

# workers power

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## STRIKE TO SAVE NHS!



**THE FIGHT is on to save the NHS. Thatcher's announcement of a 'whirlwind review' of NHS funding signals the start of a major attack on free health care. She has chosen to make the NHS the key battleground with the working class. We should waste no time in answering her challenge with decisive action.**

Thousands of rank and file nurses have already shown the way. The strike votes which followed the north Manchester nurses' strike quickly forced Thatcher to shelve her attack on special duty payments. As we go to press on the eve of 3 February thousands of health workers are preparing to strike, not just over pay, but against privatisation, cuts and victimisations.

The nurses' strikes have started over a wide range of complaints about pay and conditions. But they have remained unfocused due to the deliberate tactics of the Nupe and Cohse leaders. Nupe officials in London called for 'a day of protest, not a day of strike'. Their contribution to this day of protest was to order Nupe ambulance personnel in London not to strike. As long as they can keep the

strike demands localised they hope to keep the action at the level of one-off protests.

The reason they fear effective strike action is clear. The nurses have already busted-up their well laid 'plan' for defending the NHS. The union leaders wanted a moral pressure campaign in alliance with 'wet' Tories, consultants and the scab leaders of the RCN. But the whole lot of them have rounded viciously on the nurses' strikes.

So now the union leaders want to channel health workers' anger into passive protests. Above all they want to prevent ancillaries striking alongside the nurses and other trade unionists taking solidarity action.

The task of the moment is to unify the strike movement around clear goals. We should demand a massive increase in NHS funding to:

- abolish waiting lists
- reverse all cuts and privatisations
- abolish low pay in the NHS.

The Pay Review Body should be scrapped and the nurses' claim met in full. There should be a national minimum wage in the NHS for all workers, set at the level of the average industrial wage.

The depth of the cuts means that only NHS workers themselves can know the full extent and how to repair the damage. We should fight for workers control, with committees of health workers determining staffing and funding allocation at local and regional levels.

NHS workers should demand the unions call an all out indefinite strike in the NHS, with emergency cover only under workers' control. They should use the days of protest called by the union officials on 3, 10, 19 and 24 February to launch national strike action with the aim: *all out, stay out!*

But it is not the job of NHS workers alone to defend the NHS. The whole trade union movement should rally to the fight with solidarity strike action. Already the phone lines are buzzing between the union head offices making sure the leaders of local government and education unions are ready to damp down any moves towards solidarity action.

The present bunch of union leaders have already presided over the defeats of the miners and printers. They have allowed the Tories to get away with the virtual outlawing of

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## FREE THE BIRMINGHAM SIX

**WHEN IT comes to Northern Ireland, even the pretence of British justice stops. This is the lesson of both the vindictive rejection of the Birmingham Six appeal and the Attorney General's refusal to prosecute in the RUC shoot-to-kill inquiry.**

Britain's war in Northern Ireland is not fought to the rules of justice and legality. Like all wars of occupation it involves criminalising the whole of the nationalist community, giving the armed forces licence to torture, frame up and shoot down suspects. This licence was renewed at the highest level of the British legal system last month.

Despite clear evidence of confessions obtained under torture, and of the unreliability of the one forensic test used to convict them, the Birmingham Six were still held to be guilty by a panel of trusted ruling class judges, acting in line with the dictates of the British state.

Politicians, civil servants and judges alike were horrified at the prospect of admitting the wrong men had gone to prison for the Birmingham pub bombings of 1974. That would have meant accepting that more than thirty police officers were guilty of perjury and conspiracy on a grand scale. In addition it would open pressure for the review of the eleven other framed Irish prisoners—the Maguire family and the Guilford Four—all of whom have clear evidence of police frame-ups.

It is no coincidence that all of the framed Irish prisoners were convicted within months of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) being rushed in in 1974. Since then its draconian powers have allowed hundreds of Irish people in Britain to be terrorised by raids and detentions for up to seven days. As many as half a million have been stopped or questioned under the act since it became law.

In the six county war zone, the methods are even more openly repressive. Behind the 'normalisation' process, which involves the RUC replacing the army as the main armed force in the province, there is a continual 'dirty war' of loyalist and SAS death squads against republican activists.

In 1982, as the RUC desperately

tried to secure military advantage over the IRA this flowered into a full blown shoot-to-kill policy. Six unarmed men, five of them IRA volunteers were killed by RUC bullets. This on the spot death penalty for IRA membership was excused by a Northern Ireland court, which acquitted four RUC officers of murder. In the process however it was revealed that shoot to kill orders, and the later cover-up came from the very top. RUC officers had been threatened with the Official Secrets Act if they told the full story.

Senior Manchester policeman John Stalker, brought in to investigate, then found himself on the receiving end of British justice, Northern Ireland style. He was fitted up by MI5 and top RUC officers on a corruption charge, and taken off the shoot-to-kill enquiry. Despite being cleared completely he was not reinstated. The final act in this farce was concluded on 25 January.

After reading the report of Stalker's replacement, which still implicated senior RUC officers in the shoot-to-kill plot, the Attorney General decided not to prosecute for reasons of national security. The Attorney General is a supposedly impartial figure who manages to combine impartiality with being a key member of Thatcher's cabinet.

All law is class law. When the stakes are high this fact is revealed all the more viciously by the upholders of British justice. To protect police who have lied, tortured or murdered they will go to any lengths.

As long as Britain occupies Northern Ireland, it will need the legal apparatus to repress the nationalist community, both in the six counties and in Britain itself.

We must pledge to the Birmingham Six, to the other framed prisoners and to the republican fighters left to rot in British jails, we will not rest until you are free. Workers' anger against these judgements and the cover-ups must be directed at their real roots, British imperialist rule in Ireland. We must fight to:

- Repeal the PTA
- Disband the RUC
- Troops out of Ireland now
- Self determination for the whole Irish people

effective trade unionism.

The Labour Party's leaders, still determined to win the middle class vote, could not even bring themselves to support the 3 February strike. Only 4 members of the NEC voted for Labour to support the action. Labour 'listens', but not to striking nurses!

We cannot allow these traitors to sit back and watch Thatcher destroy the NHS. We need to transform the NHS strike wave into a massive movement which links the defence of free health care to the fight against the Poll Tax and the Baker education

bill.

Health workers should link their fight now to the wave of action in the pits, to the seafarers' strike and with the disputes in the car industry.

The opportunity is there, in the coming weeks to build class wide action that could beat back and reverse the eight year Tory onslaught. Impossible, sneer the cynics who run the unions. But they said the same four weeks ago about a national nurses' strike. Now the nurses have proved them 100% wrong.

**Here is our chance to defeat Thatcher. Lets not waste it.■**

**HEALTH WORKERS—ALL OUT NOW, STAY OUT TO WIN!**



## Left must challenge Kinnock

THE RISE and fall of John Prescott's deputy leadership challenge revealed the paralysis gripping the trade union bureaucracy. They shelled out millions of pounds of their members' money on Kinnock's election fiasco. Now, adding insult to injury, they have to sit back and watch Kinnock's campaign to rid Labour of its image as the 'party of the unions'.

They are paralysed both by their fear of Thatcher and their terror at the prospect of any argument at all in the Labour Party spoiling Labour's chances, four years in advance of the next general election. David Warburton, a rising right winger in the GMB, was packed off to the Boilermakers' equivalent of Siberia for daring to say Kinnock's media-hype campaign was going nowhere.

So it was inevitable that Prescott would be given the cold shoulder, despite the widespread disquiet at Kinnock and Hattersley's performance. Differing hardly one iota from Kinnock and Hattersley on politics, Prescott was making a pre-emptive strike on behalf of his own personal career. But the union leaders wouldn't buy it. Prescott's stage right exit now puts the spotlight on the Campaign Group. Even from their own limited, parliamentarist viewpoint, this could not be a better time to stand. It is at a safe distance from the next election. Prescott's posturings did give an airing to the previously unthinkable idea that there could possibly be more than one candidate for leader and deputy.

Kinnock's election strategy failed and its proposed replacement—Gould's 'share owning democracy'—was just finding its feet when the stock market crashed. It is clear that Benn is thinking seriously about a joint challenge for leader and deputy by himself and possibly Audrey Wise.

Paradoxically, the most persuasive argument put forward in the Campaign Group milieu for standing now is that Benn and Wise stand no chance at all either of winning or seriously destroying the united front of the centre and right wing. Thus, for many in the Campaign Group, standing would merely be a left gesture.

After all, on the key issues which the left purport to differ with Kinnock over they have already thrown in the towel. As early as 1982 at Bishops Stortford they had surrendered to the union leaders' ultimatum to shut up. From then until the 1987 election disaster they stuck to their side of the 1982 bargain: 'existing policies, existing membership, existing leadership'. All the while Kinnock threw policies overboard and the witch-hunt gathered pace.

Ever since the Campaign Group was formed in 1984 Benn has washed his hands of responsibility for leading the fight against Kinnock. We are not the leaders, but the servants of the rank and file was the refrain sung by Benn and Skinner. It was a line of argument repeated by the Campaign Group's uncritical supporters on the centrist left. 'We are against Kinnockite policies, not Kinnock the person' said *Socialist Action*.

Most revealing was that when the chance of mounting a potentially successful challenge to Kinnock was there—during the miners' strike—the left stayed silent. Then hundreds of thousands could see Kinnock's treachery. When the name Kinnock was synonymous with the name Judas amongst the ranks of working class fighters neither Skinner, Benn nor Heffer made the slightest attempt to challenge for leadership. And even now the left's idea of 'defending socialist principles' against Kinnock is clinging to the state and welfare capitalist policies of the immediate post-war period. There was jubilation amongst the left over the crash. But it was mainly inspired by the hope that Keynesianism would rise from the ashes, and with it the welfarism of Bevan and Atlee.

Despite this rotten record we still say that every worker and Labour Party member should demand that the Campaign Group stands, both for leader and deputy. Why?

It is certainly not because we support the Campaign Group's overall politics. We do not. Nor is it because we think they are an alternative leadership to Kinnock that workers must experience before our own politics—revolutionary socialism—can triumph. No, it is because the Campaign Group standing would give militants inside and outside the Party the chance to break Kinnock's grip on the Labour Party. It could become a rallying focus for all those who want to fight the witch-hunt and defend the limited constitutional and policy goals won in the early 1980s.

To realise this potential a Campaign Group leadership challenge would have to go well beyond the wheeler-dealing electioneering inside the constituencies and amongst the union bureaucrats. If Benn and Wise stand against Kinnock and Hattersley, then we must demand that they become the voice inside the Party for all those fighting Thatcher now. We must demand that they use their campaign to assist every strike that Kinnock and the TUC will try to smother. That they openly support all those rank and file militants who organise to take the unions out of the bureaucrats' control. That they denounce Kinnock every time he indulges in his favourite pastime—class collaboration.

A campaign along these lines—one that began by disavowing Labour's wretched refusal to support the nurses' strikes and declared its own total support for them, one that challenged the union leaders who will try to sell out the strikes in the NHS, British Coal, the car industry and on the ferries—could help militants in their fight against 'new realism' in both the Labour Party and the unions.

If the Campaign Group refuses to stand we will have witnessed yet another case of them handing Kinnock a victory without him having to even enter the ring. If they stand on any basis other than the one we have outlined, then we must beware a grand diversion from the key area of the class struggle, designed merely to boost the left credentials of the Campaign Group.

Whether the Campaign Group stand or not, however, socialists in the Labour Party need a strategy that breaks forever with the idea of peacefully transforming the Labour Party. It cannot be done. To those who disagree we say, put Benn to the test, demand not just support for class action but leadership in the battle to oust all the class traitors from the PLP and the union bureaucracy as well as the Labour leadership.

# DEFEND BERMONDSEY

by Chris Ramsey

IN THE last two months the Labour NEC has stepped up its witch-hunt against the left. The main target has been Militant. In December Pat Wall's Bradford North constituency party was suspended and the Militant controlled LPYS national and regional conferences cancelled. In January the NEC suspended the whole of Bermondsey CLP pending investigation of 'Militant infiltration'.

Meanwhile the National Constitutional Committee (NCC) expelled the chair of Knowsley North CLP. The NCC waiting list of cases gets longer every week as the local right wing, encouraged by Kinnock's success, point the finger at left wing activists.

Kinnock claims that the purge is necessary to 'protect the democratic constitution of the party'. Yet a glance at the charges against witch-hunted members makes the real reason obvious. Sharon Atkin faces an NCC hearing next month for publicly branding Labour as racist. Mandy Mudd, a Haringey Labour Briefing supporter faces expulsion for organising a demo against local Labour council cuts. The aim of the witch-hunt is to bludgeon the whole

left into silence. Labour will listen, but not to council workers it wants to sack or to black people whose real demands it has always ignored.

A large part of the blame for Kinnock's success must lie with Militant itself. Their strategy of playing dead, hoping the witch-hunt will go away is proving disastrous. With every unopposed expulsion Kinnock gets the scent of blood even more. On the one hand Militant predicts mighty movements of resistance against Kinnock's purge, on the other they greet every expulsion or suspension with a shrug of their shoulders. Like a cork, we keep bobbing to the surface, even where the torrent is raging' is just one of Militant's self-congratulatory stock phrases.

But the task of real Marxists in the Labour Party today is to stand against the stream. At present Militant refuses to do this because they think the whole process of history is going their way. Kinnock expels them to show he's in charge. They grudgingly accept expulsion as proof that they soon will be! We need a different strategy altogether.

As long as CLPs are suspended

without a fight they can be run from Walworth Road and by local bureaucrats, since all 'running' a Kinnockite CLP involves is a monthly MP's surgery and the occasional press release. What the NEC couldn't cope with would be trying to run dozens of suspended CLPs, while the real CLPs, wards and YS branches continued to function in defiance of the leadership.

If every branch, CLP and section continued to allow expelled members to take part and if every suspended CLP continued to function, selecting and even standing candidates in local and parliamentary elections then the NEC would face the prospect of civil war in the party.

One of the few things the wide-boy, and now businessman's consultant, Derek Hatton got right was to argue for this perspective at the height of the Liverpool events, when the District Labour Party was suspended. But it was all too much for the 'revolutionaries' of the Militant Editorial Board.

Defiance of the witchhunt, up to and including disaffiliation from the party and standing against stooge Labour candidates is the surest way of turning the tide against Kinnock's purge. ■

# LABOUR'S LOCAL ONSLAUGHT

LABOUR'S LAST claims to be defending local services are crumbling about their ears. All over the country, Labour councils—dominated by both left and right—are implementing swinging cuts. Properly speaking, every one of these councils is doing the Tories' dirty work for them.

In London the spate of cuts budgets has been like a highly contagious disease. The so-called 'loony left' councils have launched a series of vicious attacks on their workforces and the local communities as a whole.

As a pre-Christmas warm-up Lewisham sacked eleven housing workers. Needless to say left gloss was provided. Seven of this number were black, a fact that was cited as proof of Lewisham's excellent equal opportunities policy!

Haringey has ushered in a £46 million cuts package which will lead to job losses and closed services. In Lambeth Linda Bellos' council is closing old peoples' homes, day nurseries, housing offices and libraries. Under the vacancy freeze, redeployment is being forced on workers and

compulsory redundancies are to follow. In Lambeth management seem all set on provoking disputes and organising lock-outs, with the full connivance of the Labour leadership, to try and smash any union resistance. Over seventy AEU fitters are on strike, having been locked out for refusing to cover vacant posts and for the crime of attending a union meeting asked for by management!

The story is the same everywhere—Hackney, Camden, Brent, all of the councils that had built up a reputation for being 'left'. What has happened?

The fact is that despite a lot of ballyhoo about 'local socialism', not one of these councils ever based themselves on the local working class or sought to mobilise workers in a class struggle defence of services and a fight for their extension. Instead of fighting capitalism, instead of making the bosses pay for the crisis they have caused in local government by refusing to pay the punitive debts and interest charges to the banks, they tried to square the circle. Maintain services, but not at the cost of going 'illegal'—that is, do not go all the way in a fight to defend those

services against the ravages of Tory legislation.

As their options for financial juggling disappeared they faced a choice. Should they stay in office and make the workers pay through cuts or should they fight? Their whole strategy had determined the answer to this in advance. Labour in office is a million times more important to them than the interests of the class.

The lesson of this is clear. Only by mobilising working class action to fight the cuts demanded by the Tories can we hope to win. With the present round of cuts we must rally the forces committed to such action. We must take our lead from the Lambeth engineers and fight for strike action against the cuts and in support of those who are already falling victim to them.

Those councillors who say they oppose cuts must become the voice of striking workers in the council chamber. But the real fight is outside the council debating chamber. It is in the struggle for councils of action to organise the resistance against the Tories, and against the Labour administrations that make their cuts for them. ■

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## Fund Appeal

By the end of June we need to raise £5,000 to buy equipment required for a more regular and improved paper. In December our readers raised £155. This month we have received £970 from readers and supporters in South London making a total of £1,125. Help us raise the remaining £3,875 by sending your donations to our box number without delay.



# AFTER THE SELL-OUT...KEEP FIGHTING FLEXIBILITY



**FORD OF Britain's 'final offer' to its 32,500 manual workers was rejected by one of the largest majorities since secret ballots were introduced in 1984: 24,981 (88%) to 3,339 (12%). Yet the union negotiators (read traitors) still found a way of blocking strike action, a mere three hours before it was due to begin. Ford wanted a three year deal. After the ballot they upped their offer for manual workers to 7% now followed by inflation linked increases in years two and three. This deal on pay was linked to a conditions package which involves far-reaching changes in working practices. That is what management were really after.**

Ford wanted an agreement to lay the foundations for a reformed production system, built around work teams in which skilled and unskilled workers would be interchangeable. Traditional supervisors would be replaced by group leaders recruited from the shop floor. Ford is clearly after the Japanese-style

working arrangements typified by the new Nissan car plant at Sunderland.

They are attempting to move on from the attack on demarcation lines in the two year deal struck in 1985. This resulted in the slashing of the number of different job titles among employees from 550 to 50. Since that last pay deal two years ago productivity has risen by 40%. Ford now accounts for 30% of all UK car sales. Ford of Britain is expected to confirm net profits of £350 million shortly. It has been consistently more profitable than Ford's other European operations. Yet wage rates are only half those paid in Germany, and Ford's British workers work a longer day and enjoy fewer holidays than their counterparts on the continent.

Little wonder then that Ford's comprehensive package on pay and conditions was rejected by the overwhelming majority of the company's manual workers. As Mick Murphy, chief motor industry negotiator of the TGWU has said: 'Ford workers are not stupid. They can see how much the com-

pany is making'.

Ford workers know that for them, the 1985 deal intensified the traditional pressures of line work. Modern, flexible production may mean fat profits for Ford. But for a Ford worker it means that 'every 102 seconds a car comes by. And in between you have to tidy up, make sure your tools are repaired, make sure you've got components, check faults and quality'. As one worker said: 'we got stitched up last time. It mustn't happen again'.

In 1985, the 70% vote against the company's offer was used by officials to force Ford to concede a few measly quid in return for flexibility. The officials have been up to their old tricks this time around. Before the ballot, officials from the TGWU and the AEU refused to sanction an overtime ban to run down stocks and prepare for a strike. They hoped the ballot result would frighten Ford's bosses into making concessions. But all along the feeling for action was there amongst the workforce. 26,000 cars were 'lost' during the negotiations through unofficial

action. 'I was out for eight weeks in 1978, and I would be prepared to stay out longer this time' said a line worker from the Dagenham assembly plant.

Ford may be a 'pace setter in industrial relations' (*Financial Times* 28 January 1988) but it's not out on its own with regard to work practices in the industry. Vauxhall is facing union opposition to its plans to change shift patterns and reduce absenteeism. Here the immediate sticking point is a new two shift weekday working system. Manual workers at the Luton plant have overwhelmingly rejected a two year deal, despite the union negotiators' recommendation to accept. Peugeot Talbot and Austin Rover workers face the same offensive to impose Japanese style working practices.

## Buoyancy

The bosses' paper, the *Financial Times*, said of the Ford ballot result that:

'It does suggest that the unions, helped by the buoyant car market, have recovered some of their confidence and that their acquiescence in the process of change cannot be taken for granted.'

That regained confidence of car workers has been squandered by the treacherous negotiators—Mick Murphy of the TGWU and Jimmy Airlie of the AEU. Mick Murphy found allies in the likes of Access and Barclaycard—'working people are used to plastic money and could live on it during a strike'. One of the lessons of the miners' strike (and a lesson that Murphy clearly hasn't learnt) was that simply staying out a long

time isn't enough to defeat the bosses in Thatcher's Britain. Thatcher is carrying out a policy the bosses desperately need (even if some of them get the jitters about it when the going gets tough). It is a policy aimed at driving up the rate of profit by the intensification of labour via speed-ups, job losses and 'flexibility'.

Ford workers have been sold out by the officials. The lesson must be learnt—not to rely on Murphy, Airlie and their flexible friends. Instead of leaving the action in the hands of the officials, Ford workers needed to look to their fellow car workers in Vauxhall, in Austin Rover and in Peugeot Talbot.

The inevitable fights need to be linked into a combined counter-offensive. Ford workers need to go to Austin Rover and Peugeot Talbot and argue for workers there to bring their claims forward and fight alongside Ford and Vauxhall workers. A national strike throughout the car industry was needed—and still is—to force the motor barons to back down in their attempts to introduce 'flexible' working.

This latest sell-out makes it less likely than ever that the union bureaucrats will lead such action. Rank and file car workers must organise to reverse the sell-out, to force the union leaders to act and to take control of the action themselves to stop the officials stitching them up again. A rank and file car workers' movement must be built, committing itself to wresting control of the unions from the present pack of betrayers and to building one class struggle union for all car workers. ■

# SMASH CLAUSE 28

Reported violence against gays is up ten fold in two years. Thirty children a year are taken from lesbian mothers by the courts, there is a 20% suicide rate amongst young lesbians and gays and 25% of the young homeless are gay. Ian Hassell (Ealing Nalگو Lesbian and Gay Workers Group—in a personal capacity) looks at recent developments over Clause 27/28 and the strategy needed to defeat it.

**LAST MONTH'S demonstration against Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill brought thousands of lesbians and gay men onto the streets of London. It has been followed in city after city by meetings and local demonstrations of unprecedented numbers.**

Well known figures in the arts joined a protest performance at a London theatre. A national demonstration has been called in Manchester for 20 February. This must be supported by Labour Party and Trade Union branches throughout the country. It must be a massive warning to the Tories that lesbian and gay men will not remain silent as the government attempts to smash the limited gains won over the past two decades.

Despite the successful protests

though, there are problems with the strategy being adopted to defeat Clause 28. OLGA (Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action), who organised the London demonstration, is taking its lead from the Association of London Authorities (ALA). Their strategy is to woo members of the House of Lords in the hope that they can be persuaded to amend the proposals.

Even worse they are recommending the preparation for 'legal cases to get a narrow "promotion" definition' as a key tactic. This is a dangerous course of action. It is a distraction from the real business of building a campaign of opposition and, if Clause 28 goes through, defiance. It builds illusions in their Lordships, who even the ALA are forced to admit, are unlikely to delete the clause. And to pin our hopes on Tory judges

giving a liberal interpretation to the clause is plain stupid.

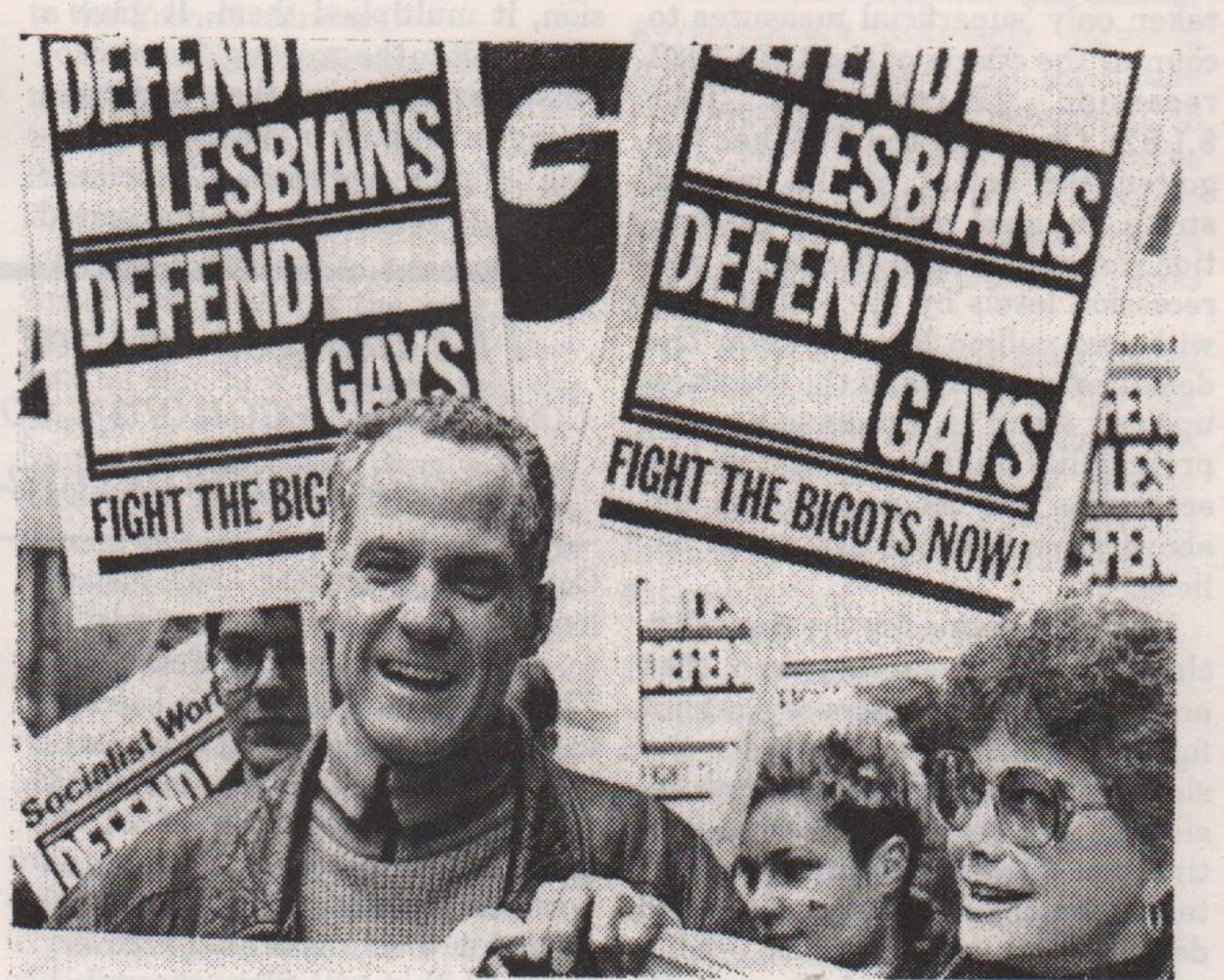
Imitating this approach the 'Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights' last month threw out a proposal to fight for a labour movement orientation in defeating the clause. It also refused to adopt a policy to fight for non-compliance.

This is particularly dangerous in a situation where there is mounting evidence that the police and local authorities are already implementing the clause. Last week Woolwich police informed the landlord of the Greenwich Lesbian and Gay Centre that the Council was withdrawing their funding. While the Council denied the claim and reaffirmed its support for the centre, other councils such as Reading are refusing to support new lesbian and gay projects.

## Priority

We face massive attacks on our rights as lesbians and gay men, and as workers, if the clause becomes law. Our first priority is to stop it becoming law, which means linking our campaign to the struggles of all local government and education workers in their battles against Ridley and Baker's attacks.

And we must start the arguments now about the need to pre-



pare for mass defiance. We should put the demand on Labour Councils to defy the legislation and argue for Nalگو workers to refuse to co-operate with any aspect of the Local Government Bill. Any attempt by councils to comply with the Bill should be met with industrial action.

At the same time we must expose so-called 'left' Labour leaders, like Linda Bellos, who promise to defy the clause if it becomes law. Yet at the same time Bellos' Lambeth administration has decided to slash £60 million from the budget in order to comply with the Tories' ratercapping legislation. This mas-

sive attack on all workers and services will see the tearing up of equal opportunities commitments. It will make the task of winning workers to the council's defence if it does defy Clause 28 harder when only yesterday it has been sacking people and closing down much needed services.

We must link our struggle with the struggle of other workers if we are to have any chance of defeating the Bigots' Charter. Fighting for unity in action within the labour movement, waging a tireless battle to win our class to a defence of our rights is the only way forward. ■



THE OCTOBER crash bankrupted many thousands of investors. It also revealed the bankruptcy of the centrists' understanding of the economic developments leading to the crash.

Nowhere is this more true than on the British economy. Ted Grant is certain that Lawson, in claiming the economy is 'basically sound', is being no more accurate than Herbert Hoover's claim of the same for the US economy in 1929 (*Militant* 30.10.87). The RCP echo Grant's line, but spiced with a bit more catastrophism. They claim that Britain is heading for a new slump from a position of unprecedented weakness (*The Next Step* 13.11.87). Not to be outdone the SWP claim that Britain's comparative economic upturn is built on sand (*Socialist Worker* 24.10.87).

### Productivity

Had these groups bothered to examine the British economy they would have found a somewhat different picture. Productivity in Britain is growing at an historically high 7%. The RCP would no doubt be astounded to find the British economy is 30% more competitive than it was in 1981. This growth in productivity together with the weak pound resulted in profit growth of over 12% per annum before the crash last October. The rate of return on capital has more than trebled since its low point in the early 1980s.

The same is true for the USA. Productivity growth there has reached 1960s proportions. Ford for example has forced up its productivity by 234% since 1978. At the same time there has been no wage rise since 1982. Once again the result has been a growth in profits of 17% per annum before the crash.

### Defeats

Behind the frenzied speculative boom (see *Workers Power* 100 for a full account) the capitalists have in fact been working very hard to make their economies profitable. The defeats of workers in most imperialist countries have had definite economic results. We can therefore only scratch our heads in wonder when the RCP declares that capitalism has taken only 'superficial measures to counter the effects of the 1979-1982 recession' ('Perspectives' TNS 8.1.87). Obviously the RCP has forgotten the defeat of the miners' strike, the steel strike, the restoration of manufacturing output to pre-recession levels by the end of 1987 with two million less workers. The defeats of workers and the resulting upward trend in productivity and profitability indicate that the key economies are not as weak as the above groups would like us to believe.

It is these gains for the capitalist class, built on sweat, not sand, that account for why the recovery has not foundered. It also accounts for the slowness of the movement into recession. The danger is that this underestimation of the resilience of the capitalist economy could very well lead to despondency, as and when predictions of a quick slump fail to materialise.

### Investment

Of course in criticising the left for ignoring the real economy, we are not implying in any way that the world capitalist economy is in good health. Far from it. The low levels of investment outside the USA indicate it is not. In the USA the rate of return still remains at 60% of its level in the 1960s—4% compared to 6.5%.

The defeats suffered by workers in Europe and the USA have, by and large, led to a growth in unemployment and a depression in the level of real wages (Britain is the exception



The October Stockmarket crash exposed the fragility of the world capitalist economy. It also exposed the failure of much of the left to understand the relationship between politics and economics

# CATASTROPHISM AND THE CRASH

on the latter). These were necessary consequences for the capitalists of restoring competitiveness. The crisis of realisation of profits that would normally hit the major economies at some point in the cycle due to the cut in the wages and salaries fund was offset for most of the period after 1982 by a growing tide of personal debt that kept demand buoyant. This expansion came up against its limits in October.

Moreover, the October crash did not just add to the chances of recession, it multiplied them. It gave a severe jolt to the growing demand for consumer durables that had been riding on the back of the credit explosion of the eighties. Government figures in the USA for the period

reluctantly agreed to do this rather than risk the continuation of the US policy of devaluation of the dollar. Why should they be bothered? For three reasons. First, it undermines world trade, since most countries still trade in dollars for their goods and services. You do not want to sell at one price and find the dollar is worth less when you come to buy. Secondly, dollar devaluation wipes out part of the value of the US debt that Japan and West Germany hold, not to mention those profits of their corporations which are measured in dollars. Finally, the more the US devalues, the more competitive the US exports become in contrast to their own on the world market.

Japan and West Germany find

Russian workers to defeat the Tsar led to a severe defeat. When the economic crisis of 1907 hit Russia the workers were in no state to resist its effect on them. Only with the 'boom' of 1910 did the workers recover their self-confidence.

*Militant* and the RCP no sooner claim there is no automatic link between the two than their catastrophism leads them to throw caution to the wind.

In an editorial (*Militant* 13.11.87) we are told that a new recession will 'mean a dramatic intensification of the class struggle'. Building up courage, it then goes on to say that a slump 'will lead to even more breathtaking upheavals'. By 15.1.88, barely two months later we are told that a

*The danger is that under-estimation of the resilience of the capitalist economy could very well lead to despondency, as and when predictions of a quick slump fail to materialise*

October to December 1987 just released show the largest quarterly fall in consumer spending since 1980. This has led to a noticeable increase in warehouse stocks as goods pile up unsold. Given that the internal US market accounted for 40% of the growth of Europe and Japan's exports in the last years such a fall must hit their export-led recovery. Soon all this will filter through to declining output. In its turn investment by industry in capital equipment will fall away. In West Germany orders had already fallen away by the end of last year.

The tempo of the coming recession will be most affected in the short-term by the success or failure of the present round of counter-cyclical measures being taken in co-operation by the USA, West Germany and Japan.

For the moment the USA has waved the big stick and got Japan and West Germany to succumb to minor deflation of their own internal economies to compensate for the lack of demand in the USA. They have

themselves in a real contradiction. On the one hand they need, and prosper from the US trade deficit since it is their companies' exports that benefit. On the other hand the trade deficit grows and destabilises the exchange rates which disrupts trade.

At what point the contradiction explodes in their face and co-operation breaks down is difficult to predict. But happen it will, as all the major economies face up to the problem of retaining market share and profit levels in a situation of declining demand.

### Crude

Trotsky wrote in the 1920s that 'There is no automatic dependency of the proletarian revolution upon a crisis. There is only dialectical interaction'. Genuine Marxists have always rejected the crude 'the worse it gets the better it is for us' recipe for the class struggle. As Trotsky pointed out the cycles of political and economic events do not completely overlap. In 1905 the failure of the

new stage in the world revolution has already opened.

*Militant's* exaggeration is necessary to revive a membership numbed by repeated defeats. It is also necessary to bolster their opportunistic view that the economic crisis will politicise the working class in and of itself. '(the crisis)... must accelerate the transformation of the labour movement along socialist lines.' Heads or tails Marxism wins! If the crisis does this then all that is left for *Militant* to do is to be in the right place at the right time to commandeer leadership of this socialist movement.

Like *Militant* the RCP's perspectives for 1988 are one of 'fantastic opportunities' for revolutionaries. Workers, we are told, will instinctively recognise that the old solutions are irrelevant. Indeed so strong are workers' instincts that the Labour Party can be dismissed. We are told that today the capitalists 'have no need for the Labour Party', and that the 'Labour Party has become too unstable' to play its political role

for the capitalist class.

Unlike the workers they write about, the RCP do not even have the right instincts. The Labour Party has stabilised itself on the basis of actively defeating the left in the party and taking advantage of the wider class defeats to ditch all the elements of policy that angered the ruling class.

If Thatcher were to prove incapable of containing the working class' fightback then her majesty's loyal Labour Party will be called up to do its duty for the nation. Or should a recession leave Thatcher and the Tories inflexibly committed to free market economics when a renewed call for state intervention is made to rescue the situation then Labour's day may come again.

Like all ultra-lefts, the RCP substitutes wishful thinking for reality, posturing for tried and tested tactics towards the existing organs of the working class. They believe that the economic crisis will give such a huge leftward impulse to the working class that it will jump over the Labour Party and directly into the RCP.

The 1980s opened with a recession well entrenched in Britain and the rest of the capitalist world. In Britain the Tories did not attempt counter-cyclical measures but rather took measures to enhance the recession in order to provoke a long delayed confrontation with the trade unions. A whole series of bitter and protracted defensive struggles opened up from the steel workers in 1980 to the miners in 1984/85.

The recession found the workers' organisations disoriented by the attacks of Labour in office (1974-79), but confident enough to hit back against the Tories. The recession did not find the working class demoralised; the intense spate of redundancies and closures in the years 1980-82 did the demoralising.

### Offensive

The demoralisation came because section after section of workers came up against the limits of sectional, isolated responses to the Tories and state backed offensive. The official trade union leadership sat on its hands (or played around with marches) while the Tories took on sections of workers one at a time. At times the union bureaucracy engaged in active sabotage. The betrayal of the miners' strike was their finest hour in this respect.

The Tories and the bosses have reaped the benefit of these misdeeds. The boomlet of 1987 was their finest hour, delayed reward for the depressing effect that the defeat of the miners had on all remaining sections of workers.

Yet this boom in its turn has gradually instilled some confidence back into the ranks. Unemployment has fallen from its 13.5% high of 1982 to 9.4% now. Profits are up and workers feel confident to ask for a share or to resist the latest round of flexibility sacrifices. Strike days lost in 1986 were nearly double those of 1985.

### Shackled

A new recession may well hit before many sections of workers enjoy even the partial victories of such a period. But a new recession will hit in a situation where effective trade unionism has been shackled by innumerable legal manacles, where rank and file organisation is weak, where union membership has fallen, where the doctrines of new realism hold sway among the bureaucrats. The barriers in the way of sectional disputes becoming generalised to the class as a whole are more numerous. For it to happen, for it to be sustained, for it to be victorious then a revolutionary programme of action is called for. Workers Power is ready to meet the challenge. ■



# THE ILLUSION OF STUDENT POWER

**THE WAVE of student rebellions in 1968 was largely a US, Western European and Japanese phenomenon. The parallel events in Vietnam (the Tet Offensive) and Eastern Europe (the Prague Spring) were important events in their own right but they were part of a different process of development.**

Of course the reverse was not true. The Vietnam war was in a sense the motive force that 'set off' 1968. It was the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against the unbridled savagery of the USA at the peak of its power, that 'ignited' the massive student upheavals. In turn this upheaval was briefly connected with, and (especially in France) stimulated, working class resistance in 1968 and in the years that followed. As such the events of the year played an important part in blowing away the conservative consensus of the post-war boom and cold war.

The struggles of 1968 did not come out of the blue. They were prepared by the contradictions that were slowly but surely sharpening throughout the early 1960s. Nor did the struggle disappear on New Years Day in 1969. If 1968 failed to achieve not only its wilder utopian goals but also most of its immediate demands, it was nevertheless a turning point - one of the leaps from quantitative to qualitative change. The year was a demarcation line between one period and another.

The upheavals of 1968 in the USA had their roots in the Civil Rights Movement of a newly confident and rebellious generation of young blacks, and in the movement of opposition to the Vietnam war on America's campuses. The linked issues of segregation in the southern states in public transport and education, registration of illegally disenfranchised black voters and of the violence of both state authorities and white racists were ones which produced wave after wave of radicalisation from the early 1960s onwards.

The Freedom Rides and peace marches at the beginning of the decade gave way to the violent urban uprisings of the black ghettos in 1965 and 1967 (Watts, Detroit, Newark etc). The bombing of North Vietnam from February 1965, and the deepening involvement of US troops in propping up the puppet regime in the South, stimulated mass resistance to the war, especially amongst students.

It was the victimisation by University of California authorities of Vietnam protesters that started the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the prototype of the student radicali-

sation. It set the tone for countless demonstrations, occupations, teach-ins and sit-ins about Vietnam during the next three years.

These events had a real and significant radicalising effect. The shocking barbarism of the USA in Vietnam was linked to the role of the university authorities through their economic and research links to 'the military industrial complex'. Added to this was resentment at the authoritarian disciplinary system of the universities.

Universities were armed with full powers to act *in loco parentis*. This intrusive, patriarchal role extended to overseeing and obstructing the social and sexual lives of their students.

Student anger mounted. But faced with even peaceful and good natured defiance of their authority, the heads of the universities often panicked and called the police. The cops thoroughly enjoyed handing out savage beatings to people they regarded as spoilt rich kids who were probably communists and 'perverts' to boot. This process explains how in a year or two a powerful minority of students - who were indeed drawn mainly from the more privileged social layers and destined (they hoped) for professional careers - became subjectively revolutionary and vocally anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-war and anti-sexual repression.

The stuffy conformity of the 1950s and early 1960s began to collapse at all levels. The accepted truths of the cold war era - the 'end of ideology', the disappearance of 'embourgeoisification' of the working class, the 'consensus' politics - were all called into question and came to be seen as 'bourgeois ideology'. In the teach-ins at the colleges, the ideas of a bizarre medley of thinkers were retailed in garbled form - perhaps best summed up in a slogan carried (and chanted) on one demonstration: 'Marx, Marcuse, Mao - world revolution now'. Differences that had been 'rivers of blood' for the 'Old Left' were cheerfully ignored by the new. A free market in ideas saw Trotsky invoked alongside Ho Chi Minh, Mao, Guevara and even Stalin.

The reasons for this chaos and confusion at the level of political ideas was not only a result of the heterogeneous class background of students in general. It reflected the political bankruptcy of the major political forces within the workers' movement and the progressive petit bourgeoisie, and their total failure to lead or inspire youth in the mid and late 1960s. In the USA the working class was still tied by the AFL-CIO bureaucracy to Kennedy and Johnson's Democratic Party.

For vast numbers of students and black activists, their faith in liberal-

ism and the Democratic Party was shaken to its foundations by the Vietnam war and campus beatings.

In Europe, analogous processes were underway. The British Labour government from 1964 to 1970 backed the USA in Vietnam and imposed an incomes policy on workers. The German SPD had joined a Grand Coalition and supported a draconian emergency law. In France, the Socialist Party (SFIO) was at a low ebb, while the PCF had little appeal to radical students as it red baited them and later sold out the workers' struggles.

This opened the way for new ad hoc organisations to emerge amongst radicalised students. In Germany the SDS (the erstwhile student organisation of the SPD), in France the UNEF and 22 March Movement, in Britain the Vietnam Solidarity Committee and the short-lived RSSF (Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation) and in the USA the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were the organisational expressions of the wave of student revolt.

These groups and others played an organising and agitational role in the great demonstrations and street battles of the year. Yet all of them withered or perished within a year or two, just as the idea of a central role for student radicalism itself faded. At its peak in 1968 the student movement envisaged 'student power' and espoused the 'detonator theory' with universities as 'red bases' or liberated zones. These were based on analogies drawn from Third World guerrilla warfare.

## Elastic

'Student power' was an elastic concept usually counterposed to 'reformist' 'student participation' which was dangled before students by the more flexible college administrations. At its most radical it meant rule of the university by general assemblies of students, academics and workers. In practice it usually ended up with a couple of student union members and observers on university senates or boards of governors.

The 'detonator theory' envisaged the French scenario. Student militancy would break the hypnotic spell of consumerism and the welfare state over the workers. The working class was seen by most 1968 radicals as being in a drugged sleep - the drugs being 'affluence', television, bureaucratic structures (trade unions) and participation in elections. The reformist leaders were not seen as active misleaders but rather as a sort of dead weight that a sufficiently explosive charge of spontaneity, direct action and confrontation would

In the 1960's, a wave of student militancy swept the capitalist world and shook the bosses to the core. Here, Dave Stocking looks at the 1968 rebellions and at the politics of its 'leaders'.



blow into the air.

This view appeared to be confirmed by some workers' responses - especially young workers - to the student mobilisations. But what would these workers join? They could not become honorary students or at least they could only when they were on strike or the students were 'sitting-in' or 'taking the streets'. The idea that students would do so indefinitely thus creating permanently liberated zones or red bases was clearly a utopia.

Yet many in the first flush of enthusiasm believed it ('Free, free the LSE; Take it from the Bourgeoisie!'). The example of France with its massive general strike however had a powerful effect in orientating a section of the student revolutionaries towards the working class.

In Britain the experience of worker-student relations was a rude awakening. In May, London dockers marched in support of Enoch Powell's racist 'rivers of blood' speech and clashed with student counter-demonstrators. In a negative way however it increased the pull towards the working class. Clearly student revolutionaries thought something had to be done about our workers to bring them up to the French standard!

1968 itself will be remembered by most for its semi-anarchistic or libertarian 'leaders', Danny Cohn-Bendit, Abbie Hoffman and so on. The anarchists, the yippies, the situationists did indeed provide much of the street theatre of the year. They shocked the bourgeoisie but they had no clue how to even begin the process of overthrowing them. Behind them, however, was a more sober kind of 'student leader'. These by and large either joined would be revolutionary organisations (Maoist, Trotskyist or peculiar combinations of both) or 'disappeared' (some later to re-emerge as trade union bureaucrats, reformist or democrat politicians).

By the second half of the year the influx into 'Trotskyist' or Maoist organisations was going on apace. This largely explains the crumbling of the 'revolutionary student' organisations. Of course most of these groups pre-dated, often by decades the '68 events, but they grew with incredible rapidity in this year and the year to come. In Britain the main beneficiaries were the International Socialists (today's SWP) and the International Marxist Group (today's ISG and Socialist Action). The already large and quite working class 'orthodox Trotskyist' Socialist Labour League (SLL) passed up the chance by keeping out of the VSC and most student mobilisations, preferring to run their own. Militant buried in the shrunken and discredited Labour Party also made little or no impact.

In France the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire (JCR) with a charismatic leader Alain Krivine, grew enormously out of and after the May events. In Germany large Maoist 'parties' developed ape-ing the ultra-left politics and agit-prop of Third Period Stalinism. In Italy Maoist and libertarian groups emerged. In the USA the SDS grew to an enormous size (60,000 or more) and then began to fragment with the 'Marxist-Leninist' Progressive Labour Party (PLP), the increasingly terroristic 'Weathermen', developing out of it.

What then were the long lasting and important effects of 1968? It finally broke up the smug conservative boom based world of the 1950s and 1960s. It shook off the hitherto unchallenged domination of the reformist parties whether Stalinist or Social Democratic and it opened the doors on a whole new period marked by renewed class struggle in the metropolitan (i.e. imperialist) countries. If the British workers had disgraced themselves in 1968, in the years following they - especially the rank and file shop stewards 'movement' - returned to the fray with a vengeance. In 1969 they struck and demonstrated against the Labour government's anti-shop steward, anti-strike proposals for legislation (In Place of Strife) and defeated it. In 1971, 1972 and 1974 mass strike waves both against the anti-union laws and against compulsory wage freezes defeated and drove the Tories from office.

In Italy the working class broke loose in massive strikes in the 'hot autumn' of 1969 in which young rank and file workers played a leading role, creating base organisations and linking up with the revolutionary left to some extent.

The pattern of the first half of the 1970s was precisely the creation of would-be revolutionary organisations, often a few thousand strong standing clearly to the left of the reformist Labour, socialist and communist parties. The ideas and words of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky were again read and discussed on a big scale for the first time since the 1940s. A minority of militant and sometimes revolutionary workers revived the labour movements with rank and file democracy and mass militant tactics. Of course these organisations and these 'movements' had important and ultimately fatal weaknesses. In particular they failed to fully understand the roots and nature of reformism in the working class and lacked tactics to combat it. But in a decade where the organisations which grew out of 1968 have capitulated and grovelled before the reformist parties and union leaders they so airily dismissed in 1968, it is worth re-stating and re-learning the lessons of that 'mad year'.



Danny Cohn-Bendit providing revolutionary leadership?



# THEIR PROFITS VERSUS OUR HEALTH

**THE NHS is in crisis. Hospitals and beds are closed due to lack of money, while waiting lists are 688,000 long. Health authorities have overspent by an estimated £150 million this year just to keep services going.**

Small children are suffering and dying because there are not enough nurses to treat them. Nurses, already flooding from the NHS due to poor pay, see their unsocial hours pay under attack. Operating theatres lie idle while thousands survive the waiting lists on pain killers.

Refusing to meet parents of heart-op children, Thatcher said: 'This is not a health service in crisis, it is doing very well'.

Only somebody wilfully blind to reality could utter this. But the Tory government's reality is very different from that of NHS users. Whether it is John Moore's pneumonia, or Thatcher's varicose veins, their treatment is never cancelled, because it is always paid for.

It would be easy to see Thatcher's callousness as the cause of all this suffering. But its roots go much deeper. There is a logic behind the chaos gripping the NHS. It is the logic of capitalism, the profit system.

## Capitalism

Once a word no-one would speak, capitalism is now the word on every Tory's lips. In their champagne bars they have been drinking toasts to 'popular capitalism'.

But the NHS crisis has uncovered the reality behind 'popular capitalism'. The bankers' champagne, like Thatcher's election itself, was bought with money drained from the NHS and other welfare services. The £3 billion that Chancellor Nigel Lawson will give away in tax cuts this year is only the latest instalment. It testifies to the fact that the few thousand capitalists who own and run industry do not care about a decent public health service.

Ever since its foundation in 1948, the NHS has been under attack. Set up on the principle of providing for the health needs of all, free of charge, it was and is an ever increasing drain on the profits of the capitalists, via the

taxes raised to pay for it.

This was a price the whole capitalist class was prepared to pay for workers' collaboration in the second world war. In fear of mass radicalisation both Liberals and Tories offered little opposition to the idea of a publicly funded NHS. Nevertheless two important concessions to the bosses were built into the NHS at its foundation.

First there was the compromise with the consultants and GPs whose resistance to becoming salaried workers eventually caused Labour minister Aneurin Bevan to compromise. Consultants were left with the right to practice privately in the NHS and to use the 'pay bed' system.

## Failure

Second and more important was the failure to nationalise the drug and supply industries. The ever expanding NHS is a source of guaranteed profit to the international drug companies. Patent laws allow them to over-price massively. Librium for example is sold to the NHS at 500 times what it costs to make.

All this, combined with private health schemes like BUPA, whose profit rate is 30%, means that a massive amount of profit is pouring into the bank accounts of the bosses from the NHS.

During the 1960s the massive expansion of industry and profit required a healthy and educated workforce and the money to pay for the NHS, education and local services. But the 1970s brought falling profits and economic crisis. With these came a concerted attack on NHS spending.

Labour launched the first wave of cuts after its deal with the international banks in 1976. As part of a £3 billion cuts package, 143 hospitals were closed or 'reorganised' with fewer beds. At the end of Labour's rule in 1979 the number of hospital beds per 1,000 people was lower than in 1949.

NHS pay too stagnated under Labour, while inflation soared. The Tory government only had to take over where Labour left off.

## Deep Cuts

By cutting the grants to local health authorities the Tories forced deep cuts in services. Thatcher never tires of repeating that she has increased NHS funding. But the need for treatment has increased faster. Britain now spends less of its total wealth on health care than the USA and twelve other European countries.

Not content with spending cuts the Tories forced through privatisation of domestic, laundry and catering services. No matter who won the contract—private or 'in house' tenders—the result was the same. Jobs were lost and the standard of service declined.

The only real growth area has been management. On the advice of the boss of Sainsbury's, the Tories brought in a new layer of unit general managers. Their job was to cut costs and enforce work discipline. Paid a commission for every cut they make, these ghouls haunt the corridors of hospitals turning off lights and heating.

Despite all of these attacks the Tories have not managed to shift the burden of paying for health care onto workers' wage packets. As long as the



Photo: John Harris (IFL)

NHS is funded from taxation it will remain a constant drain on the capitalists profits. As long as it is, however imperfectly, geared to needs its spending cannot be effectively controlled whatever Thatcher and Moore say and do. The NHS remains a gain for all workers. And it is a gain that is under threat because capitalism's drive for profit demands an end to it.

The second biggest employer in Europe (after the Soviet army), its pay bill is massive. Millions of pounds more are paid to the drug and supply industries. £65 million was paid last year to private clinics for essential operations not available on the NHS. For the bosses this seems like a dreadful waste. A health system geared to need is an affront to the profit system.

Now the NHS has reached crisis point. Unable to do more than slow its growth, the Tories were content for three elections to maintain a basically free NHS. They have never dared suggesting dismantling the NHS itself. Now conditions have changed.

In December and January, Thatcher faced a storm of protest from both consultants and nurses. The £100 million stop-gap payment and the shelving of the cut in special duty allowance were the results.

## Whirlwind

This opposition from groups the Tories consider 'natural Tories' has opened the way for the far-right's long planned solution. Thatcher has ordered a whirlwind 'review of the structure of NHS funding'.

This means that by the summer John Moore will present a plan to end

funding of the NHS directly from taxation. All the alternatives boil down to taking money from the poor and needy to pay for it.

Both the Adam Smith Institute and the Centre for Policy Studies had conveniently produced plans for the destruction of the NHS. But a *Guardian* report on 28 January revealed that as early as November 1987 the Tories were looking at a 'radical plan' for the NHS. They held a seminar for 'leading figures from British and American private health companies, special advisers to Number Ten and the Department of Health, and senior figures from the Conservative Party including Lord Skelmersdale, the junior health minister. Also represented were senior figures from the NHS'.

## Charges

Three basic options considered at that meeting have found their way into the Tories' discussions on the NHS since then. First there is the introduction of charges for hospital and GP services. A Bill currently going through parliament already plans to charge for eye and dental check-ups. This will be expanded to everything from overnight hospital stays to hospital food, drugs and operations. Everything will have a price tag. For these charges to come anywhere near covering costs they would be way out of the range of 80% of the population,

This is where option two comes in: a massive expansion of private health insurance. This kind of insurance is already at record levels, standing at 10% of the population. Excluding the

**NURSES' PAY is appalling. This is a fact that any nurse can see by comparing his/her pay to other skilled workers' wages. Low pay and the stress caused by understaffing has led 30,000 nurses a year to leave the service. This has created an acute shortage of nurses which only a big financial incentive can reverse.**

At the same time however there is massive pressure on NHS funding. Nurses' pay alone accounts for 20% of NHS spending. This is because for years nurses' pay awards have been only partially funded by government, leaving the rest to be found by cutting costs.

So it is not kind-heartedness that has made the Tories search for a solution to nurses' pay and staff shortages, but the 'market forces' Thatcher loves so much. Just as the Tories are now considering a drastic solution for NHS funding, they also want to cut the nursing wage bill by drastically restructuring nurses pay.

Tory think-tanks have long advocated the idea of a 'core/periphery' workforce. Strip away the jargon and this means a small 'core' of skilled, well paid workers, hopefully organised in a no-strike union, and a large pool of unskilled, part-time, badly paid workers with no employment rights.

# NHS

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top two or three per cent who will always go private, this means that salaried workers are now so worried about NHS standards that they are prepared to pay for what they have a right to get free of charge.

Health insurances, like all insurance, discriminates against workers and their families. The older you are, or more likely to be ill, the dearer the premium. Like car insurance it goes up for high risk groups. If you are already ill when you join, for example if you suffer from diabetes, none of your diabetic related illness is covered by insurance. If you want better cover then you pay more, and if you can't afford it, you must live in constant fear of illness.

A third option being considered is a special tax levied for the NHS. Drawn up along the lines of the Poll Tax on housing this would have to be massive. Under the guise of equality everybody would pay the same, no matter what they earned. It would be yet another way of making workers pay for the NHS.

## National Campaign

The fight is now on to stop the Tories destroying the NHS. This is a fight for every worker. But NHS workers must take the lead. We should use the current wave of nurses' action, action over privatisation in Scotland, etc, to launch a national campaign of industrial action against the Tory plans. This means learning the lessons of past defeats and overcoming the obstacles placed by government, union and Labour leaders alike to decisive victory. ■

## WHO PROFITS FROM THE NHS?

- The consultants who use NHS staff and equipment for private practice
- Private health companies like BUPA who use NHS trained staff and get £65 million a year from work contracted from the NHS
- Private contractors like Crothalls who make £9 million a year by cutting wages and cleaning standards to a minimum
- The drug and supply industries, firms like ICI, Roche, 3M and EMI. Their undisclosed profits account for millions of pounds a year of the NHS budget

All private health care should be abolished, contractors kicked out of the NHS, and the drug and supply industries nationalised without compensation.



# PROFESSIONALISM & NURSES PAY

Cuts and privatisation have gone a long way towards reducing ancillary workers to this level. But the skilled 'core' remains too big for the 'core/periphery' model to work. Staff shortages have given half a million nurses vast economic power to resist a general onslaught on their pay. So the Tories plan to introduce the 'core/periphery' idea into nursing itself.

The 'ten grade scale' to be announced in April will be the first step along this road. It will widen the difference between every grade's pay, and punish non-specialist staff by boosting the pay of paediatric and other areas.

## Exploitation

Project 2000, a scheme originally designed to stop the exploitation of learner nurses by basing their training off the wards, will be used to the opposite effect. By removing State enrolled Nurses (SENs) and introducing a large number of permanently unskilled nurses (Nurses Aides) it will pave the way for the de-skilling of many caring jobs, allowing untrained

In early January 36 nurses at North Manchester General struck for 24 hours against planned reductions in special duty payments. Within days the Tories had shelved their plans. The special duty payment cuts are likely to be reintroduced in April as part of the Pay Review Body report. But the Tories retreat reflects a real dilemma they face when attacking nurses' pay—a dilemma not based on morals but hard economic facts. Here, we look at the attacks facing nurses and how to fight them.

YTS workers to do the SEN and learners' jobs for under £30 a week. At a suitable moment in this process the Tories will introduce a compulsory no-strike agreement for the remaining skilled nurses.

There is nothing new about this process. In industry capitalism's drive for greater productivity constantly leads to one skilled task being broken down into many unskilled ones. Take a look behind the counter in a MacDonalds to see what this means. You will get a glimpse of the future of nursing as it will be if the Tories get their way.

Nurses have to fight not just to defend pay, but to defend every positive

aspect of nursing that de-skilling would remove: individualised care, the nursing process, control of your own work, etc.

But in this fight there is one big obstacle nurses have to overcome. It is the illusion of 'professionalism'.

Historically the 'professions' were self-employed small businessmen with prestige occupations. Lawyers, doctors, teachers; in short the middle class sandwiched between workers and the big bosses. Their economic independence gave rise to the idea of 'professionalism': a code of conduct, individual accountability for their work, respectability, etc.

But these ideas made sense because

of their economic position. From the very start of modern nursing the idea of 'professionalism' has been at odds with nurses' real position in the workforce. Nurses are waged workers.

No doubt the aura of 'professionalism' was used to entice middle class daughters into nursing. In the 19th century nursing was one of the few 'respectable' jobs a woman could do. But in the context of today's attacks on nurses' pay and conditions 'professionalism' is a gigantic con-trick played on nurses by management and the RCN.

## Disappear

What many nurses think of as the positive side of 'professionalism'—the ability to control their own work, individualised patient care and high standards—is exactly what will disappear under the restructuring of the nursing workforce. What is left are the ideas of self-sacrifice and individual accountability. These make sense for the lawyer who works for himself, but they are an excuse for exploitation for nurses working for a fixed wage.

It is 'professionalism' which gives the NHS £160 million a year of free overtime. At the same time one in five of the 'professionals' who provide it has to take another job to pay the rent.

It is 'professionalism' which allows learner nurses to be treated like children at work and in residence. And the very same 'professionalism' demands they act-up in charge of a ward on nights.

It is 'professionalism' which shifts

the blame away from management, onto the individual nurses if things go wrong.

Most of all it is 'professionalism' which prevents nurses fighting back. 'Professionals don't strike' says the RCN. Of course it makes little sense for a self-employed 'professional' barrister to 'go on strike'. But nurses are waged workers under attack. And for waged workers the tried and tested weapon to improve wages and conditions is strike action. The Manchester strike shows it can work.

As the government presses home its attack on nurses' pay and attempts to turn more and more of them into unskilled workers, it would be a tragedy if nurses gave in because of the illusion that they were 'professionals'.

The Pay Review Body is the biggest testament to the uselessness of 'professionalism'. Granted to nurses 'because the RCN will not strike', its findings have been ignored for the same reason. There is nothing to force the government to implement its award.

## Bargaining

Nurses must demand that the unions break with the Pay Review Body. A return to free collective bargaining is essential if we hope to gain control of the fight for better pay.

Nurses must link their claims to those of all NHS workers, in particular the fight for a national minimum wage for all NHS staff, including learner nurses, set at the average industrial wage.

But nurses should also demand equal pay for work of equal value. Low pay amongst nurses stems from the fact that 80% are women. Women's oppressed position in society, which makes them second class citizens at work as well as at home, means their wages have constantly been below those of men.

It is not the police we want parity with, because the policeman/woman's pay buys loyalty to Thatcher and the refusal to strike. We want parity with the electrician, the computer programmer.

## Workers' Control

We should take one element of nurses' position as skilled workers—control of our work—and make it into real workers' control on a hospital wide basis. Committees of nurses should have a veto over all management decisions, effectively deciding on all key questions that affect their work themselves.

All of this means throwing the swindle of 'professionalism' into the dustbin along with the RCN membership cards and taking our place alongside all NHS workers in a common fight.■

# S IN CRISIS



IN EVERY TV interview the Nupe and Cohse leaders have stressed that nurses must provide emergency cover. But for strike action to win nurses need to break from that policy.

Most wards and hospitals today are staffed below the level of emergency cover set by management in the 1982 dispute. If we let management set levels of emergency cover this will mean in some hospitals a strike where nobody is allowed to leave their post. Needless to say, strikes like this will not bother Thatcher very much. And shortage of staff has already been a contributing factor in votes against strike action in some hospitals.

To get round this nurses need to start from the clear principle that the government and management are responsible for maintaining health care, not the individual workers. Health workers should decide on all out strike action, with emergency cover levels set and monitored by strikers themselves. If management

## EMERGENCY COVER AND THE LEFT

refuse this offer workers should be prepared to walk out with no cover. Painful though this is it has been a successful tactic for nurses in Australia and the USA (in the states their demands were won within hours, not days). And if the management do reject our offer we could demonstrate quite clearly that the management would be responsible for any suffering caused. Health workers arguing this will of course find themselves the target of vicious attacks from management and union leaders. This is to be expected. What is more astonishing is that the whole of the so-called revolutionary left echoes the union leaders' position.

*Socialist Organiser*, streets ahead of the rest in the race to accommodate to the union leaders said: 'The health service unions' policy is for emergency

cover during all strikes. Sometimes militants get impatient with this policy. But it is right'.

In a rare display of agreement, the Socialist Workers Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party echoed this line:

'Their [the Manchester Nurses'] example must be followed by similar strikes—with the provision of emergency cover—in other areas.' (*Socialist Worker* 16 Jan 88); 'It is important that emergency cover is provided so that the Tories cannot seize a particular case for propaganda advantage.' (*The Next Step* 29 Jan 88)

All pay lip service to the idea of workers' control of emergency cover. But the crunch question is this: what if management say no to workers' control? According to the logic of their arguments, *SO*, the SWP and the RCP

must stop short of responding with all out action. Only *SO* has the gall to spell out the reason:

'Does emergency cover make the strike weaker? Not in real terms because a strike without emergency cover either assumes a lot of scabbing or would ruin itself! What makes strikes in the NHS weaker than strikes in some other sectors is that they do not hit profits, and removing emergency cover does nothing to get round that problem. The only way round is for other workers who do produce profits to strike in solidarity with the health workers.'

The message, again echoed in the rest of the left press, is that NHS workers are too weak to strike effectively, so why bother wrangling over emergency cover? *Socialist Worker* cites weak trade union consciousness

as the cause, *Socialist Organiser* cites the unproductive nature of the NHS.

What sickening double standards. Did anyone on the left tell the firefighters they had to provide emergency cover as a precondition for their action in 1977? Did anybody tell the miners they must cease picketing power stations in case the Tories 'seized a particular case' of death or injury due to a power cut? And where did we last read in these 'vanguard papers' warnings to teachers or local government workers that because they cannot hit profits they cannot strike effectively?

The fact is that the position of the centrist left on emergency cover reflects the existing level of consciousness of most nurses. But it is a consciousness rooted in the old ideas of professionalism. Hundreds of nurses have entered the road of breaking with their old ideas, by leaving the RCN, by striking for the first time. The last thing they need is these old ideas served back as Marxism.■



The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 caused a massive dislocation of the Palestinian economy. Compared to most of the surrounding Arab countries in the period before 1947, Palestine had a fairly high level of industry, particularly in processing agricultural products and in metal working. These had been the material base of the struggles of Arab workers in the 1930s.

The victories of the Zionist forces in the colonial 'War of Independence' between 1947 and 1949 caused a vast flight of peasants and small farmers from the land into the West Bank and Gaza, at that time outside of Israeli control.

One grave consequence of the Zionist invasion was the taking over of most of the areas (Haifa, Jaffa and Acre) where industry was concentrated. This slashed the size of the Arab Palestinian working class as workers were forced into refugee camps in the West Bank of Jordan. Those 160,000 or so Palestinians who remained inside the state of Israel when the armistice was signed in 1949 immediately became second class citizens.

## Evolution

With the successive waves of Jewish immigration in the 1950s and 60s the proportion of Arabs in the population was reduced from 25% to 11%. Since 1948 the Israeli state—fearful of the evolution of a strong Palestinian working class inside Israel—has successfully reduced the numbers of Arabs in the urban areas. In 1951 12% of Arabs were urban based. By 1976 this had fallen to 9%, severely hindering the possibility of effective collective action.

Inside Israel Arab Palestinians are not allowed to live in certain areas. This means that about half the Palestinian working class in Israel has to rise early and travel miles to work—a pattern similar to that operating in apartheid South Africa. Where work could be found it tended to be in those sectors least likely to appeal to the Jewish worker—construction, sewage, and the growing service sector. Increasingly as Israeli industry expanded manufacturing and transport came to employ a relatively high proportion of Arab workers.

In the main, however, new proletarians arriving from the countryside found intense discrimination in obtaining work in the first place. When they did they suffered lower pay and worse conditions relative to the Jewish workers. Today their standard of living is some 40% lower than that of Israeli Jews. Thousands were denied jobs on the pretext that they were not members of the *Histadrut*, a Zionist company union-cum-employer which banned Arab members throughout the 1950s and still only allows in the one fifth of Israeli Arabs who live in East Jerusalem—illegally incorporated into Israel after 1949.

## Reinforce

The *Histadrut* has used its power ever since 1948 to block all but the most limited industrial action of the Arab sectors of Israel. This serves to further reinforce the need to travel long distances to work. In Gaza and the West Bank the rise of the Zionist state had no less disastrous consequences for the economy. Ports such as Haifa and Yafa were cut off from the agricultural areas of the West Bank, undermining markets and supply routes. Gaza City lost its position as trade centre for Hebron. On the absorption of the West Bank into the kingdom of Jordan in 1950 a further set-back to industrial development occurred as the Hashemite monarchy sought to supply the industrialising East Bank with agricultural produce.

The Israeli army's crushing victory in the Six Day War brought the West Bank and Gaza (and an extra one million Arabs) under the



In last month's edition of *Workers Power* we showed how December and January's mass strikes have brought the Arab working class to the fore in the struggle against the Zionist state. This month *David Green* examines the structure of that class, outlining its changing role in the economic and political life of Palestine.

# ISRAEL'S ENEMY WITHIN

direct administration of the military. The occupation heralded the way for profound changes in the make-up of Israeli society and of the role of the Arab working class within it. Faced at last with the prospect of developing a local market for Israeli exports, a prospect which had been denied them by the boycott operated by the Arab bourgeois regimes, the Israeli ruling class was initially divided as to its strategy.

The Labour Zionists opposed any economic integration, fearing the the Jewish nature of Israel would be undermined. However, a faction led by Moshe Dayan argued for the new captive market to be exploited to the full, and for the Zionists to make use of the vast pool of cheap labour now available to them. This latter course triumphed and the Israelis set about encouraging migrant labour to come into Israel from the occupied territories.

## Interests

Employment agencies established to direct this operation brazenly served the interests of Israeli capitalist demand—by March 1971 99% of all job seekers in the West Bank were directed to Israel. A boom in 'illegal' working also took place in tandem with this process. Today some 90,000 (out of 230,000) workers of the West Bank and Gaza strip cross daily into Israel to work.

The advantages to Israeli capital of Arab labour were simple enough to comprehend: lower wages, less effective trade union organisation and no rights of citizenship made the new employees cheaper and more 'flexible'. Therefore, despite a minor slackening off in the rate of increase during the Israeli recession of 1974-77, by 1983 the number of Arab workers in Israel had doubled since the beginning of the occupation, forming 24.5% of the total workforce. Around 50% of these were employed in construction.

Unemployment dropped dramatically in Gaza and the West Bank as the knock-on effects of the increase in migrant labour were felt. As workers returned to their towns and villages with relatively strong Israeli currency, the service sector boomed, employing 45% of the territories' workers by the end of the 1970s.

Of course, the reverse side of this daily labour migration is the chronic underdevelopment of an industrial working class in the occupied territories. It has shrunk since 1967. Today industry only accounts for 7% of the West Bank's GDP and 10% of Gaza's.

Moreover, the average sized workplace in the West Bank employs only four people, while in Gaza 90% of factories employ less than eight workers. If we add to this the fact that in the 1970s up to one third of Palestinian workers were employed in the surrounding oil producing states it is clear that the Israeli state has been successful in atomising the Arab working class and marginalising it from the decisive sectors of the Israeli economy. The repression of the unions in the occupied territories, the denial of democratic rights inside Israel itself, the arduous conditions of work and the obstacles placed in the way of domestic life have all combined to disrupt the growth and homogeneity of the Palestinian working class.

## Importance

Nevertheless, several developments underline the strategic importance of the working class. It is growing compared to the other classes in Palestinian society. There is virtually no agricultural proletariat, only small impoverished farmers.

The Palestinian bourgeoisie is *in absentia*, making its fortune in the diaspora and in particular in the conservative oil states. The small Arab bourgeoisie in the occupied territories is weak precisely because of the Israeli policy of undermining Arab industrialisation.

When it does exist it does so by the grace of funds from abroad or collaboration with the Israeli military. As such, its conspicuous consumption earns it the suspicion or hatred of the refugee camp proletariat. As one labourer who works in Israel and lives in Gaza's Jabalin Camp

said of the Gaza bourgeois Palestinians:

"They splash their money around, go shopping in Israel and have dirty nights out in Ashkelch. They even throw parties in honour of the military rulers! We spend our nights locked in the factories in Israel, scratching a living . . . If weren't for the occupation—I mean, if we had our own state—there'd be a social revolution against this injustice and exploitation." (*Stateless in Gaza* p53)

In addition, the working class is well educated and cultured. Many unskilled workers are graduates who are prevented from getting skilled jobs. Since 1984 more Palestinians have been returning from the Gulf states than are leaving, due to the cut in the output of oil. All this tends to increase the average level of politicisation of the Palestinian workers.

## Unification

The growing interdependence of Israel and the occupied territories creates the conditions for a unification of the Palestinian working class across the Green Line, and gives to the West Bank and Gaza working class an increasing social power.

By the early 1980s Israel had profited from the occupation. It draws taxes from the migrant labour and had created a large captive market for many Israeli goods. One estimate suggests Israel profits to the tune of \$40 million a year in each of the territories. The revolt of the Palestinians is a real threat to these profits.

The recent mass strikes against repression by the Arab proletariat is breaking down the divisions of the pre-1967 border. Economic 'integration' despite the position of dependence in which the occupied territories have been placed, has laid the basis for a new sense of solidarity to develop between workers on both sides of the old Green Line. It is

of particular significance that on December 1987 the unprecedented Arab strike (encompassing workers in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel itself), took place around demands related to the Palestinian *national* struggle. Alongside the growth of the working class, national self-determination and an end to Zionist colonialism remain the key issues around which the mass of Palestinian Arabs have been mobilised. The ability of the workers to cause serious disruption to manufacturing, transport, services, and of course, construction, makes industrial action a key weapon in the struggle to undermine and immobilise the Zionist state.

## Pressure

In addition the commercial strike, which continued through January 1988, put sufficient pressure on the Israeli economy for the army to be employed full time in breaking open shops and harrasing those traders who were observing the boycott.

The social weight of the Palestinian working class alone may be insufficient to bring the Zionist state crashing down. It is certain that the revolutionary path involves breaking key sectors of the Jewish proletariat from its Zionism. It is also true that the revolution cannot be made permanent without drawing in the stronger Arab working classes—such as the Egyptians—into the fight against imperialism and their bourgeois Arab collaborators.

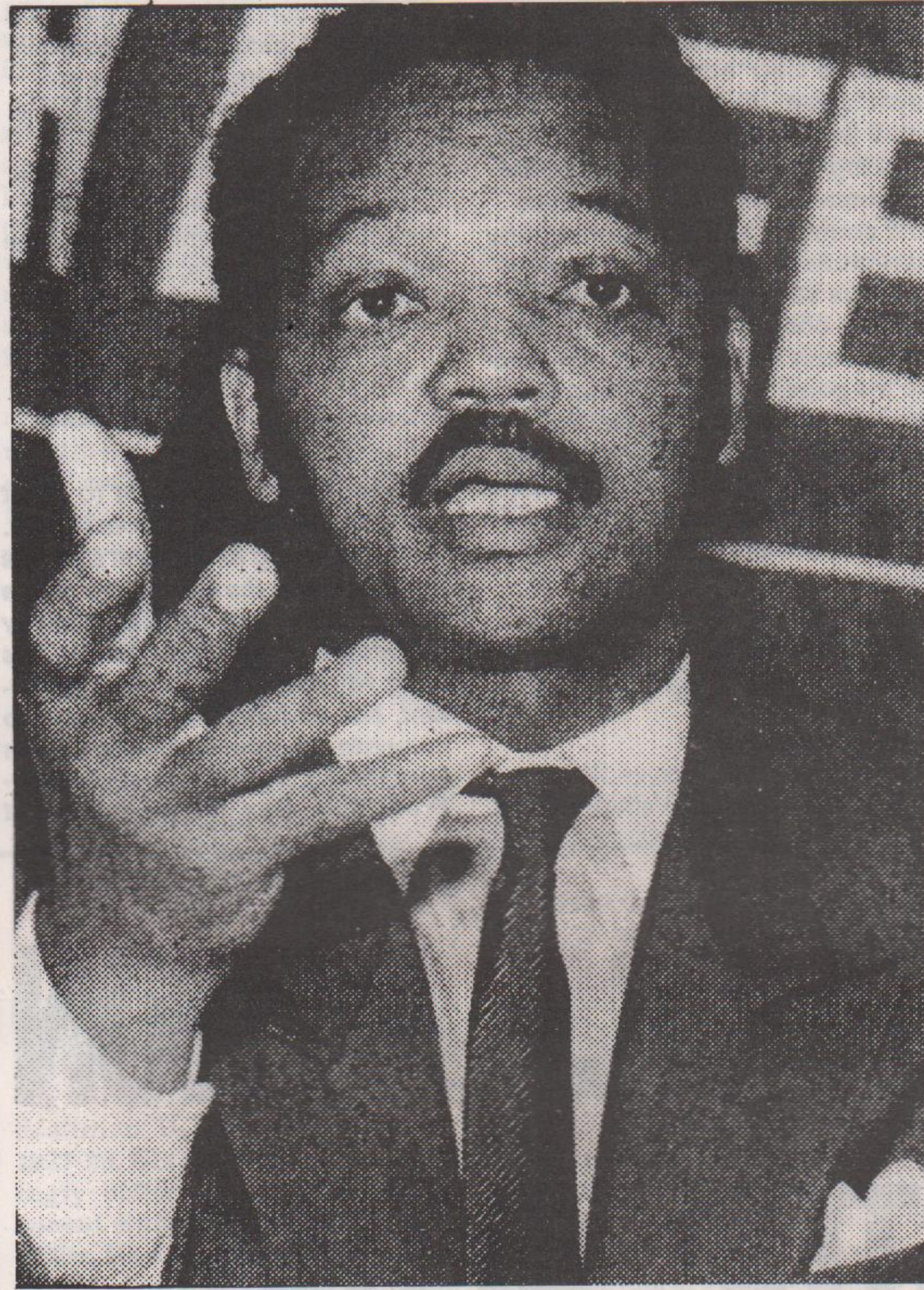
But the Palestinian workers are a political vanguard. Without their implacable struggle Arab-Jewish anti-Zionist unity is impossible. With it, the Egyptian workers can make leaps and bounds in their political consciousness. Yet there is one indispensable condition for all this. The Palestinian workers must rediscover their political independence from other classes.

From the 1930s onward attempts to build a strong working class political party have failed. During the



# NO RED IN JACKSON'S RAINBOW

G R McColl looks at what is on offer for the US working class in the looming presidential elections



revolt of 1936-39, despite the key role of the mass strike the workers remained under the leadership of Hajj Amin al-Hussaini, the Mufti of Jerusalem. The Mufti's group, dominating the Arab Higher Committee and eventually issued a call for an end to all strike action in the 'interests of Arab unity'!

The Palestinian Communist Party, under pressure from the Stalinist Comintern with its policy of class collaboration, hailed Hajj Amin al-Hussaini as 'belonging to the most extremely anti-imperialist wing of the nationalist movement'. Together with its failure ever to win a predominantly Arab membership, this accommodationist line disarmed the party in its attempts to develop proletarian political independence. By 1948 the Soviet Union's support for the establishment of the Zionist state had deeply discredited Stalinism in the region and with it the notion of working class leadership of the national struggle.

## Settlement

The Palestine Liberation Organisation, under the leadership of the bourgeois Fatah faction, has been isolated from the revolt of the workers and youth, seeing it as an embarrassment to plans for an imperialist peace settlement involving the USA, the Arab bourgeoisies and even Israel itself (see WP 101 January 1988). With President Mubarak of Egypt's call on the Palestinians to cease all anti-Israeli demonstrations 'for six months' as part of a negotiated package, we can expect to see Fatah travel further along the road of compromise and betrayal.

The real danger in the months and years ahead is that the failed policies of Stalinism and petit bourgeois nationalism will serve to speed the growth of Islamic fundamentalism. Since the mid-1970s this reactionary ideology has put down roots in the refugee camps—especially in Gaza. Its intransigence against Zionism and its devotion to mass participatory politics appeals to youth who have known nothing but occupation on the one hand and failed elitist military squads fighting on their behalf, on the other.

## Disastrous

The spread of this force would be as disastrous for the Palestinians as it has proven for the Iranian workers. Its anti-semitism would drive the Jewish proletariat further into the arms of reactionary zealots. A victory for the fundamentalists would create a new reactionary prison house for the Palestinians no better than the Zionist one in which they are currently held. The answer lies in the creation of a revolutionary workers' party fighting for a unitary, secular, workers' republic of Palestine.

## Treachery

The raw material for such a party exists. It is to be found in the revival of activity in the Gaza trade unions, which last year threw off their old conservative leadership and overcame the intimidation of Israeli troops to hold the first elections since 1967. It is to be found amongst the militant youth of the camps who are dissatisfied with the treachery of Fatah and the Gulf oil state bourgeoisie. It is to be found in the growing numbers of Palestinians living in Israel now in daily contact with their brothers and sisters over the green line who strive for their own trade unions.

In the battles of the next period the building of such a party is a pressing task:

- For independent Arab trade unions inside Israel
- For free trade union elections in occupied territories
- For a revolutionary (Trotskyist) workers' party in Palestine
- For a unitary secular workers' republic of Palestine

**A MEDIA circus of huge proportions has been busy trying to whip up enthusiasm for 1988s US Presidential elections. It needs to. The poll is one in which less than half the eligible electorate will actually vote.**

Thirteen 'serious' candidates are striving to succeed Reagan in the White House. This baker's dozen from the two bourgeois parties, the Republicans and Democrats, offers nothing to the workers and the oppressed of the USA. The one distinctive feature of the campaigns is quite how far right the Democratic contenders have been prepared to go in their bid to gain the nomination and outflank Reagan's would-be heirs in the Republican Party.

The Reagan years are drawing rapidly to a none too graceful conclusion with further indictments of key administration figures almost certain to come in connection with a wide range of corruption and constitutional impropriety. Unlike 1980 and 1984, this year America's bosses have no clear preference for the White House. The ebullient arrogance of the 1984 election campaign has been sapped and replaced by revived talk amongst pundits of a 'national malaise'. In short the US ruling class is suffering a bad case of the jitters. The Iran-Contra affair has undermined confidence in US imperialism's foreign policy. The actions of Israel, the US's Middle East outpost, in putting down the Palestinian revolt have likewise caused problems for the State Department's global strategists.

## Surge

At home the enthusiasm for Reaganomics has waned. Confidence was badly shaken after 'Black Monday' when Wall Street crashed. It has not recovered. The renewed surge in the budget deficit, a spiralling imbalance in international trade and the gyrations of the world's financial markets all point in the direction of an impending recession.

Motor manufacturing, a weathervane for US capitalism in general for much of the post-war period, shows signs of a sharp downturn. Nationally, 45,000 autoworkers are currently on indefinite layoff and an ailing General Motors has shut down two large assembly plants for the foreseeable future.

## Questions

Whatever the immediate prospect for the US economy the events of recent months have shattered the somnolent complacency of the Reagan years. Suddenly the candidates for the job of steering the leading capitalist power into the 1990s find themselves faced with awkward questions. About the apparent inability of US based manufacturing capital to compete in the global marketplace; about the chronic failure of the state educational system to churn out functionally literate workers; about the mountain of 'Third World' debt and the appropriate role for an overstretched imperialism in regions from the Middle East to Central America.

The Republican front runners George Bush and Bob Dole are both seeking to carry on where Reagan has left off. While the two men appear to hate each other their policies are, by and large, identical. They will continue Reagan's military build-up and his programme of attacks on all forms of welfare spending.

With the lame-duck presidency

behind them, they should be getting ready for second place. But they are not. The Democrats have been unable to come up with a candidate enjoying enough support within the party to act as a credible alternative to the Republicans. Gary Hart's re-entry into the race has simply further fouled things up. His well publicised sex life guarantees he will not get the nomination. But he will get enough support to act as broker for the final choice. The Democrats do have a liberal wing and over the last four years much of the radical left have liquidated themselves into it. Likewise, the AFL-CIO union federation looks to this bourgeois outfit's left-wing to act as 'friends of labour' at the governmental level. The most significant development in this wing of the Democrats has been the emergence of the Reverend Jesse Jackson as a serious contender for the Presidential nomination. He is backed by the National Rainbow Coalition (NRC) which now embraces virtually all of the party's leading black figures.

## Maverick

However, whereas in 1984 Jackson (opportunistically) behaved like a maverick in the party, this time round he is playing by the rules—a mark of quite how right-wing US official politics have become in the last few years. The Reverend is back with a modified and moderate image and muted rhetoric. He has a clear opportunity to play the most important power-broker at a deadlocked Democratic

convention come July. The NRC has been institutionalised as a campaign committee for Jackson but as little else, and gone is the talk of the Rainbow Coalition of the oppressed and dispossessed. Noticeably the phrase 'US imperialism' has also departed from his vocabulary. Instead the emphasis is on 'moral leadership for a great nation' and 'spiritual healing' as well as on black self-help. To reassure the white plutocracy in the party Willie Brown, a key black Jackson supporter, explained that the NRC 'would not appeal to the so-called Black consensus'.

## Support

Jackson has maintained some liberal stance on social issues like lesbian and gay rights. He has done enough to maintain his key base of support within the black petit-bourgeoisie, among liberal Protestant churches, and from within the new social movements. He has shed the anti-semitic image of 1984 (when he appeared to endorse the views of the black leader and anti-semitic—Farrakhan) by expressing his support for the state of Israel. And in his bid to be a man of all the people he has courted business and union leaders.

There is a real danger that the unions will, once again, be enlisted to support a Democrat in the elections. They will be asked to choose the means of their own execution—a pistol or poison. Jackson is undoubtedly trying to sweeten the

poison without diluting it one bit. He has everything to play for.

Unlike 1984 when the AFL-CIO quickly delivered poll support to Walter Mondale, this year they have given their affiliates the freedom to back whom they please. Jackson supporters have been hard at work to win this politically important base of support.

## Abstained

He has won the endorsement of a small health workers' union, the only organised labour body to commit itself to a candidate so far. While top brass of the union bureaucracy have generally abstained a handful of self-proclaimed 'democratic socialists' among the union chiefs have moved towards Jackson, most notably William Winpisinger of the International Association of Machinists. This is the man who sealed the fate of the watershed PATCO strike by refusing to fight for any secondary action within his own membership and by ordering them to cross PATCO picket lines. Winpisinger has acted thus far only as an individual, so the union's coffers are not yet open to the Jackson candidacy. But the possibilities they they will become so, along with others, is there.

In the 1984 primaries the Reverend garnered 3.5 million votes nationally, which he dutifully delivered to Mondale at the general election, despite talk of a 'third party' candidacy. This time around there is no question of doubt about Jackson's supine loyalty to the Democratic Party. And while he has been gently criticised by his Stalinist and erstwhile 'new left' supporters, he still has their backing. The left paper, *Frontline* (a coalition of assorted elements of the 'new left') is fervently campaigning for a 'broader hearing within labor's ranks for the peace and justice program of the Rainbow candidacy of Jesse Jackson'. What this solidarity will mean for the USA's masses, however, is best spelt out by Jackson himself in a campaign message when he wished Reagan gone, but stressed:

'But there is nothing wrong with America. America is our land. America is God's country. America is blessed and God Bless America.'

## Rival

The millions of American workers and oppressed do not need this kind of patriotic dope. It does not differ at all from the policies on offer from Jackson's principal Democratic rivals, Gary Hart and Michael Dukakis and his potential rival, New York's governor Mario Cuomo.

Faced with such a choice US workers must seize the opportunity to break with the bourgeois parties altogether. A candidate of the workers' organisations is needed, and a campaign to get one should begin now in every union. Such a struggle, in essence a fight to force the bureaucracy to break with the bourgeoisie and form a labor party, will not be easy. It is however vitally necessary.

Any recession will hit the US workers hard. The expanded hi-tech and service sectors will be ravaged with the same ferocity that the old 'rust-belt' industries were in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A Republican or Democratic president, a Bush or a Jackson will seek to make the workers pay for the costs of a recession. The fight for political independence now will mean workers are better equipped to face these inevitable attacks. ■



# HAYWOOD, COMMUNISM & SYNDICALISM

Dear Comrades, Workers Power's instant evaluations of history are getting worse. First we had the hyper-critical and ignorant review of A J Cook in WP 100, now the decapitation of De Leon in the 'Big Bill' Haywood review in WP 101.

'... the IWW hijacked by the sectarian group around De Leon.'

Was it? De Leon was a co-founder of the IWW and an inspiration throughout the English speaking world. The impact of De Leon was tremendous in ideological terms. Lenin credits De Leon with understanding the role and necessity of soviets (industrial unions) before he did himself.

Haywood believed the government of a socialist country should be the industrial unions, in the way that Leninists originally believed in, soviet government, i.e. government by the democratic workers' committees and councils. This is what I believe in as a Marxist, don't you?

The IWW never, ever rejected 'politics'. It was a 'red union', a left political union with a revolutionary constitution. Calling for the overthrow of the capitalist system. Isn't that political?

Haywood didn't simply 'flee to the Soviet Union' he became an organiser of agricultural soviets. He is buried just opposite John Reed in the Kremlin.

Reviews like this one make me believe that your vision of socialism consists of some sort of government by a political party, albeit a revolutionary one. Anything other than this is in your distorted view 'non-political' or 'syndicalist'. A socialist state to my mind is direct government by the working class themselves (i.e. the democratic workers' committees and councils, and such community assemblies as the CDR in Cuba or perhaps street committees and tenants bodies here. Revolutionary parties can advise and continue to be the paper selling pains up the arse that they are now, but the power of the class must be represented directly in the working class organs of government and administration, soviets (industrial unions).

Revolutionary greetings  
David Douglass  
NUM

Dear Comrades  
I don't know if they receive *Workers Power* in the workers' Valhalla—but if



they do, 'Big Bill' Haywood will be mighty sore about issue 101. As your review of Dubofsky's book on Haywood makes clear, he was a syndicalist for many years. But you failed to mention that, as a result of the lessons of October 1917, he became a communist! He was one of the first members of the American CP. Then, during his exile, he joined the Russian party and was active in Comintern affairs, particularly the defence of class-war prisoners, until his death in 1928.

To omit the fact of Bill Haywood's transcendence of syndicalism and his adherence to communism for the last decade of his life, it to obscure that which made him truly Big.

Yours fraternally  
J E Lewis.

Comrade Lewis is right to point out that Bill became a communist. But he is wrong to suggest that this was somehow the apex of the man's career. Bill was ill, drinking heavily and politically restless during his exile. His role in the ILO was important, but advisory. And (in reply to comrade Douglass) his spell in an agricultural soviet, proved short-lived. The point is, however, that

none of this distracts from the contribution he did make to the working class movement during his years as a syndicalist. It was a big and valuable contribution.

Comrade Douglass' main criticism also misses the mark. De Leon, despite positive contributions, remained a sectarian. Under his leadership the IWW shrivelled. Haywood's return to the IWW and its resurgence coincided with De Leon's departure. Moreover, far from leading Lenin on the question of soviets, De Leon and Haywood's tendency to equate industrial unions with organs of working class power was and remains wrong.

Even industrial unions, important as they are, do not transcend the workplace/industry soviets. Soviets draw in to struggle and organise for power the entire ranks of the exploited and oppressed. But to equate the two is to make a classic syndicalist mistake, for it substitutes a union based form or organisation for a class wide one. The role of the party is to substitute for neither, but seek to win leadership of both.

Nowhere do we accuse Haywood—or syndicalism for that matter—of being unpolitical. We believe it underestimated the role of the state, did not understand the role of party politics, and pursued purely trade union forms of action, while spurning a variety of political forms of action.

Finally, we do differ with Dave's view of socialism, and quite fundamentally so. We do not believe in the rule of the party over the working class. Dave, however, by citing Stalinist Cuba as his model, obviously does.

## SSiN and NOLS

Dear Comrades, Although I agree with most of the report of NUS conference in WP 101, I must disagree with your account of who did what over the Baker Bill and the Poll Tax. You imply that the NEC were left without a mandate to organise action 'due to the conference being dominated by CP Stalinists and by NOLS, which in turn is dominated by the Kin-nockite "democratic left"'. In fact these forces did put forward their own, even less adequate strategy—which was thankfully rejected. The policy that was adopted was in fact put forward by SSiN. It was SSiN which was not prepared to force the executive's hand for fear of alienating their own base.

Despite this, some action is being organised by the NUS against Baker's Bill. There is a national college shut down called for Thursday 11 February, and a national demonstration on Saturday 27 February.

Yours in comradeship  
M Gouldbourn.

## NALGO BALLOT

Dear Comrade, As a Nalگو activist I was concerned to read your article in WP 101 on the social fund, in which you said that 'the unions have also been silent on the question of opposition to the cuts.' Not true! Nalگو is balloting all members concerned on non co-operation with the fund and many of us are working for a 'yes' vote.

In comradeship  
Ian Hassell  
Ealing Nalگو

# FOR WORKERS' ACTION TO STOP ALTON

Cath Tytler looks at the problems facing pro-abortion campaigners in the wake of the Alton Bill's successful second reading

WITH THE help of 35 Labour MPs David Alton won a second reading for his anti-abortion bill in January. We should take no comfort from the fact that anti-abortionists got 54% of the vote whereas Corrie got 71% in 1979.

Nether should we let the fact that all other attempts to restrict the 1967 Act failed to reach the statute book lull us into complacency. They fell when filibustering by pro-abortion MPs exploited the government's refusal to give them enough parliamentary time.

The Tories have given this bill enough time to make it virtually a government bill. Alton's one clause bill makes it less easy prey for amendments. The defeat of Alton cannot be left to the arithmetic of parliamentary voting alone.

Throughout the campaign against Alton we have consistently argued that the key to victory lay in mobilising working class support. The fight against restrictive legislation is a class question. It affects working class women most.

In order to mobilise them we cannot simply restrict ourselves to defending the '67 Act. For many working class women without the means to pay for abortion, this is calling for defence of rights that do not exist. Only free abortion on demand meets their needs.

We need to draw in working class women not previously in-



involved in the struggle for abortion rights. This means getting speakers into union meetings. It means organising women's caucuses where branch and regional officials obstruct the campaign. It means leafleting workplaces and estates and organising factory gate and community meetings. The extension of abortion rights requires the provision of NHS facilities to meet the need. We must link this to the struggle of the health workers in the NHS. We fight for free early pregnancy testing, for better contraceptive

advice and for early abortion with full counselling.

We must challenge the Labour MPs who voted for the bill. Resolutions need to be sent through LP wards to the NEC demanding they impose a three line whip. This is a class issue not an issue of individual conscience.

The TUC has already given its support for the national demonstration called by the Fight Alton's Bill campaign on 19 March. They must now be pressurised into providing the money and resources to help build a massive trade union presence on the day. But we cannot wait for them to act. Rank and file trade unionists must take the argument for abortion rights into their workplaces. We must seek to ensure it is the biggest demonstration yet.

However, a massive demo on the 19th will not, in itself, guarantee the defeat of Alton. If the bill has the support of Thatcher—which it will have if Alton compromises on the time limit—then it will require more than a demonstration to stop it.

We must argue for the demo to become a stepping stone to organising strike action on the day of the third reading. We must show them we mean business. That is the way to guarantee the defeat of Alton, not wooing the medical profession or liberal and conservative pro-abortionists. ■

Up

### OUT THIS MONTH

**Permanent Revolution 7**  
Feature articles on  
The British working class  
Nicaragua  
The Transitional Programme today  
£2.50 (inc p&p)  
**The Road to Red October**  
A new pamphlet by Workers Power  
75p (inc p&p)  
**Fight Alton's Bill:**  
**Free abortion on demand!**  
A pamphlet for all FAB activists  
50p (inc p&p)

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

**BIRMINGHAM**  
*Arab workers shake Israel*  
Carrs Lane Church Centre  
Thursday 4 February 7.30pm  
**CARDIFF**  
*Free abortion on demand*  
See seller for date and venue  
**CENTRAL LONDON**  
*The NHS in crisis*  
See seller for venue  
Wednesday 5 February 7.30pm  
**EAST LONDON**  
*The NHS in crisis*  
Durning Hall, Earlham Grove, E7  
Thursday 18 February 8.00pm  
**LECESTER**  
*The NHS in crisis*  
Unemployed workers centre, Charles St  
Monday 8 February 7.30pm  
**READING**  
*Palestinian workers shake Israel*  
Reading International Support Centre  
London Street  
Friday 12 February 7.30pm

### CLASS STRUGGLE

Monthly paper of the Irish Workers Group  
Issue No 3 out now  
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### SHEFFIELD

*Debate with Socialist Organiser:*  
*Palestine and Zionism*  
Thursday 25 February  
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### MARXIST DISCUSSION GROUPS

**BIRMINGHAM**  
*Reform or revolution?*  
Tuesday 16 February 7.30pm  
**CHESTERFIELD**  
*Palestinian workers shake Israel*  
Tuesday 16 February 7.30pm  
**LEICESTER**  
*Palestinian workers shake Israel*  
Thursday 11 February 7.30pm  
**NORTH LONDON**  
*The current attacks in education*  
Wednesday 17 February 7.30pm  
**SOUTH LONDON**  
*What is the nature of the state?*  
Wednesday 24 February 7.30pm

See your Workers Power seller for details of all MDGs



# The Nicaraguan revolution



Stuart King reviews  
**Nicaragua: politics, economics and society**  
by David Close  
(Pinter London 1988)

**DAVID CLOSE** a Canadian academic, has produced a well researched book on the Nicaraguan revolution. It is extremely up to date, drawing on information and studies as recent as August 1987.

Close's book, having provided a brief overview of the history of Nicaragua, concentrates on the causes and nature of the revolution that overthrew Somoza in July 1979. Close starts by pointing out an obvious fact so stunningly ignored by many of the so called 'socialists' and 'Trotskyists' who gush about revolutionary Nicaragua:

'We must bear in mind that the Sandinista revolution was not a proletarian movement to create a proletarian state. Rather the Sandinista's led a multi-class, multi-interest alliance to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship on what they saw as the first step towards building a democratic socialist regime pursuing the logic of the majority.'

Close, who is obviously far from unsympathetic to that project, proceeds to analyse Sandinista government policy in terms of the imperative on them to hold together that multi-class alliance.

At the level of government the FSLN, despite strenuous efforts to keep significant representatives from the bourgeoisie, failed to maintain the alliance. Close goes through the steps of this governmental breakup. April 1980 saw the departure from the governing junta of Violetta Barrios de Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo, who was later to become a leading contra. Their bourgeois replacements lasted only a little longer, with Arturo Cruz leaving the junta in 1981 and joining the Contras sometime later.

This failure to maintain the popular front at the level of government did not, however, mean that the strategy of maintaining a popular

front alliance was abandoned. Far from it. Maintaining the multi-class alliance meant preserving and encouraging private agriculture and industry. Comandante Jaimie Wheelock, Minister for Agriculture, put it in its most utopian form in 1984:

'Let the bourgeoisie just produce and limit itself, as a class, to a productive role. Let it use its means of production to live, not as an instrument of power or domination.'

Of course there was never any question that the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie or any other capitalist class, would voluntarily give up its political power, its direct control of the state, while a 'painless' transition to socialism was adopted. At best a minority offered grudging, if obstructive co-operation. The majority set about sabotaging the economy, decapitalising the plants and organising, with the help of their North American friends, the counter-revolution.

What we have seen in Nicaragua in the first eight and a half years is living proof that tying the workers' and peasants' struggle to a 'democratic stage' sows the seeds of bloody defeat for the masses.

Close brings out the implications of this policy most clearly when he looks at agrarian reform. The growing of cotton, coffee and to a lesser extent, cattle raising were crucial to the primarily agricultural Nicaraguan economy. While Somoza's considerable lands were expropriated (amounting to 20% of Nicaragua's agricultural land), peasant land occupations of other farms were discouraged and reversed by the new government. The first Agrarian Law Reform was delayed until August 1981 in order not to alienate the bourgeois members of the government.

According to Close, before 1981:

'Large and medium sized private farms and ranchers held over two thirds of the country's productive land. Preserving national unity and maintaining production compelled the FSLN to offer the private producers a package of incentives unprecedented even under the Somoza regime.'

# Reformism and Northern Ireland

Breda Concannon reviews  
**Beyond the Rhetoric**  
Edited by Paul Teague  
(Lawrence and Wishart 1987  
£6.95 243pp)

**Paul Teague** in his introduction to this collection of essays on politics, the economy and social policy in Northern Ireland, states that the authors' aim is to go 'beyond the rhetoric of most existing left-wing literature on Northern Ireland, and to provide a more rigorous and comprehensive examination of current political issues in the province'.

Some sections of this book are well researched, very informative and certainly worth reading. In particular the second half, which deals with the Northern Ireland economy, provides a vivid picture, backed up with numerous statistics, of the economic and social realities in the six counties.

Gafkin and Morrissey detail some of the worst poverty and unemployment in Europe and reveal the differential suffering that this entails for the Catholics. Others chart the dev-

astation of manufacturing (historically the back bone of the partitioned and gerrymandered state) and its replacement by public sector employment. This sector now accounts for 70% of all jobs. Those industrial enterprises that remain only survive by massive financial subsidies. Harland and Wolff Shipbuilders receive an average of £8,000 per job a year from the British government.

But what are the political perspectives the authors put forward. They claim not to be offering a specific strategy, but are primarily concerned to promote debate. Indeed Teague claims in the introduction that all the main different viewpoints on the left are represented in the book. All that is except the one which supports an immediate British troop withdrawal and self-determination and a united Ireland.

Groups like ourselves who stand for this are regarded as holding rigid positions and being more concerned with 'ideological purity' than seeking a solution to the Northern Ireland crisis. The fact that the crisis is actually a result of British imperialism's rule over the North is ignored.

In contrast the authors offer an array of reformist policy options of a

Stalinist and left Labourite hue. One of the more dangerous is contained in the article by Bew and Patterson. They seek to propagate the notion of unionism as essentially democratic in content. It is not power-sharing they oppose but 'any change in the constitutional status quo'. A position which finds favour with *Marxism Today* in Britain and the Workers Party in Ireland.

O'Dowd in contrast limits his horizons to the hope that a future Labour government might consider adopting his strategy of increasing the mutual economic interdependence of both communities as 'a special Northern Ireland version of a broader spatial strategy for the UK'.

What all the contributors have in common is their search for solutions to the economic crisis facing Northern Ireland within the framework of capitalism, British dominated capitalism at that.

Nor do any of the authors really understand or condemn British imperialism's economic and military role in Ireland. So while this book provides much needed statistics and data, the authors use them to reinforce their own brand of reformist rhetoric. ■

# The roots of Stalinism

John Hunt reviews  
**The Birth of Stalinism: The USSR on the Eve of the 'Second Revolution'**  
by M Reiman  
(IB Tauris and Co Ltd 1987)

**REIMAN'S BOOK** is an interesting study of the establishment of Stalinism in the USSR between 1927-29. His approach is refreshingly different to that of most recent studies of the USSR in the 1920s. He acknowledges the profound contradictions within the New Economic Policy (NEP) which were propelling it towards terminal crisis. As such his is not a work that seeks to rehabilitate the political programme of Bukharin or NEP as a viable and functioning precursor of modern 'market socialism'.

More importantly he acknowledges that the protagonists in the party struggle of the late 1920s were not simply the 'humane' Bukharin and the scheming, brutal Stalin. He evidences Bukharin's own calls for brutal repression against the left in 1927. And he shows how the weakness and eventual defeat of

Bukharin and the right rejected the collapse of the system they advocated.

Reiman amply demonstrates that the crisis of late NEP provoked major fears among Stalin's supporters and the right that the Trotskyist Left Opposition was becoming a major force once again. Coinciding, as it did, with mounting working class discontent the Opposition had the support of increasing numbers of workers in 1927. Reiman quotes GPU (secret police) reports from German archives that express mounting alarm at the popularity of the Opposition and at the activities of the Opposition in the proletarian centres. What was alarming for the party leadership was that the left was both being proved right in its predictions about NEP and growing in popularity.

The author is not an advocate of the Trotskyist programme. He does however assert the centrality of the Left Opposition to understanding the development of repression and the rule of Stalin and the clique of his immediate henchmen. He places considerable stress on the fight of the Opposition for party democracy. To this extent he restores the Opposition to its rightful place in the his-

tory of the Soviet 1920s.

Reiman furnishes clear evidence of the political parasitism of the Stalin group. Squeezed between the right, whose project was collapsing, and a growth of the left, Stalin's programme rejects the clash of those forces. In a repressive and bureaucratic manner that had nothing in common with the Trotskyists, the Stalin group moved left against private farming and low industrial growth.

In a voluntarist manner, they dramatically upped the targets for industrial production. All of these decisions were pragmatic responses to immediate political and economic crises, not the fruition of a long held distinct programme of the Stalin group. In that process the Stalinist system was born.

After many years of Bukharin occupying centre stage, Reiman's book is a welcome corrective. It contains a fascinating appendix of letters from Soviet officials in Moscow to Soviet representatives in Berlin that were kept by the German foreign ministry. They give the feeling of the crisis that wracked the late phase of the NEP and the powerful spectre of the Left Opposition that was haunting the USSR's bureaucratic rulers. ■

The 1981 Reform was extremely moderate and did little to assuage the land hunger of the peasants. It was only in 1985 with an escalating Contra war and real signs of disaffection amongst the small and landless peasants that a slightly more radical land reform was introduced. Even today the president of the National Farmers' and Stockmans' Union, (SNAG), a union of small and medium farmers which is increasingly a major social base of the FSLN regime, can declare:

'I would say that the agrarian law to date has been very prudent... you might even say conservative. The new law is also consistent with the mixed economy and political pluralism.'

David Close's book does not neglect the very real gains made by the workers and peasants through their

revolutionary overthrow of Somoza. He details the freedom from the constant repression and violence of the Somoza dictatorship, the right to vote and to join trade unions, the gains in health care and in education—in particular the literacy campaigns—and the improvements in housing and sanitation. Yet the economic blockade imposed by the USA, the massive human and financial costs of the US backed contra war, the sabotage and obstruction of the bourgeoisie and the undoubted corrupting effect of a massive black market and 'informal economy' is increasingly undermining many of these gains.

Between March 1982 and January this year, various 'states of emergency' have outlawed the right to strike for all but a few months during the elections. *Real* wages in Nicara-

gua now stand at only 57% of their 1980 value—signalling a real fall in living standards of the masses. There has been a considerable exodus from the factories and into the 'informal economy' which now accounts for 49% of the economically active population. The war takes up over 50% of the governmental expenditure and most education and housing programmes are at a standstill.

While David Close can see many of these problems, as a 'detached academic' he can only muse on the 'model' the Sandinista state has chosen to follow and admire its 'pragmatic' attempts to solve its problems.

For the Marxist this book brings home the iron necessity of constructing a revolutionary party armed with the perspective of permanent revolution, the only possibility of a real and lasting victory over imperialism. ■



# workers power

AFTER THE ELECTION . . .

## WHERE NEXT FOR THE NUM?



**THE FLAMES** of militant resistance are still alive in the coalfields. This is despite being beaten back to work after the year long national strike. It is despite a management crackdown in every pit and a closure programme that has seen the workforce in South Wales and Scotland reduced by over 50%. It is in spite of pleadings by area leadership for miners to throw in the towel.

That the South Yorkshire Bentley miners brought out 20 pits in their support when the Board tried to move three men from a driveage shows that this is so. So too does the opposition of the South Wales miners at Oakdale to the loss of two hundred jobs. And in its own particular way the fact that a majority of NUM miners voted for Scargill in the Presidential elections makes the same point.

This is particularly true of the Scottish and Welsh miners who refused to heed the calls of their area leaderships. British Coal and the Tories still have a long way to go in breaking the miners to the extent that a sell off of the mines would be an attractive proposition to their City backers.

In the period ahead either the Tories will succeed in smashing the NUM as a fighting force, or the miners will rebuild their strength. That Arthur Scargill has been re-elected as President does not resolve things either way. The key lies in organisation at rank and file level in, and across, the coalfield.

While the bosses have not broken the NUM they have the whip hand at present. From South Yorkshire to Scotland and Wales they are throwing their weight around. And usually

they are getting their way. They are spoiling for a fight with the most militant sections of miners. That is why they have targetted South Yorkshire for a series of disciplinary crackdowns.

Their plan is to break the NUM's bargaining power by enforcing 'flexible' working arrangements. These range from the reintroduction of the brown envelope butty payments common in some South Yorkshire pits to attempts to railroad four-shift working in South Wales. Obviously at the end of this path lies the goal of six day working, privatised superpits with not an NUM membership card in sight. Anticipated increases in world coal prices, and the reality of breaking the NUM, would make the British coal industry a profitable enough prospect for the privateers. That is why they are out to stamp down hard to impose what they call 'management's right to manage'. This means destroying the power of the NUM in every pit. This they have not been able to achieve.

Despite the tenacity of the miners, the union leadership is in retreat and disarray. The re-election of Arthur Scargill should not be allowed to conceal this fact.

The area leaderships are all pulling in their separate directions to undermine national unity.

In their various ways, they are raising the white flag in the face of British Coal's offensive. South Welsh and Scottish officials opened the door to Walsh by refusing to support Scargill. Hiding behind the union's federal constitution they will seek to negotiate their own terms in the areas. The South Yorkshire leadership stabbed Bentley in the back and are now trying to stifle the potential for an instant response to provocation by ruling that no pickets can be sent out without the prior consent of the Panel.

A coalition of these area leaderships still controls the NUM executive. It did before the Presidential election. And neither the campaign nor the result changed it.

The Board have not only their publicised plans for flexible working super pits—Margam, Frances, Thorne, Asfordby and Hawkhurst Moor—they also have the scab herders who would be willing to provide the labour force for six day working. The UDM would do it.

Worst of all, from our point of view, they have the yellow-bellies like South Welsh leader Dutfield who have told the Board that the NUM has given up any prospect of organising at Margam and of ensuring that it works on the NUM's terms. Both through insisting on flexible shift working arrangements in individual pits and through driving in the wedges between the areas the Board

aim to get their way eventually. Arthur Scargill's election campaign has to be judged against the tasks facing militant miners. The first task is to hold the line against a merciless management attack and against the backsliding and treacherous area leaders. Linked to this is the job of rebuilding the unity of the NUM within and, crucially, across the coalfields. It is testimony to the inherent limits of Scargillism that his campaign and victory advanced this cause only negatively. That is it protected the morale of the militants by not letting Walsh get in.

### Rhetoric

Throughout the campaign Scargill failed to argue for a platform around which the NUM can regroup its forces and fight the Board. There was ample rhetoric against pit closures. A vote for Arthur was a vote against them. But the tide of closures continues while the national leadership keep quiet. There was lots of talk about reinstatement of the sacked lads. But how? The National leadership and Scargill have no plans for action to win back their jobs. The hated code was repeatedly denounced. But what did Arthur commit himself to do in leading a fight against it? In truth the thousands of miners who went to Arthur Scargill's meetings would have heard all the things they hate roundly denounced. But no means of fighting them were advanced in those meetings beyond voting Scargill.

Similarly the campaign advanced no platform around which to organise against those officials who are on their knees before the Board. It gave the South Welsh and Scottish miners the chance to show what they think of their area leaders. It showed that these leaders were out of touch with their rank and file. But it offered the rank and file no call to boot out Dutfield and Bolton and their time serving henchmen. South Yorkshire rallied to Arthur Scargill true enough. But at the time of the election Bentley were being stabbed in the back. And Scargill did not intervene.

The election shows that in all ways, and by choice, Scargill remains a prisoner of the NUM official bureaucracy. He plays by their rules and will not break them by organising the rank and file against the regional officials. He fought to keep his Presidential seat and won. His left talking constantly inspired the miners when they were locked in mortal conflict with the Board, the police and the Government. And that was important. But now when the miners are more divided and more on the defensive against management his left talking, trade union bureaucratic politics have visibly less to offer. Its inherent limits are clearer to see. The danger is that miners who realise this will sink into demoralisation and that ex-worshippers will take the fact that Arthur has not delivered as a reason for capitulation. If even Arthur couldn't beat the Board, who after all could?

### Control

The key battlefield in the war between British Coal and the miners is on the question of who controls the work processes in the pit. The management—particularly the newly confident and growing number of under managers—are out to stamp their authority on every aspect of the pit's workings. They are saying that they will decide who works where and how. They are saying they will decide who gets bonus payments and how big they will be. They want to say what special conditions will receive special payments. Bluntly, they want to kick the NUM out of any negotiating role on a national, area

and pit level. They face most resistance at pit level. At area level the officials are caving in. The national leadership is paralysed. What is needed is to unify the pit level resistance against the Board and mobilise it to oust the misleaders. This Scargill will not do. His rhetoric about the national issues of pay and the code are not linked by him to the local disputes that are flaring up everywhere. The danger is that militants themselves will not make the link. As the Board go for a pit-by-pit strategy of imposing their conditions, a real danger will be an exhausting round of pit-by-pit battles exploding, remaining isolated and being defeated.

How can we stop this? How can we link the issues of pay and the code to the local issues? How can we get to the stage where an effective national fightback will become possible?

The overtime ban against the code has been shown to be a toothless farce. Everyone knows it has had no effect. South Wales has been balloted to call it off. Plans to 'escalate' it into regional one day stoppages will not convince most miners that this is the way to destroy the hated code. A campaign to implement an effective overtime ban as the starting point for organising to smash the code must be launched immediately.

But an overtime ban is not enough. We need to win area and national policies on all of the vital issues to ensure co-ordinated area and national responses to local attacks. The first step in achieving this is patiently organising the militants. Informal networks exist. We know who to phone when the pickets are to go out. In several areas unofficial Scargill for President campaigns were organised. Their networks must be kept alive. Taken together these elements must become the key links in a permanent national rank and file organisation campaigning for a programme of effective resistance.

### Organisation

Against all forms of flexible working, not just the six day week, the NUM must organise in every pit to fight to control the speed of work, the rate and distribution of bonuses and who works where. That organisation must be linked across the pits with guarantees of national solidarity action with any miners resisting management sackings, victimisations and provocations. That guarantee must be copper-bottomed with a commitment to action every time the Board tries to implement its code.

Forged together with a clear resolve to hold the line against the attacks and to unite the defensive struggles the miners can rekindle their confidence and begin to go on the offensive. They can organise to boot out the new realists. They can organise for a national campaign on pay, against closures and for solidarity with workers in struggle once again.

This is not a struggle to return to some dreamed of days when the bosses treated with the union and accepted arbitration. As far as British Coal are concerned those days are gone for ever. Only by asserting our organised strength against theirs in the battle for workers' control can the bosses be pushed back. This battle, not the re-election of Arthur Scargill, is the key to rebuilding the fighting strength of the miners. ■

## Red Miner

Workers Power bulletin for miners and their families

Number 20 out now looks at the future for the NUM