

workers' ACTION

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10p

Saturday 26 November

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER school on
WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNIONS

10.30am, Friends House, Church St, Reading.
Open to all

'RANK & FILE' DELEGATE CONFERENCE

11.30am, New Century Hall, Corporation St,
Manchester. Credentials 50p from 265a Seven
Sisters Road, London N4.

No more con-tricks! MINERS SAY IT FOR US ALL

THE MINERS have voted by 100,634 to 87,901 to reject the Coal Board's productivity scheme.

It is a declaration of war on the living-standards-slashing policy of the Labour Government. The National Union of Mineworkers claim for £135 a week for faceworkers threatens to drive a tank through the Government's 10% pay rise boundary, and to encourage the entire working class to fight to restore our living standards.

Only the Executive of the NUM now stands between the Government's pay policy and the impact of a campaign by ¼-million miners.

The ballot was an attempt by the majority of the NUM executive to ignore a decision of the union's conference rejecting pit-based productivity dealing as divisive and detrimental to safety. Now the ballot decision has come loud and clear and final. Even NUM President Joe

Gormley has had to concede. "We shall not be pushing for productivity bonuses — the members have rejected them on two occasions". But he added that he would try to get the executive to accept the 12-month rule.

Gormley and NUM Secretary Lawrence Daly and their supporters on the Executive endorsed and campaigned for the Coal Board productivity deal offer. They argued that it was proper for miners' wage demands to depend on

productivity.

Now, however, the vote has massively reduced their room for manoeuvre. Emlyn Williams, President of the South Wales miners, has predicted a national ballot on industrial action if the claim for £135 is now rejected.

The miners' vote opens a new stage in the struggle of the working class against falling living standards. Two and a half years of rel-

ative industrial peace leave us with real wages down by about 10%. Arthur Scargill claims that miners' real wages are down by 30%. Now a section of the working class which certainly has the muscle to win moves towards a confrontation with the Government.

It is in the interest of the entire working class — as well as their own interest — that the miners should take on the Government... and that they should win.

GRUNWICKS Be there on Monday 7th!

PLEDGES of support are flooding in for the Grunwick 'day of reckoning' mass picket on 7th November. Fifteen coachloads are promised from the Birmingham area [13 from Leyland plants] and a further 35 from Bradford.

The turn-out needs to be as big as July 11th, although this time there is not the official support there was then.

On Wednesday 26th October nearly 300 trade unionists lobbied the TUC General Council, demanding that they put action behind their words of support. Six branches of the Union of Post Office Workers were represented at the lobby, as were electricians of the EPTU (not, unfortunately, those in a posit-

ion to stop services to Grunwick), building workers, and TUC staff. Strikers from Rolls Royce, Mulliner Park Ward (out for several weeks for a pay claim) and the Metropole Hotel (still fighting for their union, the GMWU, to make their strike official) were also there.

The TUC leaders who went in through the lobby gave a fair indication of what support the Grunwick strikers can expect from those quarters.

Frank Chapple of the EPTU had said on the radio, "What difference does it make if the movement loses 300 members?" Fred Jarvis of the NUT came from a union which has only just got round to deciding to support the

strikers' demand for the right to belong to a union. Geoffrey Drain of NALGO is the man who exclaimed in panic "No General Secretary is going to risk his life..." when threatened with a High Court order to stop NALGO industrial action.

The two most centrally involved TUC General Council members, Roy Grantham of APEX (to which most of the strikers belong) and Tom Jackson of the Union of Post Office Workers, did not even turn up!

When the question of indemnifying workers who take solidarity action with the Grunwick strikers was

raised, the General Council decided... to refer it to a consultative committee later in the week.

On Friday there was a special picket of Grunwick by lawyers and legal workers, complete with pin-stripes, to show that 'the right to picket does not exist'. Speeches by representatives of the lawyers' societies concentrated solely on the fact that the police presence was preventing certain sections of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act being implemented — the right to picket peacefully and talk to the scabs.

All very good, but at Grunwick the stage of 'talking' to scabs is now past, and the job at hand is to stop all supplies,

including that of scab labour.

The fact still remains that the only way this strike can be won is by mass action of the rank and file of the unions, not just to talk to scabs, but to stop them getting into the factory. And maximum mobilisation for November 7th is vital to give workers the necessary backing to brave the threat of victimisation by the Law, employers, and union leaders, and black Grunwick services.

It will also give strength to Mrs Desai, treasurer of the strike committee, who at present is being chased through the courts by Grunwick management who claim she assaulted one of their managers last May.

PETE FIRMIN

THAT'S ME finished. I'll never get a job again", a young German schoolteacher told a correspondent from the French revolutionary daily Rouge after the funeral of Gudrun Ensslin, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Andreas Baader.

3,000 police surrounded the funeral, checking the identity of everyone there, and filming the whole proceedings. That schoolteacher's name is probably now on police files as 'sympathetic towards terrorism'. As such, under Germany's *Berufsverbot* law, she is liable — like any other leftist — to be excluded from any public sector job.

Questions about the implausible official story of Ensslin's Baader's and Raspe's 'suicide' are being smothered by a massive "terrorist"-hunt. Regular police checks stop cars on

SMOTHERING THE QUESTIONS IN GERMANY



the main highways to examine the identity papers of the passengers and cross-check with a phone call to the central police files.

The whole population has been mobilised: the police have received over 15,000 tip-offs in their search for the presumed killers of Hanns-Martin Schleyer. At least 39 bookshops have been raided, and three

printers have been arrested. A publisher who had planned to put out a collection of writings by Ulrike Meinhof — a member of the 'Red Army Faction' who was found hanged in her cell in May last year — dare not go ahead now.

It is not just terrorists, but anyone who raises any objection to the state's drive against terrorists, who is

at risk. The Maoist organisation KBW put out a poster declaring that the authorities either murdered Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe or encouraged their suicide, and demanding an end to the rule whereby prisoners can be kept in complete isolation, refused access even to lawyers.

The next day 150 policemen arrived at the KBW

headquarters to seize the posters. The KBW is being prosecuted for "insulting the organs of the State".

Meanwhile a French court will decide on Wednesday 2nd November on the German government's request to extradite RAF defence lawyer Klaus Croissant.

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The papers briefly mentioned last week a report that Andreas Baader, shortly before his death, had told a government official that he disapproved of the methods used in the Lufthansa plane hijacking.

The story is not improbable. Baader's terrorist activity was directed against what he saw as the strongholds of the system and particularly of American imperialism. Misguided though it was, it was markedly different from the hijackers' use of innocent airline passengers as hostages.

The German government has not so far denied the story. For getting the aeroplane hostages free, it would have been useful to publicise Baader's statement. Keeping it quiet makes sense if they wanted to minimise any sympathy for Baader or any protest about his death in unexplained circumstances.



PORTUGAL

Food imports cut by 'natural reduction'

LAST week Portugal's Socialist Party prime minister Mario Soares expelled his party's left wing and introduced a budget promising further cuts in workers' living standards.

Many Portuguese workers are now down to one meal a day.

The budget counts on cutting food imports through "natural reduction" — that is, through the effects of inflation and unemployment. Wage increases are limited to 15%-20%, while prices are rising at 35% per year, and income tax is to be raised by 10%.

Unemployment is running at 15%, and since the Socialist Party government repealed laws restricting sackings, some 20,000 workers have been sacked in the past seven months, according to the CGT-Intersindical trade union-federation.

For over 15 months now, the Soares government has been trying to roll back the gains made by Portuguese workers in 1974-75. Land seized by peasant cooperatives is being restored to the landowners. Workers' control has been legally transformed into "participation" on the French or German model, and business secrecy has been re-introduced.

Up until the end of September, some 64 factories previously under workers' control had been restored to the old owners.

Where factories are not given back to their former owners, compensation is being paid.

The Socialist Party Left had protested, weakly and inconsistently, against these measures — but they never organised themselves to fight against the government. Consequently Soares was able to beat them down, from a point when they got

25% of the vote at the October 1976 SP Congress to today, when 300 of them could be evicted with little trouble.

In Parallel, the far left has been declining enormously. MES, LUAR and the FSP have disappeared or nearly so; PRP and UDP, the other organisations which were to the fore in 1975, are much weakened (especially the PRP).

According to opinion polls the Portuguese Communist Party is gaining ground. But it is not using this support for any militant fight against the government. "Forms of struggle", it says, "must be chosen which take account of the concrete conditions of each factory, without letting ourselves be carried away by idealism".

The PCP is calling for a coalition government uniting the PCP, the SP, and the two right wing parties, the PSD and the CDS. And despite the fact that the government's programme of restoring land to landowners hits hardest at areas in the Alentejo where the CP is strong among the peasants, the CP declares that it "won't demand a new agrarian reform law in any negotiations that take place for a programme of national salvation."

The results of the SP's move to the right, the collapse of the SP left and the far left, and the PCP's unwillingness to fight, have been a strengthening of the right. The PSD and the CDS promise that they will put down a motion of censure against the Soares government before Christmas.

It is only a matter of time before this government that has rendered so many services to the ruling class, is shoved out of the way by that class's direct political representatives.

WINNIE MANDELA SPEAKS OUT

IN THE first major statement to come from a black leader inside South Africa since the suppression of all urban black organisations, the closing down of the biggest black newspapers, and the arrest of 70 black leaders, Winnie Mandela has indicted the apartheid government. "As much as they are prepared to fight to the last drop of blood to retain this country, so am I and so is every black man".

"No sane man really wants violence, but what do you do when you are dealing with a violent government?"

The statement was given to a Reuters staff correspondent, but only the 'Morning Star' among the British dailies used the Reuters report. The most likely explanation appears to be that the other papers were concerned about their sales in South Africa. Winnie Mandela is under a banning order which prohibits publication of any statement by her in

any paper in South Africa.

Winnie Mandela made her statement in the courtroom after her trial on charges of breaking the banning order was adjourned to January. She is charged with violating another provision of the banning order, which forbids her to meet with more than two other people.

The order also compels her to live under police surveillance in the strongly Afrikaner town of Brandfort, rather than at her home in Soweto.

Winnie Mandela has been under restriction orders on and off for the last fifteen years. Her husband Nelson Mandela, a former leader of the African National Congress, is imprisoned for life on Robben Island.

"We gain inspiration", said Winnie Mandela, "from the knowledge that we are not alone in our struggle for human dignity."

"This knowledge of support from outside South Africa gave blacks courage, even though they know salv-



ation was really in their own hands".

But that "knowledge of support" is no thanks to Britain's Labour Government. The same day as Winnie Mandela spoke, the British government joined with France and the USA in vetoing a United Nations Security Council motion for a permanent arms embargo and economic sanctions against South Africa.

Anti-Apartheid protest meeting: see p. 7

Leyland: Resist at every step!

THE 59,000 to 31,000 vote by British Leyland car workers to accept management's "corporate bargaining" deal is a green flag for the bosses to go ahead with attacks on manning levels and mutuality.

But it should not also mean a white flag for Leyland workers.

The Leyland bosses have got a 'mandate' to go ahead with their plans to destroy shop floor control over wage negotiations and over manning levels and track speeds. They have also got an assurance of official union support in those plans. But that is not the same thing as implementing those plans in full!

In the statement recomm-

ending acceptance which every Leyland worker received with his ballot form (and which is the only information circulated to all Leyland workers on what exactly the deal is) nothing is stated clearly in black and white except a wage rise of 10% on gross earnings. And nothing apart from that wage rise should be accepted automatically.

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The inspectors' dispute at Longbridge ended last Monday, 31st October. On the recommendation of the stewards, they ended their ten-day old strike for re-grading without having won their demands.



Don't let the Bulldog breed

THE Hitler-Jugend will live again — if the Young National Front project gets off the ground.

After a period of leafleting, recruiting and giving talks in schools and colleges around the country, the National Front AGM announced last month that they were setting up an official youth section. And shortly after, came news of the free distribution of a bulletin called "Bulldog" in schools in Barking and East London.

It appeals to kids on a gang-war level to "spread the racial-

ist word", promising "Our time will come, and when it does the blacks are going home to their own countries". Filled with filthy racist insults, it tries to build up a spurious 'rebelliousness', with stories of 'red' teachers threatening a 14-year old for wearing a NF badge, and complaints about "Communist teachers" who "prefer blacks to whites."

"Bulldog" has been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions under the Race Relat-

ions Act — and a fat lot of good that will do, even if any action is taken. If anything, the taint of 'illegality' will probably only lend it glamour in the eyes of the sort of school-kids it is appealing to.

As a matter of urgency, the anti-fascist struggle must be taken into the schools without further delay. Already, propaganda leaflets in reply to "Bulldog" are being got out in large numbers by the Barking Community Relations Council and the National Union of School Students (NUSS). But what of the need to confront

the fascists physically and deny them the freedom to organise? What of the need to build up physical defence against fascist bully-tactics?

One problem is that schools are authoritarian structures in which 'gangs' flourish but where collective, democratic action by the students is discouraged or repressed. And yet such action is the key to combating the fascists: for it is not difficult to see that the

isolated act of suppression of fascist activity by this or that teacher is simply counter-productive. Teachers acting alone, relying on their position of authority, will tend to reinforce the NF's claim to "radicalism" in the eyes of students under their influence.

The best thing teachers can do is encourage, initiate or help pupils to confront the school fascists themselves, and defend them from any victimisation as a result of their anti-fascist actions.

NO TO SHAM DEMOCRACY

Editorial

130,000 LEYLAND carworkers voted last week on management's proposals for 'corporate bargaining'. For the press this was, at long last, a democratic consultation, after the horrors of mass meetings, decisions taken by militant shop stewards, and strikes.

What sort of democracy was it?

Each worker was given an envelope with a ballot paper and a joint statement by management and unions recommending acceptance. The workers were not shown, and have not had the opportunity to see, what the proposals to be accepted actually are! (The statement recommending acceptance only gives a short and vague summary).

Nothing on the other side of the argument was in the envelope with the ballot paper. In fact, during the whole of the negotiations on management's package, the arguments for and against have never been officially presented to the shop floor.

In some parts of the Longbridge works, at least, management and the Works Committee actually prevented shop meetings being held to discuss the ballot.

It was a postal ballot. Instead of voting in the factory, where he could discuss with other workers, each worker voted at home, where the only other opinion he heard was that of the press and television, campaigning energetically in favour of management.

This was sham democracy. A vote that was designed to let the workers decide what they wanted would require the full presentation of different views, full discussion, and a vote there and then in the shop meeting, after the discussion.

Seal of approval

Not only the management's proposals, but also any alternatives put forward, would be voted on.

The Leyland vote had a different purpose. The decision had already been reached, in the committee-rooms, by negotiators who were not at all answerable to the rank and file. The vote was designed simply to get a seal of approval for that decision.

The recent vote at Fords was also sham democracy. And the National Union of Mineworkers vote was only a partial contrast.

At Fords there were mass meetings. But as in Leyland, the rank and file had not been consulted or even informed

in the whole process of negotiation leading up to the vote. The workers were presented with a cut-and-dried decision — and it was that or nothing.

It was arranged that the vote would be decided by a majority of plants, not a majority of votes. That meant that a few hundreds of workers at smaller (and usually less militant) plants would have the same weight as thousands at larger plants.

The smaller and less militant plants voted first, thus creating a 'momentum' in favour of acceptance.

The NUM vote, in contrast, was through a pithead ballot, and on an issue that has been discussed in the union over some time. Yet even there the rank and file were at a disadvantage. The Union Executive was asking the membership to approve its violation of Conference decisions. It asked them to approve pit-based productivity dealing (which Conference rejected), hinting that the Exec would do nothing about the £135 claim (which Conference approved).

Upsetting plans

All these exercises in sham democracy were organised by the union leaderships, but it is the same sort of sham democracy as we get in Parliamentary elections. All the decisions are taken in consultations between top politicians, civil service and army chiefs, and leading industrialists and financiers, but every so often a vote is organised to get a 'democratic mandate'.

There is always a possibility of the vote 'going wrong' and upsetting the plans made at the top — as has happened in the NUM — but the politicians and the union leaders find that risk worth running.

It's a different sort of democracy when workers begin to take decisions for themselves — as in shop meetings, mass meetings, or strike meetings. That is why the Tories and the Labour Right wing campaign so vigorously for postal ballots, and why most of the Labour Left usually prefers votes in trade union committees or branches to mass meetings.

And that is why we have to insist:

- All votes to be taken by shop-floor meetings or shop floor ballot, not by postal ballot or voting in branches.
- All trade union officials and negotiating committees to be subject to regular re-election and the right of recall.
- Full shop-floor control over all stages of preparing claims, negotiations, and disputes.

Whether or not students in a school are already organised in the NUSS, they should be encouraged to oppose the dirty work of the NF in their school straight away. But the formation of the YNF and the appearance of "Bulldog" (and there are probably others of its kind on the way) show how important it is for school students to be organised in a union that take collective and continuing action from a strong base. And it also points to the need for the NUSS itself to take the necessary steps to fight fascism in the schools.

As well as leafleting against the lies of the racists, they are to encourage branches to affiliate to local Anti-Fascist Committees and support local anti-fascist actions and demonstrations. They have a national policy of opposing the letting of schools for NF meetings, and are at present looking into setting up anti-fascist committees in schools where none exists in a locality.

The other organisation concerned in this is the NUT.

Unfortunately at its last Conference the Executive badly watered down a strong anti-racist resolution, so the union will neither exclude fascists from membership nor oppose the use of school facilities by fascists. Most NUT high-ups are head teachers, and they either (eg Max Morris) think racialism in schools isn't a problem, or (eg secretary of ILTA Richardson) think the Race Relations Act is enough to combat it.

The fight must go on to involve teachers in anti-fascist work; to include in the curriculum studies that counter the racist myths and propaganda that bombard kids in the media and, still, in many school books; and to support against victimisation those teachers who refuse to work with racists and fascists, and to get such people thrown out of the NUT.

CHEUNG SIU MING
Lambeth NUT

RICHARD AND HIS FRIENDS

IN 1968-9 a lot of people in the labour movement must have felt that the then Labour Government knew what it was doing when it introduced "In Place of Strife". It was an attempt to place sanctions against strikers on the statute book, and to turn the trade union bureaucrats into direct agents of the state for policing the shop floor; but the presence of so many labour movement dignitaries in the Cabinet must have reassured many workers.

According to the picture painted in the now published diaries of Richard Crossman, then a Cabinet minister, the Cabinet was hopelessly muddled, very much in the hands of the permanent civil servants — and was incompetent even from the point of view of the bosses and their interests.

For example. "I saw Barbara... 'Frankly, Dick', she said, 'you don't know much about this, any more than I know about pensions. If I back you on pensions, you back me on this...'" But Barbara herself hadn't done her homework very well, either: "As it got on towards mid-day, it became clearer and clearer that she wasn't all that conversant with the details of her scheme. She is able and driving but like the rest of us she is an amateur, quite new to trade union law and legislation, a tremendously complex subject. She wanted the setting up of a statutory commission, with all sorts of positive things to help the unions, and two negative things: powers to enforce a ballot before an official strike and powers, backed by the threat of a fine, to order unofficial strikers back to work whenever she felt inclined".

In the event 'In Place of Strife' had to be dropped in face of TUC and labour movement opposition. But little thanks to the Bill's opponents in the Cabinet. Crossman sums up the views of Judith Hart, Tony Crosland, Roy Mason, Anthony Greenwood, Richard Marsh, James Callaghan and himself: "We were pretty resolutely opposed, on the grounds that the broad tactic of slapping this on the table and rushing ahead, getting into a point-blank conflict with the TUC and the Party in this particular year, was crazy and doomed to defeat". But they stayed put. There were no resignations from the Cabinet.

Listen to Tony Benn (Anthony Wedgwood Benn then) who at first supported Castle and Wilson, before changing sides. "Tony Wedgwood Benn said in his thoughtful way: 'We are ahead of the times. We only started talking about trade union legislation a year ago and it is too early to talk about a statutory obligation when we haven't yet had a process of education'" (June 17th, 1968).

But still there was a lot of good fun, perhaps like a college debating society "... Barbara put before us the package she proposed for the short Bill... We firmly recommended the substitution of a section on inter-union disputes for the section on compulsory strike ballots and we also thought that attachment of wages [for unofficial strikers] was out... After that Barbara and I rushed off, ironically, to the Café Royal, right up to the top to a delicious flat where Charles Forte now lives... He... has proposed that we should borrow his motor yacht and crew at Whit-sun..."

But Crossman's sense of irony is limited. The following could be part of a 'Crossroads' script, with its ludicrous dialogue between self-important posh people. "Barbara said: 'We want to help you, Harold. Why do you sit alone in No. 10 with Marcia and Gerald Kaufmann and these minions. Why not be intimate and have things out with your friends?' We said: 'If you have to have Jim [Callaghan] in the inner cabinet, all right, but do also have your friends...'"

The most remarkable thing about this ridiculous dialogue is that those exchanging it are on opposite sides in a dispute in which the issue was the independence of the labour movement from state control!

Crossman notes the view of sections of the ruling class that though 'In Place of Strife' was too weak for their liking it would ease the way for future Tory legislation on the unions. But it didn't pass, and in the years after 1968 History rolled down the other side of that hill. First Labour failed to get 'In Place of Strife' on the statute book, and then when the Tories tried to bring in their Industrial Relations Act the government itself was kicked out.

THE WORD "democracy" appears countless times in the new draft of "The British Road to Socialism". It is given a dominant role not only in "the next stage" but also in the "revolutionary transition to socialism", and a leading CP member writes that "the revolutionary process will be propelled on the issue of democracy" [Dave Cook, MS 13.6.77]

Democracy is never clearly defined. It is often equated with Parliament and democratic rights gained by the working class within capitalism; sometimes it is defined in terms of taking over bourgeois institutions in the name of the working class; and often it is given some vague formulation such as "ability to control one's own life".

Limits

The importance of 'democracy' is explained in the Draft as follows:

"The objective basis for this (ie the broad democratic alliance) is the fact that the monopoly capitalists who dominate the economic and political system in Britain are only a tiny minority, pursuing policies which conflict with the interests of the great majority of the people. These monopoly capitalists are the main enemy in the way of democratic advance"

"The sections and groups which can be brought into alliance against them, on the other hand, are all involved in the battle for democracy..."

"Increasingly democracy is threatened by authoritarian trends. The monopolists call for 'order' and 'strong government' ... Parliament's sovereign rights are being eroded..."

"Democracy can be carried through to its utmost limits, breaking all bourgeois restrictions to it, through the democratic transformation of society, including the state, in all the stages of the struggle."

For Marxists however there is a sharp difference between bourgeois democracy and workers' democracy.

Bourgeois democracy concedes some important rights to the working class: the right to organise politically and industrially, and the right to vote.



Hungary 1956: workers' democracy in conflict with Stalinist bureaucracy.

But those rights are limited by the fact that the essential levers of power remain in the hands of the State (the army chiefs, the judges, the police chiefs, the civil servants...) and of the capitalists who own and control society.

Marxists are in favour of fighting for and defending the rights which the working class can gain within bourgeois democracy. But our aim is something different: workers' democracy, which means the running of society and the economy by democratic workers' councils.

Workers' democracy denies many "rights" which bourgeois democracy recognises: the right of the wealthy to own the factories, the offices and the shops, and to do what they like with their property; their right to exploit workers or to throw us out of work as they wish. At the same time workers' democracy recognises rights which bourgeois democracy denies: the right of workers to control industry, and the right of everyone to have a job and a living wage.

Between bourgeois democracy and workers' democracy there is, therefore, not just a difference of degree. It is not a question of democracy expanding more and more until it becomes socialist. It is a question of which class rules in society. Workers' democracy can be created only through the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois democracy.

Broad

The Communist Party has for a long time had an ambiguous attitude to democracy. In the states which they call "socialist", the workers are deprived of even the political and trade union rights which most bourgeois democracies recognise. In Britain their policy is a broad alliance of everyone who supports "democracy".

The "Eurocommunists" try to square this circle by timidly criticising the lack of (bourgeois) democratic rights in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The old-style Stalinists square the circle by declaring that the "guided democracy" existing in the USSR and Eastern Europe is in fact the highest form of democracy possible!

THE COMMUNIST PARTY will be holding its 35th National Congress of November 12th-15th, to decide on new version of its programme "The British Road to Socialism".

The debate on the new draft and on "Eurocommunism" has shaken up the CP more than anything since the Hungarian Revolution 1956. One index of this was the split section of the old-style Stalinists into the New Communist Party.

The debate is about what political strategy and ideas the CP can have now that the certainties of a monolithic international Stalinist bloc have disappeared.

The official discussion has been going on in the columns of the MORNING STAR and COMMENT since the publication of the draft in April. The sharpness of the debate is unlikely to be reflected in the Congress, however. As a shrewd contributor said "It is as if the discussion is just as the opportunity for people to let off steam, with

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Neither trend thinks of workers' democracy as an alternative to both Stalinist bureaucracy and capitalist exploitation.

Thus the argument between the "Eurocommunists" and the old-style Stalinists often seems to be, literally, going round in circles.

Extreme "Eurocommunists" like Dave Purdy have charged the CP with not drawing out its conclusions fully: "Once this view (the 'long haul to socialism') is adopted the sharp separation between capitalism and socialism traditionally maintained by the left becomes untenable... socialist bases can be won... within social formations whose dominant mode of production remains capitalist. ... If, on the other hand, you adhere to a gradualist perspective, you must seriously face the consequences for political policy and practice. For such a perspective abolishes the traditional separation of long term socialist aims and immediate policies... The present draft fails to follow through the implications of the strategy it lays down." ["Comment", 9th July]

On the other side the complaint of the "dogmatists" is, in effect, the opposite of Purdy's — that the CP leadership has drawn out the conclusions too fully! They have made much of the Draft's statement that "Later stages of the democratic process would in effect be the period of the revolutionary transition to socialism", and don't like the dropping of the slogan for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

They do not deny the validity of the "democratic process", but they want to keep the idea of some sort of forceful seizure of power at the end of it.

Against the Draft's idea of a "broad democratic alliance", the old-style Stalinists champion the old formula of the "anti-monopoly alliance".

The 1968 edition of the British Road to Socialism argued that its programme of

gradually extending democracy towards socialism unites the interests of working class with those of virtually all sections of people outside big business.

The same idea is repeated in the current draft, but with a qualification. "There will be many problems in building such an alliance, since small employers are in a contradictory position... usually (?) see it in their interests to keep wages down the sake of their profits (why else...)" "yet they are fact adversely affected by in working class living standards and by the policies of big firms."

Wages

As one contribution "Comment" says, this tries the implication that actually not in the interests of small capital to hold wages down, that this is an ill on the part of small capitalists" (15th October). In reality the small capital especially when squeezed out of competition, are often the vicious wage-cutters union-bashers of them all.

The Draft has tried to remedy the manifest unrealities of the "anti-monopoly alliance" strategy in two ways. First the working class is defined — correctly, in fact — to include all white collar workers. Secondly, movements such as the women's movement or the student movement are substituted for the capitalists and farmers.

Alan Hunt outlined leadership's view in the issue of *Marxism Today*:

"The absence of such a class" (playing the same as the peasantry in the Chinese Revolution) "in Britain comes of considerable significance. To exclude the majority of wage earners from working class as the main definition" (of the working class as manual workers at the point of production) "

leadership relying on winning the vote at Congress."

Nonetheless, a deep gulf has emerged between the old-style Stalinists on one side, who accuse the leadership and the supporters of the Draft of "revisionism" and "anti-Sovietism", and on the other the supporters of the draft, including the leadership, who reply with accusations of "dogmatism", "economism" and even "Stalinism"!

But the issues are often obscure, for the truth is that the present draft is little different from previous versions of the "British Road", right back to the 1951 version produced under Stalin's supervision. Both wings of the CP share the same reformist assumptions.

WORKERS' ACTION has already carried articles on the Communist Party, the State and the 'peaceful road' to socialism [WA62 & 63]. In a new series starting this week, BRUCE ROBINSON will be examining other aspects of the debate in the CP. This week he looks at the CP's idea of the "broad democratic alliance".

debates its Programme

BRINGING THE SPLIT WITH = FREEDOM WINGS



Liberty, equality, fraternity — & the rights of property, too

the Morning Star.

Maurice Cornforth argues that with the new definition the "broad democratic alliance" becomes the same thing as unity of the working class: "now the 'class' is nearly everyone and 'the allies' relatively insignificant... The production workers in industry are not a class but part of a class... As regards other sections of the working class they are not 'allies' but parts of the class" (15th April)

Pat Devine points out "an underlying weakness is the failure to distinguish between classes, social forces and movements, and political movements and parties... the broad democratic alliance cannot be a class alliance. Rather it must be an alliance of social forces and movements, some exclusively within the working class, some crossing class boundaries, others possibly entirely outside the working class." (6th May).

Changes

Jack Woddis, playing what is described by one contributor as the leadership's normal role as "arbiter between a number of contending forces", re-emphasises the role of the petty bourgeoisie: "Nor can we ignore the small and medium firms... close on 2 million self-employed" etc.

Certainly many different definitions have emerged of what the Draft really means!

The traditionalists complain about the change in the definition of the working class. Thus John Foster, a leading

member of the "Against the Draft, Against the Split" tendency: "...it fails to provide the principles on which it bases its redefinition of what constitutes a revolutionary class as such... Do events since 1967 justify a change to a definition that is purely arbitrary: the simple sale of labour power?" (27.9.77)

Percy Rodwell of Surrey vents his spleen on "middle class intellectuals" and talks about "relegating the industrial working class from the conquerors to a leading role" (18th July), while Tony Dodd argues "When we look at the new Draft ... we discover that the tasks of winning these classes to the side of the working class has been achieved — not by a process of struggle, as envisaged, but by changing the definition of the working class... No new facts about the "intermediate strata" are adduced in support of their new class position; all that has changed is the definition. What used to be called working class is now called the "heart" of the working class" (1st August).

This war of words conceals the real issues at stake rather than expressing them.

What the "Eurocommunists" are trying to do is to give a theoretical basis for their efforts to gain ground for the CP in sectors where the revolutionary left has threatened to outstrip it; among students, in the women's movement, among black youth, and so on. The "traditionalists" feel — and not without cause — that this involves stripping away from the CP any trace of a justification for its separate

existence alongside the Labour Party. They react angrily against what they see as an effort to court trendy middle class radicalism and turn away from the working class.

Tony Dodd is entirely right when he says that the Draft resolves the problem of winning support for socialism just by "changing the definition". But in fact all that he and his co-thinkers have to offer is another way of "changing the definition". The different wings of the CP can classify people into whatever alliances they like, and that still won't make those alliances a reality!

Chase

For both the "Stalinists" and the "Eurocommunists", the spontaneous revolutionary activity of the working class, as it was seen in France in 1968 and Portugal in 1975, is not a reality. Their only perspective is one of combining and manoeuvring within the framework of parliamentary democracy (though some of the older Stalinists probably have wistful hopes of the Russian Army marching in as it did in Eastern Europe).

In Britain, with a small Communist Party, those perspectives of parliamentary manoeuvres cannot even bring the parliamentary results which they bring in Italy or in France. Thus the different wings of the Communist Party are doomed to chase each other round and round their various ways of solving the problem by "changing the definition".

carry with it as well the implication that they are not a potentially revolutionary class. The prospect of building such an alliance between the working class and other classes would become, both theoretically and practically, an extremely difficult and unlikely project."

"The adoption of the broad definition of the working class" (ie as all wage labourers, including white collar workers — this definition is used in the Draft) "does not do away with the necessity for alliances with other classes but such other classes, particularly the petty bourgeoisie, are very much minority classes."

The Draft takes up Hunt's "broad definition" — "it includes the overwhelming majority of the population — those who sell their labour power, their capacity to work, in return for a wage or salary, and who work under the direction of the employers". While still pointing out the need for an alliance with small capitalists, it lays much more emphasis on "social forces and movements" of an unspecified character: the women's movement, the en-

vironmentalists, students, the 'peace movement', liberal Christians, black groups...

Hunt explains the change: "This concept of a broad democratic alliance is a conception of a political alliance with a democratic and anti-capitalist content. It should be contrasted with the concept that has also been used, that of the anti-monopoly alliance. I want to suggest that the broad democratic alliance provides a much fuller and deeper concept. It is fuller because it avoids the danger of economic interpretation that the "anti-monopoly alliance" suggests, namely of an alliance at the economic level in which the content of the alliance is provided by a common economic antagonism to monopoly capitalism. The broad democratic alliance is a deeper concept because it makes it clearer that it is an alliance between political and social forces, and that the general content of the alliance is its democratic [or popular] character."

The artificiality of the concept of the "broad democratic alliance" becomes clear from some of the contributions in



Euro-Stalinist triumvirate: Berlinguer, Carrillo, and Makhov

FOR A MONTH Lenin, urging immediate insurrection, remained in a minority within the Bolshevik leadership. Trotsky, whilst agreeing with Lenin that the Bolsheviks should organise an insurrection, had a different view on some of the details. More in touch with the political mood of the capital, especially the army, he put forward a plan for the uprising to coincide with the opening of the Second All-Russian congress of Soviets, which was timed for October 15th but then delayed for 10 days by the frightened right wing [and, by this time, unrepresentative] Executive Committee.

But this was a tactical difference in which eventually Trotsky's view came to prevail.

For more serious was the opposition in principle to an insurrection, which came from the Bolshevik right, especially Kamenev and Zinoviev. They argued that the uprising would be a disastrous error. Far from being the vanguard of world revolution Russia, by its backwardness, was condemned to follow rather than lead the European workers.

Therefore, they said, a bridging operation was necessary. The party must continue the slow and patient job of education and building up proletarian organisations.

They stressed electoral tactics: "...in a country of universal suffrage our opponents will be compelled to make concessions to us at every step or we will form, together with Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, non-party peasants etc., a ruling bloc which will fundamentally carry out our programme."

Underlying this was a basic strategic conflict. As Trotsky pointed out: "Whether the party should accommodate its tasks to the development of a bourgeois republic or should really set itself the goal of conquering power."

At bottom Kamenev and Zinoviev had never reconciled themselves to the re-orientation of the party expressed by Lenin in the April Theses, when he abandoned his notion of a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants" (i.e. a radical form of bourgeois republic) and embraced, implicitly at least, the idea of 'permanent' or 'uninterrupted' revolution: an immediate prospect of a workers' state.

Kamenev at the time had denounced this shift as "Trotskyism" and he remained trapped within the logic of his old position. He ended up, on the eve of the seizure of power, putting forward the old tactics of discredited social democracy in all their timidity, passivity and subordination to bourgeois norms. He and Zinoviev had missed all the lessons of dual power and the necessity of destroying the old state machine.

How clearly they expressed this when they wrote of a Constituent Assembly fusing itself with Soviets to form "that combined type of state institution towards which we are going."

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OCTOBER

1917

THE SEIZURE OF POWER

IN THE sixth and last article of his series on 1917, ARNIE PROUT deals with the seizure of power in October.

The revolution vindicated Lenin's struggle against all waverings and concessions to opportunist passivity in the building of the Bolshevik Party. Yet for the victory of the Revolution, the Bolshevik Party itself had to surmount an internal crisis.



On October 10th the Bolshevik Central Committee agreed on the necessity of preparing the insurrection — but only after a fierce struggle during which Lenin had threatened to appeal directly to the party rank and file, over

the heads of the vacillating leadership. From now on, however, the problems of an uprising became those of technique rather than of principle.

By a happy accident the Mensheviks and SRs of the Petrograd Soviet handed the Bolsheviks an instrument of insurrection. In early October they had called for the creation of a "Committee of Revolutionary Defence" to work with general staff to solve the military problems of Petrograd, i.e. to persuade unwilling troops to fight.

It was this body which the Bolsheviks, now in control of the Petrograd Soviet, took over and, with the aid of the Left SRs, transformed into a revolutionary instrument: the Military Revolutionary Committee.

The MRC had a double role. It had to prepare the uprising whilst deceiving the Provisional Government that nothing untoward was happening.

While Trotsky publicly insisted that the MRC had only a defensive role, the Committee was carrying out an intensive campaign of revolutionary propaganda among the mass of workers, neutralising any residual support for the government.

The real spearhead of the rising was to be the Red Guards.

During February and again in August thousands of guns had been distributed in the working class districts. Now the Red Guard was rapidly

expanded until some 26,000 workers were organised. Each factory collectively decided whether to enroll and then received training from sympathetic soldiers.

The Provisional Government was now virtually without support — only the officer cadets and the Women's Battalion remained in support — but it blithely went on its sleepwalking way. "I only wish they would come out, and I will then put them down", Kerensky boasted to the British Ambassador.

When, on the night of 24/25 October, they did 'come out', resistance was minimal. Within a few hours Red Guards had occupied all key buildings and positions. Only around the Winter Palace was there opposition, and here the few casualties were all on the insurgents' side. In fact the rising was virtually bloodless and the workers showed a naive leniency towards captured generals and officers — simply requiring a paper promise before releasing them.

The real violence was that of the counter-revolution — initiated by these same generals, funded by the overthrown ruling classes and aided, materially and morally, by all the major imperialist powers. They were prepared to spare no-one and nothing in their revengeful attempt to regain their lost power and property.

Only then did the workers' republic show that it, too, had a mailed fist.

On the night of the 25th the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets met. Delegates had travelled from all localities and, as expected, the Bolsheviks formed a majority. A new executive was elected: 14 Bolsheviks, 7 Socialist Revolutionaries, 3 Mensheviks and one other. The right wing SRs and the Mensheviks promptly walked out of the Congress, followed by the taunt from Trotsky (who was chairman) that they were about to deposit themselves in the dustbin of history.

Right from the inception of the workers' republic these 'democrats' refused to recognise the revolutionary legality of the new state. Many of them ended up, with the White Guards, the counter-revolutionary armies.

The next evening the Provisional Workers' and Peasants Government presented itself to the Congress of Soviets. American journalist John Read described the scene: "It was 18.40 when the thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the Praesidium with Lenin — Great Lenin — among them... Gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little, winking eyes travel over the crowd he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long rolling ovation which lasted for several minutes... 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order...'"

50 MEMBERS of Newham North East Labour Party were picket duty outside the High Court last week. Seven leading members of the local party were in the dock — brought there for defying a High Court injunction and holding a GMC meeting on September 28th.

The injunctions were the work of Julian Lewis, who started his campaign with the aim of backing Newham North East MP Reg Prentice. Now that Prentice has decamped to the Tories, Lewis is carrying on his campaign against anyone who gives the slightest sign of leaning to the left.

The fact that five out of seven have got let off was hailed

Newham NE to be run by 'direct rule'

by some as a victory, but this latest Lewis move failed only because of legal technicalities. (The two other cases are still pending).

The High Court judge had to say "It may well be that the long term effect of litigation will be to destroy the organisation for which they [i.e. Lewis and friends] profess concern". He also said he would be "comforted" to know who was putting up the money for Lewis' litigation. But the fact remains that it was the courts that turned over control of Newham North East from the GMC to the Lewis-controlled Executive Committee.

Opposition to Lewis is growing among rank and file members of the Newham CLPs.

They argue that Lewis is wrong because he puts the spotlight on the internal affairs of the Labour Party. The principle involved, however, is that the labour movement should control its own affairs rather than letting reactionary Tory judges decide for us.

Lewis appeared to be the saviour of the pro-Prentice faction when he first hit Newham North East. Here was a man who appeared able to outmanoeuvre the left with comparative ease. It is a sorry comment on the state of affairs in the CLP at the time that rounds in the fight were going to the nimblest operators, rather than being decided on the merits of the arguments.

The Left in Newham North



JULIAN LEWIS — who came to Newham fresh from Oxford where he was a Tory active in Oxford University Strategic Studies Group, which visits NATO and security bases and establishments.

East, in their zeal to oust the reactionary Prentice, had let themselves get caught up in

internal Party politicking to the neglect of campaigning in the constituency.

Lewis has over-reached himself now, perhaps fatally. But what seemed to be a great left-wing victory against Prentice has been shown decidedly hollow. The Labour Party National Executive Committee has stepped in to rescue Newham North East from the courts, suspending the GMC and the EC. There will be 'direct rule' from Transport House by National Agent Reg Underhill, until the NEC inquiry and all the legal actions are completed, when the Party committees will be reconstituted on the basis of the Labour Party Constitution as amended at the Brighton conference.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

EVENTS

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

SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER. Workers Socialist League rally to commemorate 60th anniversary of Russian Revolution and to celebrate launching of weekly *Socialist Press*. From 3pm at the YMCA, 16 Russell St, London WC1 (Tottenham Court Rd underground). Adm. 50p.

SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER. Nottingham Workers Action meeting. "Terrorism and revolutionary violence". 8pm, at the 'Peacock', Mansfield Rd. Near Victoria Centre.

SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER. Birmingham Workers Action meeting: "Women's liberation and workers' revolution". 4pm at 721A Pershore Rd, Birmingham 29.

FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER. London Spartacist group meeting: Judith Hunter on "Women and the Russian revolution". 7.30pm Friday 11th November at the 'Roebuck', 108a Tottenham Court Road.

SATURDAY 12 NOVEMBER. Midlands conference on Ireland. Details from 7 College St, Leicester.

SATURDAY 12 NOVEMBER. Sheffield National Abortion Campaign conference on 'Abortion and the law'. From 10.30 at Graves Cinema, Sheffield University. Registration and papers, 50p from 20 Newington Rd, Sheffield 11.

SUNDAY 13 NOVEMBER. Manchester city Labour Party half day school on racialism. From 2.15pm at Hulme Labour Club.

SUNDAY 13 NOVEMBER. International-Communist League public meeting: "How to fight the fascists". 7.45pm at the 'Prince Albert', Wharfedale Rd, London N1.

TUESDAY 15 NOVEMBER. Cardiff Workers Action meeting: "Can women gain equality under capitalism?". 7.30pm at VCS, St Mary St.

SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER. "Britain out of Ireland, how and when?" Labour movement conference on Ireland. Sponsors include 5 Labour MPs, several Trades Councils and trade union branches. Delegates welcome from all branches of the labour movement that support Ireland's right to national self-determination. Credentials from LMDI, 1 North End Road, London W14. Conference starts 10am, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1.

FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER. British trade unionists and the fight against apartheid. 7pm, Friends House, Euston Rd. Speakers include John Gaetsewe of SACTU. Organised by AAM and SACTU.

SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER. Working Women's Charter day school on women and the trade unions. From 10.30am at Friends Meeting House, Church St, Reading. Details, from Anita Turnbull, Flat 2, 3 Coleridge Road, London N8.

SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER. "Rank and File" delegate conference. 11.30am at the New Century Hall, Corporation St, Manchester. Credentials for delegates from trade union bodies, 50p from the Rank and File Centre, 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

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"THOSE who told us that the armed struggle was unrealistic have been answered by Vorster and Kruger and the children of Soweto", declared Mac Maharaj of the African National Congress at Anti-Apartheid's protest meeting after the clampdown on black organisations in South Africa.

Maharaj told the audience of 300 in Central Hall, Westminster on October 25th, that all the channels of peaceful protest had now been closed. But he was not surprised by the suppression of all organisations of the urban blacks and the arrest of some 70 black leaders.

Denis McShane from the National Union of Journalists underlined the massive involvement of British capital — including Pearson Longman, with its big interests in the British media — in South Africa. Other speakers included bishop Trevor Huddleston, and representatives from the South West Africa People's Organisation and the Black People's Convention.

Anti-Apartheid general secretary Abdul Minty went further than Maharaj on the theme of armed struggle. The white population of South Africa, said Minty, is mobilised for total war not only against black South Africa but also against black African states such as Angola and Mozambique.

New military technology is pouring in. Nobody can now believe in peaceful means of protest; all channels have been closed.

When the war comes and whites are being killed, there will be a massive outcry from racists internation-

A AM Protest meeting Fiery words blur the real issues



Anti-Apartheid protest against deaths in detention in S. Africa

ally, attempting to get Britain to line up openly with Vorster. When this happens and British politicians say they want peaceful change, not violent

change, in South Africa, we must point out that this means in effect only those changes that Vorster permits. It is an excuse, motivated by their in-

terest in protecting British holdings in South Africa.

South Africa now has nuclear technology gained from the US, Israel, Germany, Italy, and Canada. This makes them a real threat to world peace.

We must stand by the liberation movements, concluded Minty, and for the preservation of the independence of the black African states.

Militant words which didn't seem to fit in with bishops on the platform. But the paradox was more apparent than real.

It is true that apartheid will not be got rid of peacefully. But that does not mean that the armed struggle is the only struggle against apartheid, nor that the ANC can claim a monopoly on the fight against apartheid. Strikes and boycotts have already shown their importance.

In fact, Minty's talk of 'total war', and his entirely exaggerated warnings about South Africa's aggressive intentions against black African states, are designed to blur over the real class and political divisions in black Africa and in black South Africa. The apparently ultra-militant exaggeration of South African militarism serves as an underpinning for the Anti-Apartheid leadership's very moderate strategy of pressuring governments to act against South Africa.

We do need to support the liberation movements, but that does not mean identifying ourselves with their politics, or forgetting the central role of working class action in South Africa and in Britain in fighting apartheid.

N.C.

Support the Azlon picket!

LAST TUESDAY, 25th October, over 250 people packed into the Grunwick support meeting called by Lambeth Trades Council at Lambeth Town Hall. After the Newsreel Collective film was shown, there was an excellent discussion and a coach was organised for the November 7th picket.

One of the platform speakers at the meeting was Trevor Williams, a member of the TGWU. He was sacked recently from Azlon, for trying to unionise the firm.

Azlon is a small firm in Kennington making plastic chemical and medical containers (syringes, bottles etc). It employs 87 people on two sites — about half in a factory, and half in the warehouse and office.

Bro. Williams started work

BY CHEUNG SIU MING

eight weeks ago as a warehouse storeman. He was soon approached by about 20 workers wanting to join the TGWU. He leafleted the warehouse with TGWU application forms and got forms back from 10 out of 15 warehouse workers and three of the office staff.

Management responded by sacking him without the notice laid down in his terms of employment.

At first eight workers joined Bro. Williams on the picket line. Management pressure and economic hardship has now reduced them to five, with

the workers on the other site yet to come out in support. Management refused the TGWU official's proposal to go to ACAS, or to discuss the matter further.

The Trades Council called for a mass picket for the Friday, and at short notice over 30 local trade unionists joined the five pickets. The strikers' steward, Bro. Jim Richardson, told Workers' Action that the wages range from £27 to £44 for a 40-hour week. Overtime at time and a half begins only after 50 hours. No previous attempt has been made to unionise this firm, he added.

The management have employed scab vans after the pickets successfully turned away the regular delivery

vans. They have also employed scabs to do the strikers' work.

One of the van drivers said to the pickets, "I'm with you and only wish our place had a union too". This was overheard by a manager, who shouted, "He won't be working for long, either!" and stormed off to the office phone.

As Bro. Williams said at the Trades Council meeting: "Another small firm is going to laugh at the union movement if we lose".

Collections and messages of support to: J Richardson, 12 Ellison House, Albany Rd, London SE17.

Airport strike breaches 10% and 12 month limit

AFTER nearly two months on strike, the air traffic control assistants voted 353 to 214 to follow the CPSA full-time officials' recommendation and accept one of the Government's two alternative offers made over a week ago.

The strikers have accepted £315 lump sum (before tax) in return for renouncing their rights to back pay worth nearly £1 million. They will get 4% guaranteed increase in April 1978, and "any amount up to a maximum of a further 4% if that could be

accommodated within 10% increase in the total Civil Aviation Authority wage bill" (i.e. other CAA workers are to help pay for it). But they are to keep the 1975 Job Evaluation agreement, which now has the seal of government 'recognition'.

The vote to return was narrow, and 300 strikers did not vote at all. The vote reflects the confusion and division among the air traffic control assistants about

the way the CPSA bureaucrats ran the dispute, the officials' recommendation, and the fact that other unions in the airports were very slow in taking solidarity action.

But the government obviously has retreated, with however little loss of face. The blunder that forced the concessions was the use of the Royal Air Force fuel tankers to break the West Drayton picket line, and the sympathy that this incident

created amongst militant workers elsewhere. The Government has in fact broken the 12 month rule and the 10% limit, though they hope it will not snowball.

Many militant air traffic control assistants feel that they could have won more. Feeling is high among many of them about the full time officials. In Scotland the air traffic control assistants' mass meeting last Sunday heard the two full time officials give their case, then threw them out of the meeting. A lay official was told "if you were half the man you say you are, you would hang yourself" — and a rope was thrown onto the platform.

A bitter lesson about the need to control the union officials has been learnt by the air traffic control assistants. It should also be learnt by other CPSA members and by all workers.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

Mersey firemen going for a strike

Firemen on Merseyside have started a work to rule in support of their pay claim for a living wage [not just 10% increase!] and against their union's pussy-footing over negotiations with the employers.

The firemen have been getting more and more militant in the last few months over their low pay, in some cases £35 take home for a 48 hour week. Several marches have been held in the North West. In the summer several Merseyside firemen were sacked for taking part in an unofficial work to rule, only to be reinstated after prompt strike action forced Chief Fire Officer Rankin to climb down.

Terry Fields, Fire Brigades Union secretary for Merseyside, has said that if the employers don't come up with the money by Tuesday 1st November, "we'll be going for strike action when the union delegates [at the special FBU conference on the pay claim] meet..." Of talk of the Government bringing in troops to break the strike (as they did in the Glasgow firemen's strike in 1973), Bro. Fields said, "It's not unexpected — but it seems very insensitive while negotiations are still proceeding... But if the Government is throwing down the gauntlet, we will not hesitate to pick it up".

The Government hope the strike will be kept to the North of England and Scotland as they do not have enough trained firemen in the armed forces to scab on a national strike.

G.Y.

6,000 march in anti-abortion stronghold

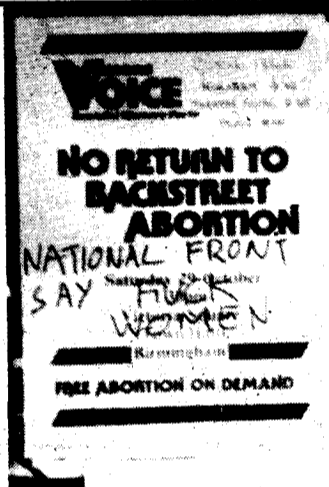
OVER 6,000 people demonstrated in Birmingham last Saturday in favour of 'a woman's right to choose' and against attempts to restrict abortion facilities. The march, which drew support from many political and women's groups, ended in a rally in a local park, addressed by, amongst others, a feminist member of the Italian Parliament.

Birmingham was chosen as the site for the demonstration because of the notorious domination of anti-abortionists in its hospitals. Only 6% of abortions in Birmingham are done on the NHS!

The size of the march shows that the abortion issue is still

very much a live one, although both the James White and the Benyon bills to restrict abortion rights failed to get through Parliament. Rumours are rife that the Labour government is preparing to do a deal with anti-abortionists and introduce some form of restrictive legislation. Failing that, there are many MPs who are prepared to put forward a private member's Bill along the lines of White and Benyon.

If these moves are to be defeated, the maximum amount of pressure will be needed. Yet the campaign so far has suffered from a real weakness. Despite the position of formal support for abortion rights from



most of the major trade unions, there were very few union banners on the march, and none from the industrial unions.

The number of Labour Party banners bore little relation to the overwhelming vote for abortion on request at the last Party conference.

The fight has to be waged inside the labour movement to turn the formal support into an active campaign, at grass roots level. Here the CLPs and the YS branches have a special importance in taking up the crucial demand that Labour MPs toe the party line on abortion.

In taking up the fight for abortion rights, it will be impossible to avoid the wider issues of women's rights in general and the anti-working class policies

A poster calling for support for the abortion rights demonstration in Birmingham, defaced by fascists with the message 'National Front say Fuck Women'.

'Kinder, Küche, Kirche' [children, kitchen, church] was Hitler's programme for women. And it seems his British equivalents have the same idea.

of the present Labour government, especially the running-down of the Health Service.

P.K.

□ □ □

A Basingstoke Labour Party political education meeting on abortion rights recently produced some new arguments from the 'Life' anti-abortion lobby.

After Ann Weyman from the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign had spoken, there was a lively debate. The 'Life' supporters ended up with arguments such as "People like you are responsible for teacher unemployment" [because abortion rights cut down the number of children to be taught], and "How are you going to get anyone to vote Labour in future generations if you have aborted them all?"

Once the 'babies for burning' emotionalism has turned cold, there is nothing but this irrationalism to boost the anti-abortion case.

C.J.

BOG strike ends

BRITISH OXYGEN workers meeting on Tuesday 1st November accepted a new management offer in response to their 30% pay demand.

Stewards meeting on 31st October had voted 38-36 to recommend acceptance of the offer.

Tremendous pressure had been applied to the British Oxygen workers and stewards because of the strategic importance of the strike. British Oxygen supplies 80% of the gas used in British industry.

Up to 31st October, 50,000 workers had been laid off, and the company estimated that 100,000 firms would have had to close within two weeks if the strike had continued. Swan Hunter ship repairers on Tyneside had tried to get round the strike by importing replacement supplies from the Continent, at considerable risk to industrial safety.

British Oxygen's first offer, rejected by stewards, was a wage increase within the 10% ceiling plus a self-financing productivity deal which the company said could add a further 5% to 8½%. It is not yet clear how much further the new offer goes.

CLARE RUSSELL

Ultimatum at Chrysler

SHOP STEWARDS from all over the west of Scotland are being called to a meeting on Thursday 3rd November. Chrysler Linwood stewards have organised the gathering to discuss the ultimatum they have been faced with by management.

Two weeks ago management unilaterally ordered changes in the duties of four inspectors, with increases in track speeds and cuts in manning levels. The workers insisted that these changes be negotiated. Management refused and work stopped.

Next day management announced they were shutting down the plant and stopping wages for the 7,000 workers. Since then workers have occupied the factory to show that they are prepared to start work as soon as management returns to status quo.

The Chrysler bosses are refusing to negotiation on the initial change in working arrangements, but is demanding comprehensive negotiations on 'flexibility' and productivity before the plant is reopened. Tom Darby, Chrysler director of

personnel and industrial relations, said that 'he was genuinely seeking a solution, but for the sake of the future he had to insist that before Linwood reopens the unions agree to serious negotiations on a new attitude of cooperation that would help to make the plant viable'.

Among the requirements for "a new attitude of cooperation, it appears, is the demand that negotiating powers be transferred from individual shop stewards to the senior stewards' committee.

This is not another of the cases, common in the car industry, of bosses provoking a strike to save them wages in a period when they have plenty of cars stockpiled. Chrysler has just launched a new model, and need as much production

as they can get.

Stewards suspect that Chrysler management is either preparing to close Linwood, or out to smash the union organisation there. Chrysler is nowhere near fulfilling the plans associated with its £162 million government grant two years ago; it is making serious losses, and a senior executive has said that, "The life blood of Chrysler UK is flowing away".

The Scottish TUC has been asking the government to arrange a 'negotiated solution' at Chrysler Linwood: a proposal that hardly meets the situation! Nationalisation of the whole car and car components industry, without compensation and under workers' control, is the only serious solution.

CALLUM McCRAE