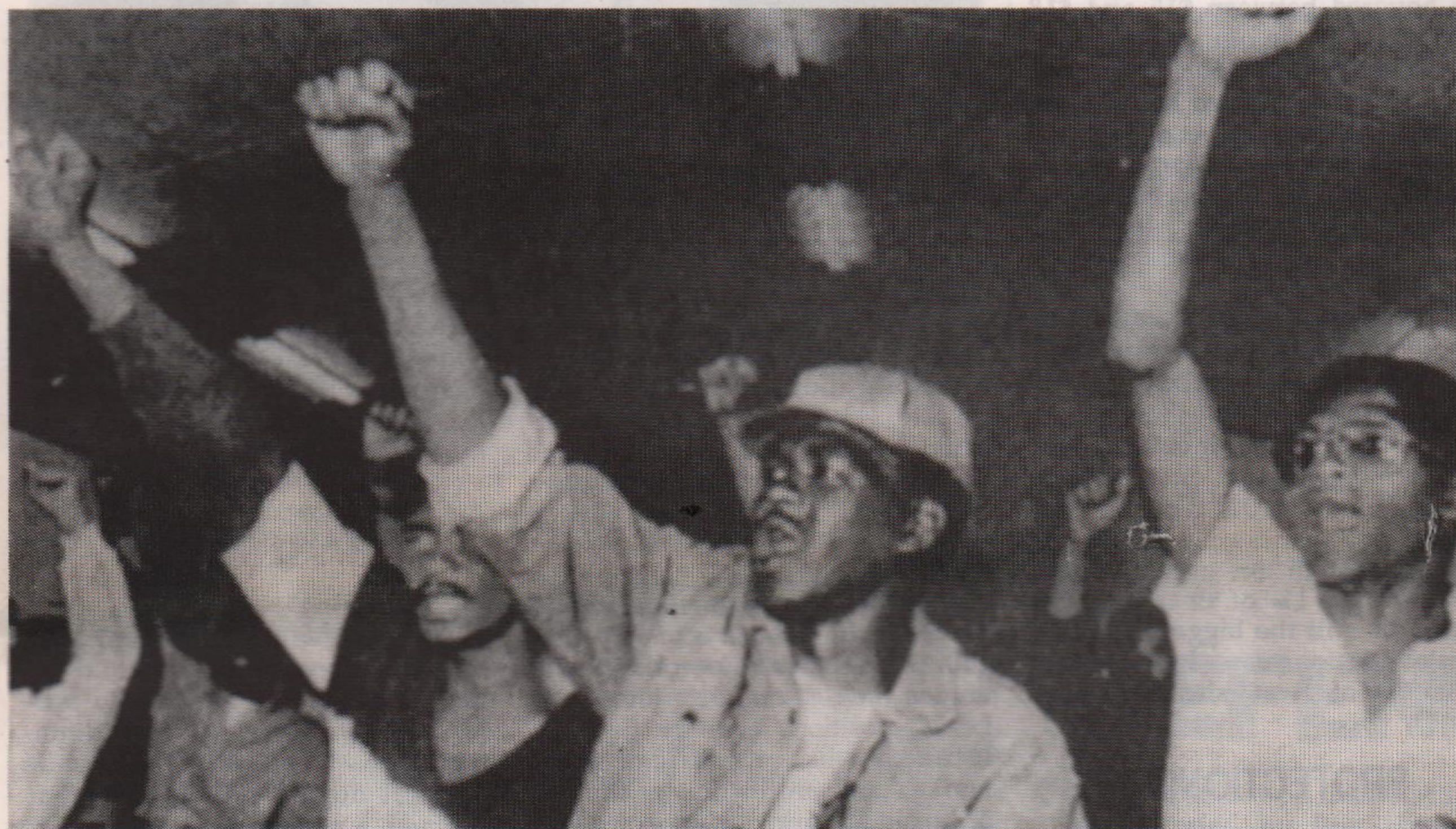


# Workers Power

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## SOUTH AFRICA

# THE REVOLUTION LIVES!



THE APARTHEID REGIME has launched its most severe attack against the renewed wave of black militancy that is being spearheaded by the trade unionised working class.

It has brought in new laws aimed at curbing calls for the release of the detainees in Botha's jails. Last year it detained 24,000 under the State of Emergency. The regime is holding 1,424 children by its own admission. Now it is trying to silence those who campaign on their behalf.

Arrested trade union leaders now face possible execution. The Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) general secretary Moses Mayekiso has been charged with attempting to 'overthrow, usurp or endanger the authority of the state'. If the racist judges find him guilty he faces the death penalty.

Armed police were let loose on a demonstration of railway workers in Johannesburg. They murdered six workers and ransacked the offices of COSATU. Of the 800 workers they dragged out of the building, 400 are still being detained.

This is not simply a get tough election ploy by Botha. In fact he is under little threat from the liberals or the super-racist right in the white only elections due for 6 May. It is a desperate bid by the regime to hold the line against the revived combativity of black workers.

Last June's State of Emergency has failed to quell black resistance. In the face of brutal repression the independent trade union move-

ment in South Africa has continued to grow and wage important struggles. The major federation COSATU has actually grown over the last period and is now estimated to organise upwards of three quarters of a million workers. MAWU managed to hold a national conference and debate important policy just over a month after the Emergency came in, and its strong shop stewards' network is keeping the union effective, despite the detention of key leaders like Moses Mayekiso.

### KINROSS

At the end of February, the South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) held its annual conference and confirmed its stance that the union should be concerned with both economic and political issues. Last Autumn, the union staged its biggest ever strike with 300,000 miners supporting the day's stay away in commemoration of the miners killed in the Kinross disaster. As we go to press 24,000 gold miners are on strike against threatened redundancies at the Randfontein Estates and Western Areas mines.

The catering workers' union CCAWUSA which organises in South Africa's highly monopolised retail industry, has won disputes with a number of the big chains, and has recently concluded a 10

week strike of its workers in OK Bazaars, a dispute which saw 1,000 detentions, occupations and a COSATU organised boycott of the stores.

From the turn of the year the regime has been bracing itself for a showdown with the railworkers' union (SARHWU). In January it detained its general secretary, Ntai Sello, after raids on SARHWU's Johannesburg and Cape Town offices.

Despite the arrest of its leadership the members struck in March against the dismissal of a member on a clearly trumped up charge referring to an incident occurring six months before the sacking! The employers, the state owned South African Transport Services (SATS), tried to break the strike through organised scabbing and harassment, but failed to do so. It set 22 April as a deadline for strikers to return to work before facing dismissal, but only 2,000 returned as a result of this ultimatum.

Having failed to drive SARHWU back to work the police were unleashed against strikers in at least two areas, Doornfontein and Germiston. The day the deadline to return expired they opened fire in Johannesburg.

This is a crucial moment in the struggle in South Africa. The strike wave coincides with a solid work boycott in Soweto against attempted evictions of rent strikers. The South African working class is preparing itself for a massive display of solidarity on May Day.

## DISARM THE BOSSES

GORBACHEV'S PROPOSALS to scrap all Soviet and US short and medium range nuclear weapons has caught the cabinets and war machines in London, Paris and Bonn on the hop. The signs that Reagan and Schultz seem prepared to deal, have alarmed the European imperialists even further.

For years Thatcher and Kohl have defended every increase in the West's nuclear arsenals as a necessary means of matching the Soviet Union bomb for bomb in Europe. Only recently the European bourgeois leaders declared the absolute necessity of deploying Pershing and Cruise so as to defend 'peace' against the Soviet threat. The prospect of a Soviet-US arms deal is giving them the jitters.

Under the present proposals both major powers would scrap all European missiles with a range of between 500 and 5000 kilometres. That is what short and medium range missiles are. This would mean the end of Cruise and Pershing. It would mean the dismantling of the SS20s as well as Soviet short range missiles like the SS23.

Despite all the talk about the zero option, in no sense is imperialism about to disarm itself. A deal would leave intercontinental missiles intact. Here the US has a clear advantage over the USSR as well as plans for a first strike invulnerability if it can get Star Wars (SDI) in order. It would also leave the arsenals of battlefield, air and submarine launched nuclear weapons untouched. The US nuclear F1-11s will stay in Europe. The British and French nuclear systems will be left unscathed. It is the Soviet bureaucracy that is making the major concessions.

Gorbachev needs an arms deal with imperialism very badly. In the long term it would take a strain off the Soviet economy, and hopefully, allow the diversion of funds and technologies towards economic modernisation. In the shorter term it strengthens Gorbachev's political base within the bureaucracy. Whilst having achieved few social results inside the USSR he can claim success where Brezhnev and Gromyko have failed.

He can claim the laurels for both an arms deal with the US and for de-coupling Europe from the US. The Soviet bureaucracy is historically locked into class collaboration with imperialism. Gorbachev hopes he can use a new deal with imperialism to aid him against those sections of the bureaucracy and Soviet society who are resisting

his plans. The fact that his plans will leave the workers' states considerably free more vulnerable attack from imperialism is neither here nor there. For years the Reagan administration has used the arms race as a means of bringing the evil empire to its knees. That was so even when they were talking about arms control. Supreme NATO commander General Bernard Rogers let that cat out of the bag recently when he confessed:

*"The truth is that in 1979 some people agreed to the Zero Option proposal because they never thought it would be accepted by the Soviet Union".*

Why then do Reagan and Schultz seem to be singing a different tune right now? Partly they have been hoist on their own petard by Gorbachev. But more importantly, key sections of the US ruling class, whilst not embracing old style isolationism, see some lessening of their arms budget as a means of reducing the US government's mounting debts. A deal with Gorbachev will increase the pressure from Washington on its European allies to foot more of the bill for their own defence.

Hence the alarm in Western Europe. Either they must admit that they were wrong to arm themselves to the teeth against the 'Soviet threat' or they must make good any US withdrawal by boosting their own arms spending. London and Paris will now argue that they can and should beef up their arsenals. All the Western European governments are now talking about building up their conventional weaponry to bridge the gap that they deceitfully claim exists between the Warsaw Pact and NATO forces. NATO has already got more ground forces and surface ships than the Warsaw Pact.

In Britain the refrain for more European nuclear weaponry has been immediately taken up by *The Economist*. And they have overnight become particularly keen on a major conventional re-armament against the USSR. Poor old Kinnock. He tried to sell Labour's plans to expand Britain's conventional arms to the British ruling class only to get it flatly turned down. He tried to sell it in Washington only to get a flea in his ear from Reagan. And now that the European right and the Chiefs of Staff are pressing for a new arms build up they are not showing any gratitude to Neil Kinnock for suggesting just such a thing.

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The South African workers must go forward and defeat this round of repression. They must respond to the onslaught with a mighty general strike to break the regime. If the unions do not respond with all their strength the regime will be encouraged to stamp on the unions even harder.

### SOLIDARITY

British workers can no longer sit on the sidelines as the struggle becomes fiercer. We have our part to play in bringing nearer the day that our brothers and sisters in South Africa win their liberation from apartheid and capitalist exploitation. When the racist police invaded the COSATU offices they smashed the telephones and telexes. They wanted to cut off all the links between COSATU and the international workers' movement. Our

reply must be as immediate and as class conscious.

- Build direct links with the South African trade unions. Fight for the release of all detainees. Highlight the cases of detained trade unionists, especially Moses Mayekiso who faces death.
- Break the apartheid regime's links with its capitalist backers by a trade union boycott of all goods and services to and from South Africa. Carry out such activities in collaboration with the black trade unions.
- Support the Campaign for Trade Union Sanctions Against Apartheid—and get your unions to affiliate—to build on the actions taken already by British workers in response to the call from their black sisters and brothers for international workers' support.



# EDITORIAL

## TACTICAL TREACHERY

THE RECENT ALLIANCE surge in the opinion polls has placed 'tactical voting' on the agenda of the Labour right and the yuppie intelligentsia. The Eurocommunist *Marxism Today* is in the vanguard of those trying to persuade workers to vote Alliance to keep the Tories out. The *New Statesman* and *New Socialist* have followed suit with their own guides to 'tactical voting'.

Labour's gloomy prospects are also concentrating the minds of the right in the trade unions and Labour Party. Gavin Laird used the AEU national committee to urge Kinnock to form a coalition with the SDP. Frank Field (Labour MP for Birkenhead) has said the Greenwich bye-election 'raised his morale' at the prospect of putting together an anti-Tory coalition.

The theory behind tactical voting is simple and deceptive. Voting for the party with the best chance of beating the Tory is supposed to result in an anti-Tory parliamentary majority. But behind the anti-Tory talk of some tactical voting advocates lies the reality that they are falling into line behind a clear and definite ruling class strategy. They are doing the bosses' dirty work.

Since the early 1980s the bosses have been set on ensuring that never again would a government be elected that was, as *The Economist* put it, 'constitutionally dependent on organised (let alone unorganised) labour'. This is part of Thatcher's vision of 'removing socialism from the agenda of British politics'. The bosses want to hammer together an opposition with no organic links with the working class, based around the Alliance but which the Labour right, and all those who turn their backs on organised labour, can join.

The opinion pollsters have now got their sights set on talking Labour voters in marginal constituencies into switching their votes to the Alliance. Tactical voting is not intended to work the other way around.

### PRACTICAL OBJECTION

The first argument against tactical voting is practical and real. A vote for the Alliance is a vote for those who have made no commitment to act with Labour as an 'anti-Tory majority'. Owen's SDP is committed to policies—like monetarist economics, law and order, an independent nuclear deterrent—that make it far more likely a candidate for shoring up the Tories than allying with Kinnock. Owen has made it clear already that his preferences lie that way. The most likely outcome of the tactical voters' dream of a hung parliament will be a pro-Tory majority with Owen and Steel as junior partners.

The second argument against 'tactical voting' is that it lies at the heart of the employers' strategy. Breaking the link between the liberal 'socialists' of the Labour leadership and the trade unions who foot the party's bills has been a long cherished ambition of the ruling class. In the Alliance they see a means of achieving it.

The Alliance has served to constantly pressure not the Tories, but the Labour Party. The press has praised its 'moderation' while railing at Labour's 'extremism'. Kinnock's every attempt to get back to the 'middle ground' by junking Labour policies has seen him confronted by the reality that the Alliance has occupied that ground. Under their pressure he has disowned Labour policies in the hope of projecting his own leadership image. But despite succeeding in his onslaught on Labour's progressive policies he has proved a predictably miserable failure as a capable leader.

What the employers prefer about Owen and Steel is that their parties cannot be pressurised by the mass of workers organised in trade unions. Kinnock and Owen would both hold down wages; but Kinnock, and not Owen, is beholden to trade union bureaucrats who can be pressured to resist by their members. Kinnock, like Owen, now claims to favour some sort of nuclear weaponry. But Owen reassures the military chiefs by the fact that, unlike Kinnock, he has never headed CND marches. The bosses can rest content that his leadership does not face block votes in favour of nuclear disarmament.

The bosses are set on creating this new political safety net for themselves against the day the Tories might let them down. Against them Kinnock's strategy is pathetic. He has offered up a Labour Party without a hint of pro-working class policies. Not surprisingly he has found no takers in the bosses' ranks. They smell blood. And no less surprisingly he's opened up the prospect of workers deserting Labour in large numbers.

To desert Labour for tactical voting is to consign that party to a future of marginalisation or coalition broking. The Labour leaders are putting a brave face on it at the moment but the minute they lose an election the majority will resign themselves to one or another form of coalition. What they say they can't do now they will without a doubt do later.

Workers must not vote to propel Labour into the arms of Steel and Owen. We don't say this because we see any real difference between Kinnock's policies and those of the Alliance. They are all too often a carbon copy of the SDP and Liberals. We say so because the working class should not give up the party its unions created until a revolutionary, not a tactical, alternative to it exists. Today it must force Labour to act for it through its class organisations.

The only valid 'tactical vote' is a critical vote for Labour. It must be a critical support that places concrete demands for working class interests on Labour and organises to fight for those demands irrespective of whether Labour wins or not.

# TRADING BLOWS

A FLURRY OF diplomatic activity is now taking place to prepare for the June economic summit of the major imperialist powers in Venice. They have much to concern them. Over the last few months all the economic policies of the United States' administration have been directed at reducing its runaway trade deficit. The gap between what it imports and exports is a product of the declining competitiveness of US industry as compared to its major rivals, in particular Japan and West Germany.

The Reagan government has sought to reverse this situation by a variety of measures. It has intervened in the currency markets to force down the value of the US dollar. In mid-April the dollar hit a post war low of 140 Japanese Yen to the dollar. This, hoped the Reagan government would render the US exports cheaper to buy and make foreign imports more expensive for US consumers.

After a year and a half of such interventions, however, the trade deficit remains stubbornly high. In November 1986 it reached a record of \$20 billion a month. Since then it has hovered between \$15 and \$18 billion despite the plunging value of the dollar. By and large this manoeuvre has not worked because the currency has fallen least against the USA's main trading partners like Canada, Taiwan and South Korea. Others, such as Japan, have cut profit margins to keep their share of the trade.

The failure to reduce the trade gap significantly and restore competitiveness has increased the domestic pressure for other ways to hit back. Protectionist measures are chief amongst them. In April the USA slapped a 100% tariff on \$300 million of Japanese electronic imports. Although this only accounts for less than 1% of their bilateral trade it is still the biggest protectionist blow for years. It represents something of a watershed.

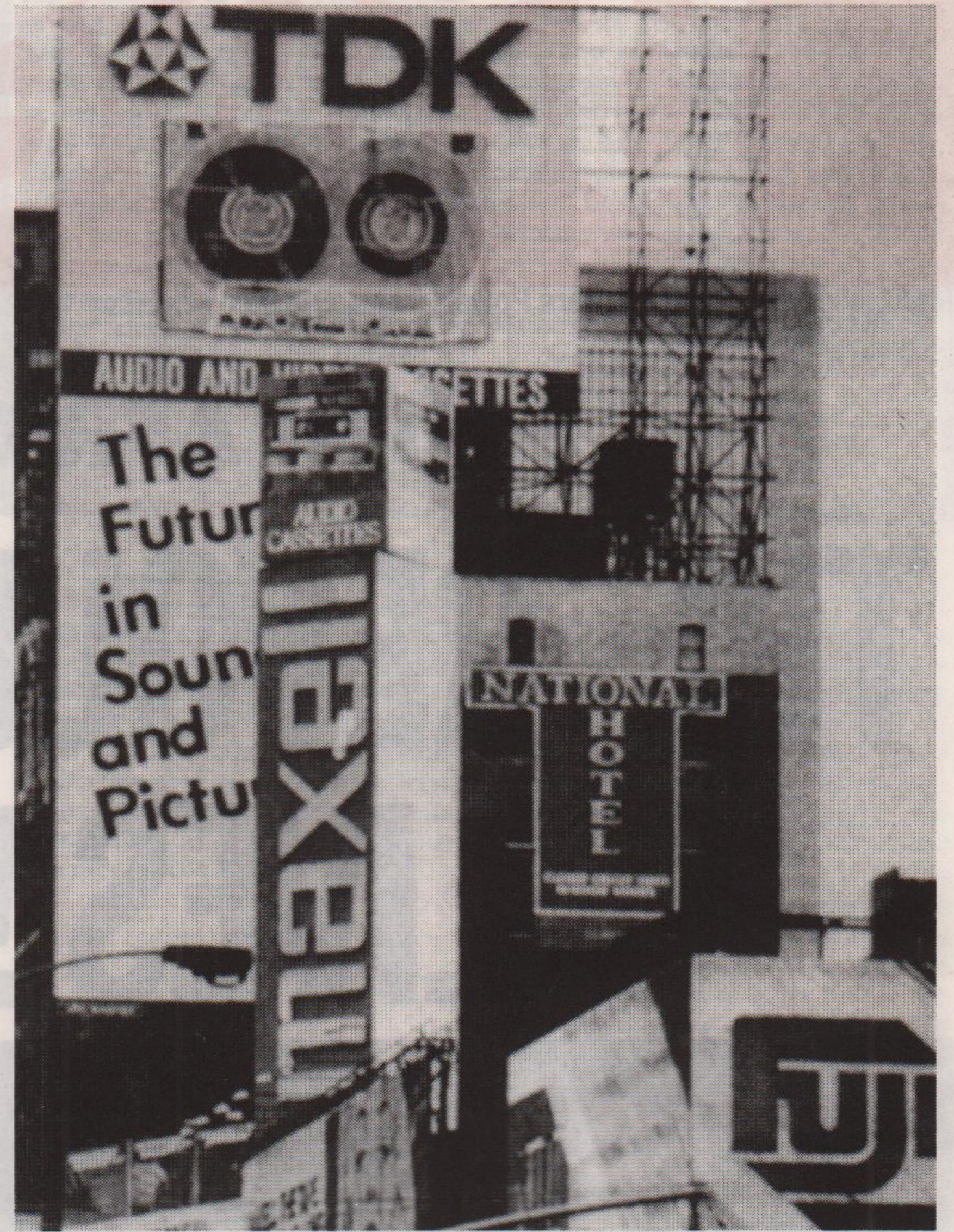
### PROTECTIONIST

Further protectionist measures by the US and a retaliation by Japan, threaten to tip a precariously balanced world economy into full blow recession. Even *Newsweek* recently said that "the prospect for global growth are the darkest they have been since early in the decade".

The USA provided the main source of support for general recovery in the world economy in the years after 1982. The reflation engineered inside the USA on the basis of a major restructuring at the expense of US workers led to a surge in the European and Pacific economies as demand increased in the US for their exports. But the measures taken by the US to halt its declining competitiveness have reduced the profitable outlets for the Japanese and European imperialist nations. In the last three months of 1986 industrial output in West Germany was stagnant. In the first quarter of 1987 output actually shrank. All the major commentators

continued from front page

Gorbachev's offer has made several things clear. There is no Soviet threat to invade and occupy Western Europe. The West's nuclear and conventional armories have and always have had, the purpose of pressurising the Soviet bureaucracy to accept imperialism's terms and ultimately to undermine the USSR in its entirety. What is at stake at present is whether the European powers bear more of the burden for that armament and force the workers to pay for it. The drums of rearmament are beating in Western Europe. The US imperialists want their allies to play a greater role in



consuming interest

have drastically cut their projections for growth in 1987 as a result.

Japan's industry is in serious trouble. With a relatively impoverished internal market it feels the decline in export markets very quickly and deeply. Clearly, further protectionist measures will worsen the situation. This is a classic illustration of the contradictions within the world imperialist economy. The USA could underwrite world growth only at the cost of a deterioration in its own positions relative to its rivals. It can claw back its share of world markets and profits only at the cost of causing a shrinkage in world output, markets and profits.

In essence, there is little that the main powers can do faced with this. Their attention and hopes are focused on the June summit. They will not be short of advice.

### PUNDITS

The economic pundits will implore them all to forget their national interests and devise a package that can keep the world economy afloat. The Japanese will be urged to liberalise their internal markets by removing hidden protectionism' and boosting internal demand through infrastructural spending. Unfortunately, for the pundits, the Japanese parliament has just passed one of its most restrictive budgets ever.

West Germany will be urged to bring forward most of its \$26 billion worth of tax cuts planned for 1990 again, to reflate demand and take its share of the burden that the USA

alone has shouldered so far. However, the West German government fears that reflation will boost inflation and damage its competitiveness.

### RAISE TAXES

The USA will be urged to raise taxes and revenue in order to cut the deficit rather than bow to protectionist pressure. But the administration is hampered by Reaganite political dogma over taxes. What seemed a virtue seven years ago now appears as the opposite.

Failure of the carrot and stick to budge the USA's rivals will bring the inevitable recession nearer. The scenario is clear in outline. The falling dollar while it makes few inroads into the trade deficit, does make the itself a less attractive currency for foreign investors to hold. Already they are selling off dollars and not taking up the government bonds the USA needs to finance its deficit. The pressure to raise interest rates is hanging over the administration as a means of attracting money back into the USA.

In turn this could prove disastrous. It could make the debt situation of US companies and major borrowers such as Brazil intolerable. The domino effect in other countries would likewise deliver a blow to interest rates, borrowing and ultimately levels of output. A full blown recession would occur.

When the ministers of the major powers gather in Venice it won't just be the buildings that have that sinking feeling. □

### OUT NOW!

#### THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE ELECTIONS

Vote Labour but organise to fight!

A Workers Power pamphlet

£1 inc. p&p

policing the world system that guarantees their profits at the expense of the exploited and oppressed mass of the world's population.

The workers' movement must not let the talk of peace blind it to what is going on. It must resist any attempt to boost the bosses arms budgets and rally around a genuinely proletarian anti-militarist policy:

- Disarm the bosses—not a person or a penny for the defence of this system
- Britain out of NATO now
- Defend the USSR and all the degenerate workers' states against imperialism



# LABOUR'S SOP TO WOMEN



THE LABOUR PARTY is entering the election campaign with 'a clear commitment to tackle the inequality women still face in British society'. The centrepiece of this commitment is the proposal for a Minister for Women, who 'will take her seat in the Cabinet on day one of the next Labour Government'. What are the concrete proposals within this commitment and will this solve the problems of working class women?

To seriously attempt to tackle women's social and economic oppression in the workplace, in the home and in the family requires policies far wider than those Labour proposes.

The legislation in the 1970s, the Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination Act and the setting up of the Equal Opportunities Commission have done little to improve the position of women workers. Labour recognise that

*'existing equal opportunities legislation is incapable of bringing about the major changes needed to provide equal opportunities for women at home and in the labour market.'*

They note that women still earn 25% less than average male earnings - making them the poorest section of the population, and that women are still largely segregated into a narrow range of unskilled and semi-skilled occupations.

To tackle this Labour propose more legislation and a strengthening of the Equal Opportunities Commission within the radically different machinery of the Ministry for Women. But is this just more of the same?

Any benefits for working class women have to be considered in terms of Labour's economic strategy.

Given that women's average earnings are considerably below the national average and women are employed in some of the lowest paid jobs in both the public and private sector, legislation to enforce a decent minimum wage is vital.

## MINIMUM WAGE

The Labour Party plan to introduce a National Minimum Wage to be decided following consultation with both unions and employers. It has not decided what that minimum should be but in January 1987 it was reported that 'many unions are suggesting an initial figure of £80 per week, about half the average male earnings'.

And just to make sure the employers are not frightened off by this miserable reform,

*'the minimum wage would not be introduced overnight but would be phased in over a number of years.'*

Further, the minimum wage legislation is designed to operate within a broader incomes policy in which wage restraint would be 'urged' on higher paid workers to pay for minimum wage levels. The working class will be redistributing amongst themselves the already pathetic slice of the cake they get now without touching the huge chunk expropriated by the capitalists.

Women workers must support the introduction of legislation on a national minimum wage, but they must not be under any illusions that a Kinnock-led government would have the determination to force employers to implement it. As with equal pay, any legislation will



equal chances under Labour?

remain toothless unless workers organise and fight to win a decent minimum wage from the bosses. This goes against the Labour and TUC's plans - they would prefer a gentlemen's agreement on low pay with plenty of exclusion clauses for small firms and part-time workers no doubt. We must demand a guaranteed national minimum wage linked to the cost of living as determined by workers' price watch committees and set at the level of the average industrial wage. This minimum level must be based on hourly rates in order to protect the growing numbers of part-time workers, most of whom are women.

Labour further promises women a 'fair share of all jobs and opportunities'. However Kinnock's hardest pledge on unemployment is to provide 'one million jobs in two years', so for many women this will mean a fair share of unemployment.

In order to provide equal opportunities for women there needs to be a massive expansion in childcare and welfare facilities to relieve women of the burdens in the home that take them out of the labour market or force them into low-paid part-time work. Labour plan to place a statutory duty on local authorities to provide childcare facilities for all three and four year olds in their area.

This is hopelessly inadequate even in terms of childcare. Flexible services caring for children of all ages in appropriate ways - creches, nurseries, after school play groups, professional carers to look after children in their homes when parents are out in the evening or at night - such a full, free 24-hour service would allow women to work and be sure their children were being well cared for.

Women have doubly suffered as a result of cuts in social services and the health service, through job losses and worsening conditions as services have been cut or privatised. They have been forced to take on more responsibility in the home as unpaid carers. It is not just the Tories who make cuts while extolling the virtues of the family in taking on this role. When the last Labour Government announced cuts in public spending, Callaghan started to talk about 'the importance of the family' and 'community care'.

Despite recognising that one in eight women stay at home to provide care for elderly, disabled and handicapped relatives, Labour still see this responsibility to be shared by the family and the community. They aim to make employers

*'aware of their workers' caring roles' and 'strongly urge the negotiation of flexible employment practices with time off for those with adult dependents as well as children.'*

'Awareness' and 'urging' are not going to be enough to persuade many bosses, and the burden of

unpaid caring will remain with women workers in the family.

Whilst we should support any moves to force employers to grant flexibility and compassionate leave and reduced hours to allow people to care for dependents, we must also tackle the problem of providing adequate services so that women do not have to stop work to become unpaid carers. An expansion of community services to meet the needs of disabled and elderly people would benefit women and provide a better form of care. The loneliness and isolation which 'community care' has meant for so many people must be overcome by expanding care to meet the needs expressed by elderly people and people with disabilities.

Labour and the TUC's Jobs and Industry campaign advocates that:

*'Women workers should join a trade union - they achieve better pay and conditions'*

when they are better organised'.

The fact that many women are employed in low-wage non-unionised jobs in the private sector, where many of the employers are virulently anti-union adds to the specific difficulties women have in fully participating in union activities. A bland recommendation by a Labour government is not enough. Labour's record in office of support for the bitter struggles by women workers at Grunwicks, Chix and other small factories, for trade union recognition is abysmal.

## GRUNWICKS

Labour used the SPG to smash the picket line at Grunwicks. So too is the record of the TUC! We need to demand that a future Labour government fully supports the struggle of women themselves to organise themselves, and begin now by campaigning for more women to join the unions. This will not be achieved just by having more glossy union journals and recruitment campaigns based on PR stunts instead of action as Todd and Edmonds seem to believe. It means organising to get unions fighting for women workers' interests - full employment protection for all workers including part timers, fighting against privatisation, taking up demands of home workers for decent pay and conditions. For full maternity leave rights and for the right to free abortion and contraception on demand to all

women. These struggles combined with making union meetings accessible to women (meeting in work time especially to cover when part-timers and shift workers are there, creche provision, women's caucuses to challenge male dominated bureaucratic meetings, etc) will really ensure women are 'well organised'.

Labour's plans for a Ministry for Women, carrying out the policies advocated in Kinnock's programme, will do little for working class women. It may grant jobs to a few highly paid women civil servants, and establish a bureaucratic regional machine to print tedious consultative documents, but it looks unlikely to be a fighting body committed to radically transforming the lives of women.

The experience of such ministries in other Social Democratic governments is not encouraging - in France and Australia they have been part and parcel of the administrations inflicting massive austerity measures on the working class. With the current Labour leadership this experience would be repeated here unless women in the workplaces, unions, the Labour Party and the community organise to fight for the demands we have outlined. Struggles on all these issues, led by militant working class women would form the basis for a working class women's movement which could really 'tackle the inequality' women, and indeed all workers, face under capitalism. □

by Kathy Tytler

## DEFEND ATKIN DEFEND BLACK SECTIONS

LABOUR'S LEADERSHIP, spearheaded by Roy Hattersley, has launched a full frontal assault on the Black Sections of the Party. The prospective MP for Nottingham, Sharon Atkin, has been called before the NEC to face disciplinary charges.

Hattersley has called for action to be taken 'against anyone supporting the Black Sections manifesto'. With a general election imminent the Labour leadership has decided to make one last attempt to appease the middle-of-the-road voter by rounding on yet another wing of the so-called 'loony left'. With the bosses' press calling the racist tune, Kinnock and his friends—like David Blunkett—are blaming the left in advance for the defeat they fearfully anticipate in the coming election. Black Sections' leaders such as Sharon Atkin and Linda Bellos are a prime target for attack, having dared to publicly side with the oppressed in the inner city uprisings.

After the Black Sections' conference in March the NEC launched its attack against them for having policies other than those in the official party programme. In fact the most powerful faction of all in the party, the right-dominated PLP, consistently and publicly argues against and ignores party policy on disarmament and other issues. But of course these open servants of the bosses never get called before the kangaroo courts of the NEC.

After this warning shot, Hattersley and the other Birmingham MPs then provoked an open confrontation by telling Black Sections' leaders that Birmingham

was a no-go area. When Sharon Atkin and Linda Bellos defied this racist ruling and spoke at a Birmingham Black Sections' meeting on 7 April, the right were ready to pounce.

At the meeting, Sharon Atkin argued that she put the interests of black people before the safety of her parliamentary seat. Since then she has come under attack from many sections of the Party. Larry Whitty has demanded her appearance before the NEC where her position as PPC and a Labour Party member will be threatened.

## DISTANCED

Even the other Black Sections' PPCs—Bernie Grant, Russel Profit, Diane Abbott and Paul Boateng—distanced themselves from her stand when they stated that 'nothing can stand in the way of getting Labour elected'. Bernie Grant has gone further and argued that 'pursuance of constitutional issues surrounding black sections was not the priority at this time'. Sharon Atkin must be defended for the stand she has taken. So too must other black activists in the party like Linda Bellos, Leader of Lambeth Council, who are at risk of being witch-hunted.

A drive to organise black workers, black women and, particularly the black youth, condemned by the traitor Kinnock as 'criminals', to a fight against unemployment, immigration controls and deportations, police harassment and racist violence, would demonstrate to the Tories and to Kinnock that Black

Sections are a force to be reckoned with.

The concentration of certain leaders of the Black Sections on gaining positions in the Party and a future government will achieve nothing for black workers unless it is combined with a tireless struggle to organise militant resistance to all attacks on black people, whether from the state or the Walworth Road clique.

Whatever the NEC choses to do about Sharon Atkin and other activists such as Linda Bellos or Phil Murphy, a national campaign must be built in defence of Black Sections, the right of the oppressed to organise in the labour movement, and in defence of our right to criticize Labour's bankrupt leadership. Resolutions, meetings, demonstrations and lobbies of the NEC, such as the one called by Labour Against the Witch-hunt in defence of Sharon Atkin, should be supported by all socialists in the Party.

If the NEC decides to remove Sharon Atkin as PPC for Nottingham East, she should be urged to stand against an imposed candidate, with the local party campaigning for her rather than any Kinnockite stooge. Against those who argue that this would be 'divisive' we reply, 'better that the interests of black people are defended than we conclude a non-aggression pact with Kinnock and Hattersley that would allow them, in power, to carry out racist policies'. We will fight now for our class, and will campaign for a Labour victory by our own methods of supporting, not stifling, the voice of the oppressed. □



THE WHEEL HAS come full circle in the eighteen months since Gerry Healy was expelled from the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP). He may be long gone but a good number of the leadership crew that he trained have proven, in a series of disgraceful manoeuvres, that they have not forgotten their Healyism.

This much is clear from the results of the International Trotskyist Conference project that the WRP are at the centre of. It now looks extremely likely that this conference to 're-organise the Fourth International' (a vacuous slogan which fails to say which of the various pretenders to Trotsky's International they think need re-organising, and what political programme they are to be re-organised around) will be a stitched up arena in which the WRP, the Morenoite International Worker League (LIT) and Varga's GOCQI carry through an unprincipled fusion. It will be unprincipled because each will avoid mentioning a single previously existing (and possibly still continuing) political difference.

## INVITATION

During the weekend of 11/12 April several groups from Europe and the United States arrived in London. Their purpose? To take part in the first meeting of a preparatory committee to begin the organisation of the international conference to discuss the crisis of Trotskyism. A call for this conference had been made by the WRP in late January. Many groups responded positively and many received an invitation to the first meeting of the committee. The report of this first meeting of the committee in *Workers Press* (18 April 87) 'Applications from several organisations were discussed and the composition of the committee was agreed by unanimous vote'.

Perhaps it comes with so many years association with Healy that Workers Press feels the need to be so economical with the truth. Five organisations who turned up were denied a place on the committee. They were the International Trotskyist Committee, Socialist Organiser, Workers Socialist League (USA), Revolutionary Workers Group (Italy) and Trotskyist Organisation (USA). At least another two, including Workers Power, were excluded in advance.

## SPURIOUS

Who, then, agreed this 'unanimous' vote? The WRP, the LIT and the Varga grouping LIT. After keeping these groups waiting for five hours while the chosen ones conferred on their reasons for these exclusions all the groups were interviewed, given assorted spurious reasons as to why they could not be let onto the committee and then shown the door. Mind you Cliff Slaughter as the Secretary of the IC for many years is well practiced in this sort of behaviour. And no doubt we will be given the 'theoretical' justification for this manoeuvre in yet another volume of *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, the heavily censored 'history' that he edited on behalf of Healy.

Eighteen months ago rank and file members of the WRP and a handful of members of the organisation's obscenely bloated apparatus staged a coup against Healy. These people were, quite justifiably outraged by the discovery of Healy's various sexual abuses of women comrades. He was expelled and the WRP exploded. The rank and file demanded an honest and thoroughgoing accounting from the leaders who remained in the party.

## PRESSURE

In November 1985 in a public rally in London Cliff Slaughter declared that 'we are at the beginning of an objective analysis, and all who want to really learn the lessons can participate.' So great was the pressure from the membership that at the WRP's 8th Congress in February 1986 it was agreed that:

*'the International Committee of the Fourth International does not represent the continuity of the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938.'*

In addition it was claimed at this Congress that:

*'The public discussion of the problems of the Fourth International will continue and this party will work for an international pre-conference of all those who stand on The Permanent Revolution, the*

# THE SPECTRE OF HEALYISM

## Workers Press

*Transitional Programme and the first four congresses of the Communist International, before the end of 1986.'*

This was an absolutely correct position. There were no conditions set or judgements made various groups' claims to be the Fourth International or part of its 'continuity'. The WRP's degeneration was so profound that a precondition for correcting not merely the political errors but also the outright crimes like the *Newsline's* public support for the execution of Iraqi Communist Party members by Saddam was a genuine public discussion. The possibility of internal regeneration without such a process was excluded. In January 1986 Workers Power, recognising the important potential in this rupture with Healy, proposed a discussion. We were ignored. In February we wrote an open letter in which we outlined the case for a principled revolutionary regroupment through a process of discussion. We said at the time:

*'The WRP has made a break with Healy. The political process underway in the WRP indicates that a political break with Healyism - catastrophism, destructive and sectarian methods of party building, false dialectics, and the capitulation to left reformism and petit-bourgeois nationalism - is currently taking place.'*

Such was our hope at least, and through participation in public forums, leadership discussions and common work we strived to help the WRP fully realise this break. But we also made clear our belief that an open discussion was a means to an end not an end in itself. The fact that for many the discussion was enough meant that the WRP underwent repeated splits and loss of members. There were few signs that a clean break with Healy's political method was being made. Rather the favoured bits and pieces of his rotten politics were being picked up and given new life by leaders whose own heyday had been the pre-Redgrave days. However for a whole period these leaders were unable to contain the open discussion. Increasingly they looked towards allies from other fragments of the IC at an international level to help them re-establish their control over the WRP.

## DOMINANT

Following the split with Mike Banda and his faction—a split carried through in good old Healyite fashion with shares and property figuring far more in the row than political programme—the old Healy trained leaders like Slaughter, Cyril Smith, Bill Hunter and Geoff Pilling began to re-emerge as a dominant force. The faction in the WRP who grouped around Mike Banda were not homogenous nor politically clear on the roots of the Fourth International's degeneration. But Banda did attract people who desired an honest and complete account of the errors of the past. When the Banda faction finally decamped and hurtled headlong into anti-Trotskyism the leadership around Slaughter/Pilling/Hunter were able to launch their Healyite counter-offensive in a more and more open fashion.

This leadership clique discounted the idea that the crisis in the WRP was only resolvable in the context of a public principled regroupment. They had determined that there was a 'contradictory' but essentially revolutionary continuity within the FI represented up to the late 1960's primarily by the IC but including other forces who had 'struggled against Pabloism' in their own way such as Varga and Moreno. Further, 'Pabloism' (equated as a capitulation to if not identification with, Stalinism) was the cause of the decline of the FI. Finally, Stalinism was held to be the greatest counter-revolutionary trend in the world

and its leaders barely part of the labour movement. Of course, none of these positions have been publicly argued, with evidence, by the WRP. They have been asserted, or rather reasserted. Still less have the WRP tried to engage in an argument in print with the material of other groups, including Workers Power, which actively refute these positions.

These positions were placed alongside other revisionist ones; mass party pretensions, a hopelessly one-sided conception of the ever upward curve of the class struggle which insisted that the miners were not defeated, and involved an opportunist stance towards left social-democratic trade union leaders. Taken together these politics pushed the WRP leadership ever further in the direction of the LIT. In some ways the LIT is an ideal partner for the WRP. The history of Morenoism is a good example of 'contradictory' continuity in the FI, having in its time been part of the IC and IS traditions, and combining the grossest errors of both camps.

## AMBIGUOUS

Incapable of publicly abandoning the idea of an international conference the leadership of the WRP made a further call for it on January 31 1987. This call opened:

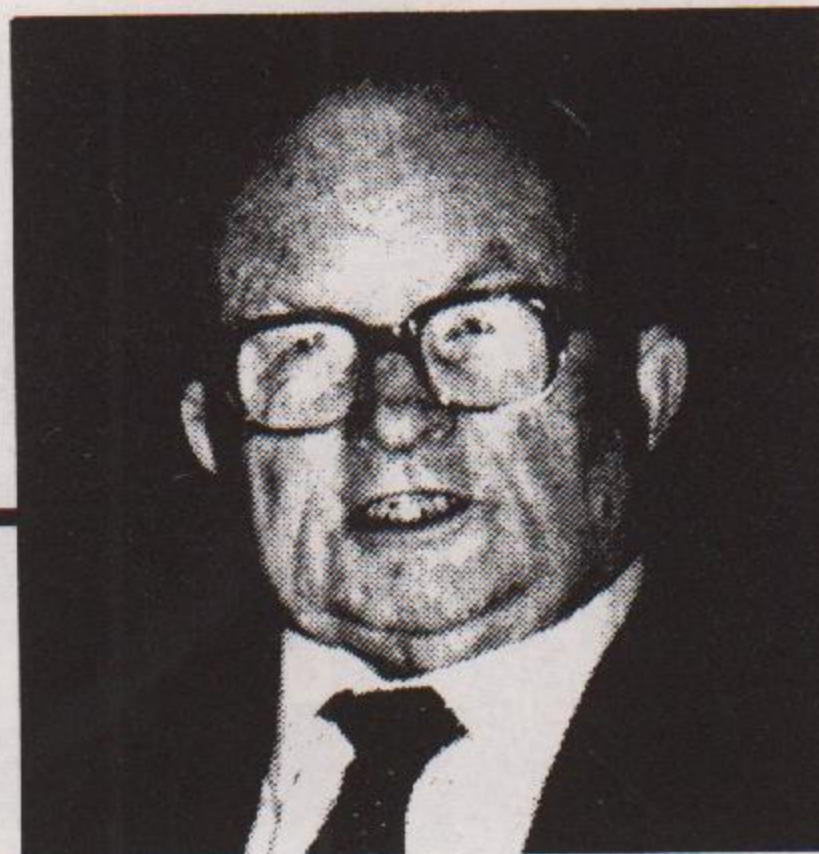
*'The WRP proposes to all Trotskyists an international conference to discuss the responsibilities of Trotskyist organisations in resolving the continuing crisis of the Fourth International.'*

This call was a deliberately ambiguous one. Attached to the call were ten theses outlining the WRP's view of genuine Trotskyism. There were two flaws in this approach to the conference. First, the theses were both too narrow and too broad. They were too broad to represent the basis for a principled regroupment of revolutionary forces into a democratic centralist international tendency, as they were only a bare statement of principles which could accommodate significant differences of strategic orientation and tactics. On the other hand they were too narrow in that they were specific enough to exclude tendencies from organising the conference if the theses were intended as the 'basis' upon which 'Trotskyists' were being called upon to co-operate in this task. Eventually the leadership got the rump WRP conference to agree to its exclusionist basis for the international conference. The form the victory of the WRP leaders took was the political characterisation of the LIT. Instead of the international conference itself discussing the question of the characterisation of all participants, the LIT insisted that participation in the organisation of the conference be conditional upon an agreement that everyone in the preparatory committee be recognised as part of the 'continuity of the FI', thus prejudging the outcome of a conference discussion. We have never been told how or on what basis the LIT was given this privileged status or how they earned the right to be part of a 'unanimous' vote to exclude others.

## MANOEUVRE

Through this process the original idea of an open conference of 'all Trotskyists' who claimed to stand on the terrain of the Permanent Revolution and the Transitional Programme became reduced to a fusion manoeuvre between the WRP and the LIT, with minor, politically broken-backed sects (such as the GOCQI) or ex-Morenoite groups (such as the LSR) drawn in behind.

In an article in *Workers Press* (25 April 87) attacking Workers Power Mike Howgate tries to advance an implicit justification for these Machiavellian in-



trigues. Despite the title of his piece, 'For an honest discussion!', he still fails to enlighten the readers of the events of that weekend. He begins his defence by arguing that Workers Power are wrong to suggest that the international conference was ever intended to be an 'open' one to all 'those who consider themselves Trotskyist'. Rather, only those who agreed with the project of 're-organising the Fourth International' were welcome. This is a lie as the history of the WRP's evolution that we have just recounted proves.

Howgate's article now limply tries to justify why exclusions have occurred. It must be said though that this 'polemic' is shoddy from beginning to end. It is an answer to a letter that *Workers Press* has refused to print. It bases many of its key arguments on what comrades said in pubs - that is, Mike Howgate's interpretation of what was said in pubs. As such it stinks of the Healyite style of polemic typified by unverifiable assertions, slanders and insinuations. He begins with an attack on the MRCI's view of the crisis of centrism of Trotskyist origin. Workers Power has always made it clear that we stand for a Leninist-Trotskyist International, as Howgate well knows.

## ISSUES

Yet we insist that it is necessary to examine the political, theoretical and programmatic issues that lay at the root of the divisions between those groups today who trace their origins to Trotsky's Fourth International or who emerged out of its disintegration. Any other approach is a religious, not a Marxist one. It is worth noting in passing that our declaration that the Fourth International collapsed into centrism is used to justify our exclusion. Yet he has more trouble with the other groups who were excluded from the preparatory committee. He solves this by not mentioning them! No wonder given that other excluded groups, such as the ITC, GOR, WSL (US), TO, do believe that the Fourth International exists in some form and that Trotskyist parties need to be built in all countries. We are left by Howgate to presume that they are excluded because Cliff Slaughter has judged them to be among those 'skeptical with regards to the rebuilding of the FI' despite their stated positions to the contrary.

In fact Howgate only proves in his article that he knows nothing about centrism. We do not claim that the FI went into an 'irreversible descent into centrism'. This would exclude the possibility that groups can break with their centrism and take the revolutionary road. He later insists:

*'Either the FI is dead and the necessity is for Workers Power and its cothinkers to build a Fifth International or you were rather premature with the death certificate. If you really do think that the WRP as it now is, is a force for revolution and no longer centrism, then you must re-evaluate the criteria on which you based your conclusion that the IC current of the FI in particular was not struggling against revisionism in the 1960's...'*

We are far from changing our analysis. In fact the whole subsequent development of the WRP confirms it. As we stated in our book, *The Death Agony of the Fourth International*:

*'... the international class struggle will continue to throw these organisations into crisis, leading to splits.'*

This was two years before the WRP ship broke up on the rocks of the miners strike. On the basis of such a perspective,

confirmed in the case of the WRP, we argued that:

*'It may be that the hammer blows of the class struggle and the criticisms of an international communist tendency will break up the centrist amalgams and allow for a principled regroupment under the banner of a programmatically and organisationally rebuilt Fourth International.'*

Howgate doubtlessly thinks that his coup de grace against us is his use of the analogy with Trotsky's fight against centrism in the Third International. Indeed he informs us that because Trotsky did not call for a new international until the Communist International had committed a betrayal 'of epochal proportions' in Germany then we should not consider the FI irreformable either. As Trotsky said it is necessary to know the limits of an analogy. Trotsky persevered in a mass international until he was convinced that there was no possibility of mass pressure forcing sections to break with the centrist programme of Stalin. But the FI was primarily an international of (sometimes large) fighting propaganda groups. Its principal strength was its programme. When this was distorted by Pablo, Healy, Cannon and co in 1951 and when the inevitable organisational disintegration occurred in 1953 when the factions fell out it was clear to any Marxist who had eyes to see that Trotsky's International had ceased to exist. Howgate's concern with 'death certificates' merely reveals him to be a chronic formalist. Real life, not Workers Power, proved Trotsky's International to be dead.

## CORRUPTED

The centrist degeneration of the FI, including the International Committee, did not preclude left turns, isolated correct criticisms; it would not be centrism if it were incapable of these things. But the fact remains that the WRP which expelled Healy was part of a tradition which corrupted Trotsky's teachings and programme.

Indeed Howgate's remarks on Stalinism confirm the WRP's programmatic departure from Trotskyism on this question. He attacks us for suggesting that the WRP claim that Stalinism is not 'counter-revolutionary through and through'. Apparently only the Stalinist bureaucracy can be so designated. Now Howgate has a problem here. For a start the IC tradition that he defends had as its point of honour the fact that Stalinist parties were merely extensions of the Soviet bureaucracy, ceasing to be counter-revolutionary through and through only at the point when they broke from the Kremlin (a fact that allowed the IC to pay court to Tito, Gomulka, Ho and Mao). Is Howgate rejecting this long standing IC tablet of stone? More to the point is he making a distinction between two types of Stalinist parties; those in the workers' states and those in the capitalist countries? If he is perhaps he can enlighten us as to the nature of this fundamental difference. The fact is that the IC tradition has long revelled in Stalinophobia and the declarations of various WRP leaders at public meetings up and down the country that it is 'the most counter-revolutionary force on the planet' confirm that they are carrying on with this tradition.

## ENTRENCHED

A year and a half after Healy was expelled Healyism is once again firmly entrenched within the WRP. He has gone but those he trained, and protected are busy repeating his errors; gross political opportunism, slander, and bureaucratic manoeuvre have now triumphed. The WRP has not overcome its crisis nor will it by taking the road of fusion with the LIT. The LIT, already firmly encamped in the WRP headquarters, is an unprincipled manoeuvrist group in search of another national apparatus to take over. Meanwhile the present WRP is barely more than an apparatus searching for a way to hold onto its membership, while the remaining membership search vainly for a revolutionary perspective for the class struggle.

The coming general election campaign will expose all the flaws in the WRP's politics. For those who cannot wait for the WRP to fail this test; for those who are appalled by the latest and perhaps fatal turn of events inside the WRP, we say decamp before Slaughter et al completely corrode your revolutionary spirit. You will find Workers Power ready to take you into its ranks.

by Keith Hassell



# TURNING AWAY FROM CLASS ACTIVITY?

THE GREAT MINERS' strike of 1984-85 had repercussions throughout the working class and amongst those oppressed by capitalism. The formation of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) was a case in point. Support for the miners by lesbians and gay men altered the outlook of many miners.

Solid links were created between lesbian and gay activists and NUM areas, especially in South Wales. The 1985 Pride March was led by miners and their families. The NUM supported progressive policy on lesbian and gay rights at the TUC and Labour Party Conferences. The News International strike and the formation of Lesbians and Gays Support the Printers saw a similar process take place amongst many printers.

The influence, though, was not merely one-way. Many lesbians and gay activists came to identify their own interests with the miners on a class basis. Class politics were openly debated within the pubs and clubs of the lesbian and gay 'communities'.

The official labour movement—generally being driven to the left by the miners' strike—adopted, in 1985, policies in support of lesbian and gay rights at the TUC and Labour Party Conferences. Yet, since then, they have done very little. Worse, a retreat has begun. For while the 1986 Labour Party conference voted by 79% to include lesbian and gay rights in the Manifesto, the debate was timed to coincide with *Playschool*, so it would not be televised. Already the issue was being closeted, once again, by the leadership.

The chance of a firm pledge on lesbian and gay rights in the Manifesto is rapidly receding. Kinnock will be vetoing all 'unpopular' issues (unpopular from the point of view of the capitalist media, that is). After Greenwich and Patricia Hewitt's leaked letter attacking the 'loony

left' and the lesbian and gay issue nobody should be in any doubt that a future Labour government under Kinnock will promise little and deliver less.

In this situation the priority of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) should be organising to stop the retreat. But no, like the other constituencies of Labour's gutless left the LCLGR leadership — including supporters of *International* and *Socialist Action*—are running scared in the face of Kinnock's onslaught.

The project of the LCLGR had definite weaknesses from the outset. Its entire emphasis was on winning the Labour Party to legislate for lesbian and gay rights. It believed that this reformist solution to the legal oppression faced by lesbians and gay men was a major step towards liberation. Indeed the lines between real liberation and democratic reform often became somewhat blurred. Thus, one of the architects of the current strategy, Jamie Gough (of *International*) wrote that socialism was necessary for gay liberation but that socialism itself would come about through 'a revolution, in the sense of a complete change of the constitution.' (*Gay Liberation in the Eighties*—our emphasis). The task of lesbians and gays, therefore, was to tackle that bit of the constitution that was unfair to them.

This strategy was embodied in the Draft Bill, to be discussed at the Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Conference. The idea of a Bill was put to the LCLGR by the Campaign Group of MPs. Optimistic back in the 1986, that Labour would win the next election the LCLGR pinned all their hopes on a parliamentary solution to lesbian and gay oppression. They believed that the capitalist state could and would solve all the problems of oppression. The capitalist state is a mighty machine of class rule, programmed to defend the bourgeois

property relations which perpetuate the exploitation of the working class and the oppression of large sections of the masses, including lesbians and gay men. The liberation of humanity can truly begin only with the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the destruction of the capitalist state, not as a result of altering a few laws.

LCLGR did recognise that Parliament would have to be put under pressure—hence the idea of a mass campaign. But the objective for the campaign was limited to doing just that, pressurising Parliament: 'Mass campaigns can force Parliament to change the law.' (*Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights: A Manifesto*)

They can also mobilise the labour movement to take up the fight against every aspect of oppression typical of capitalist society in the here and now. They can take their place in the struggle for direct action—as well as mounting pressure on Parliament. They can take their place in a revolutionary struggle for socialism which, alone, can lay the basis for ending all oppression. But, because the LCLGR leaders see the fight against lesbian and gay oppression as something that can be separated from the class struggle for socialism. They have no such perspectives for the mass campaign they are trying to build.

Thus the campaign is defined in the most vague terms:

*'This pamphlet forms a Manifesto because it is our proposal as to what we should be demanding in the way of legislation...we think it's time there was a conference on this question open to all who are interested in both legislation for lesbian and gay rights and in campaigning to achieve them'* (A Manifesto)

Anyone interested! What on earth is that supposed to mean? In fact it is the loophole that is allowing Gough and others to turn the

LCLGR away from the labour movement. We are interested in fighting for progressive legislation, though we have no illusions that it equals liberation. But we also believe that only the working class has the power to achieve any meaningful reforms because only it has interests that are consistently and materially different from capitalism. Only the proletariat has no stake whatsoever in capitalism's greed economy. For that reason we have argued and will continue to do so, that LCLGR should orient to the labour movement. But the fact is, the leadership are moving in the opposite direction. They are diluting LCLGR into a popular frontist style campaign.

LCLGR has now joined forces with the NCCL and the Campaign for Homosexuality in sponsoring the May conference and the campaign. This was achieved on the basis of ensuring that the campaign

*'is organised to include a broad spectrum of interested groups not confined to any one political party'* (*Information Bulletin*).

A piece of non-sectarianism designed to stop the witch-hunting of Trotskyists? Not a bit of it. It is a clause designed to reassure CHE's Liberal, SDP and even Tory supporters. Indeed the Labour Party's 1985 policy vote is bracketed together with the positions of the openly and cravenly bourgeois SDP and Liberal Party:

*'The ground has also been opened up by the Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party Conferences having joined the Liberal Party conference in having a pro-lesbian and gay rights platform.'* (*Information Bulletin*).

And in the campaign's bulletins the labour movement does not get a look in. It was bad enough last year when the LCLGR used to put the labour movement last in a list of 'movements' to be approached. That indicated the drift away from

being identifiable as any sort of working class organisation. Now the campaign literature does not even mention the labour movement. The popular frontist nature of the campaign is simply being disguised by the use of the categories 'gay' and 'straight' to describe various organisations.

This drift towards an all-class and separatist approach flows from the LCLGR's inability to fight Kinnock. On the one hand they are going for respectability via popular frontism to prove to him that they are no threat and to make themselves ready to plead to whichever government gets elected. On the other hand they are retreating from the difficult but vitally necessary job of winning the labour movement to a fight against lesbian and gay oppression into separatism.

They declare:

*'We welcome discussion with straight people. But when it comes to campaigning, they should be supporting the demands and actions that we determine.'* (*Information Bulletin*)

Who is the we? Gay SDPers or Liberals? If so then we say clearly that there is a class line between them and us. We will defend such people if they are attacked for their sexuality, but we do not care a twopenny-damn about what these bourgeois elements say about the sort of campaigns needed to help fight lesbian and gay oppression. It is a class issue and at the Legislation conference we will be arguing that the class line in the campaign must be drawn.

by Vema Care and Chris Brind

Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Conference  
23/24 May  
Camden Centre, London

## THE PROS AND CONS OF THE BILL

THE DRAFT BILL is a hybrid of progressive, confused and reactionary proposals. We are absolutely clear that we support its progressive aspects.

We have no illusions that law reform—however democratic or radical—or any mass campaign around this objective can achieve lesbian and gay liberation. Nevertheless, we recognise that a systematic strand of anti-homosexual policy runs through the law and gives legitimacy to moral campaigners, police raids and 'queer-bashing'. The law is not a matter of indifference to Marxists or to the mass of lesbians and gay men.

The capitalist state in this country has built up a whole arsenal of laws to discriminate against and to legally terrorise homosexuals. We are firmly in favour of the abolition of such laws because we are opposed to the right of the state to interfere in our private lives. To this end we stand for the abolition of the age of consent, something the Bill does not call for. However, those reforms it *does* call for that we support (that any democrat must support) are all aimed at making homosexuality fully legal.

The legalisation of homosexuality would in effect equalise the age of consent for heterosexuals (currently 16) and homosexual men. As the law stands male homosexuality is not a crime if the sex act occurs between two men who are over 21, in

private—behind locked doors.

We fully support the clauses of the Bill which deal with unfair dismissal from jobs and unlawful discrimination in matters of housing, something many lesbians and gays suffer from. We support the right, codified in the Bill, for lesbians to have custody of children and for all lesbians and gay men to have the right to adoption.

In court cases, sexuality or impending marriage are often used against lesbians and gay men by judges. Local authorities have often removed children from gay households describing the lesbian or gay parent as unfit. So it is necessary to make the legal changes as proposed by the Bill on adoption, child custody and marriage so as to remove these powers.

### ADVANCES

The general policy of the law which gives judges the power to use homosexual advances as provocation to murder must be abolished.

The Bill rightly advocates the recognition of a lesbian or gay partner's right to inheritance or tenancy where they cohabit. We are against the two year rule proposed in the Bill whereby a cohabitee must have lived for two years with a person to be so classified—this is an unwarranted concession to bourgeois

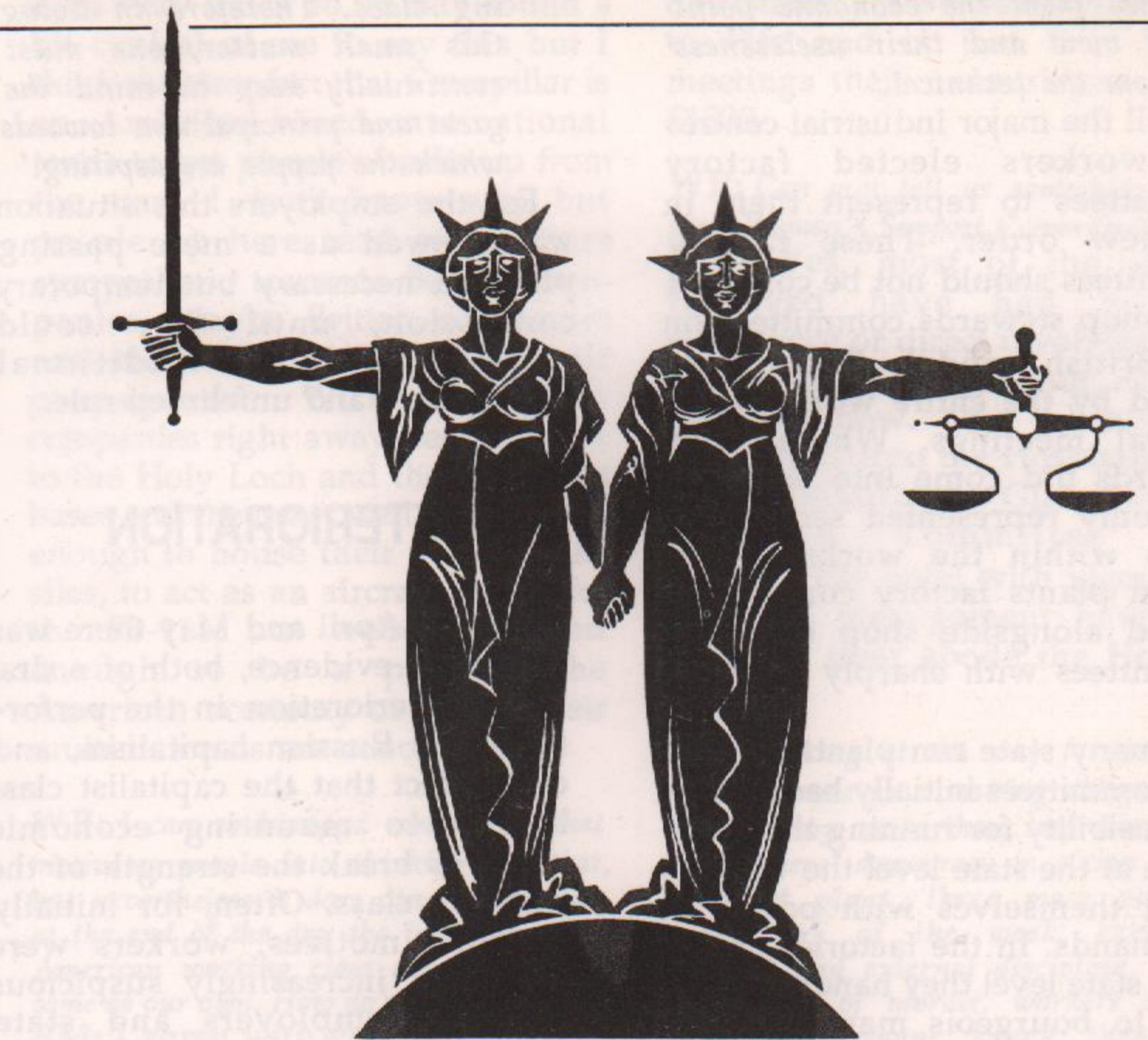
moral opinion.

Homosexuality is usually punished by laws covering public morals and decency as well as by specific homosexual sexual offences. The abolition of all these laws and the laws on cottaging and soliciting would remove the state's punitive powers. Likewise the Bill's proposals to abolish the Obscenity and Indecent Publications Act, the Blasphemy laws and other legal remnants from the middle ages must be fully supported.

In sum, these proposals amount to a democratic charter. If the Bill had stopped there it would have been fine. It did not and this is where the problems arise. On some points it has tried to equalise already reactionary laws. For example, on the 1971 Immigration Act, it calls for the removal of the heterosexual bias, instead of challenging the fundamental racist content of the law itself. But worse follows.

The Bill's proposals for new laws relating 'Incitement to Violence Against Women' and 'Sexual Harassment' are in fact feminist replacements for the laws on Obscenity and Soliciting that the Bill previously abolished. They are no less reactionary for having a feminist gloss. They hand the capitalist state a powerful weapon, since it and its courts will arbitrate in these matters and its police will enforce these laws.

The draft Bill gleefully points out that harassment and incitement to violence would be subjectively defined by individual women, thus anything from 'asking people to en-



gage in sexual relations' through to 'wolf-whistles' would be harassment, while anything from a pin-up of a nude woman through to *The Taming of the Shrew* would be incitement. This is feminist muddle-headedness.

The Bill's declaration that such changes would be merely symbolic is nonsense. Real changes in the law would have a real effect in strengthening the capitalist state not the position of the oppressed. These proposals are a vain attempt to tackle aspects of ideological sexism without so much as tinkering with its real economic basis in capitalism.

The fact that we stand against these proposals does not mean that we see violence against women or sexual harassment as unimportant. However we reject attempts to call

in the state to police our attitudes. Yes, there is massive sexism, homophobia and racism even within the labour movement. The working class is not immune to the pernicious morality propagated by the bourgeoisie. Marxists tackle those attitudes that divide the working class through struggle, through a tireless and consistent battle to educate and dispel the bigotry and prejudice, to win the class to the cause of the oppressed. None of the proposals on incitement and harassment can be supported in any way whatsoever.

- Down with legal discrimination!
- For socialism and real liberation!

By Ian Hassell, LCLGR



IN FEBRUARY 1917, at the level of state power, the Russian workers overthrew the Tsarist regime only to then accept a government of the bourgeoisie's parties. The workers ceded state power to the bourgeoisie while maintaining their soviets, their councils to oversee and pressure the government. A similar process took place in the factories and mines. The dual power that existed at state level was mirrored in the workplaces.

The Petrograd workers returned to work after the February revolution, determined to destroy the old tyrannical regime in the factories. They insisted on imposing the eight hour working day on the employers by leaving work once the eight hours were done. They demanded, and often secured, full pay for the work they had done of toppling the old regime. But most importantly they had accounts to settle with those who had bullied, exploited and humiliated them in the old days.

Large sections of Russian industry had been state run by government appointees. As the power of their chief patrons was broken so many of the directors and managers simply fled. Some workers, for example those at the Okhta explosives plant, returned to find themselves without a factory administration at all. Elsewhere the workers kicked out those with a record of brutality who dared to return.

A veritable workers festival of 'carting out' hated bosses in wheelbarrows accompanied the return to work. The director of Putilov and his aide were dumped in a canal. At the Cartridge plant workers expelled 80% of the technical staff. In the Thornton textile mill the women workers chased out 30 factory police who had dared to show their faces once again. Mass meetings of the workforce discussed and decided on lists of undesirables. At the first power station, for example, workers voted to bar all the directors from the premises as:

*'henchmen of the old regime and recognising their harmfulness from the economic point of view and their uselessness from the technical.'*

In all the major industrial centres the workers elected factory committees to represent them in the new order. These factory committees should not be confused with shop stewards committees on the British model. They were elected by the entire workforce at general meetings. Where shop stewards did come into existence they only represented sections of shops within the workforce. In certain plants factory committees existed alongside shop stewards committees with sharply differing tasks.

In many state run plants the factory committees initially had to take responsibility for running the factory. As at the state level the workers found themselves with power in their hands. In the factories just as at the state level they handed power back to bourgeois managers and directors. The parallels do not end there. While the factory committees in general reorganised the employers and management's technical and economic responsibilities they reserved for themselves the right to oversee and observe these functions. This mirrored the soviets' insistence they were overseeing the Provisional Government's work.

Crucially the factory committees demanded and effected 'control over internal order'. In plants throughout Russia the committees raised very similar demands that they should control the length of the working day, the level of minimum wage, the times of rest and all hiring and firing. In a very fundamental way they challenged the right of the employers and their representatives to manage their

factories and mines.

Workers' control at this stage meant asserting factory committee authority over these matters of 'internal order'. And it meant working class vigilance over the workings of management. It was a highly unstable and contradictory situation that the bosses had no alternative but to accept, albeit reluctantly, after the February upheaval.

### HELD BACK

In general the workers held back from taking actual responsibility for the administration of their plants. At the Patronnyi works they did not constitute themselves as an alternative management. The factory committee purged the entire administration and then retained for itself an 'observing' function. This method was codified at a conference of state sector worker representatives on 15th April which resolved that:

*'Not desiring to take upon ourselves the responsibility for the technical and administrative organisation of production in the given conditions until the full socialisation of the economy, the representatives of the general factory committee enter the administration with a consultative voice.'*

A situation within which workers' representatives daily transgressed rights that managements traditionally hold sacred could never have become permanent. As at the state level, so in the factory, one class or the other would have to prevail eventually. For the most advanced sections of the proletariat workers' control was only a transitional phase on the road to socialism as the Putilov workers declared of their workers' control regime:

*'The workers are preparing themselves for the time when private ownership of the factories and mills will be abolished and the means of production, along with the buildings erected by the workers' hands, will be transferred to the working class. Therefore in doing this small matter, one must continually keep in mind the great and principal aim towards which the people are aspiring.'*

For the employers this situation was viewed as a mere passing phase, a necessary but temporary concession, until they could establish their traditional prerogatives and unfettered rule.

### DETERIORATION

During April and May there was mounting evidence, both of a dramatic deterioration in the performance of Russian capitalism, and of the fact that the capitalist class looked to mounting economic chaos to break the strength of the working class. Often, for initially patriotic motives, workers were becoming increasingly suspicious that the employers and state managers were deliberately obstructing war production. With supplies running out factory committees frequently took upon themselves the job of procurement, through worker delegations, to the coal, iron and timber producing areas. To this extent the factory committees were in danger of becoming an accomplice to a more effective capitalist management. Yet at the very same time they were proving that only the organisations of the working class could effectively avert an economic catastrophe.

Once again, however, the instability of dual power was demonstrated. Either the factory committees would become class collaborationist participation bodies or they would have to go beyond their 'observing' role



# DUAL POWER IN THE FACTORIES

towards the socialist revolution.

As shortages mounted and management threatened closures so the concept of workers' control did go beyond 'overseeing' the bosses. Having seen what the bosses were doing it had to mean struggle against their plans for shutdown. In Petrograd, the capital city, this took an especially sharp form as the bosses prepared to 'unload' production by moving their factories out of the city and thus disperse the vanguard of the Russian working class. Dual power had to be resolved one way or another.

### SHORTAGES

A good example of this reality was the Langezipen machine factory in Petrograd. At the end of April there were severe shortages and rumours of closure were rife. The factory committee posted guards at the factory entrance in order to prevent the administration leaving. As expected management announced plans to close the plant. On the initiative of the Langezipen factory committee the central council of Petrograd factory committees investigated the funds of the company. Fearing that their dirty dealing would be discovered the owners conjured up new funds and announced their plans to keep the plant going!

A similar pattern of further encroachment on management's traditional rights was being established throughout the major plants during May. As management gained in confidence it had increasingly used the authority

workers had ceded to it to shut down or run down the plants. The employers and managers were prepared to disorganise production in pursuit of their class goals. The struggle for control over production took on a sharper form.

Of the workers' parties only the Bolsheviks party was prepared to take up and lead the fight for workers' control. It did so because the party saw that fight as part of the struggle for proletarian revolution. The Mensheviks were strongly opposed to any such struggle against capitalism, as their paper *Rabochaya Gazeta* put it:

*'Our revolution is a political one. We destroy the bastions of political authority, but the bases of capitalism remain in place. A battle on two fronts—against the Tsar and against capital—is beyond the forces of the proletariat.'*

In the face of mounting economic chaos and managerial sabotage the struggle for workers' control played a central role in the Bolshevik's programme for the transition to a socialist revolution. In his *Resolution on Economic Disorganisation* of late May Lenin argued:

*'The only way to avert disaster is to establish effective workers control over the production and distribution of goods. For the purpose of such control it is necessary, first of all, that the workers should have a majority of not less than three quarters of all the votes in all the decisive institutions and that the owners who have not withdrawn from their business and the engineering staffs should be enlisted without fail.'*

That control was to be exercised by the factory committees, the unions and the soviets. It was to be made possible by opening the books of the companies to workers' inspection and it was to be extended to financial and banking operations. It was, however, not possible for workers to exercise effective control simply at the level of individual enterprises. For the system of control to, 'be developed into full regulation of the production and distribution of goods by the workers' it had to embrace control over the economy exercised at a state level through a state responsible directly to the workers' organisations themselves.

Lenin returned to this theme at the heart of his programme in *The Impending Catastrophe and how to Combat it*, produced in September. Again he argued:

*'There is no way of effectively combating financial collapse except that of revolutionary rupture with the interests of capital and that of the organisation of really democratic control, i.e. control from 'below', control by the workers and the poor peasants over the capitalists' (Lenin's emphasis).*

Given the clarity of the Bolshevik's call for workers' control at plant and state level it was not surprising that their growing strength in the workers' movement was first evident in the factory committees. The first conference of Petrograd factory committees, meeting in late May, endorsed the Bolshevik programme. So too did all subsequent factory committee conferences.

The factory committees maintained their own central council of



# LESSONS OF CATERPILLAR

AS WE GO to press it looks as though the long-running occupation at the Caterpillar tractor plant in Glasgow will soon be over. Both the dogged heroism of the workers and the miserable treachery of the AEU leadership have been on display in this dispute. And it has not only been the god-fathers of the right, Bill Jordan and Gavin Laird, who have stuck the knife into the Caterpillar strikers.

Jimmy Airlie, of the Communist Party, has been the workers' enemy number one. And the so-called 'lefts' of the *Morning Star* have glossed over his treacherous role. In announcing the sell-out and forcing on the workers a secret ballot which he hopes will undermine the occupation's collective strength, Airlie shamelessly declared:

*'The issue is now the timetable of redundancies, and a phase out. We have asked for a different time scale.'*

The betrayal of the Caterpillar workers has implications well beyond Glasgow. Scenting the AEU's fear of a fight the tractor firm Massey

Ferguson in Coventry recently announced plans for 1000 redundancies. These workers must learn the lessons from Caterpillar. To help this happen, and to pay tribute to the marvellous class spirit of the Caterpillar workers, we are printing here an interview given to us in April by Eddie McDermott, a senior steward at Caterpillar, a member of the Occupation Committee and an AEU member for over thirty years.

Supporters of Workers Power in Birmingham have been instrumental in moving resolutions through their AEU branches demanding an end to Airlie and Jordan's class treachery and calling on the Executive to reverse its decision of refusing to give support to the occupation while expanding support both financially and physically for the occupation.

On Saturday 4 April Birmingham Workers Power contacted senior stewards within the occupied plant and discussion led to an invitation for us to visit and enter the plant.

When we went up we were

warmly received by a workforce who ought to feel sceptical toward Brummies given Jordan's place of origin. Perhaps though Gavin Laird's own little pécadilloes in Scotland haven't gone unnoticed either.

Workers' control and workers' democracy in action were the order of the day in the plant. Three mass meetings each and every day of the week were the norm. As well as blocked entrances to the plant the management have been exiled to a Glasgow hotel, where their misery is compounded by a Women's Support Committee who regularly picket the foyer.

Our comrades were able to stay with the occupation overnight. The vigil went on through the darkness and into the early morning when shifts changed over.

The courage and resolve of the occupation reflects the class struggle history of Clydeside to perfection. John Maclean would have been proud of each and every one of the strikers.

by Norman Goodwin  
AEU member

**Workers Power:** Can you tell us Eddie, what are your views concerning the AEU's National Executive and the way they announced to the world that they were removing support for the occupation?

Eddie McDermott: Knowing Laird and Jordan it comes as no surprise to us at all. We thought though that they would have at least laid off until Caterpillar began to issue threats against us, but it seems this right-wing Executive are hell bent on doing management's dirty work even quicker than decency allows for.

WP: Following the events of UCS your Executive Councillor gained a reputation as a working class hero in this part of the world. What is the overall feeling now toward the National Executive, including Jimmy Airlie?

EM: I can most certainly answer that. When Jimmy Airlie came up last week he was heard to remark it was the most hostile shop stewards' body he had ever had to face. You know from your own industrial experience you might get four or five stewards making contributions at a national meeting, at this one - and we made a point of taping it - we identified at least thirty different stewards firing searching questions at him. And the reaction of the membership is typical of that of the stewards. Later we had a meeting upstairs with the full membership. Afterward Jimmy Airlie came out and got lost in one of the passages. He approached one of the lads and asked how do you get out of this place? The answer came back quick as a flash - pick your nearest window.

WP: We know that traditionally the AEU National Executive have accepted cabinet responsibility for decisions. However, given the facts as they stand and the grave threats facing the whole of Scottish industry, do you not think that Jimmy Airlie should have been prepared to break cabinet responsibility, when the Executive carried through this prelude to an outright betrayal?

EM: That's right and we're not the only ones who would like the true picture. We were over in Clydeside the other night and we were talking with stewards from the Yarrow shipyard, their view was that Jimmy Airlie should have been seen to put distance between himself and Jordan. If necessary by resigning

and putting himself up for reelection. And remember, these views are coming from Airlie's own power base.

WP: In Birmingham our union branch was very positive in moving a motion to Executive Council demanding a reversal of their stance and is calling for all support to be widened both financially and physically. The unanimous attitude of the branch was that this is far more than a local issue. It is in fact a national issue of the first magnitude. Do you view it in similar fashion?

EM: Very much so. It may sound a bit cynical of me to say this but I think the very fact that Caterpillar is an American-based multinational tends to get people's backs up from the start. I don't know why but people up here tend to be more sympathetic towards British companies. Maybe British companies are more successful with their propaganda. With American companies right away people point to the Holy Loch and the American bases and they say, well, we're good enough to house their nuclear missiles, to act as an aircraft carrier for the F1-11s, but we're not good enough to be a part of the American economy as far as their multinationals are concerned.

WP: I can understand what it is that motivates people into thinking like that, but nevertheless it does concern me that at the end of the day the interests of the American working class are exactly the same as our own. How do you see it?

EM: I agree with you, our interests are identical, we get calls regularly from the guys in the States. Those links tell us that the American working class suffer all the same problems that we do, and speaking as an observer of just what's happening in Glasgow, our mutual problems seem more than identical. Our kids are becoming totally disorientated, they get thrown onto cheap job schemes which are totally useless, they are pilloried for glue sniffing and falling for even heavier drugs which are nothing more than a placebo for what's really happening to them. Certainly our problems under capitalism are those of our sisters and brothers on the other side of the Atlantic.

WP: Other stewards in the plant have told us that many of the other factories

on this road are under threat. How do they see your example of occupation?

EM: I'm sure they see us as giving a lead, their support has been tremendous. A good example is Hoover - we are getting something like £1000 a week from these workers, every factory on this road contributes with financial support for this occupation.

WP: Can you tell us how the Scottish mining areas have responded?

EM: I can't say enough about Fife. Fife has had its mining industry devastated yet we sent two guys up to Fife and in just four public meetings their unemployed raised £1500.

WP: Can you tell us something about your Women's Support Committee?

EM: Yes, most of the women involved have had no real experience or direct involvement in industrial action. However, all that's changed now. Our management has moved into the Hospitality Inn in the middle of Glasgow. Our Women's Committee have picketed the hotel with vigour. We hear the management have now renamed their abode the Hostility Inn.

WP: Looking at the way forward, our first response as a visiting delegation is that we are more than impressed with the workers' democracy in action in this occupied plant, three mass meetings every day of the week, exemplary internal and external discipline, a very high level of morale, workers making decisions perhaps which they have never had to make before, and doing it with confidence. All of this stands in the tradition of John Maclean, the Reform Movement and the Minority Movement which followed. It all stands in stark contrast to the treachery of our union leadership. We believe all the evidence calls for a rebuilding of the union. We may have some democracy on paper but it ends there. What is your opinion?

EM: I agree we need to begin rebuilding a union that truly represents the interests of the workers, where the democratic interests mean just that. The spectre of Gavin Laird addressing the CBI is an insult to all organised labour. Workers in Caterpillar have not been fooled or disheartened by this type of junketing, in fact nothing could have concentrated our minds more concerning the need for both radical and democratic change once and for all.

and firing and also to ship plant out of Petrograd.

Under Bolshevik leadership the committees replied with determined resistance. Most committees had their own armed militia to defend the plant and the workers against counter-revolution. A Moscow worker Postavshchik described what happened when the Bolsheviks won leadership in his plant:

*'On the 1st of June as soon as the new factory committee was elected with a Bolshevik majority...a detachment of eighty men was formed, which in the absence of weapons drilled with sticks, under the leadership of an old soldier, Comrade Levakov.'*

At the time of Kornilov's attempted coup it was the Central Council of Factory Committees that played a key role in distributing arms to the various plant militias. When the employers launched their autumn offensive they were taking on committees that were armed with guns and ammunition as well as with Bolshevik leadership.

## POLARISATION

The sharpening polarisation in the plants could not be resolved except at the level of state power. As more factory committees resisted management plans so more employers pulled out. Production became increasingly disorganised while the committees became the de facto power in the plants. That power extended beyond the struggle to maintain production. Certain factory committees ran their own farms, canteens, shops and maintained procurement squads. As well as drilling young workers in the military arts the committees often maintained their own cultural commissions. The Putilov committee, for example, took the latter task very seriously urging their fellow workers:

*'Comrades, do not let slip the opportunity of gaining scientific knowledge. Do not waste a single hour fruitlessly. Every hour is dear to us. We need not only to catch up with the classes with whom we are fighting, but to overtake them.'*

The seizure of power in October resolved the crisis, of dual power to the advantage of the working class. With the passing of undivided state power into the hands of the soviets, the state could now at last play its part as an executive organ of workers' control of production and distribution. The factory committees could take their place as overseers of production with the full backing of state power. In turn that state power legalised the control of workers' committees elected by all employees at general meetings. It gave them the right to inspect all books, documents and stocks. Their decisions were now to be binding on those owners who remained.

The struggle for workers' control in the plants was an indispensable component of the Russian workers' onslaught against capitalism, against 'management's right to manage'. They learnt to control industry and inspect accounts for themselves, and from that control and inspection came an immeasurably strengthened will and ability to resist the plans of the bosses. Such a situation could only have been transitory. Either the bosses could have rolled back the gains of the workers and reasserted their old authority, or the workers would have to break the power of the bosses in its entirety. Under the leadership of the Bolshevik party the Russian workers ensured that the old regime of the bosses in the factories, as well as in the state, was smashed.

by Dave Hughes

## LOYAL TROOPS

On 3 and 4 July the soviet leadership did not lift a finger when troops loyal to the Provisional Government fired on workers and sailors opposing that government in Petrograd. In the aftermath Lenin temporarily dropped the slogan *All power to the soviets* and urged Ordzhonikidze:

*'We must swing over the centre of gravity to the factory and shop committees. The factory and shop committees must become the organs of insurrection.'*

Lenin argued that the soviets as then constituted and under the leadership of the right, had become organs of class collaboration and the accomplices of the regime and its savage repression. They were no longer organising the masses for struggle. In that context the call for all power to the soviets was wrong, firstly because military repression made a peaceful transfer of power to the soviets impossible. And it was also wrong because, in Lenin's words:

*'the revolution has in fact been completely betrayed by the SRs and Mensheviks.'*

For Lenin it followed that:

*'The slogan calling for the transfer of state power to the soviets would now sound quixotic or mocking.'*

However the Bolsheviks were to raise the call all power to the soviets again in September. But by then, with Bolshevik strength growing inside the soviets, it was raised as a call for insurrection. While Lenin may have turned his attention most sharply to the factory committees after July, he was also at pains to explain that this did not mean that the building of real soviets had ceased to be central to the Bolshevik programme. As Lenin put it in his article arguing for dropping the all power to the soviets slogan:

*'Soviets may appear in this new revolution, and indeed are bound to, but not the present Soviets, not organs collaborating with the bourgeoisie, but organs of revolutionary struggle with the bourgeoisie. It is true that even then we shall be in favour of building the whole state on the model of the soviets. It is not a question of soviets in general but combating the present counter-revolution and the treachery of the present soviets.'*

While factory committees kept proletarian democracy alive and maintained working class morale and combativity, they could not play the historical role of soviets as organisers of the mass of exploited and oppressed and as embryos of the proletarian state itself.

The employers stepped up their offensive amidst mounting economic chaos in the autumn. Their hopes for a military coup had been crushed when the Kornilov uprising was put down by the workers. Now they set out to stop factory committees meeting in work time, to stop their control of hiring

committee delegates. As such they brought together the best organised plants in city wide coordination. They were more immediately responsible for the day to day concerns of workers than were the soviets; they were responsible directly to general meetings. It was not surprising, therefore, that the mounting Bolshevik tide amongst the workers should be initially reflected in the committees rather than in the soviet leadership. However the strength of the committees, as proletarian organisations, meant they were not able to play the role of mobilisers of all the exploited and oppressed. By their nature, unlike the Soviets, their coordination excluded the soldiers and, beyond them, the mass of the peasantry.



# THE BATTLE FOR BOLIVIA'S MINES

WORKERS POWER TALKED to Mauro Delgado and other Bolivian Trotskyist militants who were deeply involved in the miners' struggles which took place last summer in Bolivia. The background to the struggle lies in the victory in the August 1985 elections of Victor Paz Estenssoro's MNR(H) which now governs in a 'Pact of Democracy' with the ADN led by the ex-military dictator Hugo Banzer.

Shortly after the elections the MNR government signed into law Decree No.21060 which has since become infamous as a law which launched an unprecedented attack on the working class of Bolivia. The strategy of Estenssoro's 'New Economic Policy' as it was called is not unfamiliar in Latin America. It aimed a complete dismantling of much of the state sector, especially the mining company COMIBOL (Bolivian Mining Corporation), abolition of all state subsidies on basic food stuffs together with controls on prices. 'Privatisation', so beloved of Thatcher's Tories, became the MNR's watchword, which in the context of Bolivia means offering access to their minerals to the imperialist multi-nationals. This necessitated that the government take on and decimate the mining proletariat, famous for its militant, and indeed revolutionary struggles over the last half-century or more.

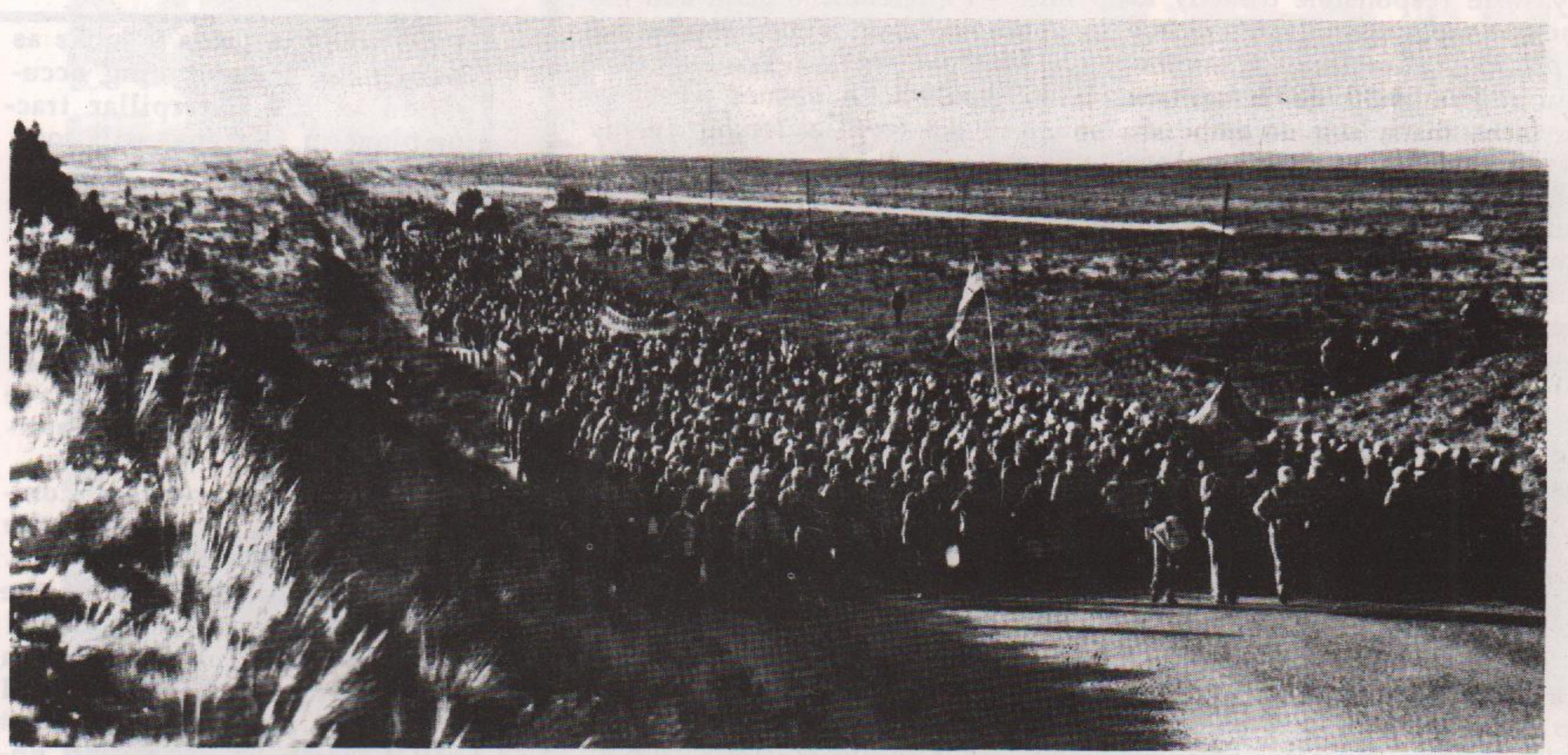
The decree was greeted with a massive general strike in September 1985. The defeat of this struggle, which was pursued most tenaciously by the miners, opened the way for the implementation of the MNR's plans. By April of last year however other sections, students, teachers and later the peasants, all came into struggle against the MNR's policies. By August this led to a number of regional general strikes and the

massive miners' march on La Paz which is described in the interview. Again the struggle was being led by the miners who were bearing the brunt of the government attacks.

## GOVERNMENT PLANS

During the miners' march the Government 'finalised' its plans for the industry. COMIBOL (the equivalent of the National Coal Board) had its head office shut in La Paz. Two extra mines were to be shut adding to the five already marked for closure. Nine major mines were marked out for 'privatisation'. The COMIBOL workforce was to be reduced from 27,000 to 13,000 in 1985. (Since the defeat of the August struggles the figure the government is now aiming at is 6,000).

Despite the defeat of the August march which is explained in the interview, further struggles have taken place since. Not only have the miners been on mass hunger strikes attempting to improve the redundancy terms, which in a poor country like Bolivia is a life and death question, but other sectors are in struggle as the government has extended its attacks to the rest of the state sector and the peasants. Textile workers, doctors, students and teachers have all been on strike. While troops were sent into the oil producing centres to break a strike against lack of investment in the industry. A new tax reform—the introduction of a form of VAT—which will fall especially hard on the peasants, is being fiercely resisted. This 'reform' is one of the measures being demanded by the IMF for restarting loans to the crippled Bolivian economy. While the Bolivian masses, especially its mining vanguard, have suffered



Bolivian miners march on La Paz

grievous blows in the last period it is still far from assured that the Bolivian bourgeoisie will be able to impose its plans without further mass struggles.

This interview demonstrates the enormous number of parallels which do and should unite the Bolivian and the British proletariat, especially the miners. It also exposes the enormous difference—imperialism. Bolivia is a country cruelly exploited by the imperialist parasites, one of whose major headquarters is the City of London, where the collapse of the Tin exchange and the plummeting price of metal triggered the present crisis in Bolivia.

**WORKER POWER:** What has been the policy of the Paz Estenssoro Government towards the mining industry?

The general policy is one of privatisation—the de-nationalisation of an industry that has been in state hands, the COMIBOL since 1952. This hits mainly the provinces of Oruro and Potosi because this is where the mines and the metallurgical industry is located.

**WP:** What does this mean for the miners?

It condemns them to death by starvation.

**WP:** What do you mean by that?

De-nationalisation means enormous redundancies. Already an industry that had between twenty and thirty thousand miners has been reduced to under seven thousand. It means a tremendous drop in incomes. Clearly the government has set out to annihilate the historic vanguard of the Bolivian working class.

**WP:** What has been the response of the workers' movement to these savage policies?

In 1985, in September shortly after the plans became clear a great national strike took place in all the mining sites and indeed in other parts of the country. But the union leaders entered into negotiations with the government that ended in a complete sell-out. By August 1986 the militant miners were able to turn a movement of civic protest of the Oruro and Potosi regions into a movement against the whole economic policy of the government.

**WP:** Can you tell us what were the demands of this civic movement and who was leading it?

At the beginning it started with the defence of two private TV channels in Oruro that the government wished to close as part of its economic cuts and to silence opposition in the mining areas to the closures. The movement was headed at first by the local petit-bourgeoisie but also the unions and the students took part.

**WP:** How did the miners intervene in the civic committee?

The Miners Union proposed the idea of a march to La Paz under the following slogans 'No Pit Closures', 'No Mass Sackings', 'No to co-operativisation of the mines' and 'Modernize and re-develop the mining industry'.

**WP:** When did the March to La Paz start and how many people took part?

On 22 August 1986 we set out from Oruro with around 5,000 miners and some university students taking part. The first part of the march was from Oruro to Caracollo, a distance of 37 kilometers, that took some eight hours of marching.

**WP:** What sort of response did you get from the population of the villages through which the march passed?

Tremendous. From the first day they showed their solidarity. They provided food and drink to the marchers and shelter at night. Despite their own poverty the peasants gave everything they could to help the marchers. Also we received the militant solidarity of other sections of the working class—from factory workers, government employees, teachers and from university students.

**WP:** What was the morale of the marchers like?

Morale was tremendously high because the number of marchers was growing day by day. After six days our numbers had swelled to about 12,000 and the peasants were clearly in full solidarity with us. Despite our numbers there was no shortage of food or shelter.

**WP:** What was the organisation and leadership of the march like?

Very bureaucratic! During seven days of marching the leaders only called one general assembly and this was only to take the practical decision whether to stop for the night in Sicasica or not! The only meetings taking place were at the top leadership level and these only dealt with secondary matters. The leadership was entirely in the FSTMB officials' hands and throughout the march their whole purpose was to slow down the march and prevent it reaching La Paz too quickly.

**WP:** What was the attitude of the COB (Bolivian TUC) to the march?

The COB, after the serious defeat of the general strike of September 1985 and its subsequent sell out deals with the government had seriously lost the confidence of the mass of workers. The reformist leaders of the COB and the Stalinist dominated FSTMB were then at odds with one another and the COB did next to nothing to aid the march or the big mobilisation against the

government of Summer 1986.

**WP:** What was the government's response to the march?

A hard-line one. As soon as the march got underway they issued a decree which ordered the closure of all the 'non-productive' mining centres. They also announced a plan of 'co-operativisation'. This meant throwing onto the shoulders of the miners the whole burden of putting pits into production with no financial or technical assistance from the state whatsoever. The government intended by means of these measures and by exerting military pressure to intimidate the miners and their families to return to their pits and villages. The government sternly insisted that their decree must be obeyed.

**WP:** What was the marchers' immediate response to the government measure?

Despite these threats and the military forces that accompanied the march the people decided to press on to La Paz. However it is important to note that the union officials gave no leadership at this point whatsoever. They gave no advice on how to combat the government's measures. Effectively they said 'It's up to you, the people, to decide what to do'. Despite this abdication of leadership the marchers were still determined to get to La Paz and force the government to annul the decree.

**WP:** What was the government's next move?

When the government saw that we were carrying on it mobilised three army regiments against us. At Callamarca—only 57 kilometres from La Paz they surrounded the march. The encirclement took place at sunrise on 28 August. The soldiers had special orders to allow nobody to enter or leave the circle. They allowed no food or drink to reach the marchers for two days and had orders to shoot if the people tried to break through the lines.

**WP:** What was the response of the marchers?

The mass of the miners wanted to stay there—to refuse to retreat but the bureaucrats called for an 'orderly return' to the mining centres. The total lack of leadership had an effect on many of the people who accompanied the miners, especially petit-bourgeois elements. They became desperate and demoralized. Many of them tried to catch any vehicle going back to their places of origin. In this situation the miners had no alternative but to return to the mining districts.

**WP:** What was the reception of the miners in Oruro like?

The populace gave a very warm welcome with constant applause but also many people were in tears.



troops surround the march

## RAFAEL LUGO 1957-1986

One year ago, April 1986, Rafael Lugo died, choked by poisonous fumes from a fire in his house. The circumstances of his death—whether it was a genuine accident or not—are far from clear.

Rafael was born in a proletarian district of Lima, Peru, called Rimac. At school he became a Trotskyist, and was a leader of the Bentin school student federation, a militant campaigning body. He was one of the first members of the PST in Peru (a Morenoite organisation).

After leaving school Rafael became a printer and was a well known and popular activist in the Rimac district. In 1980 the regional committee of the PST in Rimac split from the Morenoite leadership and Rafael, with other comrades, went on to form the Left Revolutionary Front of Rimac (FIR).

The FIR stood candidates against both the popular front, the United Left, and against an alliance of pseudo-Trotskyists, in local elections and won almost 1,000 votes.

In 1986 Rafael entered into discussions with other comrades in Peru to help found the Peruvian Trotskyist Workers' Fraction (FOT). Tragically, he died in the midst of this process.

The MRCI salutes the memory of Rafael, a fighter for the cause of the international proletariat. We will honour his memory, on the first anniversary of his death, by redoubling our efforts to help continue the work he began, of building an authentic Trotskyist organisation in Latin America. We extend our sympathy to all of his friends, family and comrades for the loss they have suffered.





TORN LIMBS, TANGLED wreckage and the scattered debris of dynamited buildings have been the images relayed on our TV screens from Sri Lanka recently. Are they a daily fact of life in the country? Yes. Only or even mainly in Colombo? No!

The 200 deaths from Tamil guerilla bands over the last two weeks of April have been given considerable media coverage. But studied silence has greeted the news of the 800 plus deaths that have occurred on the Jaffna peninsula over the last months at the hands of the Sri Lankan army.

The British government is only too happy to use the recent deaths in Colombo and in the Eastern Province to turn public sentiment even further against the just cause of the minority Tamil population for national independence. Their backing for the Sinhalese government of President Jayawardene is unconditional, naturally so since Sri Lanka under his rule is a trusted ally of US and British imperialism in South East Asia.

The British labour movement should not be taken in by the hypocritical outrage against the civilian casualties. Of course the deaths of

# TAMILS UNDER ATTACK

these civilians is tragic. But since the turn of the year actions which, in many ways, reflect the desperation of the oppressed Tamils have led inexorably to these bombings.

On 19 December 1986 an agreement was reached between the Indian government and Jayawardene which they tried to impose on the Tamil liberation fighters. This deal solved nothing. In its own words it was 'a beginning point for further negotiation'. It outlined proposals for a purely administrative link-up between the Northern and Eastern provinces. It was far from granting the Tamil's claim for a separate state or even a meaningful regional autonomy that many of the fighters seemed prepared to settle for.

Nevertheless, the agreement allowed the Sri Lankan government to take advantage of the growing rift between Ghandi and the Tamil fighters. On 2 January the government introduced a fuel embargo eventually extended to medical and food supplies. Severe shortages were evident by mid-February. On

28 January the army began a renewed military offensive. They already had 10,000 troops on the Jaffna peninsula. They were entrenched in a series of army camps, every building for 2,000 metres around each was dynamited. Since Jaffna itself was entirely in the hands of the main guerilla group—the LTTE—the army carried out its attacks from the air.

## INDISCRIMINATE

This offensive drove the guerillas into the jungle and via indiscriminate air attacks, ground shelling and the burning of villages the army butchered 600 people, mainly civilians, in a fortnight. Hence, the story that the Colombo administrator's military action was a response to the recent Colombo bombings is a lie. Rather the Tamil fighters have hit back after months of being at first starved and then battered.

Moreover, the Tamil's actions,

though not useful in that they hit mainly Sinhala workers rather than state forces, came as a result of the frustrating inactivity of the Indian government in the face of Jayawardene's assault. Protests to the United Nations aside, Ghandi has stood idly by while the Tamil's have suffered.

British trade unionists and Labour Party members must throw back the accusations of 'terrorism' in the face of Jayawardene's supporters here. Only by granting the Tamil's right to a separate state will the need for the Tamils to hit back in whatever way they can be removed. Deprived of proper military supplies to engage the army, the Tamil fighters have taken the line of least resistance by hitting civilian targets. Nevertheless, we must be extra vigilant to prevent the home Office from deporting Tamil supporters, such as Viraj Mendis, from Britain.

by Keith Hassell

## IRELAND

# THE WAR HOTS UP

LORD JUSTICE GIBSON has presided over his last no-jury trial. No more will he send Republicans to the H-Block cells.

The IRA finally caught up with the honourable judge on a road just north of the border, when one of their car bombs dispatched him to 'that final court of justice in the sky'. That was the very phrase Gibson himself used to justify the RUC's shoot-to-kill policy in 1984 when he acquitted three RUC men who had cold-bloodedly murdered three Republicans.

This latest successful strike by the IRA blew a big hole in the much heralded, much tightened cross-border security that emerged out of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It came hard on the heels of a renewed

campaign aimed at the security forces and in particular at the RUC. Nine officers killed this year and four in twelve days indicates that the IRA still has the capacity to hit back at the forces of loyalist oppression. It also underlines the fact that the decision of the last Ard Fheis of Sinn Féin to contest election in Irish Republic on a non-abstentionist basis has not led to an abandonment of the armed struggle. It should be remembered that the last 12-18 months has witnessed a significantly sustained increase in the IRA military campaign.

This itself should be further placed within the context of what the vast majority of the republican movement believes to be the changed conditions following both the H-Block struggle and the turn to 'community politics'. For, it is now confidently asserted, the mass base of support has reached a point of stability such that whatever the IRA may do, it will not significantly diminish.

What may be emerging from within the IRA is a view that Britain's failure to achieve stability and 'normality' in the North can be even more effectively and ruthlessly undermined by inflicting even greater and more widespread physical damage to the infrastructure of the North, while simultaneously demonstrating considerable public support for the IRA.

Whilst this view of how to defeat British imperialism is wrong headed—turning its back on mass workers' action, north and south, to defeat imperialism's presence—we do

support unconditionally the right of the IRA to carry out their fight against British and loyalist domination in whatever way they can and see fit.

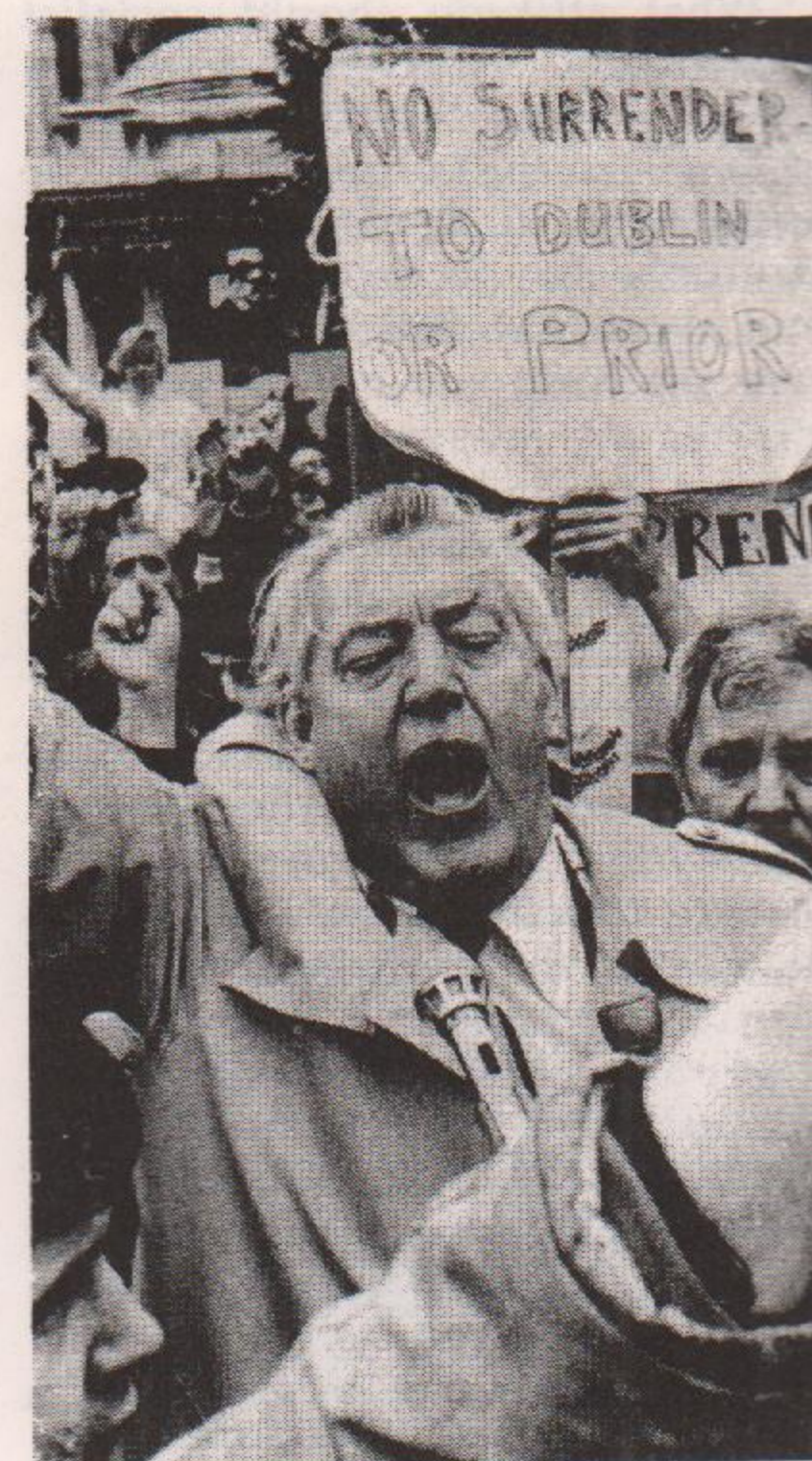
## CAMPAIGN

It is essential that we are clear on this since the flurry of letter bombs to British civil servants and ministers may herald the IRA's intention to conduct a major military campaign in Britain once again. Such a campaign in election year would be further evidence that Thatcher's Anglo Irish deal has not marginalised the IRA or Sinn Féin and would be a blow to her public posture as the British prime minister who successfully contained the Irish problem.

Furthermore, we have to be on guard against a renewed bout of legislative measures either in Britain or the six counties aimed at repressing republican and socialist fighters. Defence of Sinn Féin and the IRA must not be sacrificed by Labour Party activists in the name of electoral realism.

Already in Leicester, for example, the local Labour Party have refused to have anything to do with the May Day celebrations because a Sinn Féin speaker will be on the platform. To their credit the trades council and many local activists have resisted the pressure to abandon Sinn Féin.

In the coming months LCI and TOM activists should recognise the



Paisley mouthing off

recent activity of the IRA for the blow against imperialism it is and take their message into the Labour movement.

- For the IRA against the RUC/British army
- Troops out now! Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole
- End the unionist veto. Smash the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
- Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act



## MRCI

OVER FOUR DAYS at Easter the Third Conference of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International took place in London. The conference was attended by all the sections of the MRCI, Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (W. Germany), Irish Workers Group, Pouvoir Ouvriere (France) and Workers Power (Britain). Observers also attended from two Latin American groups with whom the MRCI is in discussion.

The major items for discussion at the conference were a developed outline of a draft Programmatic Manifesto of the MRCI. This document seeks to develop a com-

# MRCI CONFERENCE

munist programme on the basis of the method of the Transitional Programme adopted by the Fourth International in 1938. It seeks to re-elaborate that programme in the light of developments within imperialism and the class struggle over the last four decades.

The conference committed itself to take this work forward by commissioning a full draft of the programme for a future MRCI meeting, which will lay the basis for

democratic centralism within the MRCI.

A second important question for the conference was the amending and adoption of a set of 22 Theses aimed at defining revolutionary communism, Trotskyism, against the centrist distortions of that tradition by the various degenerate 'Fourth Internationals' and their fragments which claim Trotsky's heritage. These will be translated into several languages and sub-

mitted as the MRCI's contribution to any 'International Conference' discussion process which takes place in the next period.

The conference recognised the importance of the contributions made by the Latin American comrades which brought the experience of an important tradition of revolutionary struggle in the imperialised world into the MRCI's discussions. The conference committed itself to devote the political and material resources necessary to strengthening the MRCI's Latin American work with the aim of establishing Latin American sections within the framework of the MRCI.

They had a deep feeling of impotence because in an important sense the future of the vanguard of the Bolivian proletariat had been decided.

WP: What is the situation of the miners now? What has happened since the march?

At first the miners did all they could to carry on the struggle—with hunger strikes. They even forced the leadership of the FSTMB to resign and an extraordinary congress took place at Siglo XX—Twentieth Century Mine—one of the most famous and traditionally militant mining sites. The old leadership split into factions, blamed each other, but because there was no strong alternative leadership all this only produced a situation in which the miners began to accept the redundancy terms and take voluntary retirement on a massive scale.

WP: What is the morale of the workers now?

Since the defeat of August last year the government set out to destroy the vanguard of the working class, the miners. Having done this to an important degree it is now concentrating its fire on the other sections of workers. It is attacking the education system and the teachers. It is attacking health workers, the peasants and small shopkeepers and small businessmen. The measures for doing this are massive cuts in state expenditure and the implementation of tax 'reforms'—that is shifting the tax burden onto the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.

The COB leaders, deeply discredited in front of the masses have tried to restore their credibility before the next congress of COB. Three weeks ago they launched a national hunger strike in which all sections of the working class took part.

WP: What are some of the main lessons you learned from the march and the tragic defeat in which it ended?

The central question was the absence of a revolutionary leadership for the proletariat. The march showed again the matchless revolutionary instincts and militancy of the miners but it also showed again the counter-revolutionary role of the reformist and Stalinist leaders. It also showed that the centrists could offer no alternative strategy to these leaders when it came to the crunch. Lastly this defeat should teach workers the bitter lesson that the gains the workers made in the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, especially the nationalisation of tin mining, were after all only transitory. If the proletariat does not resolve the question of political power and take it for itself then the bourgeoisie will wait and seize the right moment to claw back any concessions it has been forced to make.

**FREE  
ELEUTERIO  
GUTIERREZ**

**CAMPAIGN MEETING**

Mauro Delgado—Trotskyist militant from Oruro—speaking on the Bolivian miners' struggles and the case of Eleuterio

Duke of York, York Way,  
Kings Cross  
Monday 4 May 7.30pm



# FIGHTING RACISM IN THE SCHOOLS

EIGHT YEARS OF Tory rule have resulted in a dramatic intensification of the oppression of black people in Britain. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in education. Cuts in the education budget have led to a sharpening of the crisis in the inner city schools where black pupils are concentrated.

Thatcher has encouraged racist ideologues such as Ray Honeyford to take the offensive in the schools. This in turn has given the green light for open racist and fascist agitators to mount numerous physical attacks upon black pupils—both outside and within the schools.

One response to this offensive from within the black community has been to set up separate black schools. Many black parents have felt this to be the best way of protecting their children from the racist attitudes of teachers and of promoting a curriculum which can overcome the alienation of black children and thus improve educational performance as measured by exam results.

Support for such projects has been found in all sections of the black community—Asian and Afro-Caribbean. But well before today, the idea of separate schools for oppressed minorities found favour in the Jewish and Irish communities in Britain.

## ATTITUDE

What attitude should socialist teachers take to these developments? The first thing to stress is that the growth of separatism in British schooling is not only due to deepening racism but also to the failure of the left in the teaching unions to advance strategies for overcoming this racism.

In the 1950s and most of the 1960s the state's response to black immigration was that of 'cultural assimilation'. This automatically meant that black children were forced to accept the racism embedded in the curriculum; a history course, for example, which revelled in the 'civilising' mission of British imperialism. Their own cultural traditions and educational philosophies were systematically rubbished. By the late 1960s it became clear that a large number of black children were failing in schools.

Black students often ended up in special schools and were frequently categorised as Educationally Sub-Normal, not surprising since cultural assimilation focused on the black child as the problem rather than the racist system. Faced with an alien culture and with no attempt to relate education to their own experience, black students were rebelling—either behaviourally or through academic under-achievement.

## DEBATE

The education debate of the 1970s began to revolve around the question of culture with regards to black students. The debate produced two responses; the first was 'multi-culturalism', properly speaking a product of liberalism rather than of the left.

Multi-culturalism came to be favoured by the establishment and it is not difficult to see why. In 1967 Roy Jenkins, the then Labour Home Secretary called for 'unity through diversity'. All pupils were encouraged to value, accept and learn from a variety of national and regional cultures.

Beneath the fine phrases, however, it was still about integration and acceptance. Through this process, it was hoped, black pupils would become less disruptive and racism would be prevented through mutual understanding.



Bradford students strike against racist teachers

The problem with multi-culturalism is that it promotes a static view of the world—in other words a view which is fundamentally false. Multi-culturalism denies the existence of inequality, of political, social and economic domination. It glosses over the realities of oppression and exploitation. It seeks to create a cosy and comfortable view of the world in the classroom which simply does not correspond to the real world outside.

Multi-culturalism also encourages pupils to value what is reactionary and backward-looking in different cultures. As socialists we should not seek to respect 'values' which oppress girls and women in Islamic culture, for example, any more than we should reconcile ourselves to such oppression in western imperialist democracies.

## CHALLENGE

The challenge to multi-culturalism has been largely carried out under the banner of 'anti-racism', the second response to the debate in the 1970s on education. Anti-racist teaching attempts to provide an understanding of the history of immigration, immigrants and racism. By exposing the causes of racism it hopes to defeat it. In administrative terms, anti-racist policy seeks to guide the institution away from racism and provide a framework for action against any form of racism in schools.

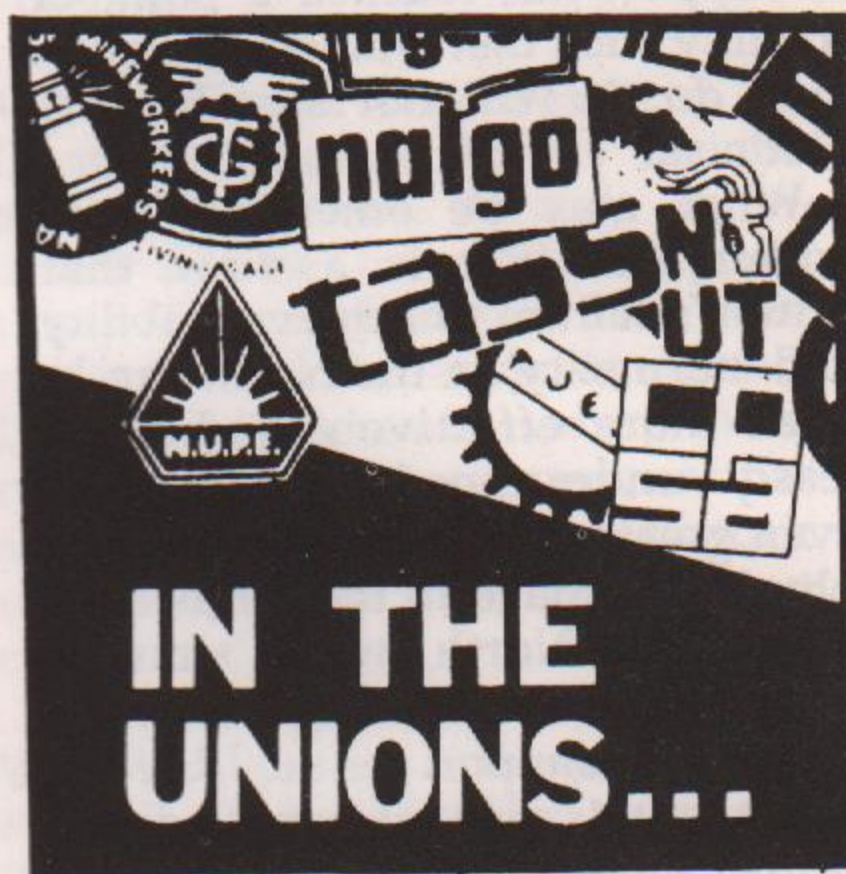
Many anti-racist initiatives have come from Local Education Authorities particularly in large cities with a significant black population. When ILEA issued its own anti-racist statement it required all ILEA schools to draw up similar statements. This imposition from above has caused problems. The statements have often been left at the level of pious words rather than proposals for action. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly a statement can act as anti-racist cover without committing the school to any positive action. Secondly there has been inadequate resourcing to cover new teaching materials and extra teacher time to plan new courses. All too often, therefore, anti-racism has simply been an administrative good intention rather than a real answer to racism in the schools.

The failure of multi-culturalism and anti-racism has increased the pressure towards separatism. It is a pressure we must oppose.

At this year's Labour Party Black Sections' Annual Conference considerable support was expressed for separate or supplementary

schools. This reflected the concern of Afro-Caribbean parents. These parents point to the institutionalised racism and consequent under-achievement of their children. Research shows that amongst children who are disciplined, suspended or expelled from school, a disproportionately high number are black. The figures also show that there has been no significant increase in black entrants to higher education in the face of the clear failure of the state education system. Afro-Caribbean parents are calling for separate schools for their children. Sections of the middle class Afro-Caribbean community are prepared to pay for such schools. By making them private schools they hope to counteract the institutionalised racism of the state.

The problem with this perspective is twofold. First, it implies that under-achievement is strictly a problem of racism. The fact is, however that it is primarily the fate of working class youth whether black or white. Moreover, most black working-class youth have parents who cannot afford the luxury of separate or supplementary



schools to help their children 'get on'.

Secondly, separate schools do not counteract racism in society. Temporary relief from harassment in the classroom may be a by-product of such schooling but it fails to overcome racism in the community at large. Challenging racism in the white working class and forcing the left to respond to that challenge is the only realistic way of unifying the working class around anti-racist policies.

Another strand within the separatist lobby is avowedly religious. Many Muslim parents wish to establish schools on religious grounds. They argue that only through separate schools can the religious requirements of their children be guaranteed. Such schools would allow suitable uniforms and special food as well as allowing for the separation of the sexes. The schools would also allow for an increase in religious and mother-tongue teaching. Muslim parents point to the historical precedent of separate Catholic and Jewish schools and call for state support for Muslim schools to be established in the near future.

Socialists in the NUT have to argue against the establishment of religious schools and oppose any state funding of them. Of course, we do so from a standpoint of recognising that so long as the state sector under capitalism is tied to the Anglican Church through the 1944 Education Act we defend the right of religious minorities to establish such schools. But more importantly we fight for the basic democratic right of religious minorities to have the necessary facilities for religious observation, special diets, religious holidays and so on within the state sector.

However, this support against racism and religious intolerance has to be set in the context of a socialist fight against any religious teaching in schools. As materialists we are implacably hostile to religious education. Religion is fundamentally opposed to a scientific materialist and historical approach to the understanding of nature and society. In the struggle over curriculum content we aim to prevent any form of religion being given the backing and support of the state or the school authorities. Religion enslaves the mind and encourages the acceptance of suffering and oppression and hence serves capitalism and its state.

We are not opposed to religion being approached objectively within the curriculum, that is, studied as an ideology, but we do oppose religion being taught reverentially as a faith. Socialists, in fact, favour positively anti-religious

propaganda in the curriculum since it is the only way to counter the religious poison peddled via the church and even via the family. Neutrality within the schools over religion amounts to bowing to the superior ideological weight of the church and family.

For all these reasons we must oppose any central or local authority aid to any religious schools and launch a fight for free, compulsory state education for all, and the complete separation of church and state, in particular, breaking the religious stranglehold of the Anglican church, and ending all state funding, for example, for Catholic schools.

Within schools we argue for a positive and effective anti-racist policy. We seek to analyse, understand and combat racism as it manifests itself in schools and in society at large.

We support the self-organisation of black self-defence groups such as that set up by students at Daneford School in East London last year following a series of racist attacks.

Also we support the increasing involvement of black parents and students in the development of the school curriculum. We are not opposed to the concept of 'core curriculum' but we refuse to have one determined by Kenneth Baker and the CBI. We fight for a curriculum under the control of classroom teachers, parents and pupils.

## ANTI-RACIST

We are against ethno-centricity in the curriculum and for anti-racist teaching in all subjects. Such teaching, if it is to be effective, must be adequately resourced through a massive injection of funds. Anti racist teaching would seek to explain and analyse the class society in which we live and demonstrate the possibilities for change.

If anti racist teaching is to succeed it is vital that more black teachers are recruited. In the unions black teachers should have the right to caucus. We are for the expulsion of organised racists and known fascists from the unions. No active racist should be allowed to hold a union post.

Finally it is important that the struggle against racism is not confined to the schools. The unions should commit themselves to active support of campaigns and struggles against the immigration laws and the deportations they result in, and to other anti-racist struggles. Teachers should participate in, encourage and support black students and parents who are engaged in the fight against racism. Above all we need to recognise that the racist content of education is inextricably linked to its pro-capitalist content within this society. A struggle for a non-racist education system means a struggle for a socialist society.

by an NUT member





# SAFE SEX?

'AIDS IS NOT a problem for most people . . .' says the glossy pamphlet from the RCP. And further ' . . . compared with other causes of death and disease, 350 deaths in four years is a marginal health problem'.

This may comfort complacent heterosexuals in Britain as they ponder the higher probabilities of their demise through heart disease, cancer or a road accident. But for 30-39 year old men in New York, knowing that in 1985 AIDS was the leading cause of death amongst them—less than four years after the first five cases of AIDS were noticed in California—this smugness must appear as something of a head in the sand approach. AIDS is also the second biggest killer of young women in New York, a sobering thought for those who believe the RCP's claim that it is still only a problem for gay men.

The only way forward offered by the authors of the pamphlet is:

*'Fighting for the equal treatment of homosexuals in society, and for the unity of the working class against divisive moralism and phoney public health propaganda.'*

It seems that the thousands, possibly millions, already infected with HIV in Africa must rest content with the knowledge that the RCP will be saving lives by 'rejecting the panic'.

## EQUAL NUMBERS

In Africa equal numbers of women and men are infected, and only a hopelessly British centered sect like the RCP could come forward with a perspective based purely on acceptance of AIDS as a disease of gay men.

The central argument of this 'truth' kit is that:

*'there is no good evidence that AIDS is likely to spread rapidly in the West amongst heterosexuals.'*

It restates that to date in Britain only clearly defined risk groups, gay men and drug injectors, are becoming infected and therefore the rest of the population need not worry. The government, they argue, have simply used the issue of AIDS to spread panic in order to create the climate for a moral backlash.

It is clearly the case that the publicity campaign from the Tories, plus the advice given by many campaigners for safer sex has been moralistic and reactionary, attempting to reverse the extremely partial sexual freedoms that have been gained over the past two decades. The constant stress on 'It is dangerous to have sex with lots of people' and 'only sex with one person who is faithful to you...' (British Medical Association

pamphlet) is aimed at reinforcing traditional morality and the family, thereby denying sexual choice for women and youth but particularly lesbians and gay men.

But it would be wrong to leap from that understanding to a total condemnation of the very notion of safer sex. Whilst there can be no individual solution to the problems posed by AIDS, it is quite possible to give people enough information to enable them to voluntarily take informed decisions about their behaviour. This is not the same as arguing that safer sex campaigns will eradicate AIDS, or that only monogamy with a faithful partner can be advised. The real information about safer sex which the government does not put out is that it is not how many partners that matter but what you do with them.

A really useful health education campaign would need to be based on full explicit sex education at all levels of school and the community, openness about sexuality, repealing all repressive laws against homosexuality and prostitution, and fighting bigotry and moralism. Decriminalising drug use, allowing better access to information and education for users, would be integral to such a campaign. In that context, discussions of how to reduce risks of infection and disease would be much more meaningful.

The RCP pamphlet rejects any approach to this type of sex education at all and offers instead its own confusing advice that:

*'designates receptive anal intercourse and possibly vaginal intercourse with anybody likely to be HIV-positive as relatively risky and everything else as relatively safe.' (p54)*

## DUBIOUS

Their assertion that AIDS will remain a disease of specific risk groups is made from a dubious scientific basis used for dubious political ends. What projections can be made about the spread of AIDS? It is true that in Britain and in the USA the reported cases of AIDS have remained largely within major 'high risk' groups, namely homosexual men, drug injectors, recipients of infected blood products plus the sexual partners of and babies born to people in these groups.

Unfortunately it is not possible to say with any certainty what will happen over the next ten years. No

## REVIEWS

PAMPHLETS ON AIDS have been produced by both the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The RCP's *The Truth about Aids* by Dr Michael Fitzpatrick and Don Milligan (Junius £1.95) and the SWP's *AIDS The Socialist View* by Duncan Blackie and Ian Taylor (90p) both deal with many of the problems associated with AIDS. But neither provides a communist answer, argues *Helen Ward*.

one knows how many people in the community are carrying the virus without being recognised. No one knows enough about behaviour in particular groups to say whether the high incidence amongst the drug users and gay men will lead to a spread into other groups through sexual contact, and we are still not sure about the precise way the virus can and cannot be transmitted.

Dr Michael Fitzpatrick and Mr Don Milligan have looked at the evidence and decided that:

*'While it is possible for the AIDS virus to be passed from men to women in vaginal intercourse, in the West relatively few women appear that have been infected in this way.'*

They dispute whether the virus can spread from women to men through sexual intercourse and return to the medical opinion of the early days of the disease that:

*'it seems clear that the virus is less easily spread by vaginal than by anal intercourse.'*

This idea is not supported by the various studies assessing the degree to which the partners of infected individuals are themselves infected. All these case studies, plus the studies of patterns of infection spread, indicate that the virus can spread through vaginal and anal intercourse, possibly both ways, that is from men to women, men to men, and women to men.

This last point, the transfer of the virus from a woman to a man during sex, is well supported by the epidemiology of the disease in Africa. There are a number of individual case reports of men who seem to have acquired the virus through sex with an infected woman.

The situation in Africa, which is ignored almost totally by this pamphlet, indicates that the HIV behaves like other sexually

transmitted diseases. There is no reason to think that it could not do the same in the West. In Haiti, one of the early areas to be highly affected, the initial distribution of cases showed that most people were in the 'high risk' groups—gay men and intravenous drug users—after a few years this had reversed to the point where now most HIV-positives are not in these groups, and the major risk seems to be heterosexual contacts.

So it is possible for the situation to change. This is not to say that it will, but certainly in terms of public health planning and education it would be wrong to maintain the idea of AIDS being a gay plague.

The complacency of the RCP pamphlet is partly based on a peculiarly (in fact characteristically) wooden interpretation of the figures about the epidemic. By pointing to the relatively few cases so far of AIDS in Britain they say it is not so important as heart disease, occupational diseases and accidents. In terms of overall numbers per year this is true—but what they don't assess is the rapid change in numbers of cases, which gives some idea of the future scale of the problem, 350 deaths so far may seem 'marginal', but given that the first deaths were in 1981, the rate of increase is crucial.

## RESOURCES

The changing, growing nature of the problem means that resources must be massively expanded in health care, both in the hospitals and the community, to deal with the cases of AIDS. This does not mean that resources could be directed from other areas, as the RCP pamphlet implies the campaigners would like. In a situation where London hospitals are losing thousands of beds, the additional needs of AIDS patients are combined with increased demand for care for the elderly. This requires a campaign for a massive expansion of the NHS, organising and mobilising health workers to fight for this—demands which are missing from the RCP pamphlet. As usual they have no programmes to offer anyone.

Having attacked the left for supporting safer sex campaigns and promoting condoms the RCP jibe that:

*'one paper suggested that the London Rubber Company should become a prime target for social ownership under a future Labour Government.'*

In fact LRC, like the other pharmaceutical firms and suppliers, is a major drain on the health service and we should demand its nationalisation under workers' control with no compensation for the parasitic owners.

The RCP steadfastly refuses to make any demands on governments, Labour or Tory, to do anything. All reforms for them are hopeless, although despite themselves they do manage to slip in a few, such as free needles and more rational research. They argue that to demand reforms is to strengthen the state apparatus of which they see the NHS being a part. They are totally unable to use the fight for reforms to mobilise workers in a revolutionary manner.

Their pamphlet is of little use. The medical information is often mis-leading. The conclusions about the spread of the disease reinforces the idea of a gay disease passed on only through anal sex and they offer no way forward other than bland calls to campaign against discrimination.

The SWP's pamphlet on AIDS

puts forward a less sceptical account of the current medical knowledge about AIDS. After looking at previous plagues and epidemics and the social responses to them, they concentrate on the particular questions faced today. A chapter on Africa usefully points out that imperialism has caused the major problems there, with AIDS merely added to the long list of devastatingly infectious diseases.

## PERSPECTIVES

The SWP have a different perspective for tackling the problem of AIDS from the RCP. They do tend to overestimate the impact of the disease, and whilst pointing to the dangers of moralising and Victorian values they do end up arguing that 'safe sex can stop the spread of AIDS'. This emphasis on safe sex as a solution is misleading. We need to be clear that there is no such thing as safe sex, only safer sex - and it is a matter for informed personal choice not a means of stopping the spread of the disease.

The final chapter tells us 'what we can do . . .' In addition to what must be done in the short term, such as opposing moralism, oppression and hypocrisy, and educating people about safer sex, the SWP put forward a long term solution. 'AIDS is just one hazard in a dangerous world' we are told, and the answer to this, plus the threat of nuclear annihilation and all other evils, is ' . . . a revolutionary change in society'.

This is correct, and the SWP can always be relied upon to remind us of the 'maximum' programme for socialism, unlike the RCP who have neither a minimum nor maximum programme for the working class. But the SWP in practice limit their programme to immediate economic and trade union issues even when tackling questions of oppression:

*'The miners' strike of 1984-5 demonstrated how an economic fight . . . changed peoples ideas on oppression' (their emphasis).*



are condoms the cure?

Many miners did change their ideas, and the positive support given to them by Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners was essential in this. But it is not enough to expect economic struggles to spontaneously transform themselves into political and social ones.

Neither of these pamphlets on AIDS offers a way forward for the working class. A serious fight in the unions and workplaces around demands for health and safety, for a massive expansion of the NHS, for sex-education, for expansion and control of research and the nationalisation of the drug companies under workers' control, combined with a tireless fight against oppression and discrimination can link the 'short term' solutions put forward by the SWP (and rejected by the RCP) with the necessary struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

## LPYS

Comrades,

At the LPYS conference *Socialist Organiser* put out a leaflet calling the *Workers Power* contingent 'craven wimps'. I don't wish to appear over sensitive to the use of the word 'wimp'. However given the high profile *Workers Power* had on the lesbian and gay question in trying to force conference to take a resolution on lesbian and gay rights, and given the number of gay comrades in our contingent, I feel that the use of the word was extremely suspect. What was their motive in using such a word? Instead of resorting to the childish level of a student union rag mag they would have done better criticising us politically. Perhaps the *Socialist Organiser* supporters just don't know how to.

In comradeship,  
Ian Hassell  
Vauxhall LPYS



WRITE TO:

The Editor *Workers Power*  
BCM 7750 London WC1N 3XX

## BLACK SECTIONS

Dear Editor,

Your report of the Black Sections' Conference left me unclear as to your position on one important question. You said that 'Despite the perspective of five or six black MPs after the election it was clear that these prospective MPs were by no means committed to accountability to the Black Sections.' As a statement of fact this is doubtless true, but do I detect a tone of disapproval

that implies that *Workers Power* thinks these MPs should be accountable to their Black Sections? Surely Marxists should argue for Labour representatives to be directly responsible to all the workers they represent—including Black Sections—and not to one part of the local working class?

fraternally,  
J.Hunt

We reply: The article was not meant to convey the view that WP thinks the prospective MPs in question should be accountable only to the Black Sections. It was pointing out that they are not even prepared to be accountable to those they claim to speak for and who have paved the way to candidacies for them. We think all Labour MPs should be directly accountable to the entire labour movement and organisations of the oppressed. The Black Sections should play their role in that process.



# workers power

## CIVIL SERVICE ALL OUT NOW!

CIVIL SERVANTS ARE in struggle to restore some of the lost ground of the Thatcher years. A claim for 15% across the board, with a £20 minimum rise for lower grades, a shorter working week and longer holidays, coupled with a claim for a minimum wage of £115 per week was submitted by a consortium of the CPSA, the SCPS, the IRSF and NIPSA.

The Treasury's "final" offer was for a paltry 4.25% with an underpin of £5.75 for the low paid! The unions agreed to ballot their members on the offer and consider industrial action. The "action" being proposed was a six week rotating program of "selective" strikes where the country would be divided into six regions. The social security and unemployment benefit offices in each region would be called out for a week at a time and all civil servants would be asked to strike for the last two days of the week. The bandwagon would then move to the next region but the strikers left behind would be expected to go back to work on Monday as though nothing had happened!

In the ballot, only the SCPS executive recommended support for this modest program of strikes. The CPSA leadership, despite instructions from a special pay conference to fight on pay in 1987, made no recommendation to their members.



This line was followed by Tony Christopher's IRSF. Despite this complete abdication, the membership in both CPSA and NIPSA voted strongly in favour of action with 60% support from both unions. SCPS returned a massive 70% vote in favour of industrial action. Only the IRSF voted against the campaign. The campaign strategy of the leadership is not designed to win the claim. The leadership has not organised to win. They failed to produce any propaganda leaflets for use by pickets standing outside the dole offices for the first two weeks of the campaign. It was left to local militants to talk to claimants and win them to support the strike.

The leadership of the unions have refused to be drawn on what would

happen after the six week period. Militants in all areas have realised that the present campaign, even when supplemented by strikes in VAT and customs offices, will not be enough to win the full claim. They see the teachers' two and a half year long campaign of selective strikes as a lesson in diversion and a recipe for defeat.

Even the Broad Lefts have done virtually nothing to build the campaign. They have produced one national leaflet which called for support for the 'rolling' strikes but played down the next stage of the campaign. They have failed to argue for even the most basic rank and file control of the strikes in the localities. One leading supporter of Militant at a rally in Cardiff argued

against the creation of town based, directly elected strike committees by saying that the non-elected Pay Campaign Committees (with only two reps from each union and a full-timer to cover one or more counties!) were able to co-ordinate activity adequately. She said the strike didn't need another layer of bureaucracy forced upon it!

### EFFECTIVE

Workers Power supporters have always argued for rank and file control of strike committees and directly elected bodies with reps from every office directing action in the most effective manner. This, coupled with a clear call for an all out indefinite strike, and practical measures to build this by keeping the regional strikes going, is the only way to guarantee a victory for the claim in full.

The only message the Treasury will listen to is an all out strike. Militants must build now in the workplaces for all out strike action and demand meetings of local strike committees to make the plans. We must demand of the unions' executives that they call for all out strikes unless the claim is met in

workers were getting.

The dispute has official backing from SOGAT '82, the plant's union, as well as the Tyne and Wear Association of Trades Councils. Support from Tyneside trade unionists and activists from unemployed centres has been so effective in closing down the plant that police have massively increased their presence on picket lines. So far at least six pickets have been arrested.

Messages of support/donations to:  
Gateshead Plastic Workers' Fund  
119 Jesmond Road  
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne  
Tyne and Wear

full.

The unity shown so far by the three unions still fighting must not be allowed to be an excuse for unity in defeat. If one union votes not to take all out action the others must fight on and try to win their colleagues back into the struggle. We must also seek to link up with other public sector workers to build an alliance to fight the government on all fronts. We must link up with the teachers. We must also seek to draw support from other public service workers and argue for them to bring forward their own demands for better pay and conditions. Unemployed and benefit claimants too, must be won to supporting the strike.

- All out for the full civil service claim!
- Build rank and file strike committees in every town!
- Build links with other public sector workers and with unemployed and claimants groups!
- Smash the Treasury limits on pay and reverse all public service cuts!

by Steve Powell

### NUT

## CONFERENCE RETREAT

AT THIS YEAR'S NUT conference the Executive had set themselves two objectives. One was to wind down the already minimal action and the other was to isolate the left as far as possible, and brand them as wreckers.

To a large extent they were successful on both counts. Using the oft-repeated phrase "unity with the NAS-UWT" they managed to bludgeon the delegates into believing that any meaningful action would endanger the new partnership we were forming with the other main TUC-affiliated teachers' union.

To this end they were able to win a carte blanche from the conference to organise (or not) any action they felt to be appropriate. Of key importance in the action debate was the motion on no-cover. Initially conference rejected an Executive amendment which would have meant strike action in selected areas. Having lost this, however, the Executive used their time well, in order to lobby and scaremonger amongst the delegates. Claiming that no-cover action would bankrupt the union and open it up to the threat of sequestration, they were able to persuade conference to throw out the main motion from ILTA and West Kent which called for total no-cover except in primary or special schools.

In passing, it is worth noting that ILTA and West Kent's adaption to professionalism was used by some

of the Executive to help talk out the main motion. They asked:

*'can "caring professionals" refuse to look after young secondary school pupils with no notice whatsoever?'*

Surely militants must learn from this that identifying ourselves as 'professionals' instead of as trade unionists will always be thrown back in our faces whenever we call for meaningful action.

Probably the only real hiccup in the Executive's attempts to wind down the action came in the shape of Shadow Secretary of Education, Giles Radice. His public call to the teacher unions to halt their action in order to help Labour get elected made it impossible for the leadership to do so at the conference. Given this was precisely what they wanted to do, and had privately told Radice they would, they were furious at his 'union tamer' style intervention. Had they been seen to obey Radice it would have completely destroyed their non-party political stance and their credibility as defenders of teachers' interests.

The second, but intertwined strand, of their strategy was to try and split the conference between "radical urban activists", for example ILTA, and "moderate professionals" in the rest of the country. In order to do this they set up the spectre of the union within a union and claimed that LAPAC (Local Associations' Pay and Conditions Conference), an organisation which

is in favour of more action, was just such a body.

While never managing to launch an all-out witch-hunt, they did manage to use this diversion well enough to isolate all militants who sought to raise the question of the expelled and suspended ILTA officers, many of them being howled down by right-wing elements.

Overall then conference saw the Executive consolidate its stranglehold over the dispute. Delegates were persuaded that a compromise with Baker, coupled with local negotiations and token action to bring local authorities to heel, is the way forward on pay and conditions. Such an approach will further isolate militants and make the job of local negotiations by school reps and local association officers extremely difficult. In such a situation it is possible that the structures of the union will gradually fall apart as members decide to get out of time-consuming and increasingly fruitless local negotiations with intransigent or "poverty-stricken" employers.

Never has it been more important to win militants to a perspective of building a genuine rank and file movement. Such a movement would seek to turn the union into a thoroughly democratic, class struggle organisation, pledged to act in the best interests of the membership.

by an NUT delegate

### LPYS CONFERENCE

## NON EVENT

THIS YEAR'S LPYS conference was turned into a real non-event by the Militant leadership. Despite being under threat from the right, with Tom Sawyer's proposals to 'reform' the LPYS aimed at destroying Militant's power base in the youth organisation, all the signs were that these tame 'Marxists' were determined to play dead.

In particular they did not want to offend Kinnock, or his press secretary, Patricia Hewitt, by taking a stand on the lesbian and gay issue. Despite there being three resolutions on this issue the Militant leadership tried to prevent a discussion by prioritising a resolution on football. Under pressure from delegates they did not control they were forced to make a statement on lesbian and gay rights, but their intention of turning LPYS into mere canvassing fodder for the election—in the hope that this will soften Kinnock's attitude towards them—was clear.

At conference Workers Power supporters argued for a complete rejection of Sawyer's proposals as against the fudge '6.2 million youth for Labour' plan adopted by conference. Militant argued that Sawyer's proposals did provide an 'opportunity to have a full discussion on building a mass socialist youth movement'. The composite finally passed did call for a postponement of this discussion until after the election, a delaying tactic unlikely to deflect Sawyer and Kinnock from their plans to completely neuter the

LPYS.

Although some of the proposals put forward by the LPYS leadership and adopted by conference are supportable in themselves, the real issue at stake is the sovereignty of the LPYS. Any compromise on this question will merely encourage the witch-hunters. The task, which conference failed to address itself to, was rallying the forces to fight Sawyer and Kinnock on this issue.

As usual Militant refused to support elementary democratic demands with regard to Northern Ireland, like ending strip searches and ban the use of plastic bullets. In practice their hostility to republicanism repeatedly places them on the side of the oppressors in the Six Counties.

Neither Socialist Organiser's *Youth Fightback* nor the increasingly pro-Stalinist Socialist Action supporters offered a serious challenge to Militant. They too, were prepared to countenance compromises with Sawyer's proposals, rather than organise a serious fight against them.

Over the next year the LPYS will face attacks from the right against a background of working class youth being driven onto the slave labour JTS scheme en masse. Both attacks can be resisted if a real fight back is organised. It is in this context that we will continue to argue inside the LPYS and outside it for a revolutionary youth movement that can wage a determined fight to defend working class youth on every front.