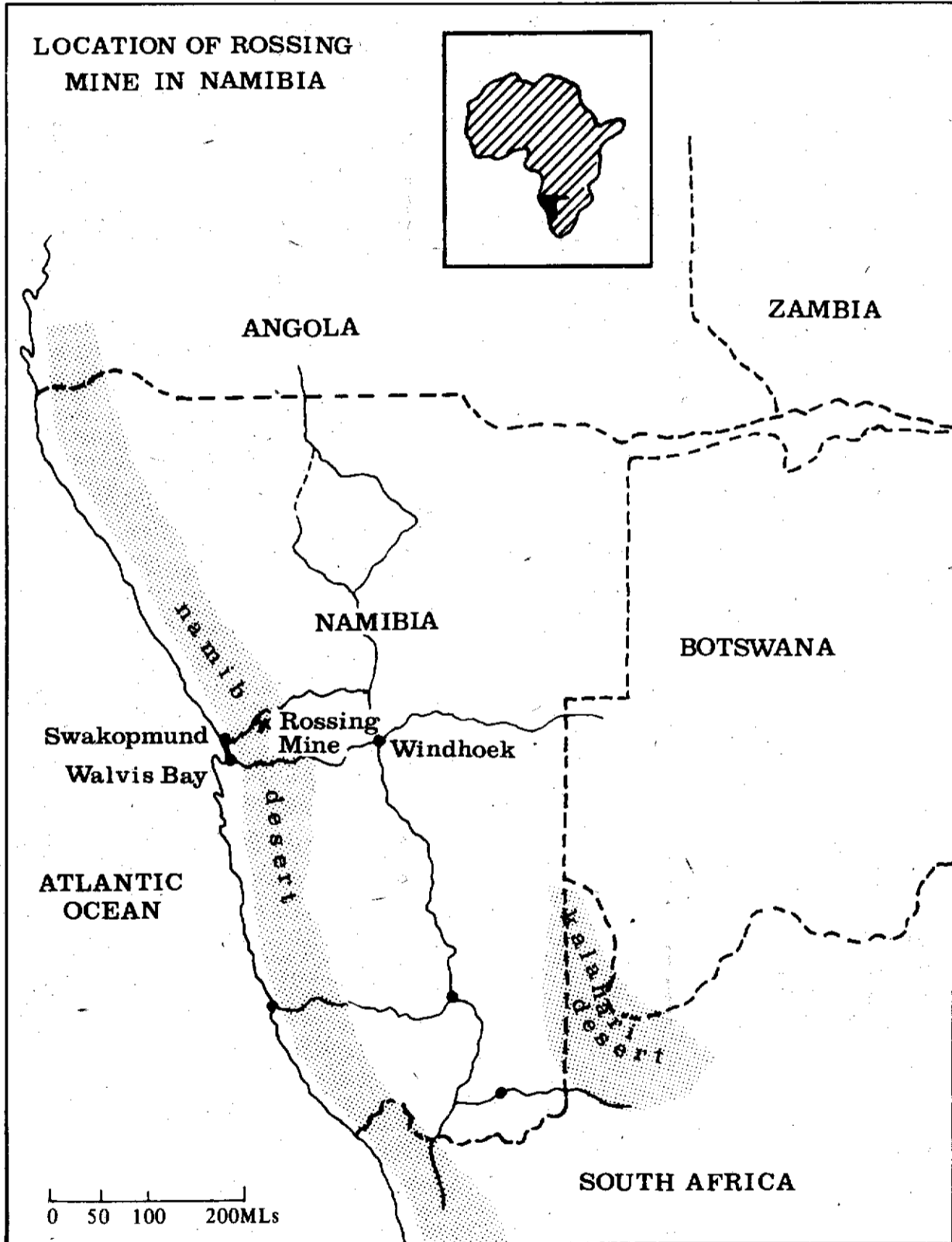
In 1977, Tony Benn threatened the striking Windscale workers in Cumbria with the use of British troops. Their leaders were threatened with prosecution under the rarely-used 1875 Conspiracy Act.

Benn's failure to disentangle British Labour from racism in Namibia, condemned the workers and peasants of Namibia to the iron heel of the soldiers of apartheid.

After Mugabe's victory in Zimbabwe, the attention of the West is already shifting to Namibia. The British left needs to focus on Namibia as well and do everything it can to ensure a victory for SWAPO. That will complete the encirclement of South Africa and provide another boost to the black masses of that country.

For a start Benn should publicly explain his role in Namibia and his supporters should tell us what they will do if Labour is elected to office again.

'The Rossing File' is available from the Namibia Support Committee, 105 North Gower Street, London NW1. Enclose 60p including postage.



for national independence. 80 per cent of the population is under white martial law.

Tony Benn has been primarily responsible, on behalf of two successive Labour governments, for providing £150m of public money to assist RTZ and the South African regime.

Without the two contracts RTZ could never have raised sufficient finance to develop the Rossing mine. British Nuclear Fuels, which later took over the contract, paid £159m, which will go towards mining costs to help remove one of arid Namibia's vital natural resources.

Profits for foreign shareholders will be nearly £65m a year. These

include Lord Carrington. Other monies will be paid in taxes and duties — a high proportion of which is spent by the South Africans on maintaining its 70,000 strong occupation army.

The 2,000 black workers are the lowest paid mine workers in the country. Is this what is meant by 'socialism', 'planning agreements' and 'worker directors' (Lord Sidney Greene, a former TUC bigwig who sits on the RTZ board!)

What would the workers at Rossing make of this 'socialism'? Those who used to work in Rossing's now derelict 'Wedgewood Benn Shaft' issued a statement recently. It reads:

'As the illegal exploitation of our

mineral resources from Namibia continues in defiance of UN recommendations, your large scale lifting of Namibian uranium from Windhoek to Britain is not going unseen, while SWAPO of Namibia is waging an armed struggle and at the same time mobilising the Namibian masses... her efforts are thwarted by your share in this illegal operation. Consequently you are enriching racist South Africa... while the British continue to exploit Rossing uranium mine, black workers are heavily exploited...

'Working in the open air, under hot sun, in the dust produced by grinding machines... exposed always to the ever-present cyclonic wind...

BATTLE OF IDEAS

When left Labour MP Frank Allaun opened last year's Labour Party conference he referred to the Labour administration of 1945-51 as the 'greatest government we have ever had'.

That may be true, but it is only because there is little of socialist value with which to compare that government.

And yet in the last year many left Labour leaders — Tony Benn, Eric Heffer among them — have cited the 1945-51 Government as the example to be followed by the Labour Party in the future.

But what does that example represent? What was the real record of Labour in these years? GEOFF BELL examines its history.

Labour candidate Maurice Edelman described the 1945 election campaign this way:

'The campaign itself — don't think I'm exaggerating — was really like an act of love.... Everywhere we went there were hands outstretched to shake our hands, to get our signatures. Outside the factory gates there were great crowds of workers who came to hear the Labour candidates.'

One of the striking things was that the agents and the supporters would go about, literally, with a bedsheet held at the four corners and the workers would throw their pennies into the sheets — filing them with the great weight of copper coins and very often silver coins, which in those days represented a considerable sacrifice.'

I have fought seven elections, but I have never known anything comparable with the mood of 1945.'

Edelman's reminiscences may seem exaggerated to those who have only campaigned in more recent elections, but his testimony is by no means unique. Another Labour candidate of 1945, Christopher Mayhew, has spoken of the 'passionate conviction; sometimes you know we Labour candidates, we thought we were being loved by our supporters'.

The reason for the enthusiasm was simple. The British working class had just fought and endured a world war, supposedly waged for democracy and freedom; it had in the pre-war



Labour candidate, Denis Healey, 1945

'The crucial aspect of our foreign policy should be to protect, assist, encourage and aid in every way that socialist revolution wherever it appears. The upper classes in every country are selfish, depraved, dissolute and decadent. The upper classes look to the British Army and British people to protect them against the just wrath of the people. We must see that this does not happen.'

years suffered depression and social deprivation; it was determined that henceforth things would be different. The Labour Party election slogan, 'And now — win the peace', expressed the common feeling exactly. So too did Labour's landslide victory. As the *New Statesman* put it on 4 August 1945: 'For the first time the popular vote demands socialism'.

Yet, four years later, Labour MP Ellis Smith was to complain: 'We have no socialist drive or vision of the end we want to achieve, or how to reach it.' A younger, more radical Roy Jenkins, speaking on the problem of inequality in 1950, despaired: 'We have hardly yet scratched the problem.' From the other side, the right wing *Daily Express* commented on the last major act of the 1945-51

Government: 'Mr Gaitskell introduces a Tory budget.'

According to the mythology that has since grown up around the 1945-51 Labour Government, such judgements appear excessively harsh. Certainly, there were notable achievements. There was the nationalisation of the Bank of England, of coal, gas, electricity, railways, part of inland transport, cable, wireless, and, half-heartedly in the later

Women — back to the family

The return to 'full unemployment' after the Second World War was achieved at a price — the return of women to their traditional role as wife, mother and housekeeper.

Between the end of the war and October 1946, the number of women employed in industry fell by 670,000. That only 93,000 women were registered as unemployed in October 1946, suggests that in just over a year half a million women were driven back to the family and home.

stages of the government's life, of the iron and steel industry. The National Health Service was introduced and with it a new comprehensive system of social insurance. Mass unemployment disappeared, and in housing, education and welfare the 1945-51 Labour administration achieved more than any other British government, before or since.

But none of this represented a basic change in the power, privilege and ownership distribution in British society. By 1951, 80 per cent of British industry remained in private hands; in 1947, the year which, in many ways, was the high point of the Government's efforts, one per cent of the adult population of England and Wales owned 50 per cent of total capital, a mere five per cent decrease from 1936. The longer Labour governed the more successful and profitable private industry became, especially in comparison with wage rates.

From 1947 to 1950, profits before tax increased by 22 per cent, wages by 25 per cent, salaries by 27 per cent. Between 1949 and 1950, however, profits increased much faster than wages; before tax they rose by ten per cent, compared with six per cent for wages. After tax they rose by 16 per cent, compared with 6 per cent for wages.

How was this profits boom achieved, and why, for example, was there a decline in real wages from 1947 to 1951? One reason is all too strikingly familiar; Chancellor of the Exchequer, Stafford Cripps, explained in January 1949:

'As a nation we cannot afford to distribute more purchasing power by increases of personal income until we get more production and until we pay our own way without gifts and loans from abroad. It is most unfair for those workers who think they can bring some particular pressure to bear upon society to demand increases which can only be met at the cost of their fellow workers. Not only is it unfair, but if such demands were generally indulged in, it would wreck all hope of our recovery.'

Such thinking led to the government imposing a wage freeze in March 1948; the freeze was 'voluntary' but it was effectively policed by the TUC.

Obsession

The drive for productivity became an obsession with the Government. Cabinet member Herbert Morrison could tell the Labour Party conference of 1947: 'In Britain today the battle for socialism is the battle for production.'

But the figures suggest that if this was the battle, then it was already largely won. From 1946 to 1948, production increased by 23 per cent, and the following year by a further 8 per cent. But for the working class rewards were

1945 THE MYTH OF LA



'An avowedly socialist government, with a clear parliamentary majority might well have been expected to...

not forthcoming. On the contrary. The 1949 budget, with its reduction in food subsidies, 'tended', as Labour Research commented, 'to

reverse any redistribution from the rich to the poor'.

Then came — and again the territory is familiar — the cuts in public expenditure. In October 1949, £35m was sliced from the housing budget, £11.5m from the education budget and charges worth £10m were slapped on the NHS. The *Times* editorialised with pleasure: 'Mr Attlee and his colleagues have at last set out on the right road.' The *Financial Times* commented: 'Truly there has been the first tentative recession from the excesses of the Welfare State.'

Why were the cuts necessary; why was the wage freeze necessary; where was the money saved going to be spent? There is no simple answer, but one major reason was the increase in defence expenditure during the government's later years.

In December 1950, the then Chancellor Hugh Gaitskell drew this conclusion as to the effects of stepping-up defence spending from £790 to £1,100m: the increase, said Gaitskell, 'shows how completely unrealistic the continual pressure and demand for higher standards of living — from all sections of the community — must be in the present circumstances... instead of counting our blessings we must count our weapons. We must turn from dealing with the dollar gap to dealing with the all too evident gap in Europe's defences.'

Increased defence spending was just one reflection of a foreign policy which, perhaps

Ireland

In 1949, the Government strengthened the 1921 Government of Ireland Act guaranteeing the partition of Ireland.

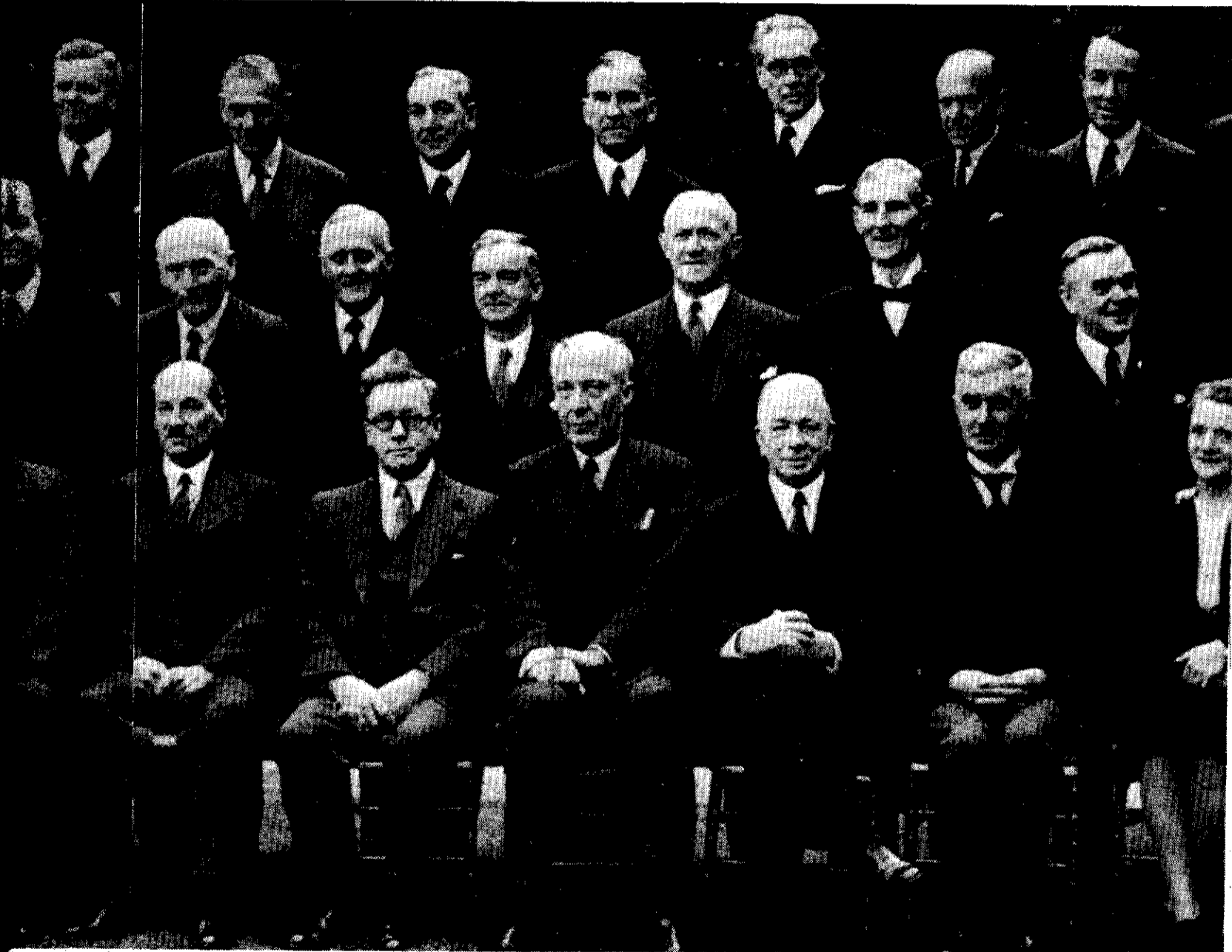
For the first time, a British Government declared that 'in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's Dominions without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland'.

One Labour minister, the present Lord Longford, protested against the guarantee. He told the cabinet: 'The record of the Northern Irish Governments since Northern Ireland was established in 1920 has revealed an attitude to freedom of speech, a fair delimitation of constituency boundaries and to democracy generally which is quite out of keeping with our Labour ideals.'

Longford argued for the political unity of Ireland, but he was told by senior Government members that the North of Ireland's 'continued adhesion to the United Kingdom' was necessary for 'defence purposes'.

5 - 1951

LABOUR'S GOLDEN YEARS



First, there was the very limited nature of that programme. So much so that when the

Prior's predecessors

The 1945-51 Labour Government repealed the 1927 Tory law outlawing general strikes. But, at the same time, it tried to stop the sort of political strikes that Tory Employment Secretary Jim Prior is trying to ban today.

In July 1949 Labour's Attorney General declared: 'A strike which is not confined to industrial objects, which is not relating to some genuine trade dispute but which is designed to subvert the Government and overthrow it to achieve political results... would unquestionably be illegal and those who proved to have participated in it would be open to a charge of seditious conspiracy'.

A year later, the Government proved as good as its word, when ten striking gas workers were taken to court under a piece of war-time legislation that had limited the right to strike. The workers were sentenced to prison, but an appeal court reduced this to a fine.

Government's plans were first announced, the Economist of November 1945 reassured its readers that: 'An avowedly socialist government, with a clear parliamentary majority might well have been expected to go several steps further.'

Second, there was the way in which the government implemented what nationalisation there was. The National Coal Board provides a good illustration. First established in 1947, it was chaired by Lord Hyndley, a managing director of a number of private firms. The rest of the board was made up of two high level civil servants, two trade union leaders, two former bosses of the private coal industry, one professor of physics and one high-level accountant from the City of London.

The idea of the workers actually controlling such industries was an anathema to the Labour leaders. As Stafford Cripps said in October 1946: 'There's not a very large number of workers in Britain capable of taking over large

The witch-hunt

Playing its full part in the Cold War, the Labour Government launched an anti-communist witch-hunt at home. March 1948 saw the launching of a purge of communists in the civil service.

It was backed up by a government/TUC offensive against communists in the unions. The government even discussed deporting communist dockers. For its part, the TUC in October 1948 urged the executives of all affiliated unions to:

'Counteract every manifestation of communist influence within their unions, and to open the eyes of all workpeople to the dangerous subversive activities which are being engineered in opposition to the declared policy of the trade union movement...attempts to wreck economic recovery in the interests of a foreign power whose policy is to keep the world divided, impoverished and in constant dread of a third world war must be condemned and repudiated by all trade unionists.'

enterprises... until there has been more experience by the workers of the managerial side of industry I think it would be almost impossible to have worker-controlled industry, even if it were on the whole desirable.'

Yes, valuable, beneficial reforms were carried out by the 1945-51 Labour Government. Yes, the gains of those years were gains for the working class. But more than anything else, those years expressed the limits of parliamentary Labourism. This was also the government of wage freezes, of productivity drives, of cuts in social services, and of strike breaking. A government that controlled the working class in the interests of capitalism.

The elections of 1950 and 1951 saw nothing like the campaigning, working class enthusiasm of 1945. Although Labour increased its total vote and had more votes than the Tories, the Tories were returned to power by an electoral quirk. The legacy left to them was aptly summed up in 1947 by Maurice Webb, chairperson of the Parliamentary Labour Party: 'The plain truth is we are not yet within miles of socialism.'

Docks in 1945, 1948 and 1949, to break a lorry drivers' strike in 1947, and a London power station strike in 1950. One historian records: 'By 1948 strike-breaking had become second nature to the Cabinet.'

What the Labour Government of 1945-51 did was to keep Britain safe for capitalism. Perhaps there is no better example of the government's opposition to, indeed abhorrence of, the very concept of working people controlling their own destiny, than Labour's nationalisation programme of these years.



world for imperialism.

In 1952, when recalling his 'iron curtain' speech of 1946, Winston Churchill observed: 'The policy which I outlined at Fulton five years ago (sic) was effectively adopted by the United States and the Socialist Party. Two years later, by the Brussels Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty, the whole substance and purpose of what I had said was enforced and adopted by the Socialist Government and today we all respect the foresight and wise courage of the late Ernest Bevin in helping to bring these great changes about.'

Part of these 'changes', and an integral part of Labour's alignment with post-war American imperialism, was Britain's acceptance of Marshall Aid. This effectively allowed the US to control large sections of the British economy. Even before this, by their own free choice, the Labour Government was by and large content to follow the US lead in keeping post war Europe and elsewhere safe for capitalism. The then US Secretary of Defence has recalled that Churchill told him in 1946: 'Bevin was able to talk more firmly and clearly to Russia than he (Churchill) could have by virtue of being (in) a Labour government.'

Being 'more firm' applied not just to the Soviet Union but also to the British working class. Labour used parliament to control the workers in ways that the Tories would have found great difficulty in getting away with.

Troops were sent in to break strikes at the

more than any other single influence, was at the root of the failures of 1945-51. The putting down of the Communist revolution in Greece, the waging of a savage colonial war in Malaya, and the supplying of British troops for Korea,

Nigeria — 21 miners shot dead

Although the Government accepted the inevitable and granted India independence, elsewhere the same old imperialist rule was the order of the day.

In the colony of Nigeria, for instance, the forces of 'law and order' shot dead 21 striking miners in November 1949.

A Government report later admitted, 'the only weapons possessed by the miners were sticks which they always carry for walking on the sloping ground'.

Labour's colonial secretary, James Griffiths, reacted to the deaths by saying that the Nigerian chief of police was to go on permanent leave in Britain.

are just three examples of how the Labour Government became a willing, if junior, partner with the United States in policing the



OUR COMMON CAUSE

Why we'll be fighting for unity with the Socialist Workers Party

REVOLUTIONARIES on the British left are clear in their criticism of the politics of the Labour Party, but revolutionaries themselves are not above criticism.

'Which of the 57 varieties of revolutionary group do you want us to join?', is the jibe on the lips of social democrats, and a serious problem for many independent revolutionaries in the trade unions and around the women's movement.

At its last conference the International Marxist Group reaffirmed its position in favour of a fight for regroupment of all revolutionaries which it had first elaborated at its 1978 conference.

It also took a decisive step forward along this path by placing especial emphasis on the need for a regroupment between the Socialist Workers Party and the IMG. The following article is based on the document 'Why fighting for a joint revolutionary organisation with the SWP (UK) is a major task of the IMG' by Alan Jones, that was passed by the recent IMG conference.

Revolutionary unity: an objective need

FIGHTING for revolutionary unity in Britain today essentially means fighting for unity between the Socialist Workers Party and the International Marxist Group.

Those who believe that a united revolutionary organisation can be built outside the existing groups — through socialist centres and so on — are living in a dream world.

Similarly those who imagine that because the SWP is the largest revolutionary group in this country that it can by-pass the others, becoming the sole revolutionary force simply on the basis of its size, are likely to be as disappointed in the Eighties as they were in the Seventies.

A fusion between the forces of the SWP and the IMG would change the whole appearance of the British left. It would provide an automatic answer to the question of which revolutionary organisation to join. Other groups would be forced to come into the fused organisation or else face a future of increasing irrelevance.

The numbers of the unified organisation would take the revolutionary left decisively out of the grouplet stage — the size would be at least 4,500 but with the many new members that would join the united organisation its size would rapidly grow to at least 6,000.

A fusion between the SWP and the IMG would not only represent an enormous organisational advance for the revolutionary left in Britain, politically it would be a big step forward towards our strategic goal of building a revolutionary party — towards winning the working class away from reformism to revolutionary politics.

Labourism can not be wished away, but we can displace the CP

WHETHER or not the SWP and IMG unify our tasks are the same. Ultimately we have to challenge the Labour Party for the allegiance of the mass of the working class.

But, with or without fusion, we cannot do this yet. The Labour Party regularly wins 11m votes; it has 6m affiliated members and block memberships of the majority of trade unions. It is on a completely different level to any other working class political organisation in Britain.

This is not the case with the Communist Party. Revolutionaries have already been able to outflank the CP and make gains at its expense, both on the electoral level and in some unions. These possibilities would be greatly enhanced with a fused organisation.

The objective role of the CP, since it stopped being a revolutionary party, has been to bolster the hold of the Labour Party and reformism in the working class.

It channels those militant workers who begin to break with social democracy back into the ambit of the Labour leaders. Moving to the CP for socialist answers they find it tailends the Labour lefts and endorses their approach.

Between 1929-31 it was the CP's ultra-leftism — its refusal to contemplate united fronts with the Labour Party, its analysis that it

Socialist Worker

was 'social fascist' — that led many militants to go back to the Labour Party.

Either way around, ultra-left or tailending the reformists, the CP's role has had similar results. As sections of the working class radicalise — due to the crisis of capitalism or the policies of the Labour leaders — and move to the left away from the policies of the Labour Party, they find the Communist Party. The policies of the Communist Party generally succeed in doing nothing more effectively than reinforcing the hold of left reformism.

The politics of the Communist Party have acted as a powerful block to those workers breaking with Labourist politics. But today it is within the grasp of revolutionaries to displace the CP as the main force to the left of Labour.

The CP is already much weaker than in the past — it admits to a 20 per cent fall in membership and it is clear the real fall is much higher. The loss of a series of its working class militants has undermined its traditional strength in the trade unions. Although the CP is still significantly stronger than the revolutionaries in the unions it has begun to come under some pressure from the far-left as was revealed at the recent conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

It has been broad united front campaigns, like the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in the late '60s, or more recently the Anti-Nazi League and the National Abortion Campaign

Labour Party — in or out?

SHOULD socialists work inside the Labour Party, or stay outside it?

That question has been asked and argued about for years. Often it is discussed in terms of which is the lesser evil. Enter the Labour Party, bury yourself in it so that you too become part of the problem? Or stay outside and remain isolated?

Not an attractive choice, but there is a third alternative. An alternative adopted, for instance, by the early Communist Party of Great Britain, who, under the guidance of the Third International, argued that a fight should be made to transform the Labour Party.

Their reasoning was simple. The Labour Party was controlled by a bunch of bureaucrats and careerists who ran the party in the interests of capitalism. On the other hand, Labour was more a federation than a political party, and it was based on the trade unions, the most powerful organisations that the working class had in its possession.

Therefore, maintain an independent existence, but insist on the right of all working class organisations to affiliate and be part of

the Labour Party. Encourage all sections of the workers' movement to try and control the party, rather than being controlled by the party apparatus.

There have been many changes since those early days. The most important is that bans and proscriptions have been imposed by the party chiefs. But the Labour Party is still based on the unions. It still claims to represent all streams of working class opinion. That is why the fight for affiliation remains a battle worth waging.

This is not only a worthy principle in its own right. If rank and file union organisations, single issue campaigns, and all working class political parties had the right to affiliate it would bring the experience of class struggle into the Labour Party.

As it is the reverse happens: generation after generation of honest socialists have been swallowed up in the daily grind of electoral life, unable to influence the direction of the party. Until this situation changes the tail will continue to wag the dog.



that revolutionaries have put the CP under most pressure. Acting in a united fashion with the Labour lefts, the distinctive class politics of revolutionaries have outflanked the CP which fails to distinguish itself from the politics of Labour.

Revolutionaries have defeated the CP in elections — in most places where the CP stood against Socialist Unity in the last elections we won more votes.

Although a united revolutionary organisation involving the SWP and the IMG would have a smaller paper membership than the CP, in terms of active membership there would be little difference.

Of course such a united organisation would initially be weaker in industrial militants compared to the CP, but the attractions of a single revolutionary organisation would tend to counteract this over time.

Such a united revolutionary organisation would have a range of activity and resources that would compare well to those of the CP, including inside the trades-unions.

Establishing a revolutionary organisation that is a clear alternative pole for those workers moving leftwards from the Labour Party — the decisive step towards the longer term goal of breaking the hold of the Labour Party itself — does lie within the capabilities of revolutionaries today.

Creating such a clear revolutionary pole is also the precondition for challenging Labour's hold on the working class. Union between the forces of the SWP and the IMG is therefore not just an abstract idea but a real objective need on the road towards a mass revolutionary party.

The obstacle to unity: internal democracy

BUT of course there are major obstacles to achieving a unity between the SWP and the IMG, particularly if that unity is to be lasting and strong. It would be extremely foolish to ignore them.

Two points need to be made at the outset. In fighting for a fusion with the SWP we would not dissolve the key political differences between us — a polemic on our positions on the united front, the independent women's movement and so on will be conducted before, during and after any fusion.

Of equal importance is the question of internal democracy — without a resolution of this problem no unification is possible.

The SWP at present does not have a democratic internal regime. For example, at its recent conference, minorities led by Steve Jeffries and others won 30 and 40 per cent of the vote on some questions, but they were initially excluded from the leadership bodies that were elected. Only a rank-and-file revolt ensured Jeffries a place on the National Committee.

This attitude to minorities is made even worse by the SWP's ban on the formation of tendencies and factions on any questions of difference outside the few months of a pre-conference discussion period. Differences within the revolutionary organisation cannot confine themselves to the routine of bi-annual

conferences. Discussion must be ongoing, differences arise if they must. The Bolshevik Party continually developed tendencies and factions as part of a healthy internal political life.

Any attempt to forbid the elaboration of political differences is contrary to the positions of a working class Leninist organisation. The right of tendency and faction, not the tin-pot despotism of an all-powerful central committee, is the precondition for developing a stable and lasting revolutionary organisation. This is even more true in bourgeois-democratic Britain than in Tsarist Russia!

No organisation, even with a few hundred let alone thousands or tens of thousands of members, can be immune to the different pressures that are present within the working class. Any attempt to create a 'homogenous' organisation will fail to produce politics arising from the real lives of revolutionary workers and will be riven by splits.

The fused organisation that we are fighting for would be alive to all the conflicting pressures and problems within the working class, with a membership used to political debate and disagreement but capable of acting together in a firm and committed manner within the class struggle. Such an organisation depends upon an internally democratic regime.

Internationalism & the International

IN a country like Britain, where imperialism has helped establish a deeply insular tradition within working class politics, the question of internationalism is more vital than ever.

Both the SWP and the IMG are committed, on paper, to the building of an international revolutionary organisation. The ruling class is thoroughly international in the way it operates — through cartels and multinationals, imperialist wars, and international 'summits' of bourgeois leaders.

The working class, too, exists internationally and has to respond to, equal and go beyond the international organisation of the ruling class. The need for international working class organisation is, and always has been, obvious.

Over a period of 30 years, the SWP has not been able to make one serious step towards establishing such a revolutionary international. The idea that it is possible to first build national organisations and then link them up internationally leads nowhere. Without international organisation right from the beginning then the national differences between organisations will tend to drive them further apart, not bring them closer together.

The path of building the Fourth International simultaneously with national sections has not been an untroubled one, but the balance sheet is clear. It is not only the International that is stronger today than in the past, but its national sections have been aided by their connection to the FI, not hampered by it. The reason that whole national sections of the FI exist — the Spanish, Columbian, Mexican and Swedish sections are examples — is because the weight of the International was used, together with existing strong organisat-

ions in other countries, to assemble forces.

We think that the SWP should draw out the conclusions of the last 30 years. In the debate with the SWP in *International Socialism* before the 11th World Congress of the Fourth International, we suggested holding discussions on the issues which prevent the SWP from affiliating to the FI. We still want this discussion. We cannot comprehend the reasons which prevent the SWP from affiliating to the Fourth International.

However, the IMG does not make affiliation to the Fourth International a precondition for fusion with the SWP. Other alternatives are open, such as becoming a sympathising organisation or allowing individuals to become members of the FI.

The United Front

THERE are other differences between the SWP and the IMG — those on the character of the Soviet Union and the use of transitional demands are well known.

All these differences would have to be debated and discussed in the process of forging unity between the two organisations.

One tactical difference which the IMG thinks is particularly important in fighting the Tories concerns the united front. Most of the distinctive features of the IMG's and SWP's work in the trade unions (and in the autonomous movements) flow from this difference.

The theses on the importance of the united front were first adopted at the Third Congress of the Communist International. They emphasised the need to bring together revolutionaries and reformists on the basis of a struggle for common objectives.

This was the character of movements like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, and the high points of the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act. It was a key factor in their success.

Sometimes the SWP chooses the method of the united front, as it did with the Anti-Nazi

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League. The real drive and weight of this campaign lay in the thousands of 'rank and file' activists who built and participated in it locally. But the ANL was launched as a united front of the SWP, Labour MPs, trade union leaders and the like.

It was this combination at the top that gave the green light for the united front of thousands of local activists at the base which swept the campaign forward to such dramatic proportions.

But the SWP does not always choose this approach. On other occasions it follows a totally different tactic summed up by the phrase the 'rank and file movement'.

The 'rank and file' approach starts from a false choice — do we base ourselves on the activity of the rank and file or do we also include the reformist leaders?

In the words of Trotsky, the author of the Comintern's theses on the united front: 'If we were able to simply unite the working masses around our practical immediate slogans and

skip over reformist organisations, whether party or trade union, that would of course be the very best thing in the world.' (*Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*)

The fact is, of course, that we cannot 'skip over' the Labour Party or the trade unions. Attempts to unite rank and file workers around the demands of revolutionaries may attract small groups of militant workers, but will crucially fail to confront the reformist leaders, who will go on misleading without being challenged. The mass of the working class will remain within the reformist fold.

The SWP vacillates between these two approaches. With the 'Defend Our Unions' initiative, it has a rank and file conception of the campaign, but actually builds it as a united front. With the ANL, the tactic employed to launch and build the campaign was clearly that of the united front.

In the teachers' union, the contradictions of the SWP's approach become clear. Despite a right-wing bureaucracy and SWP member Dick North on the national executive, their 'Rank and File Teacher' grouping still fetishises school-based actions and unofficial strikes.

Sometimes the SWP can avoid making a practical choice between these two approaches, but on big matters it will always be forced to choose.

The IMG stands for the approach of the ANL and the 'Defend Our Unions' conference; for the application of the approach of the united front to all fields of activity. This is particularly relevant in building mass opposition to the Tory government. Scargill, Benn, Moss Evans and the rest can mobilise huge numbers against the Tories — we must lend our weight to forcing them to do this, not let them off the hook while revolutionaries try to go it alone. Naturally, inside the united front we never abandon our political approach.

The next steps towards unity

THERE are no short-cuts to a lasting unity between the SWP and the IMG. We are interested in the real step towards a mass, working class, revolutionary party in Britain that would be represented by such a fusion. We are not after a cheap entry raid to win a few members, and wreck the SWP, or perhaps ourselves. Such a move would not solve the problems of creating a revolutionary party in Britain.

There are no short-cuts to unity, but there are steps that can be taken to advance the possibility of an understanding between the two organisations.

A public discussion of all the points that divide us would be very valuable. It would clarify where differences exist that do not preclude unity; it would combat suspicion between our memberships; it might even allow some differences to be overcome. The members of both organisations, and other groups and individuals on the left, would become clearer on the need for unity and what the obstacles are.

It is vital that any debate and discussion be public — no points of significance can ever be primarily decided by small closed discussions.

Clearly any steps towards unity would have to be tested out by a period of joint work. This would demonstrate whether a principled basis for unity actually exists, and would reveal whether the two currents could productively combine to form one organisation in practice.

We are opposed to a now-or-nothing fusion. Even more are we opposed to a fusion where one side call the other 'centrist' rather than 'revolutionary', as with the 1968 fusion between IS and Workers' Fight.

Joint work would reassure both sides that internal democracy would exist for all; that differences would be approached constructively, not as excuses for disruption; that debate, though firm, would be comradely and not at all a dialogue between the deaf.

The path to unity will take time and will not be easy. But if successful the end product would be something of real importance for the future of revolutionary politics and the working class movement in this country.

Let us echo the words of Lenin when he fought for the unity of all Russian revolutionaries: 'Without renouncing anything, without forgetting anything, without making any promises about setting aside differences, we are working together for a common cause.' (*Collected Works* Vol 17, p.348)

It is this common cause that we share with the SWP — the world proletarian revolution — which makes the IMG commit itself to forging unity between our two organisations. The fight has only just begun, but we are confident the future is on the side of both our organisations. And it is along these lines that we shall approach the SWP leadership to discuss a fusion.

Why Ireland is still the acid test

TAKE a look at this trade union banner. It is rather exceptional in the history of the British working class. It takes the side of the struggle of the Irish people against British imperialism.

For there along with Lenin, A J Cook, Keir Hardie and George Harvey, a local miners' leader, is the face, on the top left hand corner, of James Connolly.

James Connolly was the greatest socialist the islands of Britain and Ireland have ever produced. Great, because, as Marxist writer and theoretician, he made an outstanding contribution to socialist thought. Great, because, as an agitator and activist, he was an outstanding revolutionary.

Painted

Connolly's face was painted off this banner in 1947. By then he was over 30 years dead, having been shot by the British Army for his part in the Irish Rising of Easter 1916.

In many ways, it is remarkable his image stayed for so long, for the history of the British labour movement's attitude to Ireland is a dark, dreary and squalid business.

No more so than the last ten years when the Labour Party, whether in government or out, cheered on British imperial policy in Ireland: the internment camps, the H blocks, the police tortures, the no-jury courts and the death machine of the British Army.

It was left to others to protest. Amnesty International, the European Court of Human Rights, Irish cardinals, even US politicians. But not, or at least not in any substance, the Labour left.

When quizzed on this, most of the Labour left produce a variety of excuses. 'It's a difficult question', they say. 'We may do more harm

than good by speaking out', they argue. 'We can't support terrorists', they explain.

But, the 'terrorists' of the Irish Republican Army did not exist when Wilson sent in the troops in 1969; in this context the Provisionals are no more than a justifiable reaction to British policy.

Silence

What has their 'not speaking out' led to? A total of 2,000 dead. Words, it is said, can kill; but so can silence.

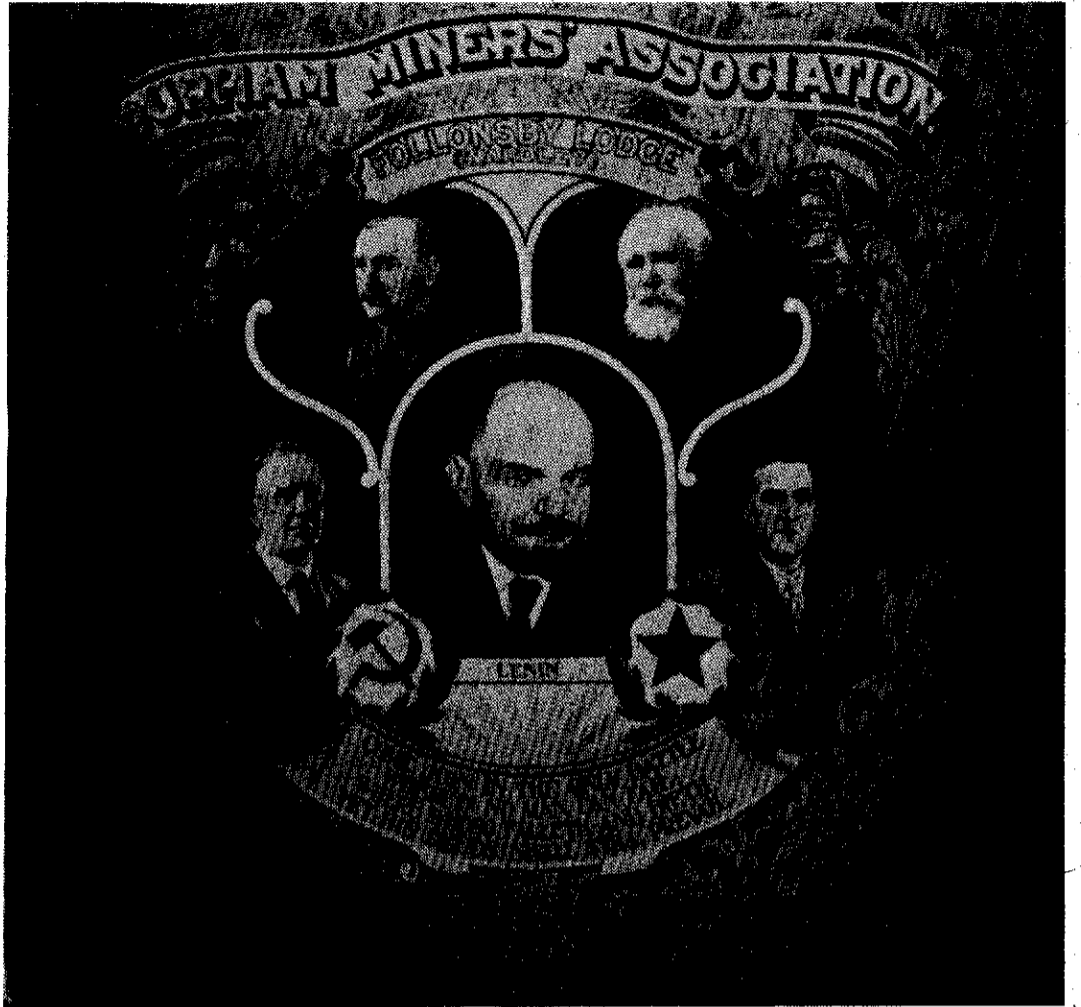
It is a 'difficult question' only if your starting point is other than the right of the Irish people to decide their own future, without interference from British government and British guns.

The simple fact is that as far as Ireland goes the Labour left has not only proved part of the British problem, it has been part of the British oppression of a people, who, taken as a whole, demand no more than self-determination.

Reluctant

That is why we can argue over the tactics for this or that wage dispute in this country, over economic strategies, over Labour Party democracy. But until the Labour left take a socialist position on Ireland, we shall be most reluctant to say that they are comrades of ours.

**For further discussion on Labour Party policy on Ireland come to the Labour Committee on Ireland Conference at North Library, Manor Gardens, London N7 on Saturday 29 March. Details: 5 Stamford Hill, London N16. Labour Party members only.*



International Women's Day, Belfast 1980

TWO hundred and fifty British feminists went to Belfast last weekend, on International Women's Day, to show their solidarity with the prisoners in Armagh jail — the women's 'H block'.

VALERIE COULTAS and PAULINE ROE were among them.

9.20pm Friday

THE boat leaves Liverpool docks. There are women from many student unions, from Manchester, Coventry and Birmingham Polytechnics, Sussex University, from London, Bradford, and Leeds. Gay women are prominent among them.

Many are quite young. Some are revolutionary feminists, others are socialist feminists. The delegation is broadly representative of the British women's movement.

Belfast 7am Saturday

WE pile off the boat to be welcomed by Sue Pantel, one of the Armagh 11, who are on trial for the demonstration on International Women's Day last year and a member of Peoples Democracy.

We are driven through Belfast. The city is deserted apart from a couple of soldiers at a security check point. The fences and buildings have barbed wire around them, many windows are broken or boarded up; some buildings have wire cages around them. Many are demolished. There are few new buildings. This really is an occupied town.

12pm Saturday

WE arrive at Sinn Fein headquarters in the Falls Road. There are boulders in front of it, apparently to stop cars stopping to throw bombs. 'Peoples' taxis' drive up and down the street — they are the only form of public transport in this area of the city. Loads of people pile in; a ride is only 20p.

Sinn Fein's headquarters are very busy. Women are very much in control, organising the stewarding. The men are playing a backseat role, helping by testing out loudspeakers.

1.30pm Saturday

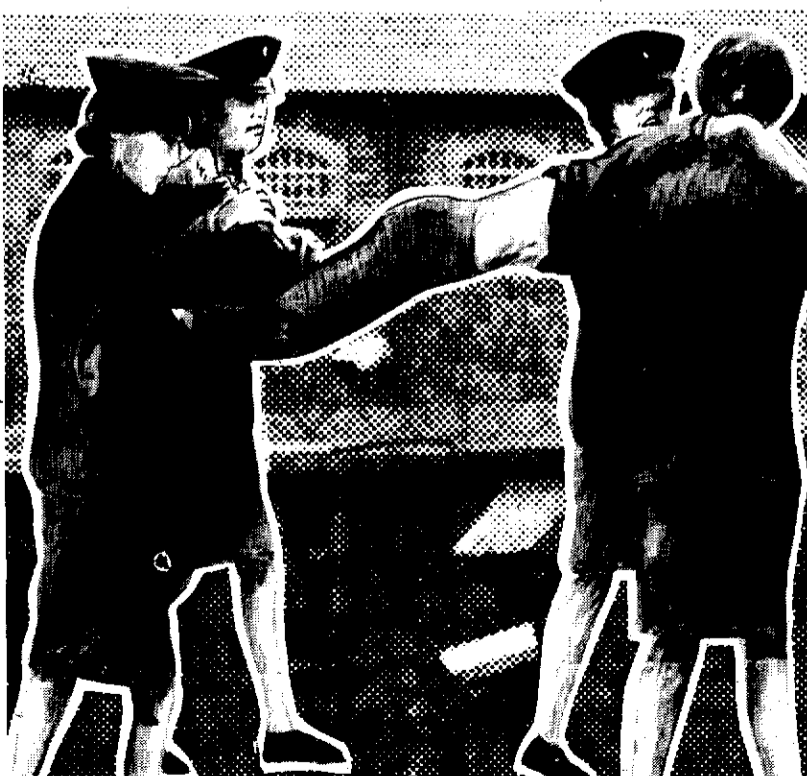
SIX coaches full of people finally move off. We are told that if we are stopped we should give the army

nothing but our names and addresses. The stewards meeting has decided that if we are stopped for over half an hour we will sit down across the road in protest.

No-one disagrees with this, but some women are quite nervous. A woman from Belfast points out that the women in the army are often more brutal than the men.

2.30pm

WE arrive at Armagh jail. The RUC is waiting for us to arrive and a few Protestants are hanging around. We leave the coaches and march for a few yards.



Male wardens from Long Kesh have now been brought into Armagh to beat women prisoners.

When we reach the jail we spread out across the road and the RUC, very politely for them, scuffles back. People were quite amazed by this but the RUC were behaving their best.

The chant goes up from Women Against Imperialism 'What do we want? Justice! What do we get? Torture!' The Sinn Fein contingent also kept on shouting for political status. There are about 400 marchers.

Marie Maholland from Women Against Imperialism makes a speech. She calls for political status explaining how the women inside were beaten by screws from Long Kesh on 7 February this year due to their continued demands for political status. Now they are confined to their cells for 23 hours a day and are refused washing and toilet facilities. They are being refused adequate sanitary towels, are subjected to freezing cold, and now they have no option but to begin a similar protest

to the men in the H blocks — throwing excrement on the walls.

International Women's Day clearly had a special significance when women stood shoulder to shoulder with men in the struggle for national liberation in Ireland. The prison authorities made no distinctions except to use women's sex against them.

Women from Dublin, from Sheffield, Manchester and London expressed their solidarity with their sisters. They promised to return.

'1, 2, 3, 4, Open up the H Block door, 5, 6, 7, 8, Open up the Armagh Gate.' Doors were banged inside the jail and a roar went up. Later we learnt that the screws moved the women to cells where they would not hear the protest.

'SS, RUC, SS, RUC' is another popular chant. But the most amazing shock for the Protestant gathering in the distance must have been the singing of the 'Women's army is marching'.

But it was Republicanism that had the last word in song.

The female stewards had some difficulty in restraining the Armagh youth, both male and female, from going and taking the Protestant population on singlehanded.

11.30pm Andersonstown

THE community centre in Andersonstown is packed. We have seen a play about Armagh.

Marie Maholland points out how great it is to see so many British women, but she wishes that she had seen us ten years before. She receives a massive roar of approval.

Sunday morning, Ballymurphy community centre

THE room is packed with women — only women. An argument takes place between a Protestant 'socialist feminist' and 'Women Against Imperialism'. The plight of Protestant women is pointed out, their poverty should be understood. But it is pointed out that they do not have the continual harassment of the army to suffer as well as poverty.

One woman explains how when Protestant women were asked to support the Armagh picket they said:

'But they're terrorists'.

Marie O'Brien, a Protestant living in Antrim and a member of PD, explains how the border effects everything and everyone in Ireland. Feminism has to tackle the anti-imperialist issue if it is to build itself among the mass of women. Women can't avoid choosing the side of those fighting imperialism or those collaborating with it.

Anne Speed, from Dublin and PD, explained that: 'This is the most heartening event for Irish feminists in the last ten years.' The solidarity that British feminists had shown with women in Armagh pointed a way forward for Irish feminists, both North and South to unite around a concrete focus — Armagh — and to unite anti-imperialism with feminism.

4pm Sunday

WHEN it came to concrete proposals there were tons. Pauline Roe, an IMG member on the NUS executive, explained that, despite censorship by the NUS leaders of her mailings to women students, she was still going to make this a priority and fight for official support and resources to the campaign.

A tribunal is to take place on 9 April with prominent British and Southern Irish women acting as judges. The Armagh 11 have decided to boycott the court that day as they do not see that they should have to be on trial at all.

A delegation is planned to visit Armagh Prison and investigate the conditions — if the North of Ireland authorities dare to let women see them!

Market Social

AS we leave the Republican pub to catch the boat men two men thank us for coming and ask us to return. 'You've had an amazing impact', one of them explains.

5pm Monday Euston station

ALL we can think is that we are lucky not to have to live in Belfast. It really is time — Britain's last colony must go.

Women Against Imperialism, c/o 52 Broadway, Belfast 12. Pauline Roe can be contacted at NUS in London.

HOME NEWS

MANCHESTER LABOUR FIGHTS CUTS — AND IMPLEMENTS THEM

By Dick Withecombe, Ardwick Manchester Constituency Labour Party.

A DAY of protest in Manchester against central government cuts is planned for 29 March. The Campaign for Manchester, a Labour Party inspired cuts campaign, has organised a demonstration which is likely to attract a large turn out.

But at the same time the Labour controlled local council is set to make £12.5m worth of cuts of its own — and raise rates by 29 per cent. Little wonder then that Manchester Labour Party is in a state of turmoil.

In January Labour councillors were informed by the city treasurer that a rate rise of 49 per cent would be needed to maintain current services. The Labour Group leadership then decided to implement cuts of £13m in order to bring the rate increase below 30 per cent.

Since then revolutionaries in the Labour Party and militants in the rank and file Fightback cuts campaign have been arguing for a policy of no cuts, no rent increase, no rate increases. Any deficit, it has been stressed, could be financed by refusing to pay money lenders interest payments.

For the moment these arguments have been defeated in the City Labour Party

where, for instance, supporters of the left wing Independent Labour Publications have described them as 'utopian' — and a little illegal. But a motion was passed at the City Labour Party on 6 February that called for no cuts in services in 'real terms'.

The 'savings' being proposed by the council include the axing of 70 homehelp jobs, delays in filling job vacancies, cuts of £3m in direct works maintenance, of £5.7m from education and £3m from housing.

The proposed chopping of two women's aid refuge centres and the city's gay information centre have been reversed after protests from the women's and gay movements.

With the planning of such cuts, what really does seem 'utopian' is to expect support for a Labour Party which while condemning Tory cuts goes all out to implement its own.

Unions Refuse to Back Occupation

THE occupation to stop the closure of Stone-Platts in Oldham continues. SUE DEARDEN reports on the latest developments, and in particular the fight for official recognition.

As the occupation of the Oldham textile machinery factory enters its fourth week, the occupation committee's plans for extending the action have been undermined by the failure of the Engineering Union to make it official.

For the second time the national executive meeting of the AUEW, the largest union in the plant, has deferred a decision, despite the fact that the Sheet Metal Union and the three staff unions — TASS, APEX and ASTMS — have all made the occupation official.

Delegation

A delegation of Stone-Platt workers to the AUEW headquarters got no further than the foyer and a chat with a personal secretary.

Harold Robinson, chairperson of the strike committee explained:

'We're ready to move — this deferment cramps our stand, its stifling our ability to win'. It particularly undermines attempts to spread the dispute to other plants in the Stone-Platt group at Accrington, Bolton and Crawley.

On the TUC demonstration Terry Duffy, General Secretary of the AUEW, told Socialist Challenge that it was up to the executive member for the area to make it official. But Gerry Russell — who is the local member of the executive — claims it is up to the national executive, ie Duffy!

Backing

Russell has promised to fight for official backing, but far more was expected from the leadership of the

Engineering Union in the Manchester district, particularly in the light of the recent wave of engineering plant closures in the area.

Local Labour MP, Michael Meacher, has offered his support, and at a mass meeting promised 'to raise hell in the House'.

The strikers want him to find out what happened to the £2.4m from the government given to Stone-Platt under the Textile Employment Subsidy scheme. They want to see the full accounts of the company.

Meacher could do more than 'raise hell in the House' — how about raising 'hell' in the Manchester area by touring factories, and mobilising real support for the occupation?

Despite the shortcomings of the AUEW leadership, the workers remain resolute. Ted Brennan, TASS representative, told Socialist Challenge:

Closure

'We're after rescinding the closure notice made in February and withdrawal of the immediate redundancy notices to 117 workers — this plant will remain closed till we get that.'

In the next weeks the entire workforce needs to be organised around fighting for solidarity action from the other Stone-Platt plants and engineering factories in the area. And this needs to be conducted on the basis of coordinated demands against any job loss, for the 35 hour week without loss of pay, and linking up with other sections of the labour movement.

Donations and messages of support to: Eddie Holland, Stone-Platt Dispute Fund, c/o 70 Lord Street, Oldham.



50th WOMEN'S TUC

THE fiftieth Women's TUC takes place in Brighton next weekend and 250 delegates, mostly women, will discuss the issues that concern women trade unionists.

Although decisions taken at this conference are not binding on the General Council of the TUC, a 1978 resolution calling on the TUC to organise a demonstration against restrictive abortion laws led to the highly successful anti-Corrie demonstration on 28 October last year.

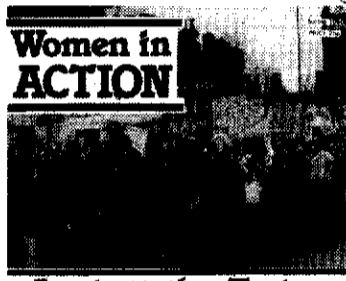
Kate Holman, one of two delegates from the National Union of Journalists, spoke to Socialist Challenge about this year's conference.

'The attacks on women's rights by the present government will be an important issue. Many of the facilities that women have won over the last decade are being taken away.'

'If the Employment Bill, proposed by the Tories, becomes law it will be much more difficult for women to return to work after pregnancy. They could end up getting the sack simply for being pregnant if they have only been working in that job for a short while.'

'They intend to double the previous six months service regulations that restricts unfair dismissal, including on grounds of pregnancy'. Women would be particularly affected by this change as domestic responsibilities mean they are not as likely to have such long service records as men.

The new immigration laws,



Women in Action
Against the Tories
In this issue
Interview
Campaign
Focus on
the Tories
A Paper for Action in the Unions on Women's Rights

WOMEN IN ACTION: A newspaper for women in the Unions. Orders from Sisterwrite Bookshop, 190 Upper Street, London N1. Price 25p.

which encourage discrimination on the grounds of sex, creed and colour, are also to be discussed at the conference, particularly with regard to the proposed exclusion of husband and fiancés of women not born in this country.

Protective legislation, which 'protects' women from doing certain jobs, will also be a big debate. Many trade unions are opposed to the repeal of protective legislation which the Equal Opportunity Commission has proposed.

Kate does not think that the only

reason for this is because the trade union leaders are out to protect men's privileges at the expense of women — though this clearly part of it.

'If you take the example of affirmative action in America, where women have been fighting to work in the mines with materials like lead because these are the higher paid areas, then I think there are some problems.'

'The emphasis should be on forcing employers to improve conditions of work and pay for all employees, rather than women having to enter those dangerous jobs.'

'Everyone should be stopped from going down the mines. They should be fully automated. Money should be invested in using new technology to cut out doing hazardous work entirely.'

Kate Holman will be selling Women in Action at the conference, a new newspaper aiming to take feminist issues to the factory floor.

'A paper for working women in the unions has never been tackled before. It's very important that women should have a paper that represents their views, where they can exchange experiences at the base of the trade union movement, and find out what the officials think.'

Given the interest working women have shown in the campaign against John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill Women in Action should find an enthusiastic audience among women in the labour movement.

You can order copies from Sisterwrite Bookshop, 190 Upper St, London N1 if you're not going to the Women's TUC.

British Rail demand 'sale of the century'

By P M Grant, ASLEF Paddington

DON PULLEN, assistant general secretary of the rail union ASLEF, told a 100-strong meeting of his union members on 23 February that British Rail was saying that unless the unions agreed to a 'sale of the century' of conditions of service no money would be made available to finance a pay settlement.

Pullen was speaking at a mass meeting of ASLEF's London District No 1 council. He explained the British Rail's 'Into the '80s' plan proposed a series of changes in working conditions which would lead to large scale redundancies. For instance all driver's assistants jobs were to go.

The ASLEF assistant general secretary went on to say that British Rail was being

egged on in their attacks on railworkers by the Tory government and that inter-union solidarity was essential if the attack was to be beaten off. Unfortunately it seems that the National Union of Railwaymen have accepted BR's arguments and are prepared to talk productivity to get money on the table.

At the meeting Tony West, a driver from the Stratford depot, argued that both the wages and cuts struggle were political struggles. Any settlement under 20 per cent, said West, meant a cut in living standards.

West got the most enthusiastic reception of the evening when he said ASLEF should have no truck with OMO — one man operated trains.



Corrie — it's not over yet!

JOHN Corrie's Bill may still wangle it's way through Parliament on Friday 14 March.

The Youth and Community Bill which pro-choice campaigners hoped would be debated instead has not got out of committee in time.

Robert Taylor, Tory MP for Croydon North-east, has a Private Member's Bill on child maintenance due to be debated on Friday, but since he is a confirmed anti-abortionist he is likely to drop his Bill or hurry it through so that Corrie can get more time.

Vote

Given last Friday's vote to include the phrase 'substantial risk of injury' to the woman's health in the grounds for abortion, pro-choice campaigners cannot afford to be complacent.

The votes of male MPs in Parliament cannot be allowed to cause suffering to millions of women who will turn to backstreet abortion. Pro-choice campaigners should turn out this Friday to show once more their opposition to Corrie.

It looks as if this will be the very last time that John Corrie's controversial Bill will be allowed time in Parliament.

Sponsor

That the Tory Party is reluctant to sponsor this particular Bill, and has refused it government time, shows that women organised to fight are a powerful force.

Over the past five years, the mass campaigning on the streets, in the factories and on the housing estates, has won the debate on whether a woman has the right to choose whether or not to have a child.

Opinion

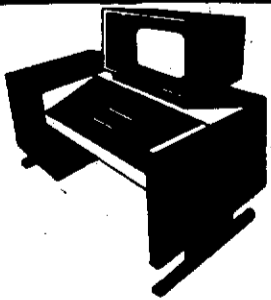
It is this long-term fight by the National Abortion Campaign that has changed public opinion on the issue of abortion and has altered the attitude of the trade unions and the Labour Party.

It has even caused divisions in the ranks of the Tory Party itself over Corrie's Bill.

But the Tory Party would not be divided if the Bill simply sought to reduce the time limit to 24 weeks.

Not only Tories, but many people in the labour movement are vulnerable to the arguments of the anti-abortionists on viability of the foetus.

The threat to abortion rights will not recede if Corrie's Bill fails on Friday. That's why building the National Abortion Campaign is crucial.



NEW TECHNOLOGY Day School

The IMG is holding a day school on the new technology. The agenda will include workshops on the car industry, office technology, telecommunications, and programming. Plenary sessions will cover the general implications of new technology, its economic implications, and nuclear technology.

The school is open to all IMG members and sympathisers and will take place on Saturday March 15th. Further details from Alan on 01-359 8288.

Afghanistan: our wishful thinking

Steve Potter's article on Afghanistan (21 February) is both confused and contradictory.

If the Soviet troops are not there to defend the USSR against imperialist attack, as Potter admits, but 'to enforce a pro-capitalist government', then why must socialists choose between a Soviet-backed capitalist government and an imperialist backed one that is only more reactionary? Can any kind of capitalist government in Afghanistan be progressive? If this were the only choice for socialists they why not neutrality?

But fortunately this is not the choice and Potter contradicts himself when he says that no revolutionary alternative exists. According to him, 'if indeed there was a direct threat to the Soviet Union it could have been countered by the encouragement of mass mobilizations of workers and peasants in favour of the reforms to smash (!) the conservative alliance of landowners...' etc.

Now who are these workers and peasants who could be 'mobilized' to 'smash' the reactionaries if no third camp exists between the Soviet troops and the imperialist-backed reactionaries? And how can Potter criticise, as he does, the Italian and Spanish CP for not calling for 'an independent revolutionary path for the workers and peasants' if 'no such camp exists'?

What has happened to the 160,000 workers who, according to the article, joined the trade unions during the first year after the PDPA came to power? There clearly is a third camp in Afghanistan and Potter's difficulties stem from the need to find some justification for supporting the military occupation, even if it contradicts his whole analysis.

The fact that the Soviet Army's fight against the rightist guerrillas 'temporarily coincides with the interests of the workers' is quite irrelevant. The Fourth International called for a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe after 1945 in spite of the fact that the Red Army actions against the capitalists and landlords temporarily coincided with the interests of the workers.

The reason for this is clear. Soviet military occupation is incompatible with independent revolutionary class politics. One or the other must go. Potter and the IMG resolve this by wishing the Afghan workers out of existence. But real life in Afghanistan will soon make nonsense of the wishful thinking of Upper St.

GUS FAGAN, Oxford

USSR still an 'episodic relapse'

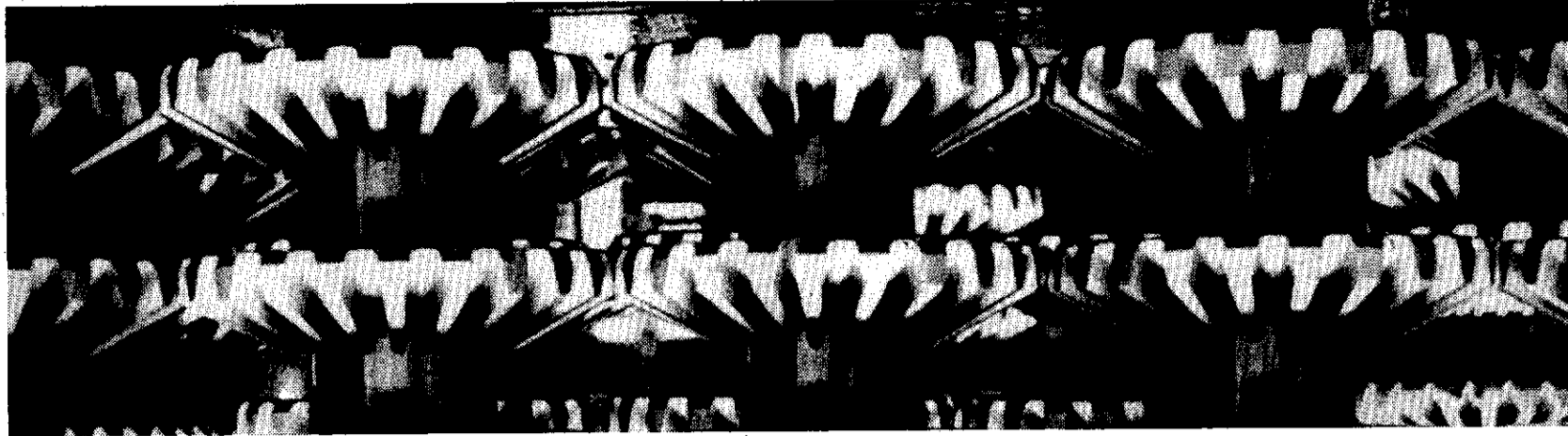
I READ Vladimir Derer's letter (Letters, 28 February) concerning Trotsky's remarks on the nature of the Soviet Union with some alarm.

His argument centres on Trotsky's conception that the bureaucratic social structure of the Soviet Union was transitional.

Vladimir argues: 'The fact that the transitional regime has continued to exist despite the absence of proletarian revolutions in the West for another 40 years makes a recognition of the Soviet society's class character a long overdue task.'

To support this thesis Vladimir quotes Trotsky saying: 'If it is conceded that the present war (Second World War) will not provoke revolutions... then it would be necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present USSR was the precursor of a new exploitative regime.'

This is a misquotation of Trotsky by taking his words out of context. True, Trotsky believed that the Second World War, because it was an imperialist war, would provoke a



proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. This would break the grip of the imperialist encirclement of the Soviet Union and inevitably lead to the overthrow of the Soviet bureaucracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis.

Trotsky argued that if this happened then the question of whether the bureaucracy was a class or a growth on the workers' state would automatically be solved. It would be clear to everyone that in the development of the world revolution the Soviet Union was only an episodic relapse.

But Trotsky did not argue that the reverse was also the case — that if there was no revolution then the USSR was shown to be a 'precursor of new exploiting relations'.

What Trotsky in fact argued was: 'In the event that the proletariat in advanced capitalist countries having conquered power should prove incapable of holding it, and surrender it, as in the USSR, to a privileged bureaucracy, then we would be compelled to acknowledge that the reason for the bureaucratic relapse is rooted not in the backwardness of the country, and not in the imperialist environment, but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class.'

'Then it would be necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present USSR was the precursor of a new exploiting regime on an international scale.'

The transitional character of the Soviet Union is not dependent on this or that imperialist war, but on the nature of the world proletariat.

Thus Trotsky goes on to conclude that: 'If the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognise that the socialist programme based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society ended as a utopia.'

STEVEN ARCHER, Brighton

Front page not the best

DESPITE agreeing with your front page general strike demand, I found the way in which you said it somewhat lacking, shall we say.

If there is to be a general strike, can you please ask your 'designers' to get back on the job until the rest of the class is ready!

WHAT DO WE WANT?
A GOOD PAPER
HOW DO WE GET IT?
NOT LIKE THIS.

UNA O'NEILL, London N1

Poser

YOUR COVERAGE of Zimbabwe last week was somewhat marred by Richard Carver's 'Will ZANU make room for capitalism?' It is not that many of the questions that Richard poses are incorrect.

It is simply that to pose them the day after Mugabe's victory is like calling for a political revolution to overthrow the Vietnamese in the week after the fall of Saigon.

The objective impact of

Mugabe's victory in South Africa is already being felt. The mass meeting of blacks in Soweto to celebrate ZANU's triumph is only the first indication.

But it would be far more use if Socialist Challenge explained what Trotskyists would do if they were leading ZANU? Or is that a contradiction of itself.
SAM HARTNELL, London.

Too rosy a view

WE WERE happy to read Jude Arkwright's article about the Revolution conference planned for 3 and 4 May. We especially like her comments about Revolution having its own independent view on Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, etc.

But there is a real problem. Even a quick look at the latest issue of the paper Revolution tends to contradict Jude's rosy view. For the coverage on British politics (by this we mean detailed tactical prescriptions) and Afghanistan is exactly the same as that of the IMG.

This is in sharp contrast to the early issues of Revolution, which were independent in every sense.

If the new youth organisation is to reflect a real rather than a formal or organisational independence, then a break with the sectarian traditions of some Trotskyist organisations is vital. The LPYS is the child of Militant, the Rebel group are the children of the SWP, and so on. We must make sure that Revolution is different.

By the way we thought that the LPYS slogans on the big TUC march last Sunday were disgusting. Socialists (young and old) should not chant: 'Ditch the Bitch', 'Milk

the Cow' and carry placards with these slogans.

Here we have the sexist and male-chauvinist politics of the parents and grandparents of the LPYS (The Militant group) revealed in all their hideousness.

See you at the Revolution conference.
PAM GROVES, FAY HODGE, London.

Proud of my sex

Although I agree with Valerie Coultas' conclusion in her critique of Susan Sontag's views on Margaret Thatcher (6 March) — that Sontag's feminism is redundant without a class perspective — I feel that along the way she misses out on some interesting points.

When I was at school I would often respond to attempts to put down my sex with the fact that Indira Gandhi was a head of state, so women were clearly 'as good as' men.

I was proud when a woman won a Nobel prize for science, and so on.

Of course we do not endorse the politics of an Indira Gandhi or a Margaret Thatcher, but Susan Sontag did not suggest that we should in her article. She said it would be 'pointless' to support the candidacies of women like these.

What Sontag did say is that such women are of 'interest' to feminists. With this I agree, and I think that Socialist Challenge does too. Why else has the paper carried articles on Margaret Thatcher as a woman on more than one occasion?

Where Sontag is completely

wrong is that she doesn't understand what power is — it can't be 'shared', 'seized', or 'acquired' or 'transferred' she says. But she does think that the quality of power can be changed or feminised. It would be a good idea to explain in more detail just what is wrong with this analysis.

JOANNA MOORE, London N1

We need Le Monde

YOUR PAPER seems to assume that a 'labour movement' daily would be a good thing.

But it would be utterly dull, unimaginative and right-wing. It would probably have its own 'Page 3'; it would be typically patronising to blacks, ignore gays and only back official strikes.

Now it could be argued that the daily paper of the French Socialist Party, *Le Matin*, is none of these things. Furthermore it also produces special supplements on Trotsky, the Russian Revolution etc., which are a visual treat. But the argument wouldn't hold up because the political level of the French working class is somewhat more advanced.

In a British equivalent we would probably get a supplement to mark the centenary of the birth of Clement Attlee, who is fast becoming a cult figure on the left of the Labour Party.

In reality what we need is a newspaper more like *Le Monde* in which serious analysis mingles with an in-depth cultural and literary coverage. The trade unions and the Labour Party should finance the establishment of a Trust to set up such a paper.
JONATHAN HITE

SCEVENTS

ENTRIES are 5p a word; semi-display £2 a column inch. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication. All payments in advance.

'PALESTINIAN Workers and Trade Unions' — pamphlet from UKPC, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1. UNION ADMINISTRATOR (part time) needed for London branch of ACTSS. Typing, duplicating, aptitude for figures and ability to work on own initiative required. Minimum £113 per month for 43 hours. Four weeks annual holiday. Job description and application form available from Ann Creighton, 8 Ridgmount Road, London SW18, or phone 870 3259 4-6pm. Closing date: 17 March. Interviews: 24 March.

'CURIOUS JOURNEY' — a film by Kenneth Griffiths, suppressed by HTV. Showing at Clapham Common Library, Clapham Common, South side. Wed 19 March, 7.30pm. Admission 50p. Organised by S London TOM.

FREE film: 'How safe are nuclear reactors?' plus speakers. Wed 19 March, 7.30pm, Carlton Centre, Granville Road, London NW6.

BRIXTON Socialist Club Benefit, Friday 14 March, 8pm to midnight. Headline and Spoilsports at South Bank Poly Union, Rotary Street, London SE1 (near Elephant & Castle). Bar. £1 in advance, £1.50 door. NUS mens and guests.

FIGHT RACISM! Fight Imperialism! Issue No. 3 out now! Contains major article 'Victory in Zimbabwe' and a full length reply to the IMG's 'The Struggle for Black Liberation'. Also articles on South Africa, the H-Blocks, extracts from an interview with Sean MacStiofain (former Chief of Staff of the Provisional IRA), news on the fightback against racism — the Black Freedom March, and reports on the Earlington family and Anwar Ditta defence campaigns. Price 20p plus 15p p&p. Please make cheques payable to RCG Publications Ltd (SC), 49 Raiton Road, London SE24 0LN.

SMASH H-Block! Hands Off Ireland! Public meeting and film, showing 'The Patriot Game'. Speaker from Hands Off Ireland! Tavistock Hall, Tavistock Rd, Off High St, Harlesden NW10 (British Rail Willesden Junction), Friday 21 March, 7.30pm. 80p (60p in advance).

JUST OUT — March issue of 'Spartacist/Britain'. Includes articles on Afghanistan, steel strike, IMG conference, Rhodesia. Send 20p to Spartacist Publishers, Dept A, Box 185, London WC1.

BUILDING WORKER group — second national conference. 29-30 March at Digbeth Civil Hall, Birmingham. Discussion on the wage claim, defending direct work, the newspaper, building the Building

Worker Group. For details, credentials, etc. contact: 30 Houghton House, South Lambeth Estate, Meadow Rd, London SW8.

SPECIAL OFFER TO SOCIALIST CHALLENGE READERS: 'Russia's invasion of Afghanistan and the Trotskyist movement!'
A series of major articles from WORKERS ACTION.
*Behind the Kabul Corps
*Don't join the imperialist outcry
*Afghanistan: What we think
*Communism against Stalinism — a series outlining the post-war Trotskyist movement's attitude to Russia's occupation of Eastern Europe and its lessons for today.
All for only £1.20 (including postage) from: WA (special offer), PO Box 135, London N1 ODD.

THE OTHER BOOKSHOP
ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI
by Cathy Porter
Virago, £4.95
WHAT WORKING PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE DANGERS OF NUCLEAR POWER
By Fred Halstead
Pathfinder, 50p
WORKERS' POWER, NOT NUCLEAR POWER
by Mike Simons
Socialists Unlimited, 50p
328 Upper Street, Islington, London N1 2XQ (tel. 01-226 0571)

WHAT'S LEFT

PADDINGTON: 'The Prior proposals — What they mean and the trade union response'. Speaker from the International Marxist Group's trade union committee. Tuesday 18 March, 8pm, Labour Party Rooms, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11. Tube: Ladbroke Grove.

OLDHAM SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities. Tel. 061-682 5151.

STOCKPORT SC sold every Saturday 1pm Mersey Square. Tel. 061-236 4905 for more information.

OXFORD SC supporters sell every Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.

BRENT SC supporters sell every Sat Morning at the Brent Collective Bookstall in the Trades Hall, Willesden High Rd NW10.

CARDIFF: SC sales Newport Town Centre outside Woolworths 11-12.30. Cardiff British Home Stores 11-12.30. Also available from 108 Books, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As — for more info ring phone Colin, 374068.

BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.

BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.
BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat. 10-4. For more info phone 643 9209.

BRIGHTON: For more info phone Nick, 605052.
BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fulmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Montpellier, Bristol 6.

COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.

DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.

HUDDERSFIELD: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.

LAMBETH: SC now available at kiosk Brixton tube. Oval tube. Herne Hill British Rail and Tetric Books Clapham.

SWINDON: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Brunel Centre).

TEESSIDE: SC sales at Newsfairs shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linsthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and at Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Market, Stockton High Street.

TOWER HAMLETS: SC supporters sell papers every Friday 5-6pm Watney Mkt, Sat 11-12.30pm Whitechapel tube, Sunday 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.

NEWHAM: SC sale every Saturday, 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.
FORDS: SC sale at Gate 25, Body Plant, Dagenham. Weds 9-9.45pm, Thurs. 7-7.45am.



From the bullet to the ballot

FOR EIGHT whole years the Patriotic Front waged an unremitting armed struggle against the settler state, with Robert Mugabe's ZANU guerillas bearing the brunt of the fighting.

Despite the propaganda of the South African, Rhodesian, and British media, the support for the freedom fighters continued to increase. The black population preferred to put their faith in the guns of the Patriotic Front rather than the promises of Bishop Muzorewa or British political leaders. And events have proved them right.

It was the armed struggle which forced Ian Smith to Lancaster House. It was the eight-year war which convinced Anglo-American imperialism that a black government was necessary to stave off bigger disasters. But different things were expected from the Lancaster House agreements by the various powers.

The South Africans and their white supporters in the Rhodesia Front thought that sufficient money could buy votes for their favourite pawn, Bishop Muzorewa.

Thuggery

After all, they reasoned, if his auxiliaries could be hired to engage in acts of intimidation and thuggery then a combination of repression, patronage and money might do the

trick. This view fitted in well with their overall conception of Africans.

The Americans and the British understood that Muzorewa was a bad bet and staked their cards on Joshua Nkomo. The aim was that he could become the Kenyatta of the new Zimbabwe, and keep the country safe for imperialist investment and the multinationals.

Frontline

Robert Mugabe's main backers were not in the West, but in the frontline states of Mozambique and Tanzania. Their influence was due to the fact that they had provided a vital hinterland for the ZANU guerilla fighters.

It was they who pressed Mugabe not to boycott the Lancaster House agreement. It was they who were most concerned about the likelihood of large-scale election rigging and intimidation.

In the event, everyone was surprised by the scale of the victory. Writers in our pages had visualised a different scenario. They had thought that there would be a massacre of the guerillas in the assembly points. This was not as foolish as it might now seem.

All the reports during the tense weeks which preceded the elections revealed hundreds of provocations and acts of violence by the white Rhodesian security forces and the Bishop's paid hoodlums. Ten thousand members of ZANU were arrested during the campaign itself.

The Selous Scouts (a semi-fascist special militia) tried to assassinate Mugabe.

But ZANU won despite all the harassment. This victory was a triumph for the black liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. The visible disbelief on the crestfallen face of white Rhodesia must have brought joy to the vast majority of black Zimbabwe.

The public jubilation and the delirious celebrations which we saw on our television screens gave the final lie to the imperialist-orchestrated media campaign spearheaded by the BBC for the past eight years.

It was shown that the 'terrorists' had mass popular support. ZANU's victory was the final outcome of the long civil war. Zimbabwe had defeated Rhodesia and there was no such thing as Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Only the most dead-end left sectarians could fail to be moved by what had taken place in Zimbabwe.

Victory

We have no hesitation in greeting the victory of Robert Mugabe as a giant first step forward for Zimbabwe. This is regardless of what may or may not follow the victory. What we are seeing is the birth of black power in Zimbabwe, and for a country which has been dominated for countless decades by a small band of white settlers this is no small achievement.

Regardless of any tactical

concessions (Walls as army chief, a white settler in the cabinet) the ZANU aim is to achieve a complete decolonisation and exercise total state power. Who can deny them the urge to complete this process without precipitating a conflict that could lead to further loss of life and invite South African intervention?

Cheer-leaders

However, it is not sufficient for revolutionary Marxists to act simply as cheer-leaders. Our fight cannot end with national independence. The social and economic transformation of Zimbabwe is vital for the process of liberation to be completed.

Land in particular is a burning question for 80% of the population. Through the Land Apportionment Act and other devices, the white settlers have occupied for decades the best farming land in the country. Sooner or later, the people of Zimbabwe will demand that the uprooters themselves are uprooted; that the land which they stole is handed back to those from whom it was stolen.

The ZANU programme is a combination of nationalism and populism. It states that 'in as much as the country belongs to the whole of our People or to our People as a whole, the resources of our country such as land, the rivers, the minerals, the forests, the mountains, the beasts, the birds and even insects are ours together...'

But the people themselves are divided. The vast majority are peasants. As the ZANU programme

admits: 'Today, most agriculture is still European agriculture.' And tomorrow? Clearly the majority will demand its economic rights, General Walls notwithstanding.

The investment of capital is another important arena of potential conflict. The country's industry is totally dominated by the settlers and British-based multinationals. To what extent will they determine the economic and foreign policies of the new government? What are the real options open to the new government?

We pose these questions in a fraternal and comradely spirit. Nicaragua has already taught us that the struggle for socialism is a complex and tortuous process. But the questions must be posed, otherwise Robert Mugabe will find that the real levers of power will not be in the hands of ZANU.

The direction in which ZANU will take Zimbabwe into the '80s will become clearer with every passing month and year. But the impact of its victory should not be in doubt, despite the ultra-careful first statements of its leader.

The victory of ZANU has tightened the noose around the neck of the apartheid state in South Africa. The SWAPO freedom fighters will be celebrating in the Namibian bush the ZANU victory; in South Africa itself the oppressed black population will treat it as their victory.

The international repercussions of the ZANU landslide have yet to be felt. Once Namibia is free the white Frankenstein will be surrounded from every side.

Socialist Challenge

WELSH VALLEYS FACE DISASTER

YOUTH MARCH FOR JOBS

By
Redmond
O'Neill

SOUTH WALES youth will be marching for jobs in April this year. It will be the first such march through the Welsh mining valleys since the '30s. It will be calling upon the Wales TUC to organise united action to stop closures and redundancies.

Already the march has the support of the South Wales executive committee of the National Union of Miners, the Port Talbot joint steel strike committee and Alan Fisher, general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees.

'No Return to the '30s' has a real meaning for young workers and school-leavers in towns like Port Talbot, Newport and Pontypridd.

Last week's issue of *The Economist* very clearly explained how the ruling class sees the devastation of Wales as a result of closures and redundancies:

'When a region, which also includes most of the people of a nation, is hit at once by cyclical and structural economic disaster, there is nothing to do but hand out some cash and hope it stays alive.'

The cash *The Economist* is moaning about amounts to just £48m — barely enough to cover the dole money for the 32,000 men and women who will join the 60,000 already signing on if the redundancies in steel, mines and rail go through.

But the youth marching from Port Talbot to the Wales TUC in Cardiff will be explaining that *The Economist* gets it wrong. There is an alternative perspective which can make sure Wales 'stays alive'.

This alternative is seen in the kind



of united strike action which first emerged in Wales at the beginning of the year. This is not an end in itself, but is a decisive first step in forcing national, joint action against redundancies and closures.

Trade union leaders speaking at rallies have spelled out time and again just what Tory policies mean for Welsh youth. They are now being asked to recognise that this is the very reason why youth have a big role to play in the fight to defend jobs.

That also means throwing out all the latest 'compromise' proposals for settlement of the steel dispute. The latest issue of *Steel Workers' Banner*, the ISTC strike bulletin, clearly explains why. 'Practically all of the important principles demanded by the Corporation have been conceded', it explains, and, 'It will mean negotiating away many jobs'.

United action in South Wales can defend jobs. But to be successful it also means building a movement that can throw out those leaders of the ISTC who sell jobs to stop strikes.

Animated

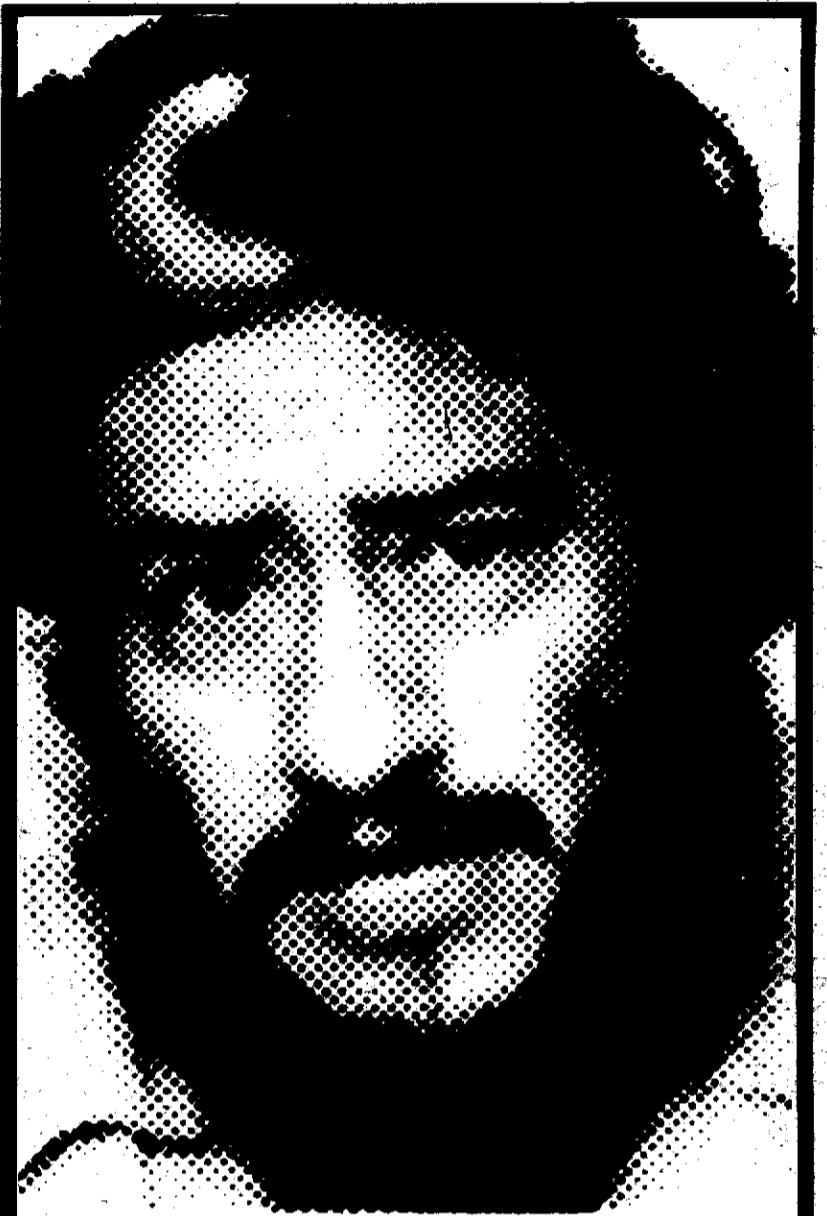
The South Wales Youth March Against Unemployment will be a small but important step in the right direction. Youth in the rest of the country should support this initiative as well as in South Wales.

Revolution youth, who played an important role in launching the march, will be arguing that the fight for jobs doesn't end with the march. In particular we will be campaigning for all the existing campaigns against unemployment, animated largely by the Young Communist League, the Labour Party Young Socialists and the Socialist Workers Party, to unite in action to fight for jobs.

That means supporting the march to the Wales TUC and planning a united march on the British TUC in the summer. The theme of both must be the call for the organised trade union movement to launch united action to stop all closures and redundancies.

This is the most effective role that youth can play in stopping the devastation of South Wales. In this way they can help break the isolation of all sections of the workers threatened by job-cuts.

The march organisers are appealing for labour movement support and sponsorship of marchers. For details contact South Wales March Against Unemployment, 17 Chaddersley Terrace, Mount Pleasant, Swansea.



HUGO BLANCO IN LONDON

HUGO BLANCO

Speaks at London rally
FRIDAY 21 MARCH

7.30pm, Friends House,
Euston Rd, NW1

Tickets (£1 and 50p wageless) in advance from
The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1.

A FIVER TO FIGHT THE TORIES

TENS of thousands of trades unionists demonstrated their hatred for this Tory government as they marched through the streets of London last Sunday. On the march organised by the TUC they voiced their demands:

Pay the steelworkers
No cuts
Hands off the unions
No redundancies
But slogans are not enough. Socialist Challenge has campaigned for all these objectives, but also to build a mass left-wing movement in

the unions and the Labour Party to throw back the Tory offensive.

Socialist Challenge aims to build a revolutionary party within the mass anti-Tory movement.

We make no apologies for asking for your money to help build that movement and that party. Our fund drive total this week is very disappointing. Thanks are due to our contributors — but where are our other supporters?

Help us in the next few weeks to reach our £2,500 target with a Fiver to Fight the Tories.

£5

Our thanks this week to:

Newham IMG	£26.00
Hackney IMG	5.00
Tower Hamlets IMG	10.00
Stamps (SC office)	2.50
E Mahood	10.00
Anon	1.35

Total this week £54.85
Cumulative total £2072.35

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Name _____

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I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to
'Socialist Challenge'.
Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.