

# workers' ACTION

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10p

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## Profiteers massacre Merseyside

MERSEYSIDE workers, already suffering from 11.5% unemployment, are facing a wave of factory closures and redundancies.

2,800 jobs are at risk at Leyland's Speke no.2 plant. Lucas Aerospace want to cut 1,200 jobs by closing their Broadgreen factory, and 490 redundancies are planned at the Lucas works in Fazakerley.

Birds Eye, Kirkby, have cut 450 jobs. GEC has announced 640 redundancies, Courtaulds 500.

Also on Merseyside, Cammell Lairds shipyard has announced 160 redundancies, and Western Ship-repairers, Birkenhead, have announced 625.

At Speke the Leyland bosses are trying to head off any struggle against the closure by promising big redundancy pay-offs. But even a couple of thousand pounds runs out quite quickly — and, looking at the list of redundancies, who can believe they have much chance of anything but a very long spell on the dole if they lose their jobs?

The working class on Merseyside — and not only on Merseyside — cannot afford to lose any more jobs.

Liverpool Trades Council

# Occupy to stop closures

has called a conference for Sunday April 9th. It's a chance to start mobilising the whole Merseyside labour movement against unemployment.

The campaign against unemployment cannot be based on schemes to "attract" capitalists to

Merseyside, or pleas for government grants. Cringing explanations that Merseyside workers are not as militant as they're made out to be, or ideas like Eric Heffer's proposed "Minister for Merseyside", are no use.

They won't sway capit-

alists who make hard-headed commercial calculations that they can get a better return on investments in areas nearer the new centres of industrial development.

A struggle to seize the factories, to run them under workers' control, to divide the available work equally among the available workforce, and to fight for the factories to be nationalised without compensation: that's the only real guideline for a struggle against unemployment.

The system of producing for profit has condemned the factories due to close: and thus — this is a side-effect from the capitalist point of view! — it has condemned the workers who earn their livelihoods there, and their families. We need to turn that condemnation upside down: basing our struggle on workers' needs and workers' livelihoods, we condemn the priorities of profit.

A lead for the April 9th conference has been given by 200 workers who have occupied a clothing factory in Knowsley. And even if the Trades Council conference confines itself to re-sounding speeches without plans for action, the resistance must still be organised at rank and file level.

★ See centre pages: How the unemployed fought back in the 1920s, and how they can organise now; why capitalism breeds unemployment, and how it can be fought.

## FIVE YEARS TO FIND A NEW JOB

NATIONALLY, 36 out of every thousand on the dole found jobs last month. At that rate, a worker going on the dole now will most likely have to wait at least 27 months before finding a job! In Merseyside the rate was 14 out of every thousand—which means an average wait of five years, unless you move, emigrate, retire, or give up first.

In the city of Liverpool the rate was 4 per thousand, which means—no chance at all!

Against this background Merseyside workers are beginning to fight back against unemployment. On Monday 20th 200 garment workers, mainly women, occupied the 'Fashion Design Clothing Centre' in Knowsley to prevent the liquidators moving out machinery and equipment.

John McNally, for the said, "We think

there is a future for the factory—and if another firm won't take us we will go it alone. We are prepared to stay here indefinitely, regardless of the discomforts. We want wage packets, not dole cards."

At Smiths Crisps warehouse in Alntree, an occupation was broken by the police, using the Criminal Trespass Act. The eight warehousemen and drivers had occupied in protest against a sudden management decision to close down. After being evicted they are continuing the fight by picketing the warehouse.

The Lucas Aerospace factory at Broadgreen is due to close. On Wednesday 22nd the Lucas Aerospace Combine Committee met and issued a call for blacking of any work transferred from Broadgreen.

Broadgreen G&M steward Dick Skelland said, "We are furious at the way the company is treating us. It's

diabolical. The first we heard of the plans was on the radio. We put sanctions on immediately we heard the news, and nothing will leave the plant until the management gives us a statement on the situation."

Shop stewards at British Leyland's Speke No. 2 plant are still determined to resist the proposed closure of the factory, which would make 2,800 redundant.

The last AUEW shop stewards' quarterly meeting called for a Day of Action against unemployment on Merseyside on May 17th—the day when the 90-day redundancy notices for Speke expire. The AUEW district committee has since overturned that decision, but many militants will still be going ahead with the Day of Action. The Right to Work Campaign is organising a march of the unemployed from Merseyside to London.

## FIGHT THE COWLEY WITCH- HUNT

Last December Alan Thornett was elected TGWU deputy convenor in the Leyland car assembly plant at Cowley. Bob Fryer was elected convenor, and Tom White to another deputy convenor's position.

The Leyland bosses refused to recognise Thornett, as they have refused for three years to recognise him in any union capacity beyond steward for his section. The TGWU bureaucracy backed this up with charges against Fryer, Thornett, White, and six other TGWU members of "bringing the union into disrepute", based on such "crimes" as walking out of a District Committee meeting.

Like the Leyland bosses, the TGWU bureaucracy have put a lot of effort over many years into victimising these workers, including heavy backing for right wingers in the Cowley plant and bureaucratic splitting of the plant TGWU branch.

The reason is that Alan Thornett is a revolutionary — a leading member of the Workers' Socialist League — and the others under attack are left-wing militants, determined opponents of Leyland's 'participation' schemes and job-cutting, and of the Government's wage curbs. It is for the same reason that the workers in Cowley elected seven out of the nine facing charges as stewards or senior stewards.

A conference to organise opposition to this witch hunt is being held on Saturday April 8th, from 1pm at the Cowley Community Centre, Oxford. It has been sponsored by several TGWU convenors and branch officials, and is being actively supported by TGWU stewards at Leyland's threatened Speke no.2 plant.

The conference is open to all T&GWU members. Workers' Action calls on all our readers to give it the fullest support possible.

# 50,000 TELL BEGIN: NO MORE CONQUEST

50,000 PEOPLE rallied in Tel Aviv on April 1st in support of a petition to Prime Minister Menachem Begin demanding "peace rather than territories".

This comes at a time when the Likud government thought that its invasion of southern Lebanon had managed to unify the Israeli people behind its rule, despite the obvious failure of the so-called Sadat 'peace initiative' after Begin's insistence on continued and expanded Zionist settlement in Arab lands.

The demonstration will have considerable impact in Israel.

The petition was initiated by 600 reserve officers, and the rally's platform included reserve officers up to lieutenant-colonel and a winner of Israel's highest medal for valour. "By starting with a group of reserve officers", said tank commander Captain Bar-On to the Observer reporter in Jerusalem, "we were not showing off our military experience. But we wanted to indicate that we were people who had done our duty for the country, that we could not be dismissed as leftists and defeatists".



Refugees in Lebanon

To understand the crisis wracking the Israeli government, it is necessary to look back at how it was elected.

Since it was set up, the state of Israel had been ruled by a series of Labour administrations, the last of which was headed by Yitzhak Rabin. This ruling bloc was blamed for what the population saw as Israel's lack of military preparation in the 1973 war. The Labour bloc also seemed unable to resolve the diplomatic deadlock. Then a series of scandals rocked the government in 1976 — the Tzur affair, the Ofer affair, the Yadin affair, and finally a minor scandal involving Rabin and his wife.

Thus, paradoxically, while a very vague and unorganised mood in favour of 'peace' was growing, the electorate voted narrowly in favour of Likud — the bloc least likely to satisfy or make concessions towards any 'peace'

mood, the bloc of open Israeli expansionism.

This contradiction gave rise to early notions that butcher Begin would "do a de Gaulle". In the same way that de Gaulle had the credibility with the French Right to push through independence for Algeria while the left-wing government before 1958 had not dared, Begin's reputation would secure him sufficiently against extreme Zionist reactions for him to make a deal with the Arab states.

These speculations revived after Sadat's peace theatre re-kindled the public imagination. So long as the bally-hoo of Sadat's initiative continued, the government stayed firm despite pressure from the religious Right and despite severe economic difficulties and a number of important strikes.

Inevitably, as the Sadat initiative got bogged down, so pressure on Likud mounted, both from within the bloc and outside.

The bloody blitzkrieg on Lebanon diverted attention temporarily and put the stress again on the obsessive themes of Israeli political life: 'safe borders', Palestinian 'terrorism', 'military realities'. This new situation could not last. When what began as a highly popular revenge raid (in the eyes of the mass of Israelis at least) soon became much more, the disillusionment of a section of the Israeli population was stark.

Quickly, many Israelis realised that the Lebanese venture had killed the Sadat initiative stone dead. The Arab rejectionist camp was thereby strengthened. The rift with the US — on whose patronage Israel depends — was growing. Just when territorial

concessions were needed, Israel was de facto extending the area of its occupation northwards.

And the raid had in any case failed to deal the Palestinian guerrillas an effective blow. Indeed, it had tended to prove what the PLO was insisting on — that there could be no 'peace' without the agreement of the representatives of the Palestinian people.

There have been persistent press rumours that the US wants to dump Begin and have him replaced by General Ezer Weizman who is reckoned to be more 'flexible' than Begin. If this is so — and it is possible — then the present mood which objectively supports the US 'solution' provides a most favourable situation for this move.

Probably it would mean a new national government.

## UN & ISRAEL OUT OF LEBANON!

THE UNITED Nations so-called peace-keeping troops in southern Lebanon are doing a lot more than monitoring a ceasefire. Their role is clearly that of establishing and policing a new border along the line of the Litani river.

Right wing Maronite militiamen are coming into the area in force. Israeli troops are still dug in there. The ¼-million Palestinians and Lebanese leftists made refugees by Israel's bombs (many for the second, third, or fourth time driven out by

Israel's aggressions) are being kept out.

The UN's work for Israel is being supplemented by the Syrian government and army in the north; they have prevented arms, supplies, and Iraqi reinforcements from reaching the Palestinians.

None of these 'peacekeepers' has done a thing to disarm or hinder the Israeli invaders, of course.

Socialists must demand the immediate departure of all Israeli and UN troops from the Lebanon.



French troops

## US MINES STRIKE ENDS

BY A MAJORITY of 56%, striking US coal miners voted to ratify the third contract deal signed by their union leadership, thus ending their marathon 105-day strike.

The coal miners came out of the strike clearly victorious, although the actual deal did not satisfy their demands.

The main thrust of the bosses' offensive had been a package of measures to smash down local union militants and penalise and victimise local strikers and their leaders. They were forced to back down on this and on a series of

other measures, leaving the miners in a strong position to resist further offensives at local or national level.

The employers provoked the strike in the hope of smashing the union, the UMWA, which had lost a lot of ground in recent years. Instead the union's sell-out leadership has been much weakened, and new militant leaders have come forward in every coal-field.

The tremendous struggle by 160,000 workers cannot fail to leave its mark on the American labour scene.

## PRINTERS' DISPUTE ENDS BUT

# WEST GERMAN STRIKES COULD SPREAD EVEN FURTHER

The West German printers' strike ended on 21 March with a compromise agreement on the introduction of new technology and job security for the typesetters and other workers affected.

The chairman of the union, IG Druck und Papier, admitted that "we have not completely achieved the aims of our strike". In fact, while the union had been demanding that the computerised typesetting should be done by IG Druck members "for all time", the agreement provided for the typesetters to be employed on it for 8 years and other workers for 6 years at their current rates of pay.

The employers have already stated that there would be "difficulties" in implementing this agreement.

The IG Druck chairman said that he hoped their agreement would also serve as "a model for the metalworking industry". In the strikes and lock-outs currently taking place in south-west Germany the issue of job security for skilled workers threatened by new technology has also come to the fore.

The strikes in the area around Stuttgart (an intensive engineering area which has traditionally led other regions in wage settlements) began on a selective basis on 15 March.

The response of the employers was to lock out about 146,000 workers, though only 80,000 had originally gone on strike. The metalworkers' union IG Metall was forced then to call out other factories.

The workers are having to survive on very low levels of strike pay, and thousands of others are being laid off throughout the country because of the shortage of parts supplied from the Stuttgart area. Volkswagen were forced to use spare parts to keep production going, and unless the strike is settled soon the entire engineering industry will grind to a halt.

Despite these losses the shaky Social Democrat-Liberal coalition does not want to be seen to take sides by intervening or mediating. The negotiations have failed to produce any agreement on job security, though it appears that some sort of deal has been struck on the issue of wages, which loomed larger at the start of the strike.

The engineers in Nord-Rhein Westphalen have given notice that they will also strike and there have been some sympathy stoppages in Bavarian factories. The bureaucracy is however doing nothing to coordinate action.

The current round of struggles is far from over, even with the end of the printers' strike. The miners in some areas have given notice of terminating their contracts from 1 May and have put in a demand for 6.5 per cent — above the government's guidelines.

# REVOLT IN THE SHAH'S PRISON

AFTER the mass demonstrations and bloody repression in Iran over the winter months, a hunger strike is in progress at the Qasr prison.

According to the *Guardian* (3rd April) "it is not known how many of the 2,000 prisoners jailed in Qasr by military tribunals are taking part in the country's first such strike. They are protesting against bad prison conditions and demanding retrials before civilian courts."

The hunger strike started about four weeks ago.

Iranian oppositionists estimate there are between 25,000 and 100,000 political prisoners in the country. The hunger strike has been accompanied by big demon-

strations against the Shah's dictatorship.

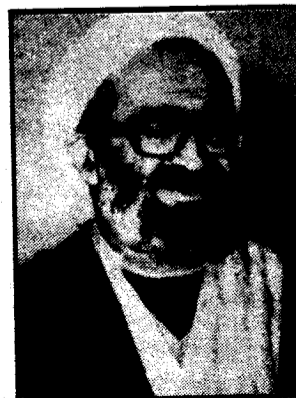
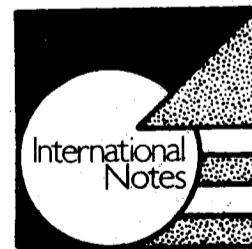
The protests began last year with poetry readings and meetings organised by the Writers' Association. On November 15th the dreaded SAVAK terror squads attacks a poetry reading at Aryamehr University, injuring at least 30 students. Protests and police repression escalated, reaching a high point with the events of January 9th in Qom.

According to the *Bulletin of the Committee Against Repression in Iran*, "Police opened fire with sub-machine guns on a 5000-strong peaceful demonstration of mainly theological students and priests... Several hundred are reported to have been killed."

A similar machine-gun attack took place against a big demonstration in Tabriz in February, organised to protest about and commemorate the Qom massacre. "Unofficial sources" quoted by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* put the death toll at nearly one hundred.

Iran still enjoys acceptance among major parliamentary democracies not granted — at least so publicly — to similar bloodstained dictatorships like Chile. But prisons and machine-guns cannot prop up the Shah for ever.

★ ★ The Committee against Repression in Iran can be contacted at Box 4, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N.1



Ayatollah Montazeri, Muslim theologian and Iranian oppositionist: jailed since 1975 and tortured

BRUCE ROBINSON

# The back-street abortionists are still in business

THE 1967 Act was supposed to end the horrors of backstreet abortion, but a case that has just been tried in Leicester indicates that it has not. A Leicester GP, Dr Shivadikar, has just been found guilty and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for using instruments to unlawfully procure abortions on two women.

In the first case, the woman went to her own GP when she was about eight weeks pregnant and asked for an abortion because her husband was not working, they were living in an expensive flat, and hers was the only income coming in. Her GP, who was also a friend of the family, refused her, saying that there were no physical or social grounds for an abortion. But he wrote in his notes that she was suffering from 'pregnancy depression' and should not be given any unnecessary medicines, as he feared she might try to abort herself.

She later went to see another doctor in the same practice, saying this time that her marriage was breaking down. She was again refused an abortion, but was told there might be a possibility of being referred to BPAS (British Pregnancy Advisory Service, a private non-profit making agency which arranges abortions) in Birmingham. At the trial, when asked why she did not follow up this offer, she explained that, being Muslim, her family was opposed to abortion and questions would be asked, since going to BPAS necessitated an overnight stay.

Therefore, on Thursday 12th March, when she was nearly four months pregnant, she went to Dr Shivadikar, who said he would do the abortion for £100. She went back next day and gave him £60, saying she'd pay the rest later.

She was given painkillers and an injection, and told to wait in the waiting room until all his patients had left. She went back in, and "I lay on the couch, he put some instruments, I don't know what they were, through my vagina, I felt a pinch, then he gave me some painkillers, anti-biotics, and sleeping tablets, and told me to go home and, if any-

thing went wrong, only to call him".

The next morning, after being in great pain and losing blood in the night, she called Dr Shivadikar. The family had also called their own GP, who called an ambulance. Dr Shivadikar told them this was unnecessary.

Later the same day she was admitted to the Leicester Royal Infirmary, and described as "in severe pain, sweating, bleeding heavily, diagnosed as suffering from pelvic peritonitis and an incomplete septic abortion". Four days earlier she had been examined at the Ante-Natal Clinic and found to be in good health, with a normal pregnancy.

Her own doctor refused her an abortion, yet his own notes indicate that she should have been entitled to one under the 1967 Abortion Act, which allows for abortion if the woman's physical or mental health is at risk and says that social factors can be taken into consideration. When she first asked for an abortion, she was only eight weeks pregnant. If outpatient facilities had been available, the operation could have been very quick and safe. Instead, she had to wait until she was four months pregnant, when even an abortion performed under proper conditions is a much more serious operation.

Although she knew of the

peritonitis, her fallopian tube inflamed, distended, with pus oozing from the outer end". (The Defence argued that the infection had been present before she saw Dr Shivadikar).

The jury decided to convict, despite the defence contention that since the main witnesses were prostitutes with other convictions for assault, shoplifting and so on, their evidence could not be relied on. Indeed, the defence case seemed to rest largely on abuse of the witnesses as 'viragos', 'wicked vindictive women', 'grudge-ridden, unbalanced', and 'incapable of telling the truth about the simplest matter'.

Dr Shivadikar was acquitted on three other charges of "attempting to induce abortions unlawfully by the administration of a noxious thing", largely because the prosecution was unable to bring any evidence as to what exactly was injected and whether or not it could be considered 'noxious' since it appeared to have no effect either in inducing abortions or otherwise.

## SUFFER

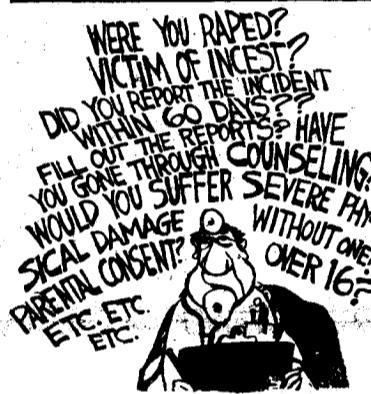
These cases may be only the tip of an iceberg in an area where less than 18% of legal abortions are performed on the NHS. While the majority of consultant gynaecologists in Leicester are opposed to abortion (one is even a founder member of the Leicester branch of the anti-abortion campaign SPUC) and use their position to deny women NHS abortions, there will always be a market for the unscrupulous backstreet operators, and women will suffer as a result.

The majority of Leicester women refused NHS abortions go to the BPAS in Birmingham. But there will be some who can not afford to or dare not because of the opposition of their family or community, and will resort to the backstreets or try to abort themselves.

The National Abortion Campaign group in Leicester are pointing out that the Shivadikar case highlights the fact that even the limited provisions of the 1967 Act are not being implemented. NAC is campaigning for an outpatient abortion clinic where women can refer themselves for safe, early abortion.

We have written to the Area Health Authority demanding that the Act is implemented in Leicester, and a day of action has been called for April 12th, which is the date of the next Area Health Authority meeting, with a picket of the meeting and a public meeting in the evening at Highfield Community Centre. GERRY BYRNE

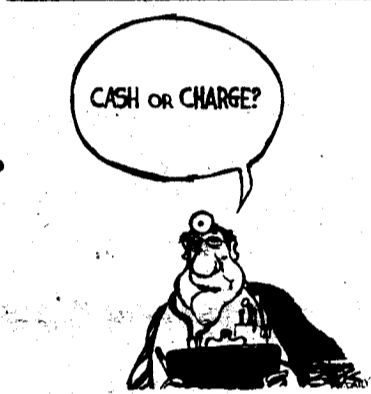
QUESTIONS A POOR WOMAN MUST ANSWER TO GET AN ABORTION:



She was severely ill in hospital for a week, and later examination also revealed a suspected perforated uterus. The consultant responsible for her was so alarmed at her condition that when she finally admitted what had happened he immediately rang Dr Shivadikar, demanding to know what he had done. Two weeks later, Dr Shivadikar was arrested at his surgery.

Apart from Dr Shivadikar's role and the fact that if his advice had been followed and no ambulance called, the woman might well have died, the case raises other serious questions.

QUESTIONS A RICH WOMAN MUST ANSWER TO GET AN ABORTION:



existence of BPAS, she didn't feel able to use it because it would have meant an overnight stay and a risk of condemnation from her community. Many women face similar problems, or may find the cost even of a charity clinic prohibitive. This points to the urgent need for an outpatient abortion clinic as part of the NHS in Leicester, where early abortions can be performed safely and without the necessity of an overnight stay.

In the second case, the woman ended up in a similar state. She was admitted to Leicester General Hospital, to quote the consultant gynaecologist, "with a septic abortion, pelvic

## A WET BLANKET AGAINST BLANKET BANS

Several well-known figures spoke at a public meeting in Camden Town Hall on 22nd March, called in opposition to the three-month police ban on all marches in London. But disappointingly little came out of the meeting. BRUCE ROBINSON reports.

THE TITLE of the meeting was 'Against Blanket Bans' — and the ambiguities soon became clear, when the speakers divided on whether it was correct to call for bans against the NF alone and to rely on the state to deal with the fascist danger.

Ernie Roberts argued that the Public Order Act was introduced as an anti-fascist measure and should be used as such, while Gerry Cohen of the Communist Party argued that each NF march

should be banned separately under the Race Relations Act. Cohen also argued that the ban was particularly bad because it had been imposed by unelected police chiefs and not by elected representatives (although Merlyn Rees' signature appears on the ban).

In opposition to this, Tess Gill of the National Council for Civil Liberties argued against specific bans on the NF from a legal point of view, and Tariq Ali pointed out that some marches had already defied the ban (as on International Women's Day) and that it was wrong to place faith in the neutrality of the state.

Paul Holborrow (secretary of the Anti-Nazi League, but also a Socialist Workers' Party member) gave a speech that was indistinguishable from left reformism, showing very clearly the rightward drift of the SWP in the ANL.

He stated that the problem

of racism is going to be solved by winning the hearts and minds of millions of people" and that "propaganda activity is most important". Both these statements are true at a very general level — but at a time when the liberals and social-democrats are in full cry against socialists' efforts to drive the NF off the streets, they just mean giving support to the liberals.

And it begs the question of how to make the necessary anti-racist propaganda in alliance with people like Syd Bidwell, sponsor of the Anti-Nazi League but signatory of the Select Committee report on Immigration!

Holborrow was also the only speaker on the platform who still maintained that the ban had in any way been a victory for anti-fascists.

Only about 70 people attended the meeting, presumably because other activ-

ists felt that a meeting with labour movement celebrities would do nothing to oppose the ban seriously. Indeed, apart from various warnings about adventurism in opposing the ban and the need for the big battalions of the labour movement to be involved in opposition, very little practical action was proposed against the ban, except in the (unlikely) case that McNea bans the traditional May Day demonstration.

There will be a picket of the Home Office, organised by the NCCL for the week of 17-24 April, and the ANL's Anti-Nazi Festival, involving a procession from Trafalgar Square to Victoria Park, was also discussed.

However, if the ban is allowed to pass this time without more active opposition, the way will be open for the police and government to reimpose the ban whenever they wish.

Editorial



# Bombs from the filth column

SOME years ago the men who now lead the National Front instructed their followers: "If you can't take part in our activities join ... a trade union and work and wait for our chance."

The NUR Executive was absolutely right when it decided last week to turn these infiltrators out of its ranks.

Trade unionists who still have any doubts about kicking out the fascist fifth column should take heed of the two bomb attacks this last week on labour organisations — the trade union NUPE and the Communist Party.

Labour Party rooms have also been vandalised by the far right.

The National Front pretends to be a 'working class' party; open letters to trade unionists, and attacks on big business (even if puzzlingly obsessive about Jews) can confuse some trade unionists, especially those already addled by the racism which pervades the labour movement.

But there is no dividing line (and many links) between the NF and the recruiters of scabs and the senders of bombs.

Fascists are in fact the sworn enemies of the labour movement: if they employ 'left' sounding demagoguery, it is only the easier to destroy the workers' organisations.

They aim to:

- \* Debilitate the unions through racism, class division and nationalism.

- \* Purge the unions of all militants and leftists, and if they really get the whip hand, throw out our black brothers and sisters.

- \* Use strong-arm thugs to break up labour meetings, attack strikers and beat up pickets.

- \* If ever they come to power, dismantle the trade unions and all labour organisations; throw their active members, shop stewards etc., into concentration camps; and set up puppet organisations to regiment the working class under slave labour conditions.

Militants in every union should take their cue from the NUR [and the bombs in London] and renew their efforts to expel any known fascist from their midst, and step up the fight against the racism that gives the fascists a breeding ground.

# Where the axe cuts most deeply

TO those that have not... The people most vulnerable to the effects of unemployment are being hit the hardest.

Official figures don't show the full extent to which women have suffered, because many don't get themselves put on the register as seeking work; and the number of women in work has recently started to rise, as employers prefer to sack higher-paid and better protected men.

But the public service cuts have led to thousands of women losing the chance of a job, while they face bigger burdens at home because of the cut-backs in nurseries, hospitals and facilities for the old.

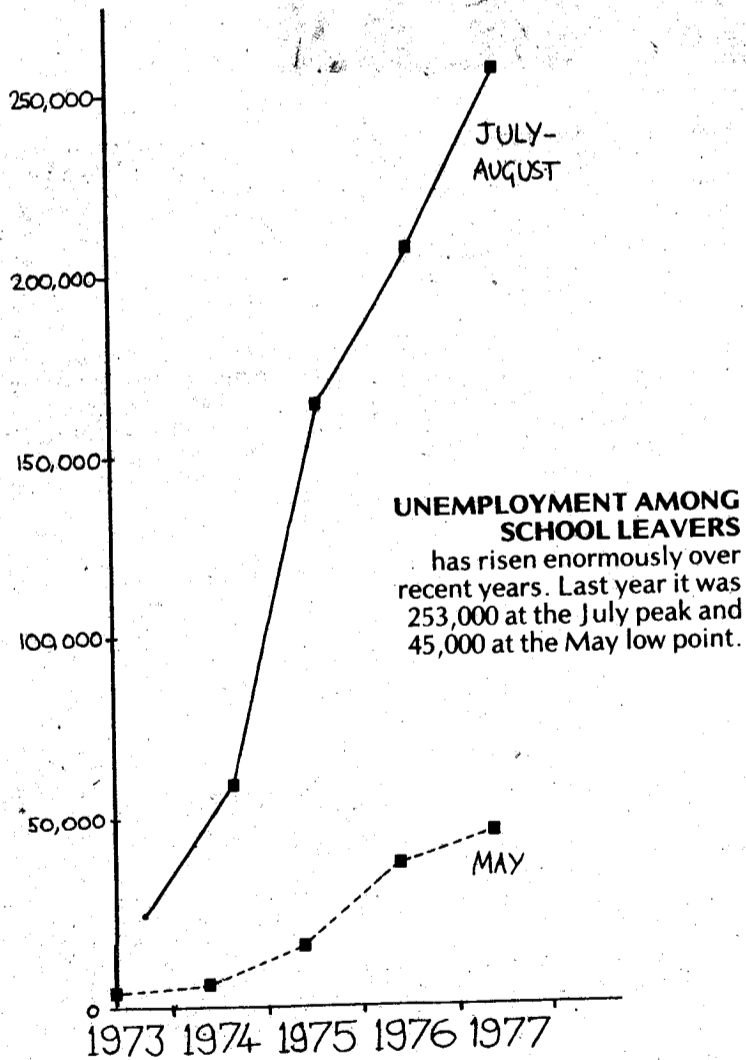
Black people have not only suffered especially from unemployment; at the same time they have also faced accusations from the twisted minds of racists that they are to blame for the job shortages! In parts of London, the unemployment rate among young blacks is as high as 50%; throughout London, unemployment among black people has gone up 350% since 1974, while the overall figures have gone up only 120%.

The areas dominated by declining industries have been devastated, as capitalists take their funds off to newer industrial areas. In Merseyside 11.5% are unemployed, in Strathclyde 11%, in the North-East 10%.

But in every area those who have a job to hold onto, or have some skills and working experience to help them in getting new jobs, are better off than those who have never had jobs. Unemployment generally is 2½ to 3 times higher than it was in 1973 — but unemployment among school leavers is 11 to 12 times higher than five years ago!

And half of all the unemployed are young people, under 29 years old.

But there is no section that gains from trying to conduct a struggle against unemployment in isolation from the working class, trying to get a special better deal from capitalism for a particular section or area, or country. Unemployment is a threat to us all, and import controls, Development Area schemes and special government subsidies will never remove that threat.



Fighting to save 200 jobs at the Fashion Design factory in Knowsley, Merseyside



## JL REVIEW

PAUL ADAMS reviews Wal Hannington's recently republished account of "Unemployed Struggles, 1919-1936".

THE unemployed struggles of the twenties and thirties are often presented as massive begging operations — thousands trudging for charity from the shipyards of the North East and the mines of South Wales to the Parliament in London.

No-one was better placed than Wal Hannington, the national organiser of the Unemployed Workers' Movement, to present the story of these struggles as they really were, in a way capable of inspiring future generations of fighters.

"Unemployed Struggles 1919-1936" was written in 1936, and was long out of print before being republished recently. Unfortunately the new edition adds to the original introduction by Tom Maan an introduction by Will Paynter, who as President of the National Union of Mineworkers watched over the axing of tens of thousands of jobs.

### Charity

The unemployed movement started with the setting up of Local Unemployed Ex-servicemen's Organisations after the First World War. In late 1920 Wal Hannington, then an unemployed engineer of 24 but already an experienced militant of the National Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement, joined his local organisation in St. Pancras.

At that time there was much opposition to organisation on a working-class basis, but faith in the charity of those who still sounded off about a "Land Fit for Heroes" was soon broken under the baton charges of the police. "Ex-soldiers in blue were now ready to club down ex-soldiers in rags at the bidding of the only class which had profited from the war". The line soon changed to "Stop begging, start fighting!"

By the end of October 1920, twelve London district organisations came together to form the London District Council of the Unemployed. The LDC proclaimed three slogans: Work or Full Maintenance, Go to the Guardians, and the demand for suitable premises for the unemployed to meet in.

But the key to the organisation of the unemployed was direct action.

The Library in Essex Road, Islington, was seized by the

unemployed who "after taking possession... barricaded themselves in and had a constant guard day and night against being evicted... Whenever anybody left the hall, or wanted to enter it, a strong body of men stood at the door ready to defend the hall if any attempt was made to rush it. This went on for several weeks..."

The same direct action tactics were used against workhouse authorities, Poor Law Guardians, and employers, and the London unemployed pioneered the factory raid, a tactic which succeeded in cutting overtime in a number of poorly organised factories.

At the Central Aircraft Factory in Kilburn, the employees had accepted reduced rates of pay and overtime was being worked. The LDC had some contacts in the factory who supplied them with a plan. So as not to arouse suspicion as they approached the factory, the raiders all carried football gear. At a signal they all rushed the gates and entered the factory, first finding the power-motors and switching them off. At the same time the telephones were commandeered.

The workers were called to hear the raiders, and soon, of course, the manager arrived. The raiders assured the workers that they were with them in their struggles, and that their aim was to see that no overtime was worked.

The incident ended with victory for the raiders. The manager agreed to halt overtime as from the coming weekend. Perhaps he was a little upset, as he had just been beaten up by police who had rushed to the plant and mistaken him for a raider!

With the spread of unemployed struggles, it became necessary to organise nationally. So April 1921 saw the birth of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, which at its founding conference elected Wal Hannington as its national organiser.

### Scales

Within months the government had revised unemployment benefit rates, reducing them to the rates in force at the beginning of the year.

The response was quick to come: in August 10,000 Sheffield unemployed marched to the town hall under the sign of the skull and crossbones and the words, "Death is better than starvation". After a series of big and bitter demonstrations in Bristol, the guardians there agreed to raise their scales.

In London the chief agitation centred around the jailing of the Poplar councillors led by George Lansbury in September 1921. On October 4th the LDC led 40,000 demanding "Work or Full Maintenance", "Immediate restoration of the cuts in the benefit scales", and "Release of the Poplar councillors". As usual, where the masses took to the streets, the police were ready with their batons drawn.

By the time of the second national conference of the NUWM in November 1921 the movement was truly a national one. In the preceding months there had been big struggles in Liverpool, Leicester, Cardiff, and throughout the Lancashire textile districts. Under the leadership of John McLean and Harry McShane the Scottish unemployed, who now joined the NUWM, had forced up the miserly rates of benefit.

# THE A MARCH

At the November conference, the NUWM decided to organise to resist evictions of unemployed workers who had fallen in arrears with their rent. Special tenants' organisations were formed, with scouts on foot and on bicycles.

The biggest eviction fight in Glasgow took place on 17th May 1922. It gave the lead to many other parts of the country, and led the Glasgow City Council to set up a special rent fund to relieve tenants who were in danger of eviction.

At the end of July 1922 the Birmingham branch of the NUWM decided to march to London. By winter the local idea had taken on national proportions, and the NUWM was busy organising the first National Hunger March. The 2,000 marchers tramped through blizzards in the bitterly cold October and November of 1922 to "fight for bread".

The London workers' movement organised an inspiring reception for the marchers, with everybody clamouring to shake the hands of the first arrivals. But this was not the end of the protest: it was the beginning. The marchers had demanded to see the Prime Minister, Bonar Law, and now that he had refused they insisted they were staying until he changed his mind. The London marchers stayed in London a further five months!

### TUC

Every day the Marchers' Control Committee met and planned activities. Finally, however, with destitution facing them and their families, the number of marchers in London dwindled, and a recruiting march which set out in two columns, after repeated attacks by the police, failed to drum up enough support to keep the action going.

Shortly before the National Hunger March, the 1922 TUC Congress had received a delegation from the NUWM. Now, on 20th December, with the marchers in London, the NUWM sent another delegation, which proposed to the General Council that a day of action be called for January 7th, 1923, to be known as "Unemployment Sunday".

A central organising committee was immediately set up, consisting of an equal number of delegates from the NUWM, the TUC General Council, the London Labour Party, and the London Trades Council. Calls were issued to trades councils, trade unions, and Labour Parties throughout the country to establish similar joint machinery in every centre to organise powerful demonstrations on the appointed day.

So began the brief period — one which ended decisively with the right turn of the TUC after the defeat of the General Strike in 1926 — in which the official movement played a useful part in organising the unemployed and bringing about unity between the employed and the unemployed.

After the success of the Unemployment Sunday agitation, the NUWM approached the TUC with more ambitious proposals.

□ Closer relations between employed and unemployed, by establishing a joint committee with equal representation from the TUC General Council and the NUWM.

□ That the General Council should circularise the trade unions and trades councils

# DANGER CHES

encouraging the formation of unemployed workers' committees in every locality, attached to the NUWM.

That at the next Trades Union Congress the affiliation of the NUWM to the TUC should be placed on the agenda.

When the TUC met that September in Plymouth, a General Council recommendation was accepted, that the first two proposals be carried but the third rejected. It was not until late in January 1923 that the first meeting of the NUWM-TUC Joint Action Committee took place.

The JAC drafted a Charter and prepared for another Unemployed Sunday in June. The Charter's points were explained in a series of six leaflets on Maintenance,

Housing, Work Schemes, Hours of Work, Training, and state workshops.

By the middle of the next year the TUC's attitude was distinctly cooler. The NUWM's resolution was not even allowed on the order paper at the TUC's Special Conference on Unemployment in 1924. With the right turn of the TUC after the defeat of the General Strike, official support for the unemployed struggles ceased.

To be continued. The second part of this article, dealing with the unemployed workers' struggles after the General Strike, will appear in next week's WORKERS' ACTION.



OVER 16 million hours of overtime are worked every week in manufacturing industry. Stop overtime, and you provide jobs for nearly half a million people working a 35-hour week.

Or if the average working week in British industry were reduced by three hours — from 41 hours to 38 — then unemployment would be mopped up completely.

The answer to unemployment is to cut working hours. But that is something the employers will not do willingly — reduced working hours would mean reduced profits for the bosses — unless they could cut pay drastically at the same time.

And that is something that no well organised workforce can permit.

So to safeguard each worker's right to a livelihood we need to fight for workers' control, to impose work-sharing with no loss of pay: in single plants, in combines or industries, in whole areas, or as widely as possible.

The trade unions should start a real campaign now for a 35-hour week, an end to overtime working, and an adequate national minimum wage so that no-one needs to work overtime.

The bosses' ultimate answer is to close down their factories. When they do that, it becomes clearer than ever

that the basic issue is: which wins out, the rights of property or workers' right to a livelihood?

Often over the last eight years, workers have recognised this basic issue and responded to closures with occupations. Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, the Meriden motorcycle factory, Crossfield electronics, and Fisher-Bendix at Kirkby are some of the best known.

Many of these occupations have turned out badly because the workers just tried to find some way of keeping the factory running on a competitive capitalist basis. Unemployment can only be fought by rejecting the whole competitive capitalist system.

The labour movement should fight for occupied factories to be nationalised, and run under workers' control. The profiteers should not get a penny compensation. If the factories run at a loss, make it good by squeezing the rich!

Workers already on the dole, if they organise themselves, can play a big role in supporting such struggles. And with real fighting unity between employed and unemployed, we would be ready to take on the whole capitalist system itself, and replace its criminal waste with a rationally planned working class socialist system.

## THE SYSTEM'S SICKNESS

UNEMPLOYMENT is an in-built disease of capitalism.

In a primitive society the "right to work" is not a problem. The means of production — the basic resources of nature — are freely available to all. "Work", in such a society, is simply the chores which are part of life, as washing, feeding and so on are today. (And, for the same reason, overwork is not a problem either.)

In a developed society, too, the "right to work" would not be a problem. Though the means of production would be much more elaborate, including all sorts of advanced machinery, they would be owned by the community and their use would be planned democratically by that community. "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" would be the rule. Necessary drudgery would be reduced to an equally-shared minimum, and

free creative, productive activity would increasingly take the place both of "work" and of "leisure".

But in capitalist society, the "right to work" is a problem. Instead of the single producer hunting or gathering, cultivating his plot of land, or plying his trade with simple tools, there are vast factories where each person's work depends on and relates to the work of thousands of others. Yet those factories are owned and controlled by a small minority — the capitalists.

Because of their ownership and control, the capitalists have the power to "give" work — or not to give it.

They give work if they can make a profit from it. By the nature of capitalism as a competitive, unplanned system, profit rates vary upwards or downwards from year to year. The bosses throw people onto

the dole or take on new labour as suits the changing fortunes of their profit-making.

When capitalism is generally on the up, unemployment rates usually remain comparatively low. When capitalism hits serious crises, and production stagnates, then unemployment spirals up.

That is what has happened since 1969. Industrial production has increased less than 2% over eight years since then. Before then, "normal" unemployment was around 300,000. Since then, the lowest it has been is 500,000, in 1973.

No-one today dares predict when unemployment will drop below a million again. Treasury experts have said "unemployment is unlikely to be reduced from its present level over the next five to ten years". And an academic forecast last week gave a figure of 5 million unemployed in 1990, twelve years away.

CRAIG DUFFY describes the experience of the Coventry unemployed workers' centre

IT STARTED in December 1975 with some community workers who rented premises from the Cathedral and set up an advice centre for the unemployed. They linked up with the Chrysler Claimants Committee, set up by shop stewards in the Chrysler Stoke plant after 3000 workers had been made redundant there.

The support of the Stoke shop stewards, and the involvement of a number of experienced trade unionists from Chrysler who had become unemployed, were very important for the centre from then on.

As more unemployed people became actively involved, they were trained to give welfare rights advice, and the centre became largely organised by and for the unemployed. Alongside the welfare

## ORGANISING THE UNEMPLOYED TODAY

rights service, it acquired another aim: organising the unemployed, and building links with the labour movement, for a fight against unemployment.

The centre was organised by weekly open meetings of the unemployed, with 30 to 40 present in the centre's best period, and financed by donations from the local labour movement. A regular newspaper, "Unemployed Worker", was put out, and some stewards' committees helped the centre by paying for bulk orders.

The centre provided advice for over 2000 claimants and represented many of them at social security and industrial tribunals, usually with success. Free "O" level classes for the unemployed were organised

in conjunction with the Workers' Educational Association, and there were also classes on working class literature and on Coventry's industrial and labour history.

Alongside the advice service there were regular public meetings outside dole offices and in shopping precincts, with performances by socialist theatre groups. The centre campaigned — together with a local law centre and the local CPSA — for dole offices to provide welfare rights information, and this battle has now been won: there is a benefit rights officer at each office.

In the Coventry bingo strike the centre helped with welfare rights information, assistance on the picket line, and with pressure on union officials.

There was a constant tug-of-war in the unemployed workers' centre between its role of giving welfare rights advice and its role of campaigning against unemployment, and these conflicts, together with a general downturn in the labour movement, led to the demise of the centre after one and a half years.

Apart from all its practical services for the unemployed workers over those 1½ years, the unemployed workers' centre was useful in two ways. As a result of subsequent agitation, a Trades Council sub-committee on unemployment has been set up. And Coventry's experience provides some lessons for unemployed workers elsewhere who have the determination and energy to get themselves organised.

## 'DOLE MOLE'

IN EDINBURGH a Youth Campaign against Unemployment has been organised round a fortnightly bulletin, "Dole Mole". 4500 copies of each issue of this single-sheet bulletin go out on the dole queues, with articles on socialist strategy against unemployment, claimants' rights, YCAU activities, and other issues.

In February the YCAU organised a picket and token occupation at a Job Centre, to publicise its protest against unemployment. It is now busy writing round to trade union branches and trying to win their support.

THE "MILITANT" tendency kept their big majority in the YS at this Conference. Indeed, with the Tribune "Clause Four" group much weaker than previously, they even increased it. But there were signs of a groundswell in favour of a more active, lively YS movement, less totally dominated by rote repetition of "Militant"'s dogmas of Parliamentary Socialism.

The Militant had shifted their positions on some important questions, and were forced to take more account of the revolutionary minority in the YS around Workers' Action.

One sign was the virtual disappearance from the resolutions and speeches of the Militant supporters of their scheme for an "Enabling Act". Previously this was the centre-piece of their strategy: this Act would enable a Labour Government

# Racialism was the big debate

to push drastic nationalisations through parliament with no delay, and thus (?) neutralise capitalist opposition to a socialist transformation of society.

After four years of the Wilson-Callaghan government, Militant is obviously conscious of this scheme's lack of credibility.

More important was the YS majority's turn towards more anti-racist and anti-fascist activity — and the presence at the conference of over fifty young West Indians from the PNP Youth Movement-UK.

The debate on racism and fascism was heated. Phil Frampton, introducing for the National Committee, declared that "The only thing the NF understand is the treatment 1000 YS members gave them at Lewisham", and another speaker said the YS "had come of age" when "it was the LPYS which assumed the leadership" at the demonstration against the Young National Front in Birmingham on February 18th.

Workers' Action supporter Gordon Brewer, moving a resolution from Edinburgh North YS, welcomed the YS majority's increased willingness to come out on the streets against the fascists at last. But he attacked the majority's vainglorious boasting about "always having been to the fore" in the fight against racialism and fascism. In fact all they had done was tag along in the wake of "the magnificent lead given by the youth of the black community". Brewer called on the conference to vote to commit the YS to getting involved in local anti-fascist committees.

## jeers —

Brewer's speech drew loud applause from some parts of the audience of nearly 2,000 working class youth, and equally loud jeers and catcalls from others. The jeering was just as loud when the delegate from Chiselhurst YS (A Socialist Challenge supporter) quietly pointed out some facts about Lewisham.

The YS had not been the only group on the demonstration that sent the National Front scurrying last August; on the contrary, the initiative had been taken by militants of the far left. And the YS majority had been absent from the previous campaign to defend 21 young blacks framed up by the Lewisham police.

No-one denied these facts, but the jeering continued. And the reply to Gordon Brewer, by PNP Youth secretary Bob Lee, was based on distorting Brewer's arguments. "While the min-

ority are calling on black workers to do this and do that — calling on the labour movement to do this and do that — the majority are doing it! ... We do not need these comrades to tell black workers to organise themselves."

In the debate on Ireland, too, one felt that Militant were not sufficiently sure of themselves to allow a free debate, without distortions.

## clamp

In previous years, the Irish debate has been one where all points of view got a relatively fair hearing. This year, there was a clampdown on opposition speakers after Ross Catlin (Northampton North YS) had moved a resolution calling for immediate withdrawal of British troops, support for Irish republicans against British imperialism, and backing for the Tribunal on Britain's presence in Ireland; Vincent Moss (Hemel Hempstead YS) had moved a similar but weaker resolution. After the resolutions a comrade from the Chartists got to speak, apparently through a chairman's mistake; apart from that there was just one Militant speaker after another.

The Militant-backed resolution called for extensive nationalisations (apparently in the Northern Ireland framework, and by the occupying British state!), other economic reforms, a "trade union defence force", and the building of a new "mass party of labour" in Northern Ireland. The Militant comrades argued that there was a growing trend to class unity on economic issues in Northern Ireland, and socialists should base themselves on that trend rather than the national struggle.

"Sectarianism has been enormously reduced by the active solidarity of the trade union ranks during and since May 1977 (the failed Paisleyite 'general strike'). This

# 'Poor little Israel...'

AN emergency resolution on the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon was moved by Michael O'Sullivan of Tottenham LPYS. It condemned Zionism, called for solidarity with the PLO in its struggle for a secular, democratic Palestine in which Jews and Arabs can live as equals, and said that the YS should organise protests against the invasion.

The platform got this rejected in favour of a YS National Committee statement which censured Israeli excesses but insisted on "the right of Israel to exist, within agreed borders".

Defending this approach, speakers of the ["Militant"] majority said: "Look at what the Palestinians have done to Israel"! The NC speaker, summing up, said that a foremost task for socialists, against the background of an international upsurge in mass action by the working class, was to oppose "individual terrorism" — under which heading he included everything from the PLO and IRA militias to the Red

Brigades and the Baader-Meinhof group.

Michael O'Sullivan posed the question the other way round, from the point of view of the oppressed people: "Look at what Israel has done to the Palestinians!" In fact the "Militant" call almost any irregular violence against established state authority "individual terrorism", and thus their Marxist-sounding arguments just come down to justifying the imperialist and capitalist monopoly of violence.

The platform refused to allow debate on another emergency resolution, moved by Callum McCrae of Edinburgh Central YS, on the Select Committee report on immigration. The issue had already been covered, they said, in a YS National Committee statement.

The NC statement condemned the report. But it stopped significantly short of the resolution, which called for the five Labour MPs who signed the report to be treated as lepers by the labour movement.

marks a turning point in the history of Ireland."

Perhaps the reason why the platform restricted debate on Ireland more than usual was the presence of the PNP Youth: talking about the Irish question to Workers' Action supporters around the conference, many PNPers felt that "obviously, it's a national liberation struggle."

## packed

The debate on Ireland came up again at the Workers' Action conference-fringe meeting, which was packed to bursting with 150 people, including a lot of Militant's supporters. John O'Mahony of the WA Editorial Board replied to the points raised from the floor by John Throne of the Militant Irish Monthly.

It is not surprising, said O'Mahony, that war-weariness leads many workers in the north of Ireland to turn to

hopes that class unity on economic issues and general socialist propaganda will enable them to by-pass the complex, bloody and bitter national struggle. But history has shown that these are vain hopes: class unity built on that basis proves to be paper-thin when any serious struggle erupts and the issue of the partition of Ireland unavoidably raises itself. A real socialist movement in Ireland can be built only by combining socialist aims with active participation in the struggle against British imperialism and the sectarian Six County state.

The main purpose of the Workers' Action meeting was to launch a campaign to make a militant socialist opposition to Callaghan, Healey and Foot within the labour movement heard in



## PNP YOUTH: A NEW MOVEMENT

THE PNP Youth Movement-UK has been set up, under the influence of the LPYS National Committee, as a black youth movement linked to the People's National Party in Jamaica.

From discussions at the LPYS conference it was clear that many PNP Youth members are quite opposed to Michael Manley and the other leaders of the PNP in Jamaica — where the PNP forms the government, running capitalism in Jamaica, suppressing strikes, and bring in repressive laws.

In their meeting at the conference, some PNP Youth members were even arguing

that their movement should change its name, so as to avoid any identification with Manley and make it clear that they want to organise black youth on a class, not nationalist, basis.

Yet Militant, and the Militant supporters in the PNP Youth leadership, applauded the Manley government. This is what they say in their pamphlet "Black Youth — Organise to Fight Back".

"The Jamaican PNP is in the forefront... of the great anti-imperialist tide sweeping the Caribbean... The People's National Party of Jamaica embodies all the hopes and aspirations of the Jamaican people

to liberate themselves from the clutches of imperialism... The PNP Government has a mission and an obligation to its supporters... It must not falter in its resolve!"

Obviously the Militant thinks that Manley will make Jamaica socialist if only he nationalises enough firms. It doesn't look to the militant youth in Jamaica but to the government "not faltering in its resolve"! Instead of helping Jamaican youth to see through the rulers of their own people in Jamaica, the "Marxists" of Militant praise those rulers.

But there are many militants in the PNP Youth who think differently.

Next steps for a fighting youth movement

Several Workers' Action supporters were delegates to the Conference from their YS branches, and about 50 others attended as visitors.

Workers' Action supporters moved resolutions on Unemployment, on racialism and fascism, on Ireland and on South Africa, and on nationalisation, as well as amendments and an emergency resolution on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Seven Workers' Action bulletins were produced during the Conference.

Other tendencies represented at the conference — apart from Militant and Clause Four — were the Chartists and the supporters of Socialist Challenge.

Workers' Action is holding a day school to follow up the YS conference debates and plan a campaign for a militant socialist opposition within the labour movement to Labour government policies in the run up to the coming general election. All YS members are welcome.

TIME: Saturday 15th April at 11am.

PLACE: St. Francis Hall, Birmingham University, Bristol Road, Birmingham.

AGENDA:

★ The Labour Party and the fight for socialism.

★ The campaign for democracy in the YS and the fight for a mass revolutionary youth movement.

★ Four years of the eighth Labour Government.

★ Socialists and the Elections.



the coming general election campaign and in the run-up to the election. Gordon Brewer and John O'Mahony stressed the duty of socialists to stand up for the needs and interests of the working class against an anti-working-class Labour Government.

Militant speakers at this conference, on the other hand, concentrated their fire on the possible future attacks by a Tory Government rather than the actual Labour Government attacks here and now.

True, they criticised the Labour leadership: "they have failed to listen to the LPYS warnings, that the pledges made in the 1974 elections could not be carried out except on the basis of nationalising the 220 monopolies." But criticism of this sort has no real cutting edge.

In his Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic (1844), Karl Marx pointed out that although the dialectical philosophy of Hegel apparently criticised reality in the most radical way possible, showing how everything existing was relative and contradictory, in the end it reinstated everything as a necessary expression of the movement of the Absolute Idea: and so, in that philosophy, "reason is at home in unreason as unreason".

In a similar way, for the Militant, Marxism is 'at home in reformism as reformism', as an expression of the gradual 'maturation' of the labour movement towards Socialism; and thus their apparently radical insistence on a full socialist programme leads to passive opportunism in day-to-day politics.

This came out most clearly in the debate on Nationalisation.

Nik Barstow (Carlton YS, Nottingham) moved a resolution declaring that nationalisation could be given a socialist character only by the revolutionary seizure of state power by the working class and workers' control in the factories.

In the revolutionary tumult of Portugal in 1975, he pointed out, the central driving force was the struggle for workers' control in the factories. The nationalisations that were carried out were a response to that struggle; and the deciding issue for the working class was not the number of nationalisations, but whether the fight for workers' control could be generalised into a successful battle for the working class seizure of state power.

## bled

Eddie Newman (Manchester Central) moved an amendment to delete the insistence on revolutionary action, but in his speech he did not directly reply to Barstow's arguments. We should welcome and defend the progress made by the existing nationalised industries, said Newman: but "that's only 20% of industry and it's being bled by the other 80%." The key to socialist advance was taking the other 80% into public ownership.

To many YS members, this sort of argument — well backed up by denunciations of the bosses' waste, greed and arrogance — still sounds like radical socialism. But more and more, they are being forced to re-think, as the revolutionary socialist alternative acquires a growing voice in the YS.

# Deportations if Garners strike fails?

"A WAITER, for instance, received from the company a weekly take home pay of £28 for a compulsory 55 hour week. A 70 hour week was and is quite common.

"Our daily diet is a frozen pie and chips or chicken wing and chips. On Saturday we are allowed a frozen hamburger and chips.

"A couple of months ago a restaurant Manager got a final warning for eating a lettuce leaf and a tomato with his hamburger and chips. Some time previously another Manager was dismissed for eating a potato-in-its-jacket which is not on the staff menu".

The Garner Steak Houses strike is now in its 11th week, and still going strong. A strike committee was elected after the seventh week, and the regular rota of pickets outside most of the Garners restaurants in central London is now to be strengthened with plans for 'flying pickets' to visit suppliers' depots and get a 100% black on Garners.

Last Saturday 30 trade unionists supported the picket outside the Oxford St Garners Steak House, including a delegation from the T&G branch at Tottenham bus garage.

The picketing has cut the number of customers dramatically, down to about a tenth of its normal level.

The strike started on 26th January, after the owner, Cyril Margolis, sacked 84 out of the 188 workers (Asian, Spanish, Turkish, and other nationalities) to stop unionisation. Margolis has so far relied on police harassment of

the picket lines (three pickets have been arrested) and scab labour to keep his operation running. But it is certainly not operating profitably.

Margolis has refused an official TGWU appeal to go to ACAS, and he is hoping to hold out and eventually break the strike before the tourist season gets well under way.

Maximum support is needed, especially from workers in central London. The strikers have called for more mass pickets, to cover every Steak House.

Many of the strikers are

immigrants on work permits, and dependent on their boss for the renewal of the permits. If the strike is defeated, they could face deportation.

The Greater London Association of Trades Councils and the South East Region TUC have called a conference for April 13th (at Transport House, Smith Square, starting 7pm), in support of the strike.

CONTACT: Chairman of the strike committee, Rahman Habid, c/o T&GWU, Room 84, 12-13 Henrietta Street, London WC1 01-240 1056.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY



# Painting out the opposition



A photograph in last week's "Militant" showed LPYS conference delegates voting, with the caption "How LPYS policy is democratically decided". But anyone getting their impressions of the conference from the "Militant" report might well ask why there should have been any votes at all.

The 3½-page coverage gives no indication of any debates or even any difference of views. It seems that the whole three days were filled with nothing but one speech after another in favour of the policies of Militant!

On closer examination, a couple of lines mentioning dissident views can be found. "Gordon Brewer (Edinburgh North)" says the Militant "claimed the LPYS had played no role in fighting racism and called for blacks to organise separately."

One sentence, two distortions. Gordon Brewer (a Workers' Action supporter) did not say the LPYS had played no role in fighting racism. He said that the LPYS majority had not had the vanguard role they claimed in anti-racist struggle. On

the contrary, they have been latecomers, and they are still dragging their feet as regards getting the YS involved in local anti-fascist committees.

And Brewer didn't "call for blacks to organise separately"! The resolution he was moving stated our position clearly: where the black communities do organise self-defence groups, the labour movement should support them.

All the other debates are presented in the same way that the Stalinists present photographs of the early years of the Russian revolution: with the left oppositionists painted out.

There is distortion even in the reporting of the ballot for YS representative on the Labour Party NEC. Militant goes beyond the true observation that Tony Saunio had a bigger majority than his fellow Militant supporter Nick Bradley had last year, and tries to show that every other tendency in the YS is declining. Not only does the number of capitalist monopolies which the Militant has to conquer get smaller each year, so also does the number of "ultra-lefts" to be

defeated on the other hand!

In fact Workers' Action supporter Nick Barstow improved on our last year's score, getting 19 votes as against 15 for Kevin Mayes in 1977. And there were noticeably more delegates supporting Workers' Action than in previous years.

Militant gets over this neatly by giving Barstow the political label "various groups" (don't they dare even mention our name?), and quoting a 1977 figure for that label of 23. The 23 is the total of Mayes' score plus the 8 votes won last year by Graham Durham of the Socialist Charter. So our progress is wiped out by lumping it together with the Chartist setbacks!

Not only Workers' Action supporters, but also serious Militant supporters, should be disgusted by this sort of reporting. For honest presentation of each other's views has to be the first principle in debate between socialists worthy of the name who want to help young workers to learn rather than stuffing them with demagoguery, caricatured polemics, and censored versions.

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# WORKERS IN ACTION

## THE WEST GERMAN STATE ON TRIAL

While terrorist-hunting spreads over Italy, with 100 leftists arrested in the police search for the kidnapers of Aldo Moro, the Russell Tribunal will this week publish its first conclusions on civil rights in West Germany.

An international 'jury' sat from 29th March to 3rd April in Harheim, near Frankfurt. Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho was prevented by the Portuguese government from coming, and some other 'jurors' were ill, but 20 out of 28 were present.

They heard cases of the application of the "Berufsverbote", the regulations under which leftists are excluded from public sector jobs in West

Germany. The West German government was invited by the Tribunal to present their side of the story, but did not appear.

Indeed, the West German government's aim has been just to stop the Tribunal happening. Recently a secret circular was discovered in which the West German government discussed the best ways to stop or discredit the Tribunal. One of the possibilities mentioned in the circular still remains a threat:

"We have to consider if... it would not be preferable to have the Tribunal dissolved by the police while underway... instead of banning it in advance."

The opposition Christian Democratic Union has outdone

the Social Democrat-Free Democrat government in its hostility to the Tribunal; the local CDU organisation threatened to hold a protest demonstration at the opening of the Tribunal.

The German trade union federation has also denounced the Tribunal as giving aid and comfort to 'terrorists'; and the German Communist Party has boycotted the Tribunal, despite the fact that its members are among the chief victims of the Berufsverbote.

Partly as a result of this pressure, the scope of the Tribunal has been limited. The question of political prisoners' rights has been put off to a second session in several

months' time, and the Tribunal did not consider the alleged suicides in Stammheim gaol or the 24 prisoners now on hunger strike in a number of other gaols.

Political exclusions from the trade unions have been declared outside the scope of the Tribunal; according to West German left sources, there are more than 2,000 cases of such exclusions on top of the 13,000 members of the teachers' union in West Berlin, which has been excluded from the national union bloc.

And as the West German revolutionary paper Spartacus points out: "discrimination against foreigners, who are not just a minor element in the sectors affected by the Berufsverbote, is left out — only cases of 'citizens of the Federal Republic' are to be dealt with". West Germany's treatment of immigrant workers is even worse than Britain's.

Nevertheless, the Tribunal report is likely to be a powerful blow against West Germany's increasingly repressive regime.

## 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 Carnatic St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

FRIDAY 7 APRIL. Anti-Apartheid public meeting organised by Southwark and Lambeth Trades Councils. 8pm, Council Chambers, Municipal Offices, Walworth Road.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY 7-9 APRIL. National Women's Liberation Conference. Ladywood School, Birmingham. Registration £3 from Birmingham Women's Centre, 76 Brighton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12 (021-449 2931).

SATURDAY 8 APRIL. Conference against the Cowley witch hunt: 1pm, Cowley Community Centre, Oxford. TGWU members only.

SUNDAY 9 APRIL. Liverpool Trades Council delegate conference on the Speke closure. 11am, Everyman Theatre, Hope Street.

THURSDAY 13 APRIL. Conference in support of the Garners Steak Houses strike, organised by the Greater London Association of Trades Councils and the South East Region TUC. 7pm at Transport House, Smith Square.

FRIDAY 14 APRIL. Grunwick support conference, at the Wembley Conference Centre.

SATURDAY 15 APRIL. Workers' Action Day School for members of the Labour Party Young Socialists, on building a fighting socialist youth movement and on organising a socialist opposition in the Labour Party. From 11am at St Francis Hall, Birmingham University, Bristol Rd.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 15-16 APRIL. Twelfth National Workers' Control Conference: Workers' Control and Full Employment. At Sheffield University. Credentials from IW, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble St, Nottingham NG7 4ET.

SATURDAY 22 APRIL. National Council for Civil Liberties conference for trade unionists on pregnancy and the law. Details from NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1 (278 4575).

SATURDAY 29 APRIL. March Against Racism: meet at Balham tube station 12 noon, rally in Brockwell Park. Sponsored by All-Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement and other organisations.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 29-30 APRIL. National Abortion Campaign National Conference. Saturday: day school on positive legislation. Sunday: resolutions on NAC's aims and structure. Details: NAC, 01 485 4303

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 29-30 APRIL. Socialist Teachers' Alliance Open Conference on the Politics of Education. London. Registration fee £2 (students/unemployed £1), from 25 Highgate West Hill, London N6. Make cheques payable to 'Politics of Education Conference'.

SUNDAY 30 APRIL. Carnival against the Nazis. Organised by the Anti-Nazi League. Assemble 11am, Trafalgar Square: march to Victoria Park.

BANNERS: cheap, all-cloth banners, applique technique, made to your own design for political groups, trades unions, etc. 21 Holmfirth St, Manchester 13: 061-224 3028.

## Tory council hounds dustmen

BASINGSTOKE dustmen have been accused of being work-shy skivers and suffering from "Monday morning"itis. Local Tory councillors say that dustbins are not being emptied because of excessive absenteeism.

The Council wrote to the Hampshire Family Practitioners' Committee, asking doctors to stop issuing certificates for what they call 'minor ailments'. NUPE and TGWU at the Council's Wade Road

depot struck from Wednesday 29th to Friday 31st, demanding that the letter be withdrawn. Unemptied dustbins, they said, were due to undermanning.

The Council backed down, saying that the official who wrote the letter had exceeded his brief from the Personnel Committee. The doctors have written back to the council indicating that they regard the letter as merely a statement of opinion, and will not act on it. Tory councillor Charles Byart is now saying that he has been misquoted in the national press.

But the Tory councillors and the local press are keeping up the pressure on the dustmen. A recent press story accused dustmen of stealing sand from the council, and the council has given notice that it will terminate the dustmen's local agreement which allows them to stop work in wet weather.

John Ledger, T&G convenor at Wade Road, said, "This agreement will not be given up without a fight".

ALISTAIR JAMISON

## Setbacks for left at teachers conference

THE NATIONAL Union of Teachers held its annual conference over Easter at Blackpool.

The tone was set by the acceptance, with a large majority, of the 10% wage settlement negotiated the week before: this ended the hopes of militants who had pressed for stepping up industrial action to win the full 12½% claim.

The left was further defeated in the first two days on many issues. The highly prioritised motion on racialism was successfully watered down by the National Executive, with the help of Communist Party members. All clauses pressing for mobilisations against the National Front were scrubbed out.

The issue of the NF booking schools for election meetings, on which the National Executive seemed divided, was cleverly by-passed and debate on this question was blocked.

After a year in which the NF have stepped up their activity, and when both Labour and Tory parties have endorsed tighter immigration and nationality laws, the NUT could only pass a weak resolution calling for little more than multi-racial curricula.

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parties have endorsed tighter immigration and nationality laws, the NUT could only pass a weak resolution calling for little more than multi-racial curricula.

Later sessions did not go all the Executive's way. Teachers' concern about retirement, re-deployment, and contractual rights made themselves felt when a resolution on superannuation from Croydon was very narrowly defeated only after a card vote. A resolution on conditions of service was passed after the Executive appeared to have slipped up in their efforts to water it down.

The women's rights resolution this year received a much better hearing, and got over one third of the card vote, despite a lot of demagoguery from the platform, mainly around the question of abortion. A women's bulletin sponsored by several associations, and a fringe meeting on women's rights, were very successful.

The Socialist Teachers' Alliance and Rank and File held two joint meetings, and there was also a well-attended Anti-Nazi League meeting. The STA and R&F agreed to set up a joint committee to look at next year's conference resolutions and future union elections.

CHEUNG SIU MING

## SOCIALIST STUDENTS OUT TO BEAT TORY-BROAD LEFT ALLIANCE

THE MOST important debates at the National Union of Students conference this week will be coming up on Thursday 6th

On racialism, the revolutionary left will be pushing for the NUS to take up the "no platform for fascists" policy previously thrown out by the Broad Left/Tory majority. On the issue of control of student union funds, the revolutionary left will be arguing for union autonomy, and the Broad Left/Tory alliance for 'public accountability'.

At the last NUS conference the Broad Left pushed for student unions to be barred from giving funds to non-student purposes like workers' strike appeals, so as to observe 'public accountability' and keep the unions' 'charity' status for tax purposes.

The first two days of conference showed the Broad Left keeping their majority. In the election for NUS President, Trevor Phillips of the Broad Left got 348 votes, as against 112 for Mick Archer of the Socialist Students' Alli-

ance, 104 for Andy Strouthous of the SWP, and 74 for the Tory candidate, Longworth. But SSA candidate Alison Downey won the election for Vice President (Welfare).

JEFF SLEE



New NUS President Trevor Phillips

## Birds Eye wins out

THE MANAGEMENT at Birds Eye Kirkby factory have won a victory over the workers there.

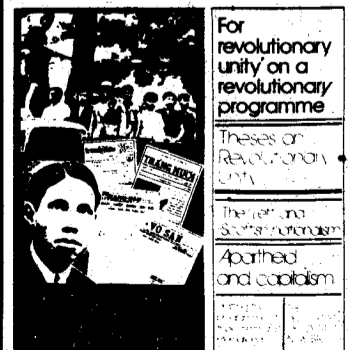
We reported in no. 95 that the 1,200 production and maintenance workers at the plant had been given notice. After talks between national union officials and the board of Birds Eye last week, and a board meeting on Monday 20th, Birds Eye decided to withdraw the notices and allow a phased return to work as from April 3rd.

But the return to work is dependent on acceptance of

de-manning, acceptance of a productivity deal, and "co-operation with management at all times". And 450 previously-announced redundancies still stand. In other words, the management's blackmail tactic in issuing 1200 notices of dismissal has worked.

The engineers, who were the first out of the gate for better wages and struck for 15 weeks, are now being told to accept the management's original offer — the offer which was so bad that it caused the strike.

LOL DUFFY



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