

FIGHT THE TORIES

AS WE GO to press, the National Union of Mineworkers' executive has responded to threat to miners' jobs posed by the National Coal Board's demand for the closure of 50 pits over the next two years by declaring that it will call a national strike.

Contingency plans are already under-way to get the support of the railway workers, steelworkers, and dockers. The steelworkers' leaders themselves have so far backed down to every attack on their members' jobs, but this joint approach might have the effect of rallying the rank and file to put pressure on Sirs, Smith, Basnett, Evans, and the craft union leaders.

At the same time the Tories are rushing a bill through Parliament so that the British Steel Corporation can get an immediate £500 million transfusion while the Tories continue their internal wrangles over the McGregor plan. The McGregor plan will certainly call for many more thousands of job cuts in the industry.

Meanwhile Linwood workers have been told that the Talbot works there will be closed. According to the parent company, Peugeot, the problem is the age of the machinery — a tribute to decades of underinvestment by the owners while they enjoyed the profits. About 5,000 jobs will go at the plant itself, with another 5,000 in ancillary industries.

Although there has been a promise to continue production at the Ryton plant in Coventry for the present, workers there know their days are numbered.

The initiative of the NUM leaders should be seized on not only by workers in the coal industry — unofficial strikes have already broken out — but by workers in other industries. A linking up of

major industrial sectors could confront the Tories with a general strike — it could confront the rank and file workers' movement with the possibility of imposing its solution to the crisis on the backs of the capitalists.

The working class must go on the offensive against the Tories. It must do to Thatcher what it did to Heath. But this time it dare not leave the conduct of affairs to a Labour Party dominated by the right wing and uncontrolled from outside Parliament: it must reach for power itself.

THE IMPERIALIST WAR DRIVE

THE PENTAGON wants to up US military spending by about \$32,000 million (£13,675 million) in line with the priorities outlined by President Reagan during his election campaign.

The shift to the right in American politics that brought Reagan to power has meant a particularly war-like twist to the political expression of imperialism's aims. Since Reagan's election, he and his administration have taken a number of serious steps that could bring the trigger-touch of world war much nearer.

Firstly, Reagan has announced his intention of reactivating the neutron bomb programme which Carter had defused after a lot of public pressure in 1978. The neutron bomb, which produces less blast and more radiation than other nuclear weapons, increases precisely the factor that is least controllable. A more vivid example of capitalist irresponsibility could hardly be found.

Politically, the resumption of the neutron bomb programme is part of Reagan's 'get-tough-with-Russia' line. That line will have serious domestic effects as Reagan attempts to create a new cold war atmosphere. And that in turn will be one of the factors seriously affecting the likelihood of war.

Several foreign policy statements have indicated the same tough line. The public statement by the new Treasury Secretary that aid programmes will be cut is one example, though this seems to have been partly revised on the insistence of the new Secretary of State, Alexander Haig. Haig is the man whose pressure on Nixon to step up the war in Cambodia resulted in an orgy of devastation there.

Reagan has also expressed his dissatisfaction about the progress of the so-called rapid deployment force to protect US interests in the Middle East. He wants the direct stationing of US troops in the area, something that will enormously contribute to raising the danger of war.

All this takes place within the context of virtually abolishing detente, for now. (However, current reports suggest that the aim of Kissinger's pupil, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, is to negotiate a new accord with the USSR, on the basis of a new agreement on spheres of influence. The last such accord, negotiated in

1972, fell apart in the mid-'70s period of weakness of the USA and assertiveness by the USSR).

Of course, for revolutionary socialists detente represented not the peaceful intentions of US imperialism, but a cynical deal made between rulers to allow them to get on with oppressing the masses under their domination.

Today, world imperialism is in crisis: inflation and unemployment ravage the working class, capitalist profits decline, and whole sections of industry are wiped out as the recession proceeds. National competition threatens to escalate into full-scale trade wars.

The post world war 2 capitalist world economy, and its imperialist world politics, were organised around the USA and under its hegemony. That set-up is in an advanced state of disintegration. Reagan's goal must be to try to restore it. The bellicose demands that the Russian bear should be driven back into its lair are secondarily designed to help achieve this, and to rally the other capitalist powers round the USA.

How real the likelihood is that the imperialists will deliberately unleash war, it is impossible to know. We know that the present chaotic state of world capitalism, the tensions and the bellicosity, make it more and more a real possibility. At the same time, the instability within the sphere of influence of the USSR, in Afghanistan, Poland, and elsewhere, raises the possibility of military action by the Russian bureaucracy panicking imperialism into a military venture.

But it is pointless to try to guess at the likely trip-wire for total war. Revolutionary socialists must emphasise that essentially it is the appetite of imperialism that causes the war threat. But we must not hold back from pointing out the role of the reactionary bureaucracy of the Stalinist states.

We must couple two political approaches: on the one hand, a fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament, against US bases in Britain, and for British withdrawal from NATO; on the other hand, opposition to nationalist economic solutions, for independent working class struggle against capitalism. This means a determined struggle against the bi-partisanship of the politics of the centre and right within the Labour Party, and against the class collaborationist nationalism of the trade union bureaucracy.

20p

MOBILISE FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY

Electing the Leader

- 1 ANNUAL ELECTION
- 2 RECORDED VOTE
- 3 Full Emergency Provision
- 4 A DIRECT VOTE AT CONFERENCE FOR EVERY ORGANISATION
- 5 NO MORE THAN ONE THIRD FOR THE PLP

The Rank & File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy is supported by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy; Women's Institute for Workers' Control; Young Socialists for Peace; the Labour Party; the National Union of Students; the Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory; and the Socialist Educational Association.

32p including postage, c/o 10 Park Drive, London NW11.

2

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

How to fight for our jobs

10p monthly, from 41 Ellington Street, London N7.