

Workers power

INSIDE: ZIMBABWE
MARX CENTENARY
PRIVATISATION SLV

A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT WON'T STOP THATCHER

THE DAY AFTER Labour's by-election boost in Darlington a Marplan poll revealed that the Tories had a 13.5% national lead over Labour. Despite all Labour's celebration after Darlington no worker should forget that it is an indictment of Labour that, in an area of high unemployment, an area where a major employer, British Rail, is threatening massive redundancies, their candidate could only achieve a 1.3% swing against the Tories.

This was despite the fact that the colourless Ossie O'Brien was treated as a personification of the "old Labour values". His campaign was in fact a vehicle for the right-wing to demonstrate the soundness of their approach as against that of the left personified in the unfortunate Peter Tatchell.

The Tories remain determined to carry on their attacks on the working class. Their confidence is growing in the face of Labour's feeble response. While the bloodless Michael Foot was bleating on about banning hunting, Norman Tebbit, the Tories' very own bloodhound, was busy outlining the next installment of his plans for savaging the labour movement. He declared of the trade unions' financial contributions to Labour that "We must bring this nonsense to an end." Of compulsory strike ballots he declared "legislation there will be."

Whatever else one might think of them, these hateful creatures are at least consistent and forthright in their policies and language. They are the policies and language of class war against the working class. Labour's challenge to this - in conjunction with the TUC - is the plaintive language of a class peace that the bosses have no longer need to observe.

The joint Labour-TUC document "Partners in Rebuilding Britain" advertises the fact that Murray, Basnett, Foot, Healey and the 'lefts' who are lining up behind it, have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. It is a social contract mark two. It is a collection of stale promises. It is couched in the language of diplomacy on the key question of pay restraint, but there is no mistaking that that is its fundamental objective. It is all that the Labour lieutenants of capital have got to offer their ruling class masters in exchange for being trusted with office.

With four million unemployed all the Labour leaders can offer is a five year investment plan in construction, transport and energy of £30 billion that promises 500,000 new jobs at the end. Another 500,000 are promised in other spheres. No doubt the three million unemployed who will remain after this bold venture will have been supplemented by thousands more shunted out of jobs over that five years.



Picture: Andrew Ward (Report)



Under the Tories a worker earning an average industrial wage has suffered a reduction in real income of 21.3% - the equivalent of £15.30 a week. At the same time the average company director taking home a cool £45,000 a year has had his salary boosted by £120 a week over the same period. No matter, the Labour and TUC barons still see wage restraint as the key to controlling the economy. Their document declares against "old" policies of wage restraint - that is, naming a percentage norm. However, it envisages using TUC consultation via a national economic assessment, to establish and enforce a de facto pay norm. That is why Len Murray has said that he is against a "no wage restraint" under Labour. He is against a fight to restore and defend lost living standards. This is why the document declares "Experience shows that the union movement is prepared to weigh priorities and where necessary to

make sacrifices - if by doing so working people can succeed in achieving their wider objectives both for themselves and for others in society." And, when Murray and Foot have decided what the pay norm is to be - based on consultation with and advice from the CBI, the TUC will police the workforce. It will ensure that any disputes that do take place "are conducted with proper regard for the interests of the community and in accordance with TUC guidelines" They will, in other words, limit pickets and undermine strikes that affect the public, so that Labour will not face another 'winter of discontent'.

In return the TUC will be once again welcomed into the auspicious decision making chambers in Downing Street and Whitehall. Thatcher, Tebbit and Howe have little time for consultations with cowardly representatives of people they are about to attack. This,

above all, has upset the union bureaucrats. By becoming partners in Rebuilding Britain they will once again become regular diners at Number 10. To weaken independent union organisation their collaborative approach is to be extended into joint union committees with "new rights to influence and control key company decisions." In other words Labour is promising a new round of workers' participation in managing industries. No doubt the workers who 'participated' in the job massacre at BL will be delighted that they are being offered this chance of a repeat performance.

The Labour-TUC document offers no working class alternative to the Tories. It is mediocre even by its own social democratic reformist standards. Yet the 'lefts' who, only two years ago were saying of the Callaghan-Healey government 'Never Again', are now heralding the document as a victory

for their policies. Benn, referring to the Manifesto that will be based on this document commented, "The 1983 election manifesto which we must soon agree, and publish, and fight on, and win on, and carry through, must be a partnership deal carrying responsibilities on both sides." This is the sentiment of the social contract. Benn's friends in Tribune hailed the document as a left-wing manifesto and reported: "Left-wing members of the NEC were generally happy with the final wording."

With the pressure of unity in election year making itself felt the lefts are predictably burying their differences with Healey, Shore and Hattersley. They are willing to fight on policies that at best will do little to help the working class and, at worst, are downright anti-working class.

The alternative to Thatcher need not be another five years of social contract style pay restraint under Labour. If Thatcher can be taken on and defeated by mass working class action then an alternative can be imposed in the interests of the workers. Do the forces exist to inflict such a defeat on the Tories? Despite the defeats and setbacks that have been suffered over the last four years, sections of workers remain resistant and capable of joining battle with the bosses and the Tories. Over the last few months car workers in various BL plants have staged and won strikes despite the effects of Edwardes' years of industrial thuggery. As we go to press 4,500 workers at Fords Halewood are striking for the reinstatement of a sacked worker. Their determination stems not only from internal solidarity with their comrade, but because they know a victory for Ford would open the door to speed-ups and prod deals under the management's 'After Japan' plan. In South Wales a solid majority of miners were prepared to strike to save a single pit. And despite the ballot set-back, the fact that they were prepared to go on what was openly recognised to be a long political strike against the Tories, shows that the working class has not yet been decisively defeated by the Tories.

The working class does not have a mortgage on time. Labour's old wine in new bottles will not bring them an election victory. Apathy, the boundary changes, and a confident Tory party will all weaken Labour's chances. Thatcher stands every chance of being returned.

There is an alternative. If the strikes strikes, the flashpoints of action, are used to weld sections of the working class together, to forge unity in struggle, to give confidence to other sections, then the tide can be turned. The militants in each industry must be organised and committed to developing these struggles into an offensive against the government. Such an offensive must not limit its goal to the restoration of a Labour government. It must fight for a government committed to defending working class interests, a government based on the working class and its own organisations of struggle a government that can clear out not only Thatcher but the whole profit hungry gang of capitalists who stand behind her. ■

For a worker's march not a People's March

THIS MONTH SEES the launch of a second "Peoples March for Jobs". It will provide a focus for mobilisations against the crime of massive unemployment that the Tories are mercilessly inflicting on the working class. To build it into such a focus should be the task of militants, employed and unemployed, over the next weeks. To succeed in doing this, though, the lessons - many of them bitter - of the 1981 march need to be learnt.

Despite the best efforts of the TUC overlords to keep that march and the whole issue of unemployment, unpolitical, the militants on the march fought hard, and achieved a measure of success, in linking up the march with the actual struggles that were taking place at the time (Ansell, United Glass). After the march the attempt to shelve the issue of fighting for jobs was at least temporarily thwarted, by those same militants

maintaining the contacts established and building unemployed workers groups.

Two years on the efforts of the militants have come to nought. The alliance of the Stalinists of the CPGB and the 'left' regional TUC godfathers like Barnett and Dromey whose brainchild the Peoples March was, had dissipated the forces who were mobilised around the march. They used their influence in the trades councils, regional TUCs, support committees to stymie mushrooming unemployed workers groups.

While these 'left' elements sabotaged the establishment of unemployed workers groups and an active campaign on jobs the TUC and Labour Party have been paying as little attention as possible to the unemployed. Prostrate before the passage of two savage anti-union laws, incapable of leading a struggle against redundancies, it should hardly surprise anyone that the initial reaction of the LP and TUC to the Scottish TUC's proposal for another Peoples March was a firm rejection. This occurred last December much to

the dismay of the CPGB who were behind the move. It was a blow to their hopes of creating a prop for the falling sales of 'Morning Star' 'The Paper of the March', and to taking one more step in cementing an alliance with the broad-centre of British politics.

The TUC stance was not motivated by any principled opposition to the repeat of the 1981 performance. They simply made the point that building a month and a half long public demon-

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STRATEGY TO BEAT THE PRIVATEERS

FOR MANY LOCAL authority workers and workers in the nationalised industries, privatisation looms as a threat to their jobs and their trade union organisation. The Tories came to power committed to privatisation as a means of ransacking the social services on which workers depend and of pocketing the most lucrative services for the private benefit of their class. The pace of privatisation has been hotting up considerably. As the Tories turn their attention to the health service it is time to take stock of recent battles against privatisation and learn the lessons so as to smash the privatisation offensive.

The attempt to sell off British Gas showrooms, threatening 30,000 with redundancy was met with a one-day strike which has staved off the threat at least temporarily. Elsewhere the Tories have been more successful. Their success in selling off British Rail services has meant that closed shop agreements with the unions have been undermined resulting in the Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA) losing nearly 10% of its membership over the last year (from 66,000 to 60,000) (Morning Star 11.3.83). The case of British Rail services demonstrates that the fight against privatisation must be launched before the plans are implemented - it is too late afterwards.

Even accepting the principle of in-house tendering against competition from outside contractors inevitably means loss of jobs at the very least. In Birmingham last October the T&GWU refuse collection workers, faced with privatisation decided to support an in-house tender which meant the loss of 1/3 of the jobs. More recently the Birmingham Direct Works building department has won tenders back from Wimpeys which will mean redundancies, cuts in pay and building closures if the tender is to be met.

At Bury Refuse Collection Service, a joint union campaign backed by a promise of strike action was launched, the threat of privatisation was temporarily withdrawn, only to be reintroduced later. In some instances the Tories' prime target is jobs in general, in others, emboldened by the lack of trade union resistance they aim to annihilate trade union organisation itself. David Evans, the boss of "Exclusive" who won the Southend waste disposal contract was quoted in Labour Research (Oct 82) "When workers previously employed by Southend or Eastbourne Councils joined "Exclusive" - some 350 union subscriptions were lost.... Suppose privatisation grows rapidly, the 350 could well become 35,000 or even 350,000 if other services are included.... The trade unions would face serious financial difficulty...." The Tories have clearly set their sights on the threat of unemployment undermining the power of trade union organisation in the private sector while privatisation fulfils for them the same role in the public sector.

Against this onslaught those trade union campaigns which restrict themselves to sending ready-printed reply slips to MPs and the Secretary of State for Industry Patrick Jenkin will prove hopelessly inadequate. Recognising this the telecommunication unions who face the selling off of the public telephone service have in addition called a number of limited regional protests. Further they have been informing their members that Arnold Weinstock, the boss of GEC is also opposed to privatisation because he fears the loss of an assured market for components manufactured by his company. All such alliances

with employers are extremely dangerous for trade unionists. They create illusions that the interests of capital and labour can run in the same direction and in doing so will lead to a fatal reliance on sections of the capitalist class opposing privatisation. Instead the telecommunication unions should turn their campaign towards their own membership and prepare them for strike action and to appeal to other trade unionists for solidarity action. While informing the general public of the real prospect of a poorer and more expensive service if privatisation was to occur, the telecommunication unions should not fool themselves into thinking that this alone is a way of defeating the threat. It is their actions and the solidarity actions of fellow trade unionists that can defeat the threat and there is no substitute for that.

The NHS unions face different difficulties in opposing "Privatisation" as it has been dubbed in a draft pamphlet being prepared jointly by the Birmingham and Solihull Health Branch of NALGO and Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre. Trade Union members must be alerted to the designs that various private contractors have on the rich pickings of the NHS. As far back as 1978 American Medical International put a paper to the Tory Party conference listing 25 NHS services which could be contracted out. In May 1982 the Adam Smith Institute published "Preserving Health" - a plan for entire NHS hospitals to be managed by outside contractors. It turns out that its author - one Michael Forsyth, is public relations consultant to Pritchard Services which is the biggest private contractor already in the NHS.

The government has sent out a consultative document to all Regional Health Authorities instructing them to draw up plans for privatising services by March 30th. The Regional Health Authorities are obliged to comply. The definite targets for the plun-

derers are catering, laundry and domestic services. This will severely hit the jobs of part time women workers in the NHS. But the Tories are also keen to privatise central and theatre sterilising units and blood banks. They want to break all key centres of Trade Union organisation and bargaining strength in the NHS.

A fightback can only start once the unions have alerted the membership to the dangers by effective monitoring of attempts at introducing or expanding the role of contractors in the NHS.

Hospital workers, at a local and national level, must prepare now to fight the privatisation onslaught. At St. Margarets Hospital, Great Barr, Birmingham, for example, the Joint Shop Stewards Committee have drawn up a plan of action. They have repeatedly explained to their members that strike action will be necessary if privatisation is to be defeated and prevented. They are prepared to meet the first moves towards contracting out with strike action.

Such action constitutes the first line of defence. There is no substitute for this and it should be complemented by automatic endorsement of such committees composed of trade union delegates not only from the other public services but also from manufacturing industry.

NUPE's official machinery has now put out a call for local meetings on the privatisation threat and for a campaign to persuade the District Management and Community Health Councils to oppose private contract deals. They have called for liaison with other unions and for JSSCs to "coordinate any industrial action should it become necessary to boycott any privatised services". But they have issued no call for industrial action of any form to stop the privateers now.

The 1982 strike saw the development of impor-

tant rank and file links between the regions and across the unions. If the campaign against privatisation is not to be a piecemeal and regionalised affair then it will have to be organised nationally and as the Shop Stewards Conference that met in Sheffield in October showed it will be down to rank and file militants to make sure this happens.

Some trade union "strategists" have advanced proposals for action only after contracting out has started. This is the main emphasis of a pamphlet on privatisation produced by NALGO and the Trade Union Resource Centre in Birmingham. The pamphlet contains material that shows that privatisation plans for refuse collection in Aylesbury were only beaten off through the threat of strike action. But the basic thread of its argument is that the wages and conditions available on the privatised work will be its own undoing. Arguing that privatisation only makes sense to contractors if they pay wages below those already the norm in the NHS, misses the point that privatisation with a smaller workforce on higher than average pay rates may be introduced to break the power of the unions and thus worsen wages and conditions in the long term. The strategy of imposing conditions on the contractors involved in tendering, and recruiting contractors' staff into the union, presupposes that the campaign to get strike action to prevent the process even beginning has been lost. Such second lines of defence are of course necessary but they need to be clearly recognised as such.

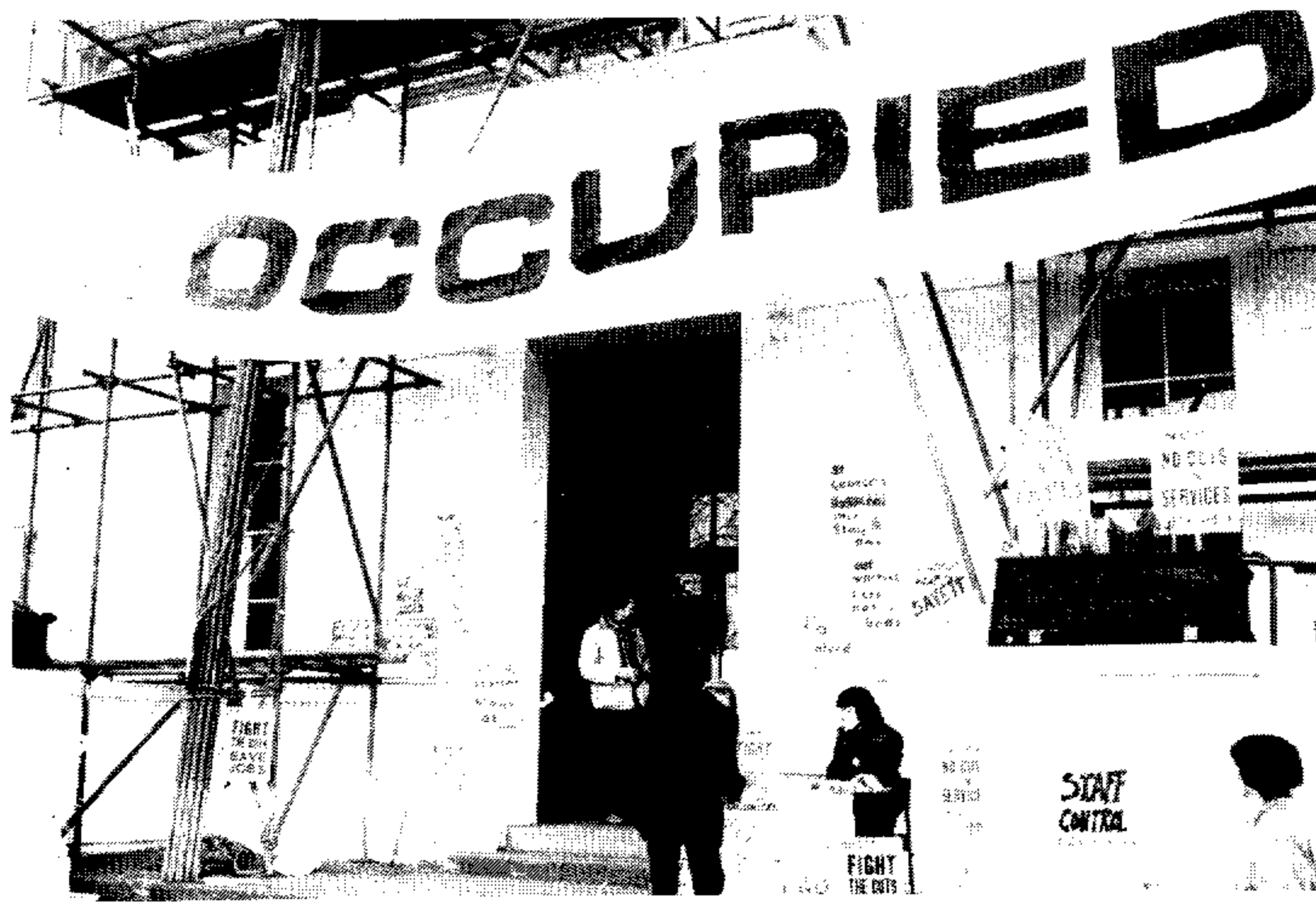
Some trade union researchers are currently basing their immediate tactics on the use of the Fair Wage Law of 1946. The idea behind this was to ensure that contracts let by government departments stipulated that contractor staff received pay and conditions comparable to general levels in the trade. Now Norman Tebbit has introduced a House of Commons motion to rescind this resolution. He must be resisted as must every DHA that tries to trample on the Fair Wage Law.

Some trade union negotiators have advanced campaigns to commit DHAs to include fair wage clauses in their Standard Financial Instructions as the means of deterring the contractors by not making privatisation worth their while. They propose this as an alternative to direct industrial action. But if Tebbit can prepare the ground for a full scale offensive on wages and conditions then the DHAs are unlikely to resist him later. The tactic of pinning all on Fair Wage clauses will prove to be fundamentally disarming and an excuse for bureaucrats to duck the fight until it is too late to do anything more.

The privatisation offensive must be stopped. This means fighting for a programme that stops the hive-off and not waiting for fight its effects.

- *Build effective monitoring. This requires:
 1. Open the books to workers inspection supported by technically qualified TU appointees.
 2. Effective liaison with the staff trade unions.
- *Prevent management consultants coming in to 'measure up' for privatisation by mass picketing and strike action.
- *Local and national councils of action to defend the jobs and stop the contractors in the tracks.
- *Build effective joint shop stewards committees pledged to immediate strike action and occupation in the event of any work being prepared for tendering by outside contractors.
- *Demand full support from the TUC including resources to expose to the whole working class the intentions of the privateers.
- *Build a local and national rank and file organisation capable of consolidating the experience of fighting privatisation and leading the offensive. ■

by Dick Pratt



Mark Risher (JFL)

...Peoples March

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

stration of the unemployed which might just mobilise activity around itself in a possible election year, would detract from the TUC campaign to push forward the Labour Party as the political alternative to Thatcher. Even a popular front on the road, as envisaged by the CPGB was initially too much for these electoral cretins.

Effective CP lobbying from local and regional TUC level has forced a change of heart and the TUC is now, belatedly, supporting the march, although the TUC/LP will not be using the march to mobilise mass action against Thatcher.

Thatcher and Tebbit openly scoff at the weak-kneed response of Murray and Foot. They ensured that after the last Peoples March the unemployed centres that managed to continue were highly bureaucratized 'tea and sympathy' drop in centres. The trade union representatives on management committees used the excuse of MSC funding to keep them that way and prevent the local unemployed being a militant section of the labour movement. The TUC preferred this to labour-movement funded fighting bodies. Tebbit has re-

warded this servility with a new round of restrictions on the unemployed centres. A new draft document recommends that centres, must not encourage "The organisation of, or participation in, marches or demonstrations of any kind." The centres will be searched regularly for "prohibited activities" or "prohibited material" The centre in Sheffield has already had its funds withdrawn by the MSC under these restrictions even though they are not yet law. One can predict that the response to this from the TUC will not be class indignation and militant action to fend off the attacks but a further depoliticisation of unemployment and the fight against it.

Plans for the People's March 83 are well advanced. Leaving Glasgow on Friday April 22nd it will arrive in London on Friday June 3rd, followed by a festival on June 4th and a rally the next day. In a recent article in 'Morning Star', Pete Carter, the CPGB newly appointed industrial organiser laid down the same old popular frontist rationale behind the march. As in 1981 the Peoples March MkII will find the labour movement as the organising centre, but the politics will be reduced to one

vague demand - 'ending unemployment'. For Carter, "this provides the opportunity for the broadest possible alliance of all who agree with the central demand, which of course ranges from bishops to bricklayers, from Non-Thatcherite Tories to revolutionary socialists". (MS 25.3.83). The working class fightback is to be restricted to the narrow horizons of the 'non-Thatcherite Tory' (i.e. inactivity and fake sympathy). As before strikes will be ignored by the march and meaningful policies to fight for jobs will be abandoned as the price for maintaining this "broadest possible alliance."

Against these ineffectual policies for the march and restrictions on its scope of activities, Workers Power will fight to turn the Peoples March into a Workers March for Jobs. We will actively support and build for the march. We will utilise this opportunity, grudgingly given by the CPGB and the bureaucrats for their own sectarian and electoral interests, to make the unemployed visible and vocal again. We will raise it in Labour movement forums, we will search out funds for it. By participation in and around it, on the support committees for example, we will seek to challenge the undemocratic and popular frontist character of the march. The marchers themselves must from the very first day organise themselves, electing stewards to take the power of deci-

sion making out of the hands of the regional bureaucrats. Remember the example of the Western leg in 1981 where our struggle from day one along these lines produced limited success in making the march a tribune for the militants fighting redundancies. Remember, too, the Eastern leg where the CP ruled with a fist of iron, harassing the militants at every turn and even forcing 40 marchers to quit or be expelled. The freedom of political tendencies to agitate and distribute literature must be established early on.

We will also argue for a "Women's Right to Work contingent" on the march that brings to the fore the massive and often disguised unemployment suffered by women. Last time, this slogan was actively opposed by the bureaucrats as "divisive", but such a contingent would not be separatist. It should positively encourage male marchers to join it and support the demand that women also have the right to jobs, at present under such extensive attack from the Tory government.

Within the trade unions over the next months we urge militants to raise resolutions supporting the march, especially seeking to organise strikes and demonstration of support on the days it enters the town or area. Particularly important is that those in struggle

should send delegations to the march and seek reciprocal visits to picket lines.

The local organising committees must, as well, make sure that every effort is made to mobilise the unemployed locally in vast demonstration around the Peoples March. Job centres, dole queues, unemployed centres must all be leafleted, meetings must be held around them, activities launched to motivate the thousands of unemployed in every town.

May must be the month when unemployment becomes 'an issue' again. The polls continue to show that 80% of the electorate consider unemployment the main problem in the country. This means little unless public concern is matched by working class action. The aim of that action should not be simply to 'end unemployment' but to unite employed and unemployed alike around the following demands

- * FOR AN UNEMPLOYED WORKERS UNION WITH T.U. SUPPORT
- * DIRECT ACTION TO BEAT UNEMPLOYMENT. SUPPORT ALL STRIKES AND OCCUPATIONS AGAINST CLOSURES AND SACKINGS
- * WORK OR FULL PAY FOR ALL. CUT THE HOURS NOT THE JOBS. MAKE THE BOSSES PAY
- * FOR A WOMEN'S RIGHT TO WORK

Socialist campaign for Labour Victory

HARD LEFT TURN RIGHT

ON MARCH 7th, 60 or 70 representatives of the "hard left" in the Labour Party huddled in a House of Commons Committee room. They were deciding how to launch a Socialist campaign for Labour Victory (SLV) and the longer the meeting went on the clearer it became that by a "Socialist" campaign the representatives of Socialist Organiser, Socialist Action and Labour Briefing meant no more than a campaign that fought the coming election against the Tories and for Labour Party policies.

Back in 1979 the old Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV) Mark I declared its vacuous commitment to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations. But nearly four years of Thatcherism and the defeat of Bermondsey has pushed the "hard left" well to the right. Nowadays they content themselves with calling for the nationalising of the "top 25 companies".

When Workers Power supporters at the meeting argued that "socialists" should campaign on such elementary demands as "withdraw the troops from Ireland now" and "get Britain out of NATO" the "hard left" threw up their hands in horror. After all, Labour Party Conference regularly opposes these demands. The born again Labour Party converts of Socialist Action were quick to inveigh against such "ultra leftism". The long converted Bennites of Socialist Organiser nodded in agreement.

Socialist Action editor Alan Freeman declared that given the "defensive situation" the left was in

we had to campaign on Labour Party policies, while Socialist Action women's editor, Val Coultas, declared that we were doing just what the right wanted, proposing that the SLV "go out on a limb".

Socialist Organiser has been singing the same song. In February they carried a front page call for the founding of a Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory signed by Bloxam and O'Mahoney and London Labour Briefing's high priest Chris Knight. Badly shaken by Bermondsey they argued that it was now down to the hard lefts to fight the Labour Party's election campaign for iton the 'soft' lefts' policies!!

"We must now launch the anti-Tory crusade Michael Foot promised but never mounted."

In the wake of Bermondsey they confronted themselves with calls for an "anti-Tory League and Labour Victory Campaign" which "would combine the experience of the SCLV with the way the Anti-Nazi League mobilised hundreds of thousands in 1977-1978." The SO campaign managers called for a series of mass rallies with speakers "who represent Labour Party Conference policy or important aspects of it". Take the model of "enthusiastic mass meetings for Tony Benn", blend it with the publicity machine of the ANL and these proxy election agents could rid themselves of the nightmare of another date for Thatcher.

The SLV certainly marks a leap to the right compared with its 1979 forerunner. But it has much in common with it. The SLV is not a united front for action. In any such united front revolutionaries would accept limited proposals that would make it possible for them to fight alongside mass forces while fighting for their own positions. The SLV is a propa-

ganda bloc set up by tiny centrist forces who are all prepared to dump their own political programme in order to cosy up to their chosen left leaders. And they can all agree to cling together on the flimsy raft of Labour's conference policies. It is a pathetic pact among centrists to make Labourite propaganda for Labour. It makes them slaves of the right as well as lickspittles of the Bennite left.

Why has there been such a sharp shift to the right by the "hard left"?

The reasons are not hard to find. The right wing has been on the offensive ever since Benn struck a peacekeeping deal with them at Bishops Stortford. The defeats at the annual conference, the new right wing NEC, the imposition of the register and the expulsion of Militant leaders have all shown the real strength and determination of the right and the weakness of the policies and tactics of the left. While the Left was gripped by mass delusion as to its strength and future as a result of Labour Conference decisions, the right was tightening its grip on the PLP and TUC, reorganising a bloc between them.

So confident is the right that it is now showing how it will deal with "Left" Parliamentary candidates. The Bermondsey by-election was consciously sabotaged by the NEC. In contrast right-winger Ossie O'Brian received overwhelming support from the Labour Party machine. Not only was the bulk of the PLP mobilised but Trade Unions for a Labour Victory put its formidable Trade Union apparatus at his disposal. All of this was consciously aimed at playing on the Left's weakness and further intimidating CLPs considering selecting left candidates.

In reply the Left have taken their cue from their champion Tony Benn. Like him they are retreating behind Labour Party Policies and Foot's leadership in the vain hope that this will somehow protect them.

There could be no clearer indication that the euphoria of 1981 has evaporated and that in the event of the election of a Labour Government it would be dominated by the right wing. It would rapidly dump any remaining commitments to conference policies that are too left wing. Already the Campaign Document and Manifesto has done its "filtering" job on left policies. Already the Labour and Trade Union bureaucrats are stitching up new deals on wage restraint. The "National Economic Assessment", a revamped social contract and blueprint for wage restraint has already been agreed in the LP/TU document "Partners in Rebuilding Britain".

In the face of this offensive the SLV declares that it will fight for "A commitment to raise working class living standards and that there should be no incomes policy" (SO 17.3.83) Fine! But will it demand commitments from left Labour MPs and its own supporters in the House of Commons that they will vote against any attacks on these policies and the working class by a Labour Government whatever the consequences? Of course they won't because Reg Race, Stuart Holland and Ernie Roberts wouldn't grace their campaign if they did. And they wouldn't even get polite goodwill messages from an absent Benn to kick their meetings off with. The SLV declares itself against any formal or informal alliances with other parties i.e. the Social Democrats. But is it demanding of Tony Benn and other left Labour MPs that they publicly declare that they will not go through the lobby in support of such an agreement with the Social Democratic Party? No it is not. To do so would threaten its carefully nurtured "no criticism" policy within the Bennite group. And the SLV has been formed as a bloc with the Bennites.

The old SCLV was formed on what its architect called a "roughly adequate" revolutionary programme. The new one is formed on a hopelessly inadequate reformist one. That is the measure of the

right shift in Socialist Organiser and Socialist Action. In the face of Thatcher's offensive they have nothing to offer but an electoral campaign for Labour. That is why Tatchell "pointed the way forward for the left" (SO) when he declared after Bermondsey, "Don't mourn. Organise for the General election."



Stuart Holland

The Socialist League is proud of declaring "The real question facing trade unionists in the coming year (is) how to elect a Labour Government committed to stopping missiles" (Socialist Challenge 11.2.83). This concentration on the re-election of a Labour Government is the raison d'être of the SLV. Yet what it ignores, and what its founding meeting did not even begin to tackle, is that it is only the mobilisation of the working class in struggle around its own interests that can lead to an effective fight against both Thatcher, the right wing Labour and trade union bureaucrats and the dithering fake lefts.

The struggles against unemployment, against the cuts and redundancies, against police harassment of black communities and against deportations have been and now are the key tactics in gaining a Labour victory and defeating the right wing. The making of such struggles central to any campaign, the organisation of the oppressed and mobilisation of rank and file trade unionists and unemployed on these issues, will bring socialists not only into bitter conflict with the right wing of the Labour movement but with the fake lefts who are tied lock stock and barrel to parliamentary reformism and "acceptable" methods of campaigning.

In their turn the centrists within the SLV are tied or rather are trying to tie themselves to the fake lefts. They are unwilling to wage a campaign based on working class action for fear of jeopardising this hoped-for alliance. The SLV is not an "alternative" or "distinctive" electoral campaign. It is a vehicle for selective propaganda on Labour policies. This is why Workers Power will not be supporting it. ■

by S. King

London Labour Briefing TILTING AT VANDALS

THESE ARE DARK times for left-wing activists in the Labour Party. One ray of light however was the miserable failure of the national conference of Briefing groups to establish a common organisation. Judging by the poison pen letters that Briefing gurus Chris Knight and Tony Greenstein have been sending to each other, and which Socialist Organiser's debate columns are the public post restante for, the disintegration of Briefing might just be a possibility. Speed the day!

London Labour Briefing, the biggest of the bunch, was launched by supporters of the old Chartist paper after they left the SCLV. Their support for rate rises meant that they were able to rally a gaggle of councillors grateful for left cover for their anti-working class policy. The paper inherited from the Chartists an obsession with sexual politics and a groveling subservience to any and every idea to emerge from the women's movement.

The London magazine is awash with articles explaining the twists and turns, fads and prejudices of London's left councillors. These can range from justifying the collapse of the Fares Fare campaign to the need to ban Cruise in London boroughs.

Briefing certainly takes its personal politics seriously. Photographs of the persons who strive for it are paraded alongside articles so that the vain authors can break out of the anonymity that their status actually deserves. The 'Streetlife Supplement' is this paper's crowning glory. It is an open forum for the most conceited petit-bourgeois members of London's Labour left. Articles like "Why Can't men be normal human beings?" and a gripping series entitled "Is Politics Compatible with Life?" shows the real nature of these people. Millions of exploited and oppressed workers and peasants are struggling for survival. For them politics is a way of fighting to live. For the Briefing contributors, however, it gets in the way of social life. Thus Janis Morton can complain: "Politics is not my main interest outside work and I prefer to pursue my own leisure interests rather than participate more actively in the affairs of my local party."

Man-hating and moaning aside Briefing has embarked on a new and more sinister path of late. Its chief peacock Chris Knight has written an article demanding "Yes - We want Law and Order". In this he complains about "noisy parties", "vandals" (read disenfranchised youth) and other criminals and argues that a Labour government must make "genuine law and order central to our programme." in the mean time he proposes local vigilante squads to deal with law and order!

This reactionary drift is the logical outcome of Briefing's whole orientation. It is not a tool of or for workers or the oppressed in their struggles. It is an open forum for petit-bourgeois utopians and malcontents. Knight's latest article is a refined expression of the contempt and fear that these types have for the masses. ■

by M. Hoskisson

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

YES - WE WANT LAW & ORDER!

People who become socialists and feminists tend naturally to dissociate strongly from the law and order approach to both politics and life. We tend to believe in the greatest human freedom - low arbitrary police powers, no prisons, and free to regulate their own activities within the limits of police and law. We believe in the abolition of the police and the courts. We believe in the abolition of the police and the courts. We believe in the abolition of the police and the courts.

WOMEN - TAKE THE POWER!

Chris Knight
London East CLR

Continued on next page

For workers unity to stop Cruise

GREENHAM COMMON WOMEN are strong on imaginative tactics. No doubt Reagan's latest plans for a 'Star Wars' battle with the Soviet Union have led some to dream of peace camps in the sky. Closer to home, however, the failure of the women to delay the Tories' plans for the siting of Cruise this year has led them into an impasse.

After many months of hardship under canvas, hundreds of pounds in fines, weeks in prison and plenty of bruises to remind them that the police don't share their belief in non-violent protest, the Greenham Commoners have turned to working class women for help. Hence the call for a women's strike on Women's International Day of Peace, May 24th, that has been issued in Britain and across Europe.

It has always been our position that massive working class strike action is needed if we are to stop Reagan and Thatcher's plans to site Cruise. The issue of Cruise is not one that simply affects women, yet the Greenham feminists reject the central involvement of men in their actions and root the

violence of the state and the very existence of nuclear weapons not in the nature of imperialism but in the evil minds of men. This analysis leads them, despite their talk of strikes, to a rejection of working class unity as the agency for fighting Cruise.

In calling for women only stoppages they are only turning their backs on the organised strength of the working class. They are also potentially laying individuals and groups of women militants open to victimisation and deepening division in the working class between male and female workers.

The feminists have no intention of confronting and appealing over the heads of the trade union leaders to the rank and file. Not one union is committed nationally to strike action. Only AUEW-TASS have given support to the principle of meetings on the day.

With this meagre national support and divisive call the likelihood of a serious strike on May 24th seems remote. But working class strike action is the only effective way to prevent the siting of Cruise. For that reason the May 24th call should be taken up and fought for not as a women-only event, which we would oppose, but through attempts to organise an all out one-day strike and demanding of the TUC that it leads it. Local meetings and demonstrations should be organised by delegate based labour move-

ment committees, not by Greenham Support committees.

We recognise however that the lack of national calls and the certainty that the feminists will do no more than their trade union patrons allow them to is likely to bring out only a few motivated individual white collar workers.

In this situation small groups of women workers striking is dangerous and divisive, and would leave them open to victimisation with no union defence. Such actions should not be supported. Strike action by individuals in such circumstances would be adventurist.

The fight to stop imperialism's deployment of nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union must not be left to the adventurist and divisive tactics of the women's peace movement. The working class needs an alternative lead.

A labour movement campaign against Cruise must be built. It should be orientated not to building peace camps and publicity-seeking protest politics but to building massive working class industrial action to stop the government siting Cruise. Unless such a leadership is given, women workers are in danger of becoming martyrs in an ineffectual pacifist charade. ■

by H. Ward

ONE EVENING DURING early April 1851 Karl Marx returned home from the British Museum and penned a letter to Frederick Engels outlining his progress in the study of political economy: "I am so far advanced that I shall be finished with the whole of the economic shit in five weeks. And when that's done I'll draft the economics at home and throw myself into another science in the Museum." Over sixteen years later Marx delivered a part of his promise in a scrawled note to his lifelong collaborator: "Have just finished correcting the last sheet of the book So this volume is finished. It was thanks to you alone that this became possible."

Between these two letters, Marx had filled scores of notebooks, accumulating economic data and subjecting previous theory to scorching criticism. The end result - *Das Kapital* - was his perfected critique of political economy with which he put the struggles of the working class on a firm scientific foundation.

Marx's discoveries in this area were all the more staggering given the conditions under which they were made. In 1852/3 Marx had to devote himself to writing a defence of his former comrades on trial in Prussia for their activities in the 1848 Revolutions. In the early 1860s he had to take off well over a year to refute the slanders of "Herr Vogt". In the later part of this period Marx helped launch, and became the chief ideologue within, The First International. In addition Marx had to devote valuable time and energy earning a pittance by writing for the New York Daily Tribune.

This work often forced Marx to compress his theoretical labours into the early hours of the morning. For the better part of these years poverty and misfortune hung like a dark cloud over the Marx family. Dogged by carbuncles and a worsening liver ailment Marx suffered bitterly. The death of his son and of another child at birth were other hardly endurable blows. Confined indoors with his shoes at the pawnbrokers and permanently in flight from the creditors, Marx made the most telling scientific discoveries of the 1800s.



Marx's house in Havestock Hill

Despite his enormous contribution in the field of politics - in the strategy and tactics of proletarian revolution - it was in perfecting the science of political economy that Marx made his greatest contribution to the working class. By this he was to show himself to be, in Engels' words: "the greatest mind of the second half of our century."

Why was it that Marx turned so sharply to the study of political economy in the autumn of 1850? Engels confided that Marx read and "knew nothing whatever about political economy" while a student at Berlin and Bonn. Marx himself said that his period as editor of *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842 "provided the first occasions for occupying myself with economic questions." However, Marx at this time was primarily a philosopher and, at first, an idealist one - a follower of Hegel. In 1844, during his exile in Paris Marx became a communist. His critique of Hegel's idealism, his study of French utopian socialism and contact with French workers' organisations transformed his outlook. But Marx was yet to put his politics on a scientific basis. At that time the workers' cause was advanced as a "moral" and "just" cause - that is, philosophically. By 1845, however, Marx made a radical break with this. Between his exile in Paris and 1848 Marx developed the position that it was the logic of the class struggle and the victory of the proletariat which would lead to the overthrow of private property and wage slavery. These positions received a powerful summary in the *Communist Manifesto* published in 1848. While still not going beyond existing political economy Marx and Engels had made a break with all utopian communist panaceas. As Marx said in 1846: "Communism for us is not...an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things."

In this early period Marx also developed an attitude to science which was to stay with him throughout his studies. He argued that science, particularly political economy, should and could be taken up by the working class. He scolded the implicit elitism of his rivals in the communist movement who looked down on the need to explore the difficulties of theory to the end. Scoffing at theory and counterposing spontaneous activity to it, Weitling had taunted Marx: "the youth with their recklessness often act much more reasonably than old people with their imaginary wisdom..." Marx, in March 1846 retorted that to address the worker "without a

strictly scientific idea and a positive theory is tantamount to a silly and foul play at preacher, where on the one side there should be an inspired prophet and on the other only gaping asses listening to him."

Despite this correct orientation and attitude, Marx operated with the assumption that existing political economy provided the method of analysis which revealed the inevitability of conflict and the necessity of a working class led revolution. The events of 1848-50 were to completely undermine this faith.

The defeat of the revolutionary wave in Europe forced Marx to re-examine his ideas. In abandoning the Communist League in the summer of 1850 Marx was acting upon something he had recognised much earlier and which he later summed up as follows: "My examination (of Hegel) brought me to the conclusion that neither legal relations nor state forms can be understood in themselves or from the so-called general development of the human intellect, but that they have their roots in...bourgeois society and that the anatomy of bourgeois society must be sought in political economy."

While Marx was aware of this as a general proposition it was the events of 1848 themselves which brought sharply home to him exactly how underworked was his analysis of the "anatomy of bourgeois society". Marx came to be critical of the "political economy" of the *Communist Manifesto* because his existing body of positions had led him to falsely analyse the economic crisis of 1847 which had been the spur to the 1848 Revolutions.

He had seen the crisis of 1847/8 as signalling the final collapse of capitalism. In fact Marx and Engels later accepted it as a "normal" periodic business-cycle crisis through which capitalism was still expanding at a rapid rate.

A considerable economic boom had opened up in 1849 and buttressed the political counter-revolution. In this context Marx recognised the need to re-work his political economy and undertake a thorough examination of the theoretical tradition from which it was drawn.

MARX'S EARLY PREDECESSORS

Political economy developed as the study of the creation and distribution of wealth within capitalism. *Scientific* political economy was that strand which recognised the sole source of new wealth (if we leave aside nature) as originating in the activity of labour. It is the action of humans, working on raw materials, which creates value.

Political economy made its first appearance in the 16th century primarily in England and Italy. At this early stage of capitalism's development most writers were concerned with immediate policies and winning state assistance for the fostering of trade. Theory was mainly concerned with exchange, circulation and money not production of value. Profit was not seen as originating in the production of new value but in buying cheap and selling dear through foreign trade, and in fact early stocks of capital were accumulated in this way. Only as the capitalist market broke down the old guilds and thus gave rise to spontaneous price formation did it become possible for political economists to analyse the formation of prices and ask the question, how is the value of goods determined?

The first major advance came from an English aristocrat - William Petty who sketched an outline of a Labour Theory of Value. He argued in 1662: "If a man can bring to London an ounce of silver out of the Earth in Peru, in the same time that he can produce a bushel of corn, then one is the natural price of the other." Put another way, the size of a product's value depends on the quantity of labour used up on its production.

But it was Adam Smith who was to improve substantially on Petty and open up the era of classical political economy with his *The Wealth of Nations* published in 1776.

Smith was the first theorist of the developing industrial bourgeoisie. His major advance lay in his understanding of the *division of labour* and its importance in raising the productivity of labour. One of Smith's great merits was to establish the importance of *industrial labour* and its superiority over agriculture and commerce and thus advance the cause of the bourgeoisie. He was the first to articulate the division of society into three major classes - workers, capitalists and landlords.

Smith focused directly on the labour theory of value and freed it from many of the confusions that Petty and others had embellished it with. He demonstrated against his opponents that equivalent products exchange because they contain equal amounts of labour. However Smith only went half-way in the application of this theory. He could only see that it applied where products, *objects*, exchanged with each other. Smith could not see how this affected the exchange between worker and capitalist where no exchange of products took place, but rather an exchange of a wage for a capacity to work.

Thus Smith ran up against the insoluble contradiction of classical political economy. Namely, if labour is the sole source of value and if products exchange on the basis that they contain equal amounts of labour, then "How is this to be reconciled with the fact that the wage-worker does not receive the whole sum of value created by his labour but has to surrender a part of it to the capitalist?" (Engels) The law of value should indicate that the worker's wages would equal the full value of his labour or the product of his labour. In the face of this contradiction Smith simply said the law of labour value didn't apply in the exchange between capitalist and worker.

THE CLASSICAL ZENITH

It was left to David Ricardo, a young retired stock-market speculator turned theoretician to make an advance over Smith. In 1819 he published his *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. Ricardo's life and investigations coincided with the period of the industrial revolution in England. He was the theoretical

MARX'S CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

champion of the industrial bourgeoisie over the retrogressive landed aristocracy. The latter's concern to protect their artificially high corn prices after the end of the wars with France impeded the accumulation of industrial capital, not least by keeping food costs high for workers. Ricardo unequivocally recognised the enormous boost to labour productivity of the new technology and placed himself on the side of historical progress in championing its cause. Politically Ricardo was a social reformer. He believed that the harmonious "productive development of human labour" was possible and the highest good. Unlike Smith, Ricardo recognised the application of the labour theory of value to capitalism itself. It applied to the exchange of products between capitalists. All the value in these products came from labour, from the working class. How then did Ricardo explain where profit came from? He argued that rather than being new value added to account for this, profit came at the expense of wages. Ricardo

necessary features of the whole. On the other hand, Thompson and company wanted to treat only the law of labour value as real. Every other category, for example, profit and money, was seen as false, unreal, unnecessary. They didn't break with Ricardo theoretically but just put a moral plus where Ricardo saw a minus and vice-versa. For them surplus value contradicted the labour theory of value and so it was seen as illegitimate.

Marx broke decisively with all this during his studies in the British Library. Not all at once, but gradually step by step; not by turning his back on previous conquests, but by assimilating them and rejecting errors, apologetics and utopian one-sidedness alike.

In this way Marx was to make the necessary discoveries that consigned classical political economy to its grave.

MARX'S DISCOVERIES

During his Paris exile in 1844 Marx wrote the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. In the sections where he treats political economy to examination, Marx had not yet reached the level of Ricardo. He rejects the labour theory of value and even agrees with the vulgar apologist J.B. Say against Ricardo. During a six-week period in Manchester with Engels, however, in the summer of 1845, Marx studied political economy and seems to have accepted the labour theory of value. This is demonstrated by references to it in *The German Ideology* (1846). By the time Marx attacked Proudhonism in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (end of 1846) he is a Ricardian, but with one important difference. Unlike Ricardo, Marx did not regard the capitalist system of production or bourgeois society as natural and final.

Basing themselves on Ricardian economics was to lead to inevitable errors in the *Communist Manifesto*; in particular the belief that capitalism could only expand at the cost of absolute worsening of workers' living standards due to the inability of wages and profit to rise together and the inability to distinguish between the business cycle and long-term phases of expansion and depression.

The former Marx was later to correct, but the latter he was never to get to the bottom of, solely because his studies on the general questions were to leave him no time to develop a systematic theory of crisis.

Despite these weaknesses, inevitable at that stage, the strength of the *Communist Manifesto* was the recognition of the inevitability of breakdown within capitalism. This aspect Marx was never to revise, but merely to lend a deeper, more scientific meaning.

The most intensive period of research for Marx was 1850-53 when he filled 24 huge notebooks on political economic theory and data. Between then and 1857 there were many and varied interruptions, collaboration on the Chartist leader Ernest Jones' 'Peoples Paper' for example. In 1857 came the long-awaited "crash" and this gave Marx the necessary impetus to give his full attention once more to political economy and set down his conclusions and new discoveries.

From the late summer of 1857 to spring 1858 Marx worked intensively, often until 4 o'clock in the morning on what was a rough draft of *Capital*, Volume One. Marx extracted some of the findings and published them in early 1859 as the *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, which was a focused summary of the fruits of eight years' research.

There were a series of breakthroughs at the heart of the Rough Draft (*Grundrisse*) which were later to find



Pierre Proudhon

assumed that the massive productivity increases he was observing meant that wages would get lower because of the fact that the cost of producing subsistence goods would decrease. Profit would therefore come from the fact that the proportion of value going to wages would be lower than the total; the difference - the surplus value - was profit.

Although Marx was to expose the weakness of Ricardo's theory it had one revolutionary virtue. It stated plainly that the capitalist's profit came from no other source than the labour of the worker. Although Ricardo did not solve the contradiction of political economy he did expose it to the full light of day and the bourgeoisie did not thank him for it; as one such, John Cazenove, remarked in 1832: "That labour is the sole source of wealth seems to be a doctrine as dangerous as it is false, as it unhappily affords a handle to those who would represent all property as belonging to the working classes and the share which is received by others as a robbery or fraud upon them."

APOLOGIAS AND UTOPIAS

Marx stated in 1873 that "In so far as political economy is bourgeois...it can only remain a science while the class struggle remains latent or manifests itself only in isolated and sporadic phenomena." Yet by 1830 in France and England the bourgeoisie had conquered political power and in the next decade the class struggle took ever more threatening forms. The impact of developing working class struggle against capitalism was immediate and dramatic. "In the place of disinterested inquirers there stepped hired prize-fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and evil intent of apologetics." (Marx)

Among the hired prize-fighters in this field were J.B. Say, Senior and Bastiat. In seeking to justify the extraction of profit and deny the workers' role in creating it these apologists dredged up all the old discredited views and invented new ones besides. One favourite, beloved of Senior, was that which saw profit as a reward for the "abstinence" of the capitalist who accumulated capital by refraining from directly satisfying his own personal needs. The history of the preceding 300 years was re-written to prove, in Mehring's words: "that once upon a time there was an elite of industrious men who accumulated riches, and a mass of lazy good-for-nothings who finally had nothing left to sell but their own skin..."

Many early utopian socialists such as W. Thompson, John Gray and John Bray took Ricardo's work at face value and concluded that the workers were being "robbed" of their rightful value. Their slogan, also raised by the Proudhonists in France was "the worker's right to the full product of labour." Scientifically, these writers represented a step backwards from Ricardo. Ricardo had tried to integrate all the features of capitalism into a coherent explanation. Wages, profit, money and capital were all recognised as essential and



CRISIS OF ECONOMY



Marx in 1867

place in *Das Kapital*. The first major discovery was that of "abstract labour" and its distinction from concrete, useful labour. From one side the value of a commodity is the quantity of socially necessary labour which has gone into its production. On the other hand, the value of a commodity, qualitatively, is determined by abstract human labour. That is, commodities are produced by private labour and only become measurable to each other in so far as people in the market abstract from the concrete and specific character of the labour that has gone into each commodity. The exchange equalises the labour, reduces it to a common, abstract nature. This quality of the commodity as abstract labour only appears in the form of exchange-value when commodities are brought into a relation with each other. This distinction between the exchange-value and use-value of a commodity was only first rigorously explained by Marx. It provided the key to his second major discovery - labour power. Before Marx political econ-



omy had only talked of "labour" and regarded it either as a use-value or exchange-value. Ricardo and Smith had never been able to square the existence of profit with the fact that wages should represent the full value of labour's product. Marx's answer to this, to be found in the *Grundrisse*, lies in the unique nature of a certain commodity - labour power. By this term Marx means that what the worker sells to the capitalist is not a product but a capacity to work. But the capitalist is really concerned to turn this capacity (the exchange value) into activity. The latter aspect is the useful side, or use value of the commodity. The use value, this activity-work, has the merit of creating new value. But - and here is the key - the value that is created is more than that necessary to pay for the wages of the worker. Engels explains:

"The capitalist now sets his worker to work. In a certain time the worker will have delivered as much labour as was represented by his weekly wage. Supposing that the weekly wage of a worker represents three labour days, then if the worker begins on Monday he has by Wednesday evening replaced for the capitalist the full value of the wage paid. But does he then stop working? By no means. The capitalist has bought his week's labour and the worker must go on working during the last three days of the week too. This surplus labour of the worker, over and above the time necessary to replace his wage, is the source of surplus value, of profit... The value of the labour power is paid in full but this value is less than that which the capitalist can extract from the labour power, and it is precisely the difference, the unpaid labour, that constitutes the share of the capitalist..." Through these simple, but brilliant illuminations Marx at once transcended the limits of bourgeois classical political economy and made socialism scientific.

CAPITALIST CRISES

Marx himself considered that the greatest effect of his work was to establish the causal connections leading to the inevitability of economic breakdown within capitalism. The form this breakdown took was the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Marx described this law in the following terms "...in every respect the most important law of modern political economy and the most essential for understanding the most difficulties."

Marx's predecessors were not unaware of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Smith tried to explain it as a result of competition between individual branches of production. Ricardo correctly criticised this on the grounds that while competition would indeed lead to this or that factory owner's profits falling, it would only imply another's rising. What it didn't explain was why the average profit rate fell. But Ricardo tried to

explain the fall as being the result of declining productivity in agriculture.

Marx rejected this and placed his theory in the context of the accumulation of industrial capital, refusing to look at extraneous reasons for the fall. Moreover, Marx established that the tendency for the profit rate to fall was a function of increasing productivity and not the reverse.

The rate of profit was calculated by dividing total surplus value created by the capital invested in the production process. Marx was the first to distinguish rigorously between the two forms of capital here. On the one side constant capital (investment in machines, raw materials) and variable capital (investment in labour power) on the other.

Marx demonstrated that the proportion of constant capital would increase at the expense of variable capital because more and newer technology operated by fewer workers was the main way to increase labour productivity. This process had two contradictory implications.

On the one hand producing more surplus value with fewer workers increased the rate of exploitation. This was assessed by dividing surplus value by the variable capital, since labour power alone is the source of value. But secondly, the rise in constant capital would outstrip the fall in variable capital since the cost of new machinery would outstrip the savings in wages. This leads to a rise in the proportion of total capital compared to surplus value and thus has a depressive effect on the rate of profit. Since investment decisions by capitalists are taken on the basis of profitability there is a tendency for investment to get lower due to falling profit rates and thus accumulation tends to stagnate, producing crises.

Of course Marx was aware of what he called counter-acting influences. For example, increased productivity in the machine-goods industry could cheapen the elements of constant capital. But the appearance of this tendency as a dominant and determining one is inevitable, as are the crises it brings in its wake. The crises bring with them confrontation and struggle as the capitalist class tries to restore its profitability at the expense of workers' living standards. The political implications of these discoveries should be obvious. Marx's work showed that the side of social progress, of the development of productive forces, could only be served by furthering the struggles of the working class. For Marx the science of political economy must be used for political ends.

PARTISAN SCIENCE

Marx's concern to bridge the gap between his science and practice was demonstrated in many ways. Perhaps the most obvious was Marx's endeavour to make his political economy accessible. Marx did not hide the difficulties which awaited a worker seeking to discover the secrets of exploitation: "There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits."

Yet Marx was no obscurantist and his letters are full of tales of the time and care he took to make his work, especially the difficult first chapters of *Capital*, as "popular" as possible.

Possibly the best example of Marx's partisan science is *Wages, Prices and Profit* written in 1865. This was written and presented by Marx as a debate with an English utopian socialist - John Weston. But he also intended the pamphlet to serve - as the earlier *Wage Labour and Capital* (1847) had done - as a simple introductory course to Marxist political economy. The supreme importance of *Wages, Prices and Profit* is that in attacking Weston's Ricardian theory of wages Marx lays down the scientific justification for trade unions, a form of workers' organisation that Weston opposed.

Ricardo had argued that wages and profits were inversely related. One could rise only at the expense of the other. Increased profits for the capitalists would put intense downward pressure on wages. Lassalle, the influential German utopian socialist, developed the "iron law of wages" out of this. In April 1863 he wrote: "The iron economic law that determines wages under present day conditions, in the name of supply and demand of labour, is the following: that the average wage always remains no higher than the level of subsistence necessary for existence and reproduction..."

With minor variations Marx and Engels themselves accepted this theory until 1848 at least, and it can be found in *Wage-Labour and Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto*.

In the 1840s those who held this view opposed trade unions on the grounds that they could not prevent wages from falling. Utopians like Lassalle and Proudhon counterposed the formation of socialist communities to trade unions. They vainly turned their backs on the laws of capitalism.

Marx overthrew this nonsense when he disposed of Ricardo's theory of profit. Marx proved that whilst there was a minimum level of wages (the amount needed to reproduce the worker and family) there was no set and rigid maximum. Profits and wages could rise together. The only maximum limit on wages was whatever level would no longer allow the capitalists a sufficient level of profits. Wage levels therefore also reflected the balance of forces in the class struggle and the workers needed organisations to enforce their will.

Marx's debate with Weston together with his patient educative work in the English trade unions showed Marx's passionate devotion to making his science a tool for emancipation. Not satisfied with explaining the inevitability of crisis, his work pointed the way for the workers' movement to make their strength felt in the here and now.

Although Marx had made his major breakthrough by 1859 it was not until late 1867 that this was to appear re-drafted as Volume 1 of *Capital*. In part this was a result of interruptions in his studies. The "Herr Vogt" affair kept him fully occupied throughout 1860. Between March 1860 and June 1862 there is no mention of economic questions in his letters to Engels.

But there were other reasons. Between 1862 and 1863 Marx rewrote the chapter on Capital from the *Grundrisse*, together with the material that was to form the content of the *Theories of Surplus Value*. Between 1863-65 Marx wrote a further draft for Volume Two and Volume Three. The final two years were occupied with further research and publishing Volume One. Marx called this latter process "licking the cub clean" after birth.

In the eight years after the *Grundrisse*, however, Marx was concerned with a great deal more than stylistic editing and re-drafting. Marx was above all else concerned to find an adequate and logical method of presentation for the argument.



After the publication of *Capital* Volume 1 in 1867 Marx continued his researches on and off for a further ten years. Marx himself did not prepare Volumes Two and Three for publication. That task fell to Engels which he did from a mass of notes in 1885 and 1894 respectively. The *Theories of Surplus Value* were published later still by Karl Kautsky. The reception that Volume 1 received from the academic bourgeois world of political economy was, on the whole, predictably philistine. Some claimed it was mystical, others that it was too difficult. This was hardly surprising since Marx was subjecting them to a revolutionary critique.

The response which *Capital* got within the vanguard of the workers' movement did not always inspire Marx and Engels either. The German SPD was the largest and most influential Marxist party in the 1870s. But Engels declared himself embarrassed by the attempts of C.A. Schramm - the prominent theoretician of the ex-Eisenach wing of the party - to come to grips with the theory of value. Most, the intellectual of the ex-Lassalle wing, was said by Engels to have "condensed the whole of *Capital* without understanding any of it."

The road to science was, as Marx said, a fatiguing one which caused many to falter. Yet understanding Marx's political economy remains central to the working class. *Capital* is not an economic "text book" or a set of dry formulae. It opens up the secrets of capitalist exploitation and provides scientific confirmation that capitalist crises are inevitable, and that accordingly socialism is not only possible but a necessity for the progressive reconstruction of society. Above all it is a book whose last chapter still remains to be written. As Rosa Luxemburg so eloquently summed up Marx' contribution: "The Marxist doctrine is a child of bourgeois economics, but its birth cost the mother's life. In Marxist theory economics found its perfection, but also its end as a science...the last chapter of economics will be the social revolution of the world proletariat." ■

by K. Hassell

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YET MORE AUSTERITY FROM MITTERRAND

Mitterrand (right) and a section of the Citroen workers (below) who are opposing his attacks.



THE FRENCH SOCIALIST and Communist Parties obtained a landslide victory in 1981. Two years and three devaluations later, Mitterrand's government have abandoned their "socialist" reforms for a ten-point austerity package aimed at the working class.

The plight of French imperialism, with its 14 billion dollar trade deficit due to West Germany's domination of its markets, demanded urgent action. The orchestrated manoeuvres of European big business and banking during March have proved, as usual, far stronger than the pathetic pipe-dream of socialist reform of capitalism.

First, a speculative run on the French franc caused Mitterrand to eat humble pie before his stronger European partners. Chancellor Kohl agreed to revalue the Mark 5% which, together with a French devaluation of 3% has lowered the Franc 8% against the Mark. Kohl was motivated by the fear of French protectionism. Mitterrand was taking his orders from the Bourse (French Stock Exchange), seeking to make French exports competitive. Secondly, French industry demanded a more right-wing Cabinet. Accordingly,

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POUVOIR OUVRIER

LES ELECTIONS MUNICIPALES DE MARS 1983 : UN TEST POUR L.O., la L.C.R. et le P.C.I.

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Mitterrand has reduced the CP ministers from 4 to 2 and while Mauroy remains Prime Minister, Delors, the French Dennis Healy, is to take charge of all three major ministries - the Economy, Finance and Budget. Then, on March 25th, the new Cabinet duly delivered-workers' social security contributions are to rise; the price of cigarettes, alcohol and health care is to go up immediately. Phone charges, petrol, gas, electricity and train fares are to rise 8%. Overall, government spending cuts of £1.5 billion were announced.

These measures, long prepared, were cynically delayed until after the French municipal elections. These elections took place on March 6th and March 13th. The results show that Mitterrand is losing the mass working class electoral support that put him in power in May 1981 and gave him a huge SP/CP parliamentary majority in June 1981. The Union of the Left (SP, CP, left radicals) lost 31 towns of over 30,000 inhabitants with a reduction of their vote by 5.3%. Of the 36 towns with over 100,000 inhabitants, the SP lost Brest, Grenoble, Nantes and Roubaix. The CP lost Nimes, Reims and Saint-Etienne. The warning for the government was greatest in the first round of these elections. This mainly took the form of mass working class abstentionism combined with mass mobilisation by the right wing. For example, abstentionism in working class towns such as Longwy and Trappes went up enormously. Compared with 1977, the number of abstentionists went up from 22.35% to 33.23% and from 28.98% to 41.18% respectively in these towns. While many workers didn't bother to vote this time, the right wingers did. In Lille, for example, there was only 20% abstention in the more right-wing North side of the town, while abstentionism rose to 38% in the working class South side.

This working class disaffection was predictable and expected by the reformists themselves. They knew too well how little workers appreciate the austerity plan launched by Mauroy last June.

This was the first major electoral test for the Government since it took power in the summer of 1981. And it approached it with fear. It did not dare present its plans for devaluation and increased austerity before the elections. Instead it criticised the right for "politicising" the elections and attempted to talk only about "local issues."

This attitude fully expresses the general trend in government policy. While its austerity plan and concessions to the bosses demoralise and demobilise workers, they do not satisfy the right. Whole sections of the middle classes (doctors, richer peasants, heads of small companies anti-abortion and pro-private education lobbies) have taken to the streets over the past two years, spurred on by Chirac's RPR, the UDF of Giscard and Barre, and assorted fascist groupings.

The original U-turn of Mitterrand in June 1981 emboldened the employers. Many have provoked

battles with the unions. It should come as no surprise that a government which draws up austerity measures will attack those workers who strive to resist them. For an illustration one need look no further than the recent strike at the Citroën and Renault car factories, involving largely immigrant workers. Mauroy's racist response to these strikes (he attacked the workers, accusing them of being controlled by Muslim religious fanatics and "outside forces") confirms the class nature of this government, pursuing traditional bourgeois policies behind a socialist facade.

These strikes also revealed the nature of the trade union bureaucracy. In spite of their timid criticisms of the government the TU "leaders" are politically tied to this government. Andre Sainjon, a leader of the Stalinist-led CGT trade union speaking about the Renault strike on January 18th, made this clear: "We will not tell workers how to vote" (for or against the continuation of the strike). "It is up to the workers to decide. What we are concerned with above all is the defence of the interests of workers. But no one loses sight of the coming elections." (Le Monde 19.1.83)

But it will not be easy for the bureaucrats to play the role of fireman for the government as the recent victorious strike by the Carmaux miners and the continuing action by Citroën workers show. The government's new austerity package, the absence of elections in the immediate future as an excuse for not striking, the need for the union bureaucrats to at least partially defend the interests of their rank and file (they are frightened by the continuing fall in union membership, which is now under half that in Britain), and the possibility that the CP might use the CGT as a means of temporarily pressurising the government in the wake of losing half of its ministerial posts, all point to a possible increase in working class resistance in the coming period.

The role of immigrant workers in the recent strikes ensured that a climate of racism surrounded the elections. The RPR/UDF and fascists conducted a tripartite campaign which linked the question of immigration to "insecurity" and unemployment. In order not to lose racist votes the Union of the Left echoed the sentiments of the right's campaign. Indeed, in

order to get re-elected Mayor of Marseilles, Gaston Defferre (the sinister and almost senile Minister of the Interior), went so far as to present posters stating "The Right - 20 years of uncontrolled immigration. With the Left - at last, vigilant control whose effects can be measured." This goes hand in hand with CP leader Georges Marchais' declaration on television on March 13th that "the concentration of immigrants is dangerous" and his arguments in favour of halting immigration, "in view of the high level of unemployment."

To overcome the divisive tactics of the leaders of the Left, the French working class needs a programme of action to combat the austerity programme. Key sections, a militant minority, are beginning to take action to resist now, and are not waiting for promised parliamentary reforms. They are beginning to realise that they will only get what they force out of "their" government.

The SP-CP government recognise this danger. Mauroy remains Prime Minister in order to present a "left" face to the workers. It is public knowledge that Krasucki, CGT boss, can (and does) phone Mauroy when he likes. Also Mauroy has gone out of his way not to attack the CP and even spoke in their favour recently. Mauroy's credibility with the unions remains high. It will therefore be possible for the CP/CGT to use Mauroy's continued presence to reassure their members, and demobilise their actions. There is a real danger that such manoeuvres will work unless the political problems of French workers are faced up to. The division of the French working class into four small union confederations must be fought. Revolutionaries must launch a rank and file movement on the basis that mobilises workers for the defence and extension of their living standards and trade unification. From the position of struggling for these demands in rank and file organisations the workers can raise the demand that "their" government break from policy prescriptions and parties of the French bourgeoisie. ■

by R. Ascal

SPD DEFEAT - A TURNING POINT

THE SPD's DEFEAT in the West German election on March 6th marks a significant turning point both nationally and internationally.

Internationally it means a closing of the imperialists' ranks and opens the way to the stationing of cruise and Pershing missiles. In addition, West Germany will now echo Reagan and Thatcher's attacks on public spending and state subsidies.

Nationally, the election was a major defeat for the SPD. Its 38.2% of the vote was the worst result since 1961. The drop in working class support can be seen from the loss of 59 of its 127 'direct mandates'. These are the seats contested by specific party candidates who stand for election by simple majority (the other 50% of parliament is made up of seats allotted to parties in proportion to their total national support). Traditionally, the SPD won its direct mandates in areas of high working class concentration, that is, in the cities. Analysis of the results shows that, on March 6th, 1.6 million workers transferred their vote to the CDU. Only in the traditional areas of heavy industry, the Ruhr, Hanover, Hamburg, Bremen, for example, could the SPD hold its seats. Even there they lost votes.

What accounts for the SPD defeat? Of course the bourgeoisie, nationally and internationally, ensured that the CDU entered the election with the credit for a 21% increase in private investment, an increase in exports (actually caused by a slight relative weakening of the Mark) and an inflation rate below 4%. Against this background, Kohl's promises that the 'austerity programme' of the CDU/CSU was only a short term, if painful, measure, prior to a return to prosperity, could appear considerably more realistic than Vogel's promise that an SPD government would increase the public debt, currently standing at 31.7 billion dollars, by several more billion.

Superficially it could appear that the SPD's blatantly opportunist attempt to win votes from the ecology and peace movements persuaded their traditional supporters to turn away in disgust. This, however, does not explain why the party should

have to go chasing after the 'chaotics' in the first place.

At a more fundamental level what brought down the SPD was its thirteen years of attempting to, 'manage capitalism' with sizeable economic concessions to its working class supporters. Such a governmental policy was viable in the boom years of the Seventies - but in the current recession was completely impracticable. Increasingly ex-Chancellor Schmidt introduced austerity measures against the working class.

What then are the prospects now? The temptation to see a direct parallel with Thatcher's victory in 1979 has to be resisted. Although there have been strains within the SPD, particularly over nuclear energy and the new missiles, these are by no means as significant as those between the TUC and the Labour Government in 1979. Opposition to cruise and Pershing is extremely widespread in West Germany, indeed, in an opinion poll one week before the elections 70% of the CDU's electorate were against them.

In addition, the West German economy is still much stronger than Britain's. The long drawn out decline of British capitalism has allowed the British bourgeoisie to develop a political leadership determined to wage an uncompromising attack on the working class. This is not the case in West Germany. Yet.

The fact that Kohl was obliged to bring the FDP (Liberals) into his government, as a counter-weight to the more aggressively right wing CSU of Franz Josef Strauss, is evidence of the continuing uncertainty of the West German bourgeoisie over the wisdom of 'Thatcherite' policies. Even the electoral claim that the 'austerity' would not last long reflects a hope among some capitalists that this will indeed be the case. That they fear an open offensive on the working class is not unconnected to the fact that, unlike the British, the German working class has not suffered a series of serious setbacks. There remains a lingering belief that it will be possible to weather the recession without dramatically altering the long established cooperation between the unions and the employers



Kohl comfort for Strauss

which has underlain the social peace in West Germany.

Certainly this is the hope of the union leaders. During the election campaign, the heads of the engineering union and the West German TUC met with the leader of the employers' federation and Chancellor Kohl in order to emphasise their desire and intention to work as closely with the CDU as with the SPD.

Nevertheless, the West German economy is under great and increasing pressure. The EEC's plans for steel imply a loss of some 100,000 jobs in Germany and already, in the last six months, unemployment has shot up by 750,000 to a total of 2 1/2 million. 'Warning strikes' by 280,000 engineering workers against an employers' offer of 2.9% on wages over the next 15 months also show the reality beneath the electoral rhetoric. With a convincing electoral victory behind them the 'hawks' of German capitalism can be expected to come to the fore.

In such circumstances the ability of the SPD, in opposition, to regain working class support via purely verbal opposition to the CDU, is a clear possibility. Willy Brandt has already made it clear that this is his perspective when he raised the

slogan of, 'renewing the party in opposition'. This is why revolutionaries would have urged workers to vote the SPD into power - so that the reality of their promises could be clearly seen.

However, Brandt is identified with the failed attempt to win votes from the 'Left' and will be opposed by those who will want to, 'recapture the middle ground'. Thus, there will be conflicts in the SPD. Although this does not mean that these will follow the pattern of the conflict in the Labour Party, it would be wrong for revolutionaries to ignore such developments. The SPD still has the support of the majority of the working class and must be stopped from misleading it. This means that revolutionaries will have to demand that the SPD (and the West German TUC, the ADGB) leaders take action to oppose the Kohl government. They must be called on to publicly support all working class action in defence of jobs, wages and social security. In addition, their likely argument that nothing can really be done until the next election must be exposed for the treachery that it is.

However, the main focus for revolutionaries as West Germany enters a period of increased class struggle must be the workplaces and the unions. Even if West German capitalism is able to gain a respite as a result of a relative strengthening of the US economy and, therefore, world trade, it will not be able to drop its strategic plans to carry through a massive transfer of resources from the working class to capital. It has to attempt to catch up with the capital intensive industry of, for example, Japan if it is to stay a world economic power.

The centrality of an all-out attack on the working class in this strategy ensures that only resistance from the working class on the scale of a general strike will force them to retreat all along the line. Propaganda for such a strike must be central to the tactics of revolutionaries in the coming period. ■

by S. McSweeney

NATIONALIST PIPEDREAM

BRINGS ZIMBABWE TO RUIN

EVENTS IN ZIMBABWE over the last months have brought the country to the brink of civil war. Robert Mugabe of the ruling ZANU party is prepared to risk such a tragedy in his bid to establish his bonapartist rule. Early in 1982 he kicked his former ZAPU ally, Joshua Nkomo, out of the government following the "discovery" of arms caches on ZAPU properties. This move alarmed many of Nkomo's supporters - former ZIPRA guerrillas - some 3,700 of whom deserted from the national army into the bush taking their guns with them.

Following various acts of violence against primarily white farmers in Matabeleland - the region where Nkomo's main power base amongst the minority Ndebele people is - Mugabe made his move against the "dissidents". He sent the Fifth Brigade in to Matabeleland with orders not merely to "restore law and order" but to terrorise the Ndebeles into submission and thus further weaken support for Nkomo and ZAPU.

The Fifth Brigade itself is made up exclusively of Mugabe loyal ex-ZANLA troops from the majority Shona people. Reports suggest that their reign of terror has been brutal and systematic. Indiscriminate killings, torture and round ups of ZAPU activists have taken place, leading, last month, to Nkomo's own flight from Zimbabwe.

Underlying the crisis that is engulfing Zimbabwe is the failure of Mugabe's nationalist solution. The promises of land reform and socialism that won the black masses to support the war against Smith have not been realised. As long as Zimbabwe's economy remained under the yoke of imperialism they could not be fulfilled. High growth rates in the first two years of independence (13%) resulting from the post-war recovery and an excellent harvest, have ceased under the impact of world recession and drought, and dropped to around 2% last year. Depressed prices for the main commodity exports have worsened balance of payments difficulties. A drop in sales has forced 1,200 redundancies in RTZ Zimbabwe's Empress nickel mine. The debt servicing rates rose from 5% to an estimated current rate of 15%.

Zimbabwe (like its neighbours) is bowing to the demands of the IMF. Following devaluation in Kenya, Zimbabwe announced its own of 20%. Finance Minister Bernard Chidzero announced "We must now curtail our demand and our consumption and match these with our own earned resources." (New Africa Feb. 83). This meant a wage freeze and the lifting of meagre meal subsidies, while the devaluation brought an immediate rise in petrol prices. Inflation, already running at 16%, was expected to rise by another 6%. The main aim of devaluation, according to Roger Riddell, the "radical" Chief Economist of the Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries, was to increase the competitiveness of Zimbabwean exports, especially in Southern Africa. This serves to pit Zimbabwe against all its like-minded neighbours.

The price rises have completely offset the wage rises that Mugabe introduced on coming to power. The industrial sector - 70% of which is controlled by the multinationals - was not willing to pay for Mugabe's promises. Realising this himself Mugabe moved to neuter working class resistance to the economic "realities" that imperialism convinced him to recognise.

After the 1981 strike wave working class activity has been dampened through a combination of repression - the use of the Smith regime's Industrial Conciliation Act, the gathering of the trade unions into the ZANU-sponsored trade union federation ZCTU and the granting of substantial wage increases. But as these have already been substantially eaten into by inflation, Mugabe must fear the effect of the new wage freeze.

Crucial in understanding the present crisis is the failure of the nationalists' major promise to the masses - land reform. In agriculture it is still the White Commercial Farmers Union who call the tune. While 700,000 black families remain tied to the relatively barren tribal trust lands, 4,600 white farmers own 38% of the country's agricultural goods and earn 47% of its foreign currency (Guardian 24.3.83). Originally 162,000 landless families were to be resettled. Some 300,000 are squatting. The plans for the 1982-3 financial year allowed for only 20,000 to be financed. Where resettlement has occurred, it is with the most basic technology and this automatically increases the amount of land each family needs to sustain itself. The demands of the IMF for cutbacks in expenditure will make another dent in the finances for the land reform.

Absolutely pivotal in Zimbabwe's crisis is the role of imperialism and, in particular, the role of South Africa. The apartheid state dominates the economic and military situation throughout the south of the continent. Far and away the richest and most industrialised of the nations, it is the major receiver of Western investment, attracting nearly 50% of all such investment south of the Sahara. It is the key world source of gold and its military installations are essential for the Western alliance - it is to be a host for Cruise missiles. It is the major representative of imperialism in the area, a subordinate power to the major imperialist states but one which itself invests in the industries of its neighbours, dominates their markets and imports their labour.

It is not merely a client state for imperialism. It has its own interests to pursue. Its inability to reform the apartheid system makes it constantly vulnerable. The last year has seen the continuing growth of the independent black trade unions, an increasing number of strikes including rebellion on the gold fields. South Africa cannot end the civil war in Namibia and cannot live peacefully with its neighbours, the major three of which won independence after wars of national liberation. Yet its need for markets and areas for investment mean that it must continue to live with and dominate its neighbours. Such contradictions produce the "carrot and stick" approach to international relations which Pretoria has got down to a fine art.

The raid on Lesotho showed that Pretoria is not above direct assaults on its neighbours to wipe out ANC bases, but for the most part it prefers to conduct its struggles through proxies. This element of disguise appeases its Western backers and reduces the risk of provoking dangerous levels of counter

attack from its neighbours, or its own black majority. The last period has seen South Africa increase its operations in Angola and in particular its support for Unita. It backs the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR) and airlifted 1,000 MNR supporters across Zimbabwe in 1981 to areas of Mozambique where the MNR were able to capitalise on dissatisfaction with Frelimo policies. The MNR had concentrated on sabotaging the rail link between Maputo and Zimbabwe, and the oil pipeline from Bura.

Pretoria would undoubtedly like to develop its own proxies on the borders of and inside Zimbabwe. Shortly before independence, an estimated 1,300 Muzorewa auxiliaries and Rhodesian army soldiers were reported to have settled in three military camps in the northern Transvaal (New Africa, March 83). What is not clear is the extent to which former Zipra guerrillas have trodden the same path. Although the Mugabe regime asserts that "dissident" forces are backed by Pretoria there is no evidence at present that they are acting as proxies or agents for South Africa.

But it does appear that Pretoria was working last year to set up channels through former white Rhodesian army officers to the ex-Zipra command.

Much more visible is the use of military pressure to enforce economic ties. Just before the blowing up of Zimbabwean oil stored at Bura on December 9th last year, negotiations over an oil deal had broken down. Zimbabwe was trying to buy oil from SASOL, the South African state-owned coal-to-oil industry, but Pretoria insisted on ministerial talks and a long-term deal. Harare refused, the oil tanks were blown up, an acute fuel shortage ensued and in January, Harare signed a three-year contract. In this manner, Zimbabwe is drawn ever closer into the South African net. South Africa is far and away Zimbabwe's major trading partner taking, in 1981, 21% of its exports and providing 27.5% of its imports (National Westminster Bank Survey Jan. 83). Pretoria's constant pressure exacerbates the difficulties arising from the deep-seated economic problems in Zimbabwe.

Against the background of the imperialists' vice-like grip on Zimbabwe's ailing economy the government is striving to cope by establishing Mugabe as a tough Bonaparte who can contain, if not resolve, the crisis. Amongst the masses the confusion is turning into disillusion and resentment. Mugabe is channelling this into a mobilisation of those loyal to himself (mainly, though not exclusively, Shona) against those loyal to Nkomo (virtually all Ndebele.) This is the cause of the intensifying violence.

In Matabeleland dissatisfaction is compounded

by the felt discrimination against the Ndebele, in particular the belief that less resources are diverted into Matabeleland. The sacking of Nkomo last year confirmed this. Alongside the banditry much more obviously political attacks have been made by the dissidents. In particular, white farmers have been targets. The leaders of the white community have lined up with Mugabe who assiduously wooed them by "drawing their representatives into government. "A government has the right to govern" declared Jim Sinclair, President of the Farmers Union, interviewed on Panorama (21.3.83) "We know the 5th brigade are here to protect us" observed a Matabele white farmer.

Inside ZANU, and inside Mugabe's cabinet, pressure has mounted for an attack on the dissidents. Inevitably, the historic tensions between Shona and Ndebele have come nearer the surface. While Mugabe's cabinet ministers may disregard the differences between themselves (one of the anti-Nkomo "hawks", Enos Nkala, is himself a Matabele), they are not above playing on Shona loyalties. The major roots of these loyalties are in the liberation war when Nkomo held back his ZIPRA forces and ZANU bore the brunt of the fighting. Nkomo also attempted to compromise with Smith, and his secret meeting in Lusaka in 1978 is still remembered. ZANU cadres blame Nkomo and now the dissidents, and demand a crack-down.

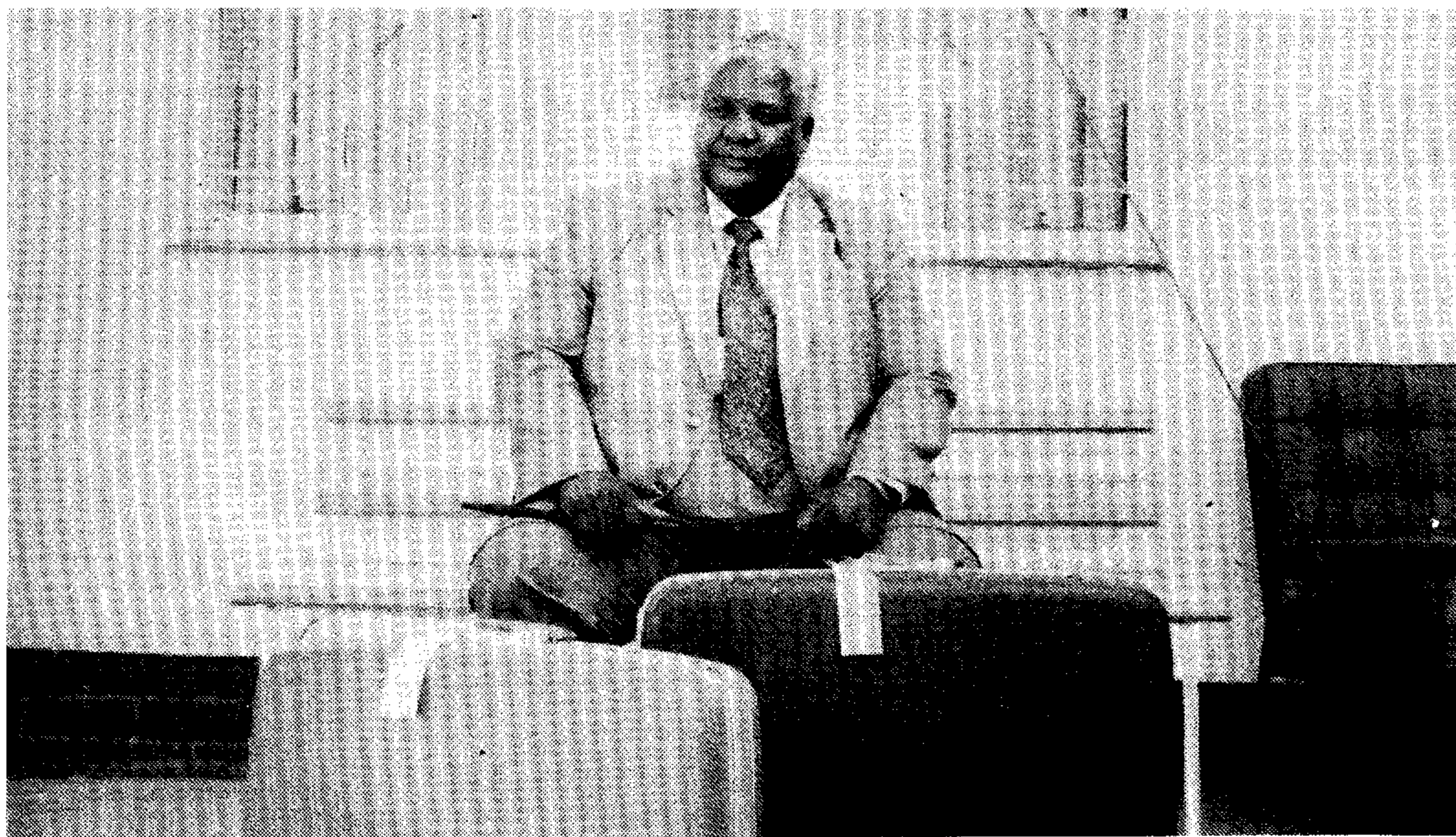
But if the rise in dissident activity and the recent austerity measures have hastened the drive to one-party rule and state repression, they did not begin it. As we have argued previously, Mugabe's programme has always been, despite the socialist rhetoric, for building an independent capitalist Zimbabwe, one with a substantial state sector but primarily tied in with Western markets and reliant on Western investment. The recession and the South African onslaught lessens what little room for manoeuvre he had. The bonapartist rule - relying on popular support amongst the Shona masses and on imperialism, but denying effective democratic rights and in particular working class opposition - is designed to facilitate that aim. ZAPU's voice cannot be tolerated.

What kind of opposition to Mugabe is needed? The masses have no interest in lining up with Nkomo whose programme was never any better than Mugabe's and whose record of double dealing with imperialism was at least as bad as Mugabe's. That is not to say, however, that the democratic questions raised by ZAPU are not important. The right of political parties to operate freely, the need for independent trade unions, an end to the 5th brigade's state terror - these are essential democratic demands which must be taken up along with the question of land reform. But none of these questions can be addressed independently from the need to build a revolutionary workers' party which takes up the demands of the masses and cuts across the imperialist-fostered rivalries.

The experience of Zimbabwe and its neighbours has shown that imperialism places clear limits on development and independence. There can be no peace or sustained growth in Southern Africa while imperialism and its major representative, South Africa, keep a grip. When Trotskyists argue for a programme of permanent revolution which links the immediate and democratic questions to the question of breaking the capitalists' power, we are not, therefore, advocating a kamikaze strategy which could only be dreamed up from the comfort of a Western armchair (as many African militants accuse us of.) In fact we are advocating the only realistic way forward.

Socialists, then, have no interest in supporting either Mugabe or Nkomo, although they must adamantly oppose Mugabe's repression. His drive to bonapartism and his attempt to subjugate the Ndebele people set back the struggle for socialism in Zimbabwe. Nkomo's power struggle with Mugabe, however, has not and cannot serve the interests of the Ndebele, or bridge the divisions that exist between them and the Shona people. Socialists would defend the Ndebele people from the 5th brigade's attacks. Only if it became clear that the "dissidents" were actually mobilising in the service of South Africa would a war against them be justifiable. That is not the case now. It need not be the case ever. The best way of preventing it is to fight the repression and mobilise united working class opposition with the support of the mass of the peasants against the Mugabe regime. ■

Indiscriminate killings, torture and round-ups of ZAPU activists have taken place, leading last month to Nkomo's (below) own flight from Zimbabwe



by S. Thomas

workers power

YOUTH UNDER ATTACK



Youths demonstrating against YOP schemes outside MSC offices

THE MUCH HATED Youth Opportunities' schemes (YOPS) are to be replaced, in September, by the new Youth Training Scheme (YTS). But before young workers start jumping for joy at Norman Tebbit's new found benevolence, it is worth looking a little more closely at the YTS. This scheme will do nothing to reduce unemployment amongst the youth. It is a thinly disguised system of cheap labour. It is a boon to the bosses.

These new "better quality" training schemes, as Tebbit calls them, are to be offered to all minimum age school leavers, employed as well as unemployed, and will last for twelve months. So far one billion pounds a year has been allocated for the scheme. The trainees themselves will get a meagre £25 allowance per week. Tebbit originally favoured £15 a week, but trade union pressure raised the allowance by £10, keeping it at levels paid under the YOP schemes. This pittance does not give youth financial independence. In many places it would not even pay the rent for any youth who lived away from their family. It will increase dependency on families which, in thousands of cases, will include other unemployed members as well.

Even the £25 is not safe. A TGWU document on Youth Training quoted Tebbit as saying that he agreed to the increase in the allowance only in order to get the scheme started, but that his original proposals are correct and that the situation will be reviewed. The extra money will be taken from the overall

amounts allowed for the scheme after twelve months. So provisions for training will undoubtedly suffer.

A big carrot was waved at companies to take on school leavers. If they take on three new school leavers on YTS, for every two school leavers they normally employed they will receive an annual grant of £1,850 for each trainee of which between £1,400-£1,450 would be the allowance payable to the trainee. As David Young, Chairman of MSC, wrote in The Director (October 1982): "You now have the opportunity to take on young men and women, train them and let them work for you almost entirely at our expense and then decide whether or not to employ them."

Companies have not been as forthcoming as they might have been, because of the general effects of the recession. However those that do take on trainees, and the number will probably increase, will be guaranteed cheap labour and rich pickings from the hand outs.

For the Tories the YTS will fulfill two very important functions. First, by getting firms to take on thousands of school leavers they will disguise the dramatic rise in unemployment that is taking place. The YTS does not create new and permanent jobs. It will merely keep thousands temporarily, off the register.

Secondly the YTS gives the bosses the chance to examine their potential recruits, select the most "suitable" and consign the rest to the dole queues. It takes youth out of the school and college education system and puts them through what is in fact, a vetting procedure. In the White Paper on YTS, heavy emphasis was laid on the need for young workers to be adaptable in their approach to their working lives. The Task Group report claims the scheme is intended "to develop and maintain a more ver-

satile, readily adaptable, highly motivated and productive workforce, which will assist Britain to compete successfully in the 1980s and beyond."

Flexibility is a euphemism for docility. What the Tories are attempting to mould is a workforce which can be utilised and paid a pittance or discarded with absolute impunity as the capitalists demand. Militant youth, oppressed youth from the black communities, those who have suffered a disadvantageous educational or domestic background, will all be weeded out under this system. Only the most compliant sections of youth will be taken on by the bosses. The YTS system involves a Pass Book system which will include detailed reports by the bosses on the performance of the trainees. A "bad" performance will be recorded and used to debar a victim from employment altogether. But then, that's why Thatcher is putting together her anti-riot police squads - she envisages a permanent and massive army of unemployed youth that will need keeping in check.

A long term goal of the YTS is to accustom those in employment to low wages. The Tories hope that out of the training schemes a docile workforce, used to low pay, will emerge. That way new enterprises to compete with the South East Asian sweated labour industries will come into being. In an interview with the Sunday Times Tebbit openly salivated at such a prospect when he: 'told the paper that 'confidential discussions' had taken place with a company whose name he would not disclose, but which wants to set up a special state-subsidised factory in which youngsters are paid £25 a week to undercut imports produced by sweated labour in Taiwan and Korea. Tebbit described the idea as 'super', commended its ingenuity and has now instructed the department of Employment officials to work out the details with a view to encoura-

ging other companies to follow suit!" (Quoted in Tribune 29.10.82).

The original White Paper was even more explicit "It is applying these extra resources to help secure longer term reforms in the quality of training and bringing about a change in the attitude of young people to the value of training and acceptance of relatively lower wages for trainees."

In keeping with these aims the government has stated its intention to abolish time-serving apprenticeships by 1985. Already some unions have made agreements which have meant a cut in apprentice wages of between 10% and 45%. One such agreement between the EETPU and the Electrical Contractors Association reduces first year apprentice wages of £41.63 to an allowance linked with YTS of £27.88. Now while a lot of improvements in the apprentice system are needed, they need to be done under trade union control and in the working class' interests. Tebbit's scheme is, in every respect, opposed to those type of improvements. It is one more element of his overall plan to weaken the unions.

For the youth the YTS means hardship, dependency on parents and the status of second class citizens at work. They are prevented from participating fully in the unions by their ambiguous and temporary status. Fellow workers will regard them as undercutting their wages and as taking the jobs of other adults.

In the light of all this it is a scandal that the unions like NATFHE and the EETPU are collaborating with the MSC Youth Task Group. The TUC itself is involved in selecting officials to sit on the supervisory Area Manpower Boards that are to police YTS. It has declared: "The TUC is committed to helping unions make YTS work." This collaboration will jeopardise the possibility of recruiting trainees to the unions, which

they will rightly view as being in league with their bosses.

A fight against the YTS must be mounted now. It must be linked to a mass union and youth campaign against unemployment. The unions, the apprentices, the LPYS, the unemployed and the trainees themselves must be welded into a struggle around the slogan, jobs for all now. To ensure the right to work every closure or redundancy threat must be met with militant direct action. Occupations, strikes, mass pickets, the mobilisation of the unemployed can defeat the bosses' offensive.

To win YTS trainees to this campaign the unions must recruit them as active members with full union rights and fight for their interests. That this can be done was shown at ICI Gloucester Fibres Plant. The TGWU have won a training programme for youth that goes some way to countering Tebbit's aims. Agreements have been made for at least £50 a week to be paid to trainees, 18 months training which is not to include menial work, comprehensive training on all the major processes at the site, off-the-job education, the right to join a union and genuine contracts of employment.

For all YTS trainees the unions must fight for proper employment rights - a permanent contract, trade union rates for the job, full union rights and an end to the secret files and pass books. To prevent the management turning the YTS into a vetting procedure we must demand trade union control of recruitment. The bosses must not be allowed to have a weapon to undermine workplace organisation - which is what they hope the YTS will become.

Around these policies, a mass campaign could ensure that the youth taken on under YTS become co-fighters against unemployment and not a docile reserve army of labour. ■

by Pauline A tienza

Support Daleside Hadden strikers

WORKERS AT DALESIDE Hadden Ltd, a Nottingham textile firm, have been on strike for over two months now. The strike began when the factory owner, Keith Fry, tried to impose a new 168 hour continental style system on the workforce. When the workers refused to operate the system Fry promptly sacked 63 of them. The workers responded with an immediate strike.

The new system was Fry's attempt to put a year of Thatcher's beloved "Victorian virtues" into practice in industry. It meant the tearing up of all negotiated agreements on working practices and the imposition of compulsory weekend working, no overtime payments and increased hours. In some instances the new shift system would mean workers, working seven nights in a row

every four weeks and only one weekend in four.

Since sacking his workforce Fry has been trying to recruit new workers from the dole queue. In the time honoured fashion he is trying to use the unemployed to destroy the strength and organisation of the employed. The rates of pay for new recruits, who will not be in the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers (the union to which the strikers belong), are well below the rates previously paid.

The firm also employs YOPS workers, who Fry is ruthlessly exploiting. Their lack of union rights and fear of getting bad references has meant that Fry has been able to use them to keep the factory going. He has even forced them to do the strikers' jobs and work shifts which they are not allowed to do under the scheme's terms of reference.

Keith Fry has been no friend of his workforce in the past, the sacking is the culmination of his bad treatment of them. His track record included contin-

uous threats of the 'sack' for not wanting to do "voluntary" overtime, no wage increase for 4 years, bad health and safety conditions, and cutting away the bottom of toilet doors so the management can spy on workers during their breaks!

The dispute has been made official by the NUHW and is supported by the Nottingham Trades Council, but much more active support is urgently needed. Cowboy drivers have been driving supplies through picket lines. The 24-hour picket maintained by the strikers must be turned into regular mass pickets (especially on Mondays and Thursdays) in order to keep up morale and block supplies. Trade unionists throughout the East Midlands must support these pickets by sending big and regular delegations.

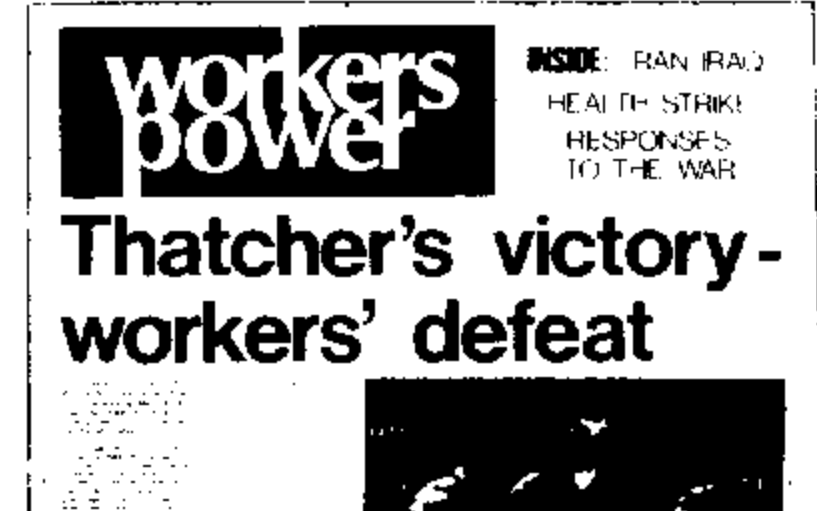
This is crucial given Fry's tactic of trying to starve the strikers into defeat. They are not getting DHSS payments and, of late, donations from other workers have been getting smaller and

less frequent. Yet the strikers themselves remain determined. They have recently refused Fry's 'final offer' of £400 severance pay per sacked worker. The strike committee's response was that their minimum demand was their job back and the abandonment of the plans to introduce the continental shift system.

If Fry wins he will have scored a victory for all the jumped-up small company bosses in the East Midlands and beyond. That must not be allowed to happen. As well as mass support for the picket line trade unionists in the area must rush in big donations to the strike fund, take collection around the workplaces and win widespread support for the Daleside Hadden strikers.

Money and messages of support should be rushed to the Strike Committee, c/o Martin Lawson 1 Eugene Gardens, The Meadows, Nottingham.

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