

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

No 24

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JULY/AUGUST 1980: 12 years after the crushing of Czechoslovakia, 24 years after the Greater Budapest Workers' Council was drowned in blood, the banner of working class democracy has once again been raised in Eastern Europe.

Over the last two months the Polish workers have hit the rotten Stalinist police-state system with direct action.

A magnificent wave of strikes has engulfed the country, throwing the bureaucracy into a state of crisis. The determination of the Polish workers, first not to bear the brunt of the bureaucrats' criminal misrule of the economy, and now to create their own independent trade unions, haunts the bureaucrats of Warsaw and Moscow.

The spectre of working class revolution chills these parasites to the bone. They know that the logic of the Polish workers' strikes, their occupations, the organisations they have created, the strike committees, points in the direction of genuine workers' democracy.

It points to the end of the Stalinists' attempt to dress themselves up as the representatives of the class interests of the workers.

It spells the end of their decades-long usurpation of our power.

Poland is not socialist. The nationalised property relations which represent the remaining gains of the October Revolution in the USSR were extended to Poland in the 1940s — but together with a terroristic anti working class political system, modelled on the Stalinist counter-revolution in the USSR.

The way to socialism will be opened only by the workers smashing the bureaucracy and setting up the rule of democratic workers' councils. The integrated strike committees could be the beginning of those workers' councils.

Even if some of the present leaders of the Polish workers' struggle think in terms of gradual reform, the workers themselves, in the course of their struggle, can find a new leadership, com-

POLISH WORKERS BIRTH OF FOUR POWER

mitted to revolution against the bureaucracy.

Already, in their centre of counter-revolution, the Moscow bureaucrats are no doubt planning how to intervene to crush the Polish workers' movement if events get out of hand.

Secret

No doubt these sinister designs were high on the agenda in the secret talks between the Polish and Russian Politbureaus last Sunday in

the east Polish town of Bielowie.

Yet the Stalinists are not alone in their fear. Apprehension is rife also among the ruling classes of the West. The Polish workers' revolt against economic hardship and social injustice threatens their own massive investments in Poland — and it could inspire similar revolts in the capitalist countries.

Already a counter-revolutionary Holy Alliance is coming into being. Billions of deutschmarks and dollars

are being loaned by western banks to Gierk, to prop up the tottering economy. A moratorium on Poland's debt repayments is being seriously considered by the bankers.

Warns

The hierarchy of the Polish Catholic Church joins in. Cardinal Wyszynski, on the State TV and radio, calls for calm and restraint, and warns against going 'too far'. The Church far prefers its cosy relationship with the

bureaucracy to the uncertainties of the revolutionary storm which is brewing.

But for revolutionary socialists, West and East, the events of the last two months can only inspire us with joy and spur us on to solidarity.

The demands of the Polish workers will increasingly strike a resonance within the working classes of the West, who, in the midst of the deepest capitalist crisis since the '30s, are on the threshold of possibly the stormiest class battles in our history.

**Jobs:
organise
for a
fightback**

OFFICIALLY unemployment now stands at over 2 million. The real figure must be much higher, as people who don't think they're entitled to benefit often don't sign on.

Capitalism's downhill slide is accelerating. It is affecting every industry, every trade and grade and every part of the country.

One single article in the 'Guardian' recorded that: 4,000 jobs were to go at BL amongst clerical workers in the Midlands. Clark's shoes are to axe 500 jobs at two plants in South Wales, two in the West Country and one in Ireland. In North Staffordshire Al Industrial Products is cutting 300 jobs, and on Merseyside 1,600 are being thrown out of work by Bowaters.

Myers' mail order is sacking 1,900, while Gardner's diesel engine works in Manchester insists that 700 must go.

Wales is one of the worst hit areas with sackings at Wrexham (tyre industry), Caernavon (motors), Maesteg (cosmetics), Bridgend (motors) Onllwyn (coal) and Shotton, where the remaining workers in the steel works might be dumped on the dole queue. But the threat to Hoover's Glasgow workers might put more out of work in one of the highest unemployment areas of all.

That is one day's run-down. And quite likely the 'Guardian' missed thousands of other dismissals of full and part-time workers.

The employed must organise to fight redundancy and the unemployed must organise too. The trade unions must plan a strategy to fight closures and get unemployed members and school leavers to be organised within the unions.

In every locality the unemployed should organise to fight not only for work and better levels of benefit but for premises, recreational facilities and training.

The employed must fight to reduce the working week without loss of pay, to share the work rather than to divide our class.

The threat of sackings must be fought by occupying the factories, the mines or offices and mobilising the workers in support of a campaign to establish state ownership and workers' control.

Nationally and locally the Labour Party and trade unions must fight to reorganise production and services in line with workers' needs. Only direct action — strikes, occupations, and the fight for control — can challenge the disastrous capitalist organisation of production.



Inside

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Lambeth calls a national cuts conference: interview with Ted Knight p.8

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Where we stand

- ★ Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket-line; no state interference in our unions!
- ★ No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions!
- ★ Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.
- ★ Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.
- ★ End unemployment. Cut hours not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35-hour week and end to overtime.
- ★ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.
- ★ Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.
- ★ Freeze rents and rates.
- ★ Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.
- ★ Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence.
- ★ The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as the bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, M15, etc.), public accountability, etc.
- ★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, and full equality for women.
- ★ Against attacks on gays by the State: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and to affirm their stance publicly.
- ★ The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.
- ★ The black working people of South Africa and of Zimbabwe should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles, and armed combat against the white supremacist regimes. South African goods and services should be blacked.
- ★ It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament, and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.
- ★ The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.
- ★ The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for the crumbs from the table of the bankers and bosses.

Socialist Organiser aims to help build a class-struggle left wing in the trade unions and Labour Party, based on a revolutionary socialist platform. Socialist Organiser supporters' groups are being organised in many towns and cities.

Socialist Organiser is sponsored by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

MOBILISE FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY

MEETINGS

LONDON RALLY

Monday 15 September, 7.30
Camden Town Hall
Chair: Jo Richardson MP
Speakers: Tony Benn MP, Eric Heffer MP, Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec. AUEW*), Frances Morrell (Mobilising Committee).
50p admission, 20p unwaged.

BASINGSTOKE

Tuesday 2 September, 7.30, Chute House, Church St.
Speakers: Michael Meacher MP, John Bloxam (SCLV).

BRISTOL

Saturday 20 September, 2pm, Central Hall, Old Market St, Bristol 2.
Speakers: Reg Race MP, Tom Litterick, Derek Gregory (NUPE Divisional Officer, Wales).

COVENTRY

Sunday 21 September, 7.30, Earlsdon Primary School, Earlsdon Avenue.
Speakers: Audrey Wise, Tom Litterick.

EDINBURGH

Sunday 31 August, 7.30, Trades Council, Picardy Place.
Chair: Cllr Alex Wood.
Speakers: Reg Race MP, Sandy Smeaton (AUEW shop steward, No.2 Divisional Council*), Cllr Val Woodward, John Bloxam (Mobilising Committee).

BIRMINGHAM RALLY

Monday 22 September, 7.15
Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth
Speakers: Tony Benn MP, Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec. AUEW*), Les Huckfield MP. Steel band.

LEICESTER

Thursday 25 September, 7.30, Highfields Community Centre.
Speakers: Tom Litterick, Tony Saunols (LPYS), John Bloxam (Mobilising Committee).

MEDWAY

Monday 8 September, 7.30, 32a New Road, Rochester.
Speaker: Frances Morrell (CLPD).

NEWCASTLE/SOUTH SHIELDS

Tuesday 16 September, 7.30, Ede House, Westoe Rd, South Shields.
Speakers: Audrey Wise, Frances Morrell (Mobilising Committee).

NOTTINGHAM

Thursday 18 September, 7.30, Albert Hall Institute, Derby Road.
Speakers: Reg Race MP, Eric Clarke (Gen. Sec., Scottish Area NUM*).

SHEFFIELD

Wednesday 24 September, 7.30, Sheffield Poly Students Union, Phoenix Buildings, Pond St.
Speaker: Tony Benn MP.

GREATER MANCHESTER RALLY

Wednesday 17 September, 7.30
Houldsworth Hall, Deansgate
Speakers: Tony Benn MP, Audrey Wise (Labour Coordinating Committee), Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec. AUEW*), Michael Meacher MP, John Bloxam (SCLV).

BROMLEY

Monday 8 September, 7.30, H.G. Wells Centre, Bromley High St.
Speakers: Reg Race MP, Cllr Jeremy Corbyn (NUPE Area Officer).

HARINGEY

Tuesday 23 September, 7.30, Haringey Trade Union Centre, 2a Brabant Rd, Wood Green.
Chair: Cllr Jane Chapman.
Speakers: Joan Maynard MP, Tom Litterick, Cllr Jeremy Corbyn, John Bloxam (Mobilising Committee).

PADDINGTON/BRENT

Tuesday 9 September, 7.30, Paddington School, Oakington Rd, W9.
Chair: Arthur Latham (chairman, Greater London Regional Labour Party).
Speakers: Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec. AUEW*), Bernard Dix (Asst. Gen. Sec. NUPE), Audrey Wise, Jack Dromey (secretary, South East Region TUC).

T.U.C. RALLY

Monday 1 September, 5.15pm
Preston Room, The Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton.
Chair: Tony Banks [Mobilising Committee]. Speakers: Tony Benn MP, Ron Todd [National Organiser, TGWU*], John Bloxam [Mobilising Committee].

TOWER HAMLETS

Wednesday 3 September, 7.30, Town Hall, Patriot Sq., London E2.
Speakers: Arthur Latham (chairman, Greater London Region Labour Party), Ted Knight (leader, Lambeth Council), Frances Morrell (CLPD), John Bloxam (SCLV).

OXFORD

Tuesday 9 September, 7.30, Northgate Hall, St Michael St.
Speakers: Derek Gregory (NUPE Divisional Officer, Wales), Frances Morrell (Mobilising Committee), Tony Banks (Asst. Gen. Sec. ABS*).

PORTSMOUTH

Tuesday 16 September, 7.30, The Crystal Room, Garnier St.
Speaker: Stuart Holland MP.

SOUTHAMPTON

Tuesday 23 September, 7.30, Civic Centre.
Speakers: Reg Race MP, Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec. AUEW*).

*in personal capacity.

General Strike in Sri Lanka

by BRUCE ROBINSON

SINCE MID-JULY Sri Lankan workers have been striking against the austerity policies imposed by the United National Party government of J.R. Jayawardne.

The government has responded to the strike by declaring a state of emergency, banning strikes in the public sector, censoring the press, freezing trade union funds for a time, arresting militants and sacking 40,000 public sector strikers.

The government wants to undermine the unions by weeding out militants, as well as by legal action. On

August 5th, Jayawardne declared that the state of emergency would continue until public sector strikes had been made illegal permanently.

In early August there were many anti-government demonstrations — and widespread arrests of union leaders and politicians opposed to the UNP.

The movement is now on the defensive. But the Sri Lankan workers are still fighting, and need our solidarity in their fight against the austerity programme and repression of the UNP government.

The background to the confrontation is Jayaward-

ne's efforts to attract investment from the IMF and imperialist firms into Sri Lanka, and turn the country into another Singapore. He has attacked the welfare system — traditionally one of the best in Asia — cut wages, and slashed jobs. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka has inflation at about 40% and a massive balance of payments deficit.

When Jayawardne cut the food subsidies introduced by the previous government, a general strike was called for 18th July by the Joint Trade Union Action Committee. This committee consists of the unions affiliated to the Communist Party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (the party of Mrs Bandaranaike, who led the last government), and the Nava Sama

Samaja Party (a left split from the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, linked to the Militant tendency in Britain).

The unions were demanding a wage rise of 300 rupees (about £8) a month, inflation-proofing, and the dropping of charges and victimisations against workers who took part in a previous one-day strike in June.

The strike call was opposed by the unions who support the ruling UNP and which organise the majority of the plantation workers, and also by the Ceylon Mercantile Union, led by Bala Tampoe (linked to the IMG in Britain), which called it 'premature'.

20p MOBILISE FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY



NEVER AGAIN!

Bulk orders: 20 for £2 plus £1 p&p.

Going fortnightly

by JOHN O'MAHONY
[Editorial Board]

WITH THIS issue, *Socialist Organiser* goes onto a regular fortnightly schedule.

A weekly *Socialist Organiser* would go nearer to meeting the needs of the moment, but for now we can only hope to produce it fortnightly — and that with a struggle which we can only win if many more of our readers than are at present actively promoting the paper help us to keep it afloat.

A socialist newspaper must be regulated by the needs and rhythms of the class struggle in its frequency of publication as well as in its contents.

With two million unemployed, the need to organise to stop the Tories has never been greater. And the struggle to win the labour movement for a socialist alternative to Thatcherism now hinges on victory or defeat for the left in the fight against the right-wing Tory agents in the labour movement.

With the hectic efforts being made by our supporters in organising for the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, Women's Fightback, and other campaigns, it became more and more inappropriate to confine ourselves to a monthly schedule. For the last few issues we have been fortnightly in fact, though not in name.

At its August meeting, the *Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory* (SCLV) Steering Committee decided to make arrangements for bringing out a regular fortnightly *Socialist Organiser*.

This will best be done by developing and broadening the base of support of the existing *Socialist Organiser* supporters' groups and starting new ones.

The *Socialist Organiser* groups will have to take direct responsibility for selling, financing, and writing *Socialist*

Organiser, and for providing a democratic framework to run the fortnightly paper. The SCLV Steering Committee decided that the SCLV should become one sponsor rather than the sole publisher of the paper, and called on its supporters to help build *Socialist Organiser* groups — that is, to create a grass roots organisation around the paper.

In the last two years, together with the SCLV, *Socialist*

which fights for a democratic YS, a YS that is a real youth movement and which is now fighting within the YS against all the backwardness of the sectarian Militant tendency.

We think these are serious contributions to the fight for a healthy working class socialist movement and for socialism.

But how much more could we have contributed to the movement if the supporters of the paper had been more seriously organised!

A broad class-struggle revolutionary current now exists around *Socialist Organiser*. Its size should not be exaggerated and *Socialist Organiser* does not claim sole responsibility for creating it. Now we need to go beyond the stage of a loose current and organise the revolutionary Marxists in the labour movement.

We need an organisation to fight in the broad labour movement, trade unions as well as Labour Party, for class struggle socialist politics. It must be an open, democratic, outward-looking, non-sectarian and indeed anti-sectarian, organisation, radically different from the would-be Marxist organisations that exist in and around the labour movement. But an organisation it must be, as distinct from a loose current.

The network of *Socialist Organiser* groups which must be built to sustain the fortnightly will begin to create such an organisation. This is not a 'sectarian' or merely self-serving enterprise by *Socialist Organiser*. For example, had a more organised Marxist tendency existed in the Labour Party and trade unions during the last year, then the Labour Right — the Tories within our ranks — would not after their defeat at the Brighton conference have made the dangerously strong comeback they did make and continue to make. The Marxists would have been much more effective in organising the broad left.

The political platform contained in our *Where We Stand* column is not a scientific programme, but a class-struggle platform. It is an adequate political basis on which to begin to organise the *Socialist Organiser* groups.

The central role of the *Socialist Organiser* groups must be to rally the broadest possible number of serious class struggle militants in the struggle against Thatcher's Tories and against their close relatives on the Right of the Labour Party.

The usually chauvinist and often reactionary pseudo-left ideas of the Tribune and LCC left need to be challenged and disputed by international socialist ideas and attitudes.

We must find a way out of sectarian divisiveness and exclusiveness. We must cultivate a spirit amongst socialists of

collaboration in action and serious, honest dialogue about our differences.

There are probably more Marxists in Britain now than at any time in history. Yet Marxism as an organised political force is weak, and as an effective force in the labour movement, extremely weak.

The vast majority of Marxists are disabled from fighting for their basic politics in the labour movement — that is, in the movement of the working class that actually exists, and as it actually exists, here and now in Britain, by what many thousands of working class militants instinctively understand to be the 'cancer' of sectarianism.

Self-evidently true about the *Socialist Workers' Party*, which excludes itself voluntarily from the political wing of the British workers' movement, this is also true of the major self-proclaimed Marxist group in the Labour Party, Militant, which is a passive propagandist sect incapable of collaboration in action with anyone else. It consistently counterposes its organisation and its ideological formulas to the living class struggle.

Socialist Organiser must fight the 'cancer of sectarianism'. The Labour Parties must be turned outwards to the struggles of tenants, to the picket line, to the battles against the Nazis and racists, and the fight against sexism; trade union militants, presently sectarian Marxists, women fighting for equality, and blacks fighting against racism must be brought into the struggle to make the Labour Party into a real instrument of the working class.

We must fight for unity of the forces of Marxism around a programme of work in both the political and trade-union labour movement. We must organise within the existing labour movement, not outside it and needlessly counterposed to it.



Socialist Organiser no. 1, October 1978

Organiser has:

- Organised a parallel election campaign inside the campaign of the Labour Party,
- Initiated the Women's Fightback movement,
- Initiated the Rank and File Mobilising Committee,
- Taken the lead in organising the physical defence of Brick Lane from the National Front during the Anti Nazi League Carnival in October 1978,
- Helped organise support for strikes and workers' struggles,
- And, with Workers' Action, created a new Young Socialists journal, *Barricade*,

To make *Socialist Organiser* a real campaigning paper that can organise the left in the movement, it needs its own organised activist support — and money.

Local supporters' groups are being established in most major towns to build a real base for the paper.

Supporters are being asked to undertake to sell a minimum of 6 papers an issue and contribute at least £1 a month (20p for unwaged). So, becoming a supporter helps build our circulation and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

If you like *Socialist Organiser*, think it's doing a good job, but realise that it can't possible do enough unless you help, become a card-carrying supporter.

Write to *Socialist Organiser*, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

Socialist Organiser asked VLADIMIR DERER, secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, for his views on the 'gang of 3'.

"IF THERE is one lesson, it is that there can be no compromise with those who share neither the values nor the philosophy of democratic socialism".

Thus said Dr David Owen, William Rodgers, and Shirley Williams in their lengthy 'Open Letter'.

These prominent members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (with Shirley Williams a temporary absentee) assume that their views accurately reflect democratic socialist views and the philosophy of the Labour Party. Is their assumption justified?

The Labour Party's aim is to realise democratic socialist values and philosophy through the abolition of the capitalist system. This is shown in the Labour Party constitution, which clearly defines the Party's object: "to secure for the workers by hand and by brain the full fruit of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange".

However, Owen, Rodgers and Williams place themselves outside this ground, traditionally occupied by the Labour Party.

Who speaks for socialism?

They are proposing to realise Labour's values and philosophy through their commitment to successful management of the mixed economy, i.e. of capitalism. The question they are raising is not a tactical one of how the transition from private to common ownership might best be brought about.

The great majority of Labour Party members may believe that this change cannot be effected overnight but only in a piecemeal manner. This means that it is believed that they may have to put up with the social inequalities generated by the existence of a private sector — albeit a shrinking one — for possibly a considerable period of time.

But Owen, Rodgers and Williams disagree not just about the method of achieving the Party's objectives. Their statement implies a commitment on their part to the indefinite existence of the 'mixed economy'.

They appear to regard a large private sector as something desirable in itself. How else is one to interpret their claim that "the mixed economy is here to stay — and rightly so", or their advice that we should all work for its success, e.g. by pouring public money into the private

sector. ("Finance should be made available on easy terms to new firms starting up...")

To top it all, Owen, Rodgers and Williams, for some obscure reason, seem to link a commitment to the successful management of the mixed economy with a commitment to parliamentary democracy, ideals of freedom, equality and social justice.

Mixed economy thus turns out to be a good thing and not a system which generates class divisions and hampers economic growth.

It is not surprising therefore that Owen, Rodgers and Williams take an extremely rosy view of the 1974-9 Labour Government: "We were proud to be members of the last Labour Government... It made mistakes as all Governments do..."

Nor is it surprising that they are unconcerned that the commitment "to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families" was not honoured, a commitment on which the Labour Government, as the present Parliamentary Labour Party, were elected.

They do not attribute the electoral defeat of 1979 to the performance of the Government, which presided over a

reduction in the living standards of Labour's traditional supporters, reducing many of them to unemployment. Instead they try to pin the blame for the last election onto those members of the Labour Party, including some MEC members, who were not prepared to be silent while the policies adopted by the Labour Cabinet were laying the ground for Labour's loss of credibility.

The rank and file members of the Party have drawn very different conclusions from their experience of the last Labour Government. They are determined to see that future Labour Governments stick to Labour policies.

This is why they are pressing for a number of vital constitutional reforms. Needless to say, Owen, Rodgers and Williams do not find this at all to their liking.

They complain: "For decades, debates on policy and organisation have gone on within our party, and we have managed to find some way of working together, but this time the far left wants no compromise. It is seeking not only to dominate the Party, but to destroy representative democracy itself".

Owen, Rodgers and Williams should know better, for it is well known in the La-

bour Party that 'far left' groups like Militant, IMG etc. had very little to do with either the launching of the campaign for constitutional reform or maintaining its momentum. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, which carries the brunt of the struggle for re-selection, was in fact repeatedly criticised and on occasion actively obstructed by some of these so-called far left groups. The attaching of false labels and silly insinuations about dangers to parliamentary democracy should deceive no one.

What Owen, Rodgers and Williams really object to is that unlike in the past, the debate on this occasion may end with the majority decision in favour of the rank and file. Having lost the argument, Owen, Rodgers and Williams are now resorting to threats.

They seem to be saying that unless the Party goes back on its traditional commitment to socialism and accepts their views instead, they will split it and thus deprive Labour of electoral victory.

All this is to be done, of course, in the name of democratic socialism. Labour Party members will not be misled by that kind of 'argument'. Nor will, in due course, Labour voters.

At last: MPs fight the Tories

by JO THWAITES

AT LONG LAST, Labour MPs have remembered how to filibuster — to talk at length and disrupt the business on the agenda in the House of Commons.

By talking for over 24 hours on the Consolidated Fund Bill — which provides the Government with money to do what it wants in the next year — they knocked the last Tuesday out of the course of Parliamentary business.

The Tories then declared that they would take Tuesday's business on Wednesday along with business already scheduled for Wednesday — namely, the Housing Bill. Again Labour backbenchers threatened to filibuster on Wednesday, and the Tories were forced to concede that extra business would be taken in the autumn and that certain changes would be made to the Housing Bill.

200,000 houses for the elderly will be excluded from the Government's plan to sell council houses. A small victory — but still an indication that the Labour Opposition can make an impact on the Tory stranglehold.

Why haven't they done this before — particularly on the Employment Bill and the steelworkers' strike? The Labour Opposition could have made itself a lot more effective than it has been — if it had committed itself to the tactic of disrupting the Tories' work in Parliament.

Even a minority of Labour left-wingers could make sure not a single Tory measure got through without big delays and a loud outcry — an outcry which would develop and encourage mass action against the Tories outside Parliament. Jo Richardson and others showed how it can be done over the Corrie Bill.

The 'gentlemanly' attitudes rife in the conduct of business in the hallowed chambers of the House of Commons are a bit sick when you're on the receiving end — homeless, on a one-day week, or on the dole queue. They are as useless as the TUC leaders' idea that they can get the Tories to 'change course' by having polite conversation with them.

The Labour Opposition must ditch their 'good manners' and continue the filibustering they started too late last session, into the next Parliamentary session.

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'Partition is the root of the problem'

Martin Flannery, MP for Sheffield Hillsborough, spoke against the renewal of the Emergency Provisions Act in Parliament recently. The debate was held late at night and few MPs bothered to turn up. 21 Labour MPs voted against it. We reprint some of his speech where he draws attention to the growing support for Troops Out in the British Labour movement.

Throughout the Labour movement there is a severe questioning of the policy of the Labour Party on Northern Ireland. A bigger debate is developing and it will be mirrored to some extent at the next Labour Party conference where many things which the leaders of the party have carried out for many years will be questioned.

Northern Ireland, so called — and this place is part of Northern Ireland — was built in a wrong manner and that has caused all this trouble. Northern Ireland has never been governed without special powers since 1922. Indeed the whole of Ireland before that was governed by special powers. Since Northern Ireland became an Orange state and an appendage of Britain, it has had to have draconian powers all the time. When a state has to have powers of this nature, there is something sick, ill and massively wrong with it. A state which has had to be governed continuously by such draconian legislation, ultimately producing continuing slaughter, has something wrong with it. What is wrong is a lack of democracy, no matter how much the Ulster Unionists may say that there is democracy. They equate democracy with a built-in majority. The majority was arranged by them, by force of arms and against the will of the Irish people.

What are the results of this horrifying Act? First, it denies a fair trial by jury and substitutes confessions obtained by whatever means for real evidence. Secondly, the military and the police used suspicion as a substitute for evidence.

We talk about getting rid of the 'sus' laws in this country, but the 'sus' laws exist on a grand scale in Northern Ireland and are substituted for evidence.

Enforced partition is the real and fundamental cause of the entire problem. It will not be solved until we have in view the prospect of a united Ireland.

WHEN WORKERS STRUCK FOR TROOPS OUT

The strike started after a machine-gun went off accidentally in the main corridor. On a normal day the corridor would have been crowded. Even on the Bank Holiday Monday (April 7th) there were two patients and two porters nearby. They escaped injury only by good luck.

But Brian Sullivan insists: 'The strike was not just caused by one bullet. It had built up over a long period'.

The Royal Victoria is the biggest hospital in Northern Ireland, and is the only one capable of providing many sorts of treatment. It is situated in a strongly Republican area of Belfast.

Although other Belfast hospitals — including the one where leading Republican Maire Drumm was assassinated in her hospital bed — are

unguarded, the Royal Victoria had a heavy Army presence.

In the whole hospital complex — a mile by a mile and a quarter — there is only one vehicle entrance and one exit. The children's hospital within the complex has no vehicle entrance at all.

Two Army look-out towers were built in the hospital complex — though Brian Sullivan points out that very little of the hospital can be seen from the towers, and suspects that their real purpose is surveillance of the surrounding Falls district.

The SAS were brought into the hospital. Plain clothes Army men were behind the desk of the casualty unit, noting down names and addresses. Before the April incident, four bullets had gone off through the ceiling of the

intensive care unit.

But after the machine-gun went off, 39 domestics refused to work in Army-occupied areas. They were suspended, and the NUPE branch struck.

The branch demanded the right to negotiate over security at the hospital. But the NUPE full-time officer, John Coulthard, insisted that only he could negotiate on security. He denounced it as 'a political sectarian strike'.

But Brian Sullivan points out: 'The seconder of the strike motion was from a strong Loyalist area. Both Catholics and Protestants were on the picket lines'.

Partly thanks to the efforts of the union full-timers — and Ian Paisley and Gerry Fitt both denouncing the strike as a Republican conspiracy — the other unions (CoHSE,

BRIAN SULLIVAN is the NUPE branch secretary at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. In April this year he led a strike there to demand that British Army patrols be removed from the hospital.

During August Brian Sullivan visited Britain and spoke at several meetings organised by Workers' Action and Barricade. He called for the British labour movement to start campaigning actively against repression in Ireland.

Socialist Organiser spoke to Brian Sullivan about the strike, about the trade unionists' campaign on H-Block, and about his ideas on the way forward in Ireland.

GMWU, NIPSA etc.) failed to support NUPE. 'So we were losing'. The strikers went back after a week.

But: 'Without any formal discussions having taken place, the Army have removed themselves. We've had plain-clothes police instead.'

'The night before the regiment went, they busted down my door. They were out of luck — I was at a conference in France. But as the police said when they inspected the damage: 'This was your going-away present'.

'I don't know whether the strike actually did it or not. I think it probably did.'

'We lost 160 members. The next week I gained 52 from one unit, then again another 30 from another unit. Now we've started to have people wanting back who

left the union...

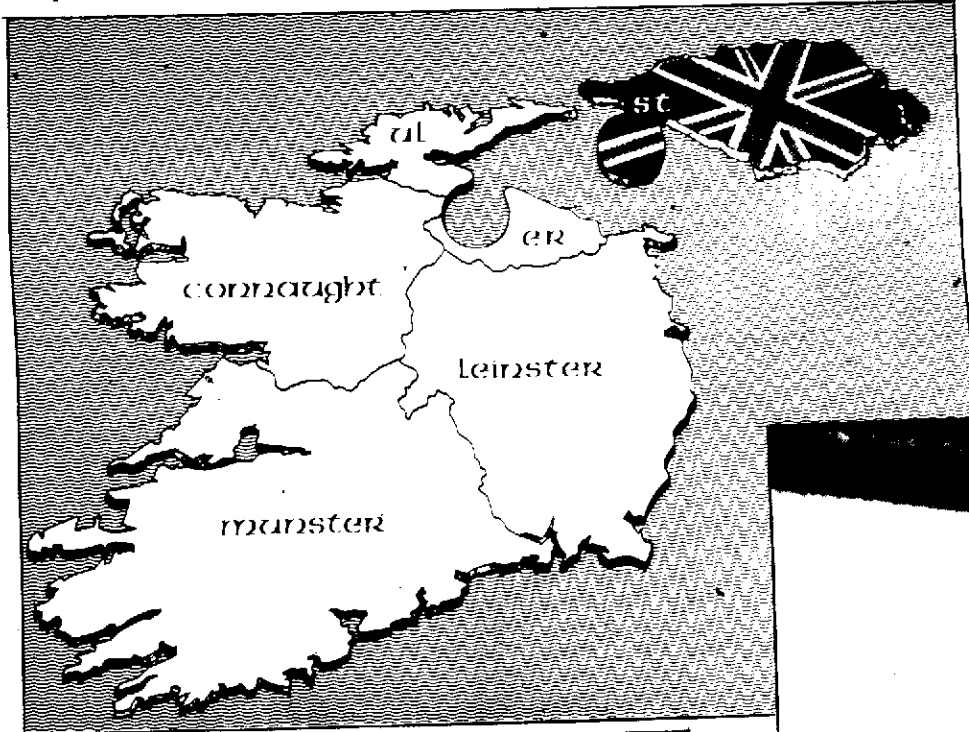
'The union as a whole has stood well. The 39 ladies were all reinstated. We didn't have any disciplinary charges against our members.'

That's no thanks to the full-time officer.

'They even called for the suspension of myself. The branch said, very clearly: That's fine. The full-time officer has called for the secretary's suspension. That means he has just asked for 1350 members to suspend themselves!'

And: 'We proved one thing that really mattered: that there was unity and there was strength'.

Brian Sullivan believes that working-class unity is still very far from being achieved in Northern Ireland. But the strike did show briefly what workers' unity can do.



A new Ireland?

ON H-BLOCK, Brian Sullivan said, 'We're talking about basic humanitarian issues that need to be resolved because they have only caused a complete political vacuum in the North of Ireland.'

'If these men were got off the blanket, we would see a different Ireland tomorrow. It would leave very little for the struggle to go on with. Times have definitely changed. No matter what the Unionists think about having their own independent government again, there's no chance of that happening.'

But surely direct rule is no answer either?

'At the moment we're better off with direct rule, because we're not dominated by one sector of the community. It's not desirable to have direct rule, but what one sees as a future

solution is perhaps a reorganisation of district councils. That being done on a PR system could prove to be a useful project.'

But there is still a lot of sectarian discrimination. Restoring power to district councils would just mean more scope for discrimination.

'That depends. It depends on what higher government does. We would be emphasising the need to re-draw the boundaries.'

'The unfairness was caused by a Unionist government drawing up Unionist boundaries to get Unionists elected. The worst example was the city of Derry. The population was two-thirds Catholic and in Parliament they had one nationalist seat. The rest were all Unionist.'

For Socialist Organiser, our view is that all attempts

to reorganise Northern Ireland will either be a return to Unionist sectarian domination or 'power-sharing' schemes which will meet huge opposition from the Unionists and anyway will not solve much. The only way out is to break the framework of Northern Ireland, end the Border, and have a united Ireland.

'If you talk in terms of breaking the framework of the Border, then you must look to the policy of having four provisional governments and one central power — whether it is situated in Dublin or in Newry or rebuilt right in the middle of where the Border is now. I would be in favour of that.'



What about the relevance of socialist policies in winning the Protestant working class away from Unionism?

'What have we got to lose? At present we're losing everything.'

'We're in a poverty situation. Most people are in debt. Let's not fool ourselves that it's an all-Republican debt problem. The working-class Protestant is just as poor as the working class Catholic in the Republican areas.'

'If only the people of Northern Ireland would open their eyes and see that the people they put into power are people who march along with the Tories. They've been voting for

people who don't give two fiddlers whether they live or die. All they're interested in is power, and power is their God.'

'To this day, you have the fire and brimstone preached on the 12th July marches, the hatred and the incitement against the Catholic minority. They feel that's the way to run a country — and God help the rest of the people in that country.'

'But those days are gone and they've got to realise that Protestants will begin to wake up and see that all the Churches in the world and all the prayers and all the hymns that they've sung will never pull it back together again.'

SOCIALIST ORGANISER 5

The Provisional Sinn Fein paper **An Phoblacht/Republican News** supported the strike and denounced the witch hunt by trade union leaders and reactionary politicians.

AS SOON AS the strike began, Coulthard [the NUPE full-timer] launched a vicious smear campaign against strike leader Brian Sullivan alleging that the strike had 'political' and 'sectarian' motivation. Rumours were started that Sullivan was a leading member of the IRA. This was an attempt to scare off the Protestant workers who had also voted for the removal of the Brits.

A Protestant woman on her way to picket was stopped by loyalists on the Shankill Road and told to get Sullivan's home address and that of another strike leader. The campaign continued and the allegation that the strike was 'Provo orchestrated' reached hysterical proportions with Paisley raising the issue in Westminster and Gerry Fitt subsequently backing up the theory.

A NUPE shop steward was attacked outside his home in the Lower Falls, kicked to the ground and received facial injuries from, it is alleged, two Sticky ['Official'] Republican Clubs members.

Sullivan was simply calling for the 'demilitarisation' of the hospital, though his substitute for the soldiers — RUC patrols — is just as intolerable to the Republican people of the Falls area and there is obviously no guarantee that RUC guns would not shoot hospital workers.

While Sullivan denies Coulthard's allegation of being politically motivated, the same can hardly be said of Coulthard. Last year he was involved in attempting to launch a six-county [Northern Ireland] political party with Ulster Defence Association leader Glen Barr and his ally, Paddy Devlin.

Another trade union leader who ordered NUPE members back to work was Terry Carlin (Chairperson, Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions) who sits on the RUC Police Authority which has covered up torture and repression.

The pickets — Protestants and Catholics — were painted as 'IRA Communists' by loyalist MP Rev. Robert Bradford, who said they were out to set up a 'People's Hospital'!

SOME 400 men in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh and women in Armagh Jail have been on protest for up to four years, demanding political status.

These are men and women jailed — mostly by special no-jury 'Diplock' courts, on the basis of 'confessions' forced out of them in the notorious interrogation centres like Castlereagh — because of their part in the bitter struggle for Irish freedom. But since March 1976 the British government has denied them political status and attempted to brand them as common criminals.

The prisoners refused to wear prison uniform. As a result they had only blankets to cover themselves. The prison warders harassed the prisoners on the way to wash or use the toilets, refused them permission, or kicked over chamber pots. So in March 1978 the prisoners stepped up their protest to 'no wash, no slop out'.

The Armagh women were allowed to wear their own clothes, like all other women in British jails. But as from this February, harassment by warders has forced them, too, into a similar 'dirty

OPEN LETTER TO ARTHUR SCARGILL

protest'.

The prisoners get no remission; hardly any parcels or letters; only ½ hour visit a month; no newspapers, radio or TV; no books, magazines, or educational facilities; no cell furniture; no exercise or fresh air; and no medical treatment. They are continually harassed, kicked about, and half-starved.

One of them wrote to Yorkshire miners' leader Arthur Scargill appealing for solidarity.

I'd like if possible in this letter to obtain your help and through you the help of the trade union movement, in ending the suffering of 360 men on the blanket in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh.

I don't know how much

you have heard about our 'no wash, no slop out' protest, but believe me the conditions here are very bad. I only need to look about my cell to witness the grim reality of it all.

The walls filthy with excreta, the floors littered with old inedible food, no furniture in these cells. We sleep on damp pieces of sponge on the floor.

The cells are poorly lit, the dehumanising grill bars and frosted perspex box covers the window opening, allowing in a reduced amount of light and blocking the view out.

We're kept in these small cells, two men to each, 24 hours a day. We get no exercise, no papers, parcels,



books, magazines, shop, TV, radio. Neither do we get wearing our own clothes or associating with other prisoners.

Our life here is just one

terrible session of deprivations. Though not alone through these brutalities do we suffer the 'brutality' of losing every conceivable right. We must also face the actual brutality of a beating by the warders...

Even our health is used as a weapon against us. We are denied medical treatment by the doctor, unless we first wash and take a bath, giving up our protest... As a result many men and now suffering from a wide range of problems, toothaches, worms, ulcers, ingrown toe-nails etc.

Daily our conditions grow worse, and daily people continue to suffer. Can you afford to sit back and say nothing while PoWs suffer?

We firmly believe ourselves to be prisoners of war, and we demand to be treated as such. Even if you don't agree with our aims or objects, you must at least, on humanitarian grounds, speak out about the injustices of the H-Blocks.

As a fellow trade unionist, I feel sure that you will not ignore our plight. Thank you for your time and interest.

EUGENE McCORMICK, H5

POLICE ARREST IRELAND ACTIVISTS

CHARGES UNDER the Prevention of Terrorism Act against two members of the Revolutionary Communist Group have now been dropped.

Mike Duffield and Kirstin Crosbie were originally arrested on August 9 and charged with 'soliciting and inviting financial and other support for a proscribed organisation'.

This witch-hunt allegation was based on the fact that the two RCG militants were selling the paper 'Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism', and were wearing 'Hands off Ireland' badges.

Others were arrested selling the same paper at the Glasgow Celtic ground a week later. Nearly 20 other supporters of the RCG's 'Hands off Ireland' campaign have been arrested in recent months.

The campaign for the release of all those arrested should be supported by all socialists. For more information, write to: RCG, 49 Railton Road, London SE24.



Irish day-school organised

EDINBURGH Central Labour Party recently passed this resolution:

"There is a need for more political education in the Labour Party on the question of Ireland and a day school should only be seen as a beginning, as many more areas need to be discussed."

The question of Ireland has been distorted by the press and the media and unfortunately all too often forgotten or ignored by the labour movement.

To win the argument in Edinburgh Central Labour Party to call a labour movement day school on Ireland was not easy.

This has been a debate in our Labour Party for the last two years. When the proposal for a day school was originally put forward, it was defeated.

Many comrades were however very angry at the way the vote was won by those hostile to any discussion on the Irish question.

The only argument they could come up with was — "We can't afford it." This argument was shown to be quite false by a working party which was later set up to organise the event.

The working party of ward activists, got sponsorship for the day school from local

councillors and from Edinburgh Central's MP, Robin Cook.

The party drew up a proposed agenda for the Day School and at our GMC's meeting last month it was passed.

The school will give comrades who support *Socialist Organiser's* policy on Ireland a forum to put that policy forward and move for action as well as more discussion.

The day school will be some time in November.

Information: c/o Working Group on Ireland, William Graeham Memorial Hall, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh.

TRADE UNIONISTS AGAINST H-BLOCK

BRIAN SULLIVAN told *Socialist Organiser* about the trade unionists' campaign on 'H-Block' in Northern Ireland.

A group of trade unionists who had joined the National H-Blocks Committee got together. They saw that the trade union movement had played no role over H-Block, and yet they felt surely there must be trade unionists in those H-Blocks.

I was invited, together with Kevin O'Connell of the NEETU, to address a meeting.

At that first meeting we had 46 trade union activists, which is a good turn-out, especially in the centre of Belfast. Our next meeting, at Queens University had 98 people.

Support in the North has gone through the

following unions, from the grass roots: the EETPU, the AUEW, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, NUPE, CoHSE, the Amalgamated T&GWU. We've had a reasonable influx from the grass roots — but within the leadership you may as well knock your head against a brick wall.

While we support the prisoners' five demands — political status, the right to wear their own garb, the right to receive food parcels, the right to have letters, education facilities, reading material etc. — we stated that we would deal with the trade unionists in H-Block as a starting point. We wanted to see if 'educational status' would be a way

forward to bring the prisoners off the blanket.

So far we have managed to identify 53 trade unionists on the blanket in H-Block.

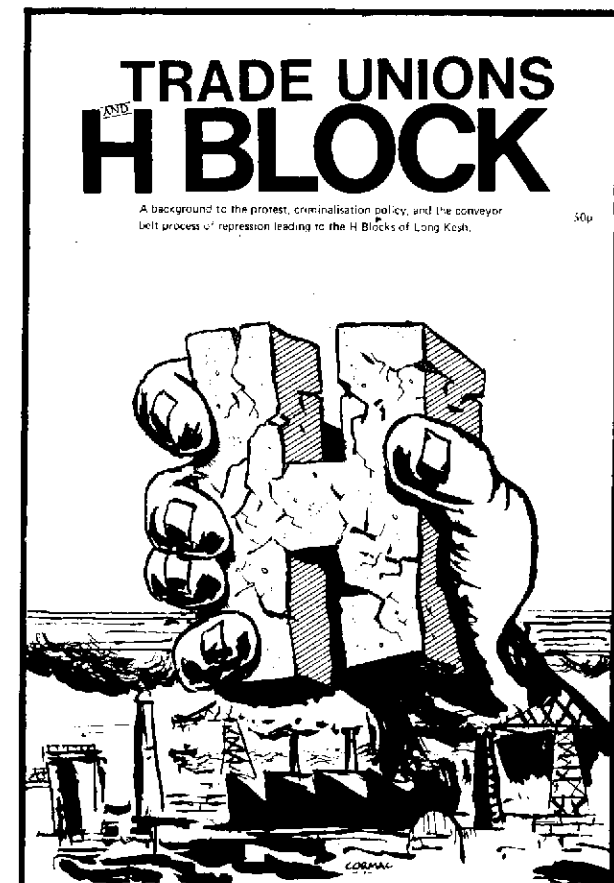
The Irish Congress of Trade Unions conference in Belfast we made an very impressive stand. Our voice has reached as far as Limerick and as far as Waterford.

Waterford Trades Council passed a motion demanding a trade union investigation and the immediate demands of the prisoners to be met. In Limerick they had something on similar lines but were demanding an inquiry rather than the demands to be met.

But there has been no support from the full-time officials. Terry Carlin,

Northern Ireland Officer of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, tried to stop the first meeting, claiming it was a sectarian political manoeuvre. Carlin, as Brian Sullivan points out, serves on the Northern Ireland Police Authority — and generally the union full-timers are most concerned to get places on Industrial Tribunals or Development Authorities or the Milk Marketing Board or the Honours List, rather than doing anything for their members.

The union full-timers' 'Better Life for All Campaign' 'doesn't exist and never existed'. No-one could disagree with its six points — but it just ignored sectarianism, did nothing, and served only as a vehicle for careerists.



New pamphlet available from 'Trade Union sub-committee, 52 Broadway, Belfast 12.



Solidarity with the workers!

by
VLADIMIR DERER

THE POLISH crisis is developing so fast that any comment on immediate events written for a weekly, let alone a fortnightly, is bound to be out of date by the time it appears in print. However, a number of more permanent features have emerged.

It has become clear that the present crisis is the most important one since 1956 when the old Stalinist gang was toppled. Then the crisis of the Polish puppet regime was triggered off by an event which occurred outside Poland and independently of Polish problems — the Khrushchev partial denunciation of the Stalinist terror at the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

In 1980 the crisis has arisen primarily out of domestic causes and in fact has developed against the background of a relatively stable regime. In Poland, unlike in post-1956 Hungary and post-1968 Czechoslovakia, the neo-Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution never travelled the full circle.

Riots

Even though by 1970 the conquests of the "Polish October" had been substantially eroded, after the bloody riots of that year in the Baltic ports when 200 workers were shot down by the Security forces and particularly after the strikes of 1976, the regime of Edward Gierek became mild, at least in comparison with other "socialist" East European countries.

Unofficial manifestation of oppositional currents was tolerated, so that the human rights activists of KOR (originally the Workers' Defence Committee), who campaigned against the savage sentences passed on many strikers of 1976, were on the whole able to operate without much interference. In recent months their underground fortnightly 'Robotnik' (The Worker) sold as many as 45,000 copies, a situation unimaginable in any of the other East European countries, let alone the Soviet Union.

Gierek's 'liberalism' therefore generated a climate of opinion in which people were no longer afraid of the state's repressive apparatus. Once it was realised that oppositional activity involves only relatively few risks, participation in such activities grew in scale. This, as well as the workers' hard-won experience, is reflected in the substantially different character of the present strike movement when we compare it with its 1970 and 1976 predecessors.

Media

Like on the two previous occasions, the strike wave was triggered off by an attempt on the part of the Polish government to correct the existing imbalance in the Polish economy by making the working class pay for the governmental bureaucratic mismanagement. But unlike in 1970 and 1976, the 1980 strike movement was, because of the relative freedom of communication, no longer confined to localised revolts. It was well organised and soon assumed a national character.

It was just this that the Polish government was anxious to prevent. They went to considerable trouble to keep the strike movement in each locality isolated by acceding readily to the strikers' economic demands. This tactic failed when it was tried on the shipyard workers in the Baltic ports. Here the shipyard workers have once more established themselves as the vanguard of the strike movement. Having struck on the 12th August, they were quickly offered economic concessions. On the 14th August the workers of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, aware of the crucial importance for the whole of the working class in their region, refused the offer. They were not prepared to let the other workers down, whose bargaining position was less favourable. Instead they stayed out on a sympathy strike, formed an inter-factory committee representing the great majority of shipyards and factories in the area and insisted that all

negotiations should be conducted by that committee. The co-ordination of the strikers' efforts had another important result. Political demands, such as the demand for the right to form a trade union free from state domination or the demand for the abolition of press censorship, could no longer be brushed aside by the government negotiators as happened when these demands were raised on a local level.

Aware that with the establishment of the inter-factory committee the strikers were breaking entirely new ground, the government mounted an intensive propaganda campaign against the committee, trying to discredit it by methods well known both East and West. They declared that the Committee was infiltrated by anti-socialist elements. The media unleashed a propaganda barrage painting a horrific picture of food shortages resulting from strikes. Finally hardly disguised references were made to the inevitability of a Russian military intervention if the strikes are allowed to continue.

But the strikers stood firm. As a result support for the Committee increased and by Saturday 23rd August had more than 380,000 workers behind them. Within a week of the formation of the Committee, the government gave in and recognised it as the negotiating body. This news was greeted by the strikers as a major victory, as was the news of the elimination from the Gierek government of some of the 'hardliners'. Nevertheless these concessions failed to satisfy the workers. Their past experience taught them not to rely on governmental promises and not to be misled by cosmetic changes.

Anthem

The final outcome of the present struggles is difficult to predict. It will depend on the extent to which the Polish government are prepared to be flexible. Should the

majority of the upper echelons of the CP resist the reforms demanded by the workers, the present confrontation may soon assume the forms reminiscent of 1956 in Hungary. Should they, on the contrary, yield to the popular demand for change, it will very much depend on how much the Soviet bureaucracy is prepared to tolerate. However, the dangers of a Soviet intervention are being deliberately exaggerated by the conservative elements in the Polish CP, for it is their power and privileges which are primarily under threat.

Unlike in 1970 and 1976 the present popular movement has outwardly a more 'nationalistic' character. Polish national flags are flying at the entrance to the Lenin Shipyard and the workers' delegates frequently break off their deliberations to sing the Polish national anthem. This however is not an indication that bourgeois counter-revolutionary elements have taken over, but a sign that Polish workers are acutely aware of the fact that their freedom of choice is severely limited by the ever-present threat of foreign intervention.

Support

The events in Poland should disperse the widespread illusions about the nature of the "Soviet" and East European regimes. Because they have had no direct experience of them, many dedicated British socialists still regard these regimes as in some way the rightful heirs of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The present struggle of the Polish workers clearly shows that under these 'socialist' regimes the working class has to fight for its interests every inch of the way. It shows that in Poland both class and national oppression are a reality. If the cause of socialism is not to be completely discredited in Eastern Europe, British socialists must give their unconditional support to the Polish working class in its present difficult struggle.

How the

On the 14th of August, 17,000 workers at the Lenin shipyards came out on strike. In Gdansk, the Baltic port, the lifeline of Poland's sea link with the West, the workers who in 1970 had toppled Gomulka from power, were once again on the move. Within 48 hours another 30,000 workers in surrounding factories had also struck in support. Elmor, Klimo, Opakomet, Techmet, many other factories too numerous to mention, were at a standstill.

• "Reinstate Anna" — a woman crane driver at Lenin shipyards, a trade union representative who had just been sacked by managers for her activities, which stretch back to the strike committees of the early and mid-1970's.

• "Get rid of the national trade union bosses."

• "Free" trade unions democratically elected by the workers locally and nationally."

• "A monument to honour the 200 strikers shot down in 1970 by the militia."

• "Wage rises of 2,000 zlotys a month"

• "The price of meat to be pegged at its pre-July 1st price."

• "The radio and television to broadcast the workers' demands."

These were the slogans of the Lenin shipyard workers.

Friday morning the 15th. Public transport at a standstill. 8,000 workers at the 'Paris Commune' shipyards in Gdynia, just outside Gdansk, came out. Representatives of the individual

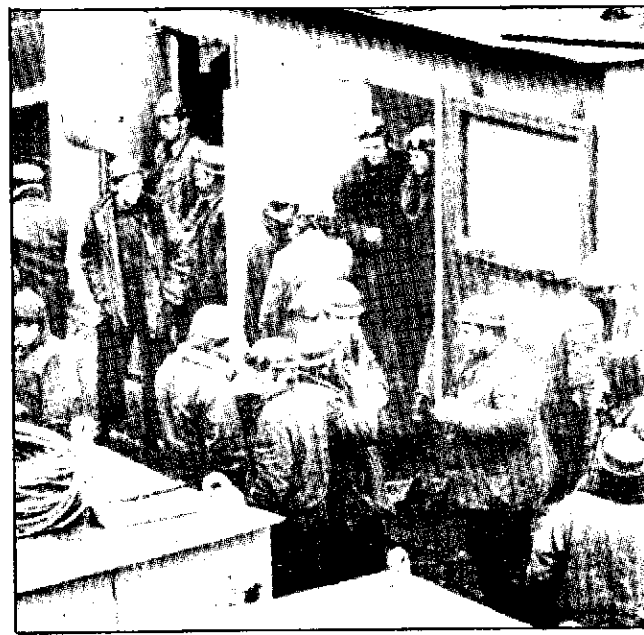
strike committees which were automatically thrown up by the strikes, hurry to the Lenin shipyard.

Friday night the negotiations with the management break down. 110 delegates elected by 17,000 workers refuse the management's compromise offer of 1,200 zlotys.

Saturday morning the negotiations start again. Outside the hall thousands of workers are shouting "2,000, 2,000" and "Walesa, Walesa" — the name of the acknowledged strike leader, just reinstated by management along with Anna Walentynowicz. He had been sacked in 1976 after the strike events and again in January of this year for his involvement in KOR.

11 o'clock Saturday morning: agreement is reached. Wage rises of 1,500 and written guarantees that no worker will be persecuted for involvement in the strike. Walesa emerges from the hall. Thousands of workers don't want any compromise. All the demands must be met. Nevertheless he is given a hero's welcome, tossed in the air by his mates, shouting "long may he live to be a hundred".

It looks as though the strike movement in the Lenin shipyards is over. So sure are the management and the government that Wojciechowski, head of the state news agency PAP calls an interview with foreign correspondents to assure them that the crisis is past and that work will resume



The breakdown

THE PRESENT strike movement in Poland is the third to rock the country in a decade.

The militancy and the freedom of manoeuvre which the Polish workers have managed to acquire through their struggles in 1970-1 and 1976 is unprecedented anywhere else in Stalinist East Europe. Instead of the strikes being immediately suppressed by the intervention of the police or (as in the USSR) by the army, the Polish bureaucracy is forced to negotiate with striking workers.

The comparative 'liberalism' of the Polish regime is the product of a stalemate between the bureau-

cracy and the working class throughout the 1970s, which has allowed dissident Polish workers and intellectuals to establish an extensive network of local committees linked to the workplaces and co-ordinated nationally by the dissident trade union paper Robotnik (The Worker). The Catholic Church's ability to maintain some independence from the bureaucracy has also loosened up the regime.

Fear

The latest strikes seem to show that the Polish work-

ers are not as normal as they appear. He is to be appointed.

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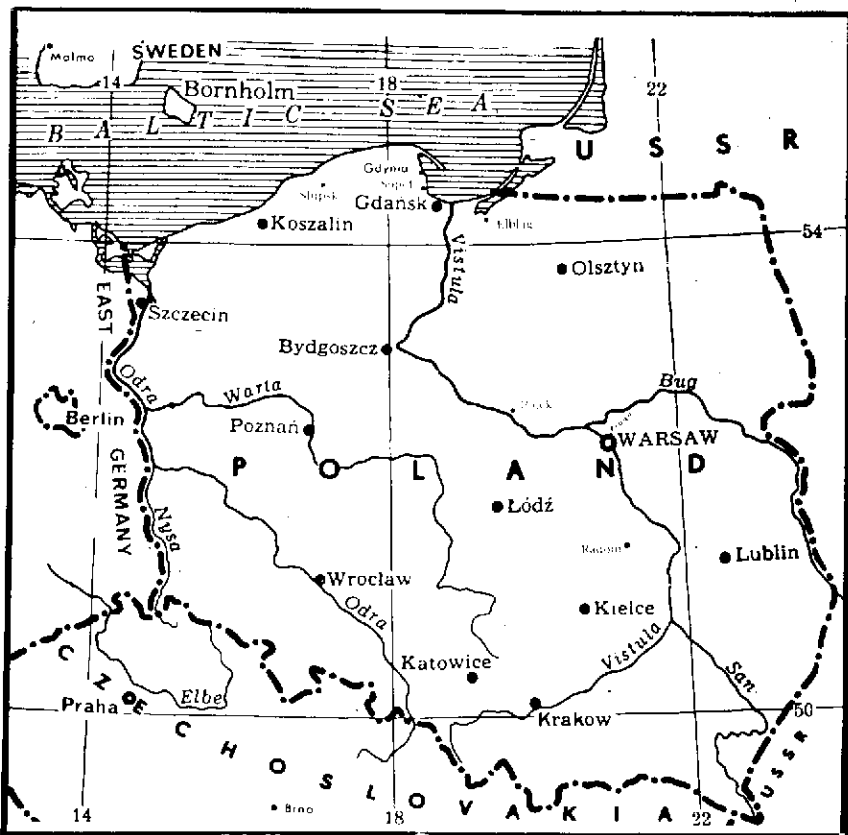
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Brezhnev, and return to Warsaw at once.

This rumbustious little man, forever reminding the Polish workers of his own humble origins as a coal miner, first in Belgium and later in the Silesian coal fields of Southern Poland, had dealt with a similarly grave situation in January 1971. It was he who took over the reins of power after Gomulka's fall.

Then, in an unprecedented (for a Stalinist leader) series of meetings with striking workers in the Baltic ports, he managed to get them to go back to work. By talking tough, he asked for a mandate, for the government to prove itself, and he got it:—
"So I am talking to you the way I spoke to my miner friends in Silesia. I say to you: help us! Help me! You cannot doubt my goodwill... As to your demands, we will do our utmost. The Party will be unmoved; we will get rid of the incompetents... Accept it, help us, and on our side, we will do everything we can to ameliorate this tragic situation. That is your duty."

The workers, then, accepted their 'duty'. Surely they would do so again. Yet Gierk, that Monday night on the television, despite all his gravity and promises, was like an anachronism. In the few weeks that he was in

the Soviet Union, Poland not only continued to regard him cynically, but had totally slipped away from him.

His attempt to divide the growing opposition movement between the 'just' wage demands of the workers and their frustration with the bureaucracy and the sinister 'anti-socialist' designs of the dissidents around KOR, was a fiasco.

Threats

Nor did he offer anything concrete.

The meat rises would still remain, absolutely no question of free trade unions and certainly no end to censorship. There were certain limits that 'socialist' Poland could not go beyond, without provoking the 'disquiet of its friends'. Once again no real concessions, only promises and dark threats of Soviet invasion.

As for the MKS, the government acted as though it did not exist. Negotiations at individual plant level was as far as it would go.

The workers' response hardened. By Tuesday strikes multiply with a dizzying speed. By now over 200 plants were on strike. In Szczecin near the East German border, 30,000 workers in 20 factories had themselves created an inter-plant strike committee and

issued a series of 37 demands.

Steelworkers in Nowa Huta near the Southern city of Cracow had come out and strike committees were being formed in the Silesian coalfields. This last event is particularly worrying to Gierk himself. Silesia is his traditional political base and the miners there are the highest paid workers in the country. During the earlier strike movements they had played no role.

Every day the strikes increased. By Wednesday, in Gdansk alone, 260 factories grouping 120,000 workers were on strike. The MKS was growing daily stronger. 500 delegates were by now represented in it, the majority in their late teens or early twenties. All of them had torn up their official union cards, just to underline their hatred of state unions. As an added rebuff to Gierk and the bureaucracy the workers were categorically refusing to negotiate on a plant by plant basis, correctly viewing this as an attempt by the party and the government to split their forces.

Tadeusz Pyka, the deputy Prime Minister, and his official entourage of trouble-shooters, which included Jablonski, the President of the Polish Republic, and Stanislaw Kania, Central Committee secretary in

charge of the army and security forces, were hardly making any progress with the Gdansk strikers.

In negotiations with sections of the MKS, which bothered to go and meet them, they would offer concessions and perks. The workers would accept but when Pyka asked them about a return to work the following morning, the answer was always the same — "that issue would have to be discussed by the rank and file." The government's rage could only just be contained.

In Szczecin, the second largest port, over 40 factories and all five of the shipyards were on strike. Transport in the city was at a standstill. The Prime Minister Babiuch and his delegation were in Gdansk making no progress in their mission to break the strike.

Meanwhile strikes were breaking out in other smaller cities. In Kosciierzynia, Lembork and Ustka. In the city of Elbag on the Baltic, eight factories formed their own MKS.

A comical incident at Gdansk shows how the bureaucracy's authority is crumbling. As part of the regime's psychological pressure to force the strikers back to work, it dropped thousands of leaflets over the shipyards, warning the strikers of the untold damage they were inflicting on the Polish economy.

The workers who printed the leaflets have now come out on strike.

The discipline of the Gdansk workers is exemplary. There are 24 hour pickets on the gates of the Lenin shipyards, by now covered with flowers sent from every corner of Poland.

Cross

Workers everywhere know about their action, despite the government's attempts to isolate Gdansk from Poland and the world on the night of the 15th when it cut all communications with the Baltic ports. The pickets search everyone entering the yard. Bottles of vodka are gently confiscated and their contents thoroughly emptied. They cannot afford any unnecessary excuse to allow the authorities to intervene.

Nearby a cross erected in honour of fellow workers,

the victims of the government's bloody intervention in December 1970.

Inside the shipyard the workers are holding continuous meetings and discussions. Working class democracy in action, a million miles removed from the dull yesmanship of previous official trade union meetings and assemblies.

Yet in Warsaw, Jan Szydlak, head of the state unions, is still furiously maintaining that "the authorities have no intention of transferring power to anyone else — nor of sharing it with anyone."

Meanwhile the television and the radio are keeping up a constant barrage of propaganda against the Baltic port workers. Pictures of idle sea ports, of the 63 stranded ships waiting for oil, of goods waiting for export, losses of millions of dollars a day, losses the Polish economy, on the verge of collapse, cannot afford.

Yet these pious wallings on the ills of Poland do not cut much ice with the rest of Poland. After all, who are the ones responsible for the impasse, the workers or the bosses? As for the rotting fruit, it was touch and go whether you could get to the top of the queue to buy some anyway.

The continual spread of strikes and the threat of strike action is the best gauge of the effectiveness of the government's propaganda.

Its arrest of the dissidents involved in the Self-Defence Committee (KOR/KSS), especially the editors of the illegal paper 'Robotnik', whose sales in recent weeks have climbed to tens of thousands, hardens the situation even further.

The arrest on Wednesday night 20th August of 14 KOR members, amongst them Jacek Kuron, is followed the next night with the further arrest of 20 more KOR activists in Warsaw.

At the same time the government's lack of progress in the negotiations at Gdansk leads to the sacking of Tadeusz Pyka, head of the negotiating team and vice-prime minister and his replacement by Jagielski.

By Monday the 25th of August, the Inter-Factory strike committee grouped over 400 factories, representing hundreds of thou-

sands of workers in Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot.

With the strikes spreading to other towns as well as breaking out again in regions which had been hit in the previous weeks, the government is forced to make concessions.

Most of them are totally cosmetic. They involve a large-scale reshuffle within the ranks of the party leadership. After the sacking of Tadeusz Pyka, the vice-prime minister, the Prime Minister Babiuch, Szydlak, the head of the state unions, Tadeusz Wraszczyk, head of the planning commission, and Jerzy Lukaszewicz, the chief of propaganda policy, are sacrificed to the anger of the working class too.

Yet the new front-row henchmen are hardly likely to win the sympathy or trust of Polish workers.

Ozolski, Kisiel, Krzak and Grabowski, old time hacks who have been in and out of favour over the last ten years, have been chosen to assure Western bankers and the hardliners in the Party and Moscow that any reforms forced on the government will not go very far.

In the meantime, Josef Pinkowski, the new Prime Minister, has been instructed to begin negotiations directly with the Inter-Factory Strike Committee.

Promises have been given that a special committee of 'experts' will be set up to examine the demand for free trade unions independent of the state and the party.

Yet the bureaucracy knows perfectly well that any temporary concession it may make on this most central of workers' demands will have to be undermined and taken back very quickly.

If it should ever concede this, then the Polish workers will fight to the end to preserve this hard-gained right from any attempts at sabotage, undermining and repression that the bureaucracy will inevitably be forced to carry out.

An inevitability dictated by the irreconcilable differences between genuine working class democracy and the maintenance of corrupt, privilege-ridden, bureaucratic misrule.

by
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mittees elected by mass meetings and representing the workers of all the different sections of a particular factory or branch.

The solidarity between the community at large and the striking workers of a particular factory is much firmer. This results from the much more acute nature of the current economic crisis.

After a decade, the promises of the Government that the living standards of Polish workers would dramatically improve and that the state would be more responsive to the needs of the workers have been shown to be a charade.

The workers' demands

1. Free trade unions — independent of the Party and the managers, in accordance with convention 87 of the ILO, ratified by Poland.
2. Guarantee of the right to strike and the safety of strikers and all those who help them.
3. The right of free expression, publication and printing as guaranteed in the Constitution. The cessation of all repression against independent publications and access to the media for representatives of all Churches.
4. Re-establishment of all rights for those dismissed after the strikes of 1970 and 1976, and the rights of students excluded from higher education because of their political views. Freedom for all political prisoners, in particular E. Zdrozinski, J.M. Kozlowski, and an end to all repression on grounds

- of beliefs.
5. The mass media to inform the country about the creation of strike committees and united strike committees, and to publish their demands.
6. Concrete actions to be taken with of ending the crisis. For example, publishing of all information to do with Poland's socio-economic situation. The opportunity must be allowed to all social strata and groups to participate in discussions on a programme of reforms.
7. Payment of strikers for the holiday period.
8. 2,000 zlotys a month increase on the basic wage for every worker, to compensate for the increased cost of meat.
9. A sliding scale of wages.
10. The domestic market to be fully supplied with foodstuffs and exports of the surplus to be limited.
11. The introduction of a

- card rationing system for meat until the market is stabilised.
12. The suppression of 'commercial' prices and the sale of goods for foreign currency in the domestic market.
13. The appointment of managers solely on the basis of ability and not of Party membership. Eradication of the privileges of the police, the secret police, and the Party apparatus by giving them family allocations equal to those of the workers' families and by the elimination of the system of special shops for the bureaucracy.
14. The right to retire after 35 years of work; at 50 years of age for women and at 55 for men.
15. Elimination of any differences between the two systems of retirement and pen-

- sions by levelling-up.
16. Improvement of working conditions, medical services, and the other services that workers need.
17. The creation of creche facilities and nurseries in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of working mothers.
18. The extension of the maternity leave period to three years, with pay.
19. The shortening of the waiting period to be allotted a house.
20. Increase from 40 to 100 zlotys in the allowance for moving house.
21. Compensation for those factories working continuously with no free Saturdays, by lengthening of the annual holiday period or by the allocation of special public holidays.

IT HAS become apparent that the crisis in local government finance will be upon us in the next few months. Many Labour Party activists had anticipated that it would not come until Spring '81 — when the rates for the next financial year are being set.

Each November, the Government of the day makes what is called the rate support top-up grant — the second instalment of the central exchequer's share of the cost of local services. This would normally also cover the cost of local government annual salary awards, including the comparability payments won earlier this year, and also an allowance for the high level of interest rates.

Heseltine is breaking with this bi-partisan tradition and trying to force Councils to finance this additional expenditure by making more cuts. On top of this,

Ted Knight explained how he sees the Conference. "The fight against the government has got to be made this financial year. It can't wait. If we wait, then the odds will be stacked well against the Labour Councils and the unions. Manchester has conceded, and other councils are in extreme difficulty. It's impossible, unless there's money, to continue paying out money — that's just not a practical proposition. Many councils will be in that position rapidly. We must move quickly; councils must take a 'no cuts' stand, but there's no way it can be maintained indefinitely."

He explained Lambeth's cash problem — the councils have got no extra money from central government to cover council workers' pay rises. Interest rates are still high, and prices are rising fast. He said that "the overall result is that we could be £6 million in the red this year", — and with Heseltine's plans to penalise 'overspending' councils, rate rises are no answer. "The rates will have to be raised so high, that it becomes not practical".

■ ■ What kind of response should be offered?
□ □ TK We must argue for increased central government grant. Thatcher and Heseltine have rejected the arguments for this. So the objective now of the Labour movement must be to force a change in government policy — or, of course, if that isn't possible, to force the government out.

■ ■ How?
□ □ TK We have to bring together the public sector trade unions and local councils, and the Labour movement generally, and say that unless a stand is made, and confrontation with the government in one form or another takes place, then what faces TUs and Labour councils is a reduction in jobs and services.

If the conference agrees on a strategy which members of the trade unions, labour councils and labour parties will go back to their organisations to right for, then that's what we're looking for. Nobody's going to be able to take a decision at the conference to take strike action on a particular day, or something like that. What we want is an agreement that we cannot just continue

his Local Government and Land Bill contains provisions to further reduce the RSG top-up of those Councils which he would call 'overspenders'. There is no limit to the size of these penalties contained in the Bill.

As a response to this attack on local services and jobs, the Labour Parties and Town Hall Trade Unions in Lambeth are calling for a National delegate Conference of their comrades throughout the country, to be held on November 1st, 1980, at the Camden Town Hall.

Alan Freeman from Socialist Challenge and myself, on behalf of Socialist Organiser, interviewed Ted Knight, Leader of Lambeth Council, together with Brian Martin, the representative from the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee [he is also Assistant Branch Secretary of Lambeth NALGO].

in the present situation; there has got to be a confrontation.

■ ■ What would happen in a confrontation? What should a Labour council actually do?

□ □ TK I don't think a Labour council should do anything by itself. I think the Labour councils and the trade unions could force a situation whereby they make it possible to bring local government generally to a standstill in the major city areas, in my view. That's the sort of action which has got to be considered. In my view, it is possible to force a government to negotiate in those circumstances.

□ □ BM We feel we have no alternative, if we are really sincere about wanting to protect services and



November 7 last year: Lambeth marches against the cuts. ... Above: Ted Knight

jobs, but to see if there is any broad front we can attack the government on.

■ ■ What sort of support will you be looking to local councils for?

□ □ BM We would want the Councils at least to stand firm until we are ready to take action.

■ ■ You say stand firm. What would this mean in the next financial year?

□ □ BM Well, I think it would mean accepting that even if it means going into deficit, it should hold out from making any cuts

until the unions are in a position to take some action...

□ □ TK Can I butt in here — what we are saying is that unless we move very quickly, that won't be possible.

■ ■ Can you explain who is organising the conference, and what sort of response you have had?

□ □ TK The organisation is in the hands of a joint organising committee of the Labour councillors, the joint steward committee of the council, and the constituency Labour Parties.

■ ■ If you're going to call for industrial action, it will obviously be better if you can get support from national unions, from trades councils and so on. Are you trying for this?

□ □ BM Yes. Trades Councils are being invited, certainly Lambeth and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils have expressed support. But essentially at the moment it



November 7 last year: Lambeth marches against the cuts. ... Above: Ted Knight

is more a rank and file conference. We are sending out invitations to delegates. We are not doing it through our national executives or anything like that, although some of the unions might have to get their NEC's tacit approval before sending out the invitations — I don't know. But it's unlikely that we, for example, could get national NALGO support for it.

I must stress that when we talk about industrial action, we mean the refusal to work, not the refusal to pay. We are not saying that we should refuse to pay the rates, but we should refuse to work for the government.

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■ ■ But one of the factors that would stimulate a fight would be if councils said: "Look, we're not going to implement the cuts, and we're not going to raise the rates" — which would mean effectively going against the law — the auditors would be called in...

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Adwest: all out 22nd September

THE BATTLE FOR picketing rights at Brixton dole office is one of several key disputes where the basic rights of workers to organise — both inside and outside the place of work — is at issue. The struggle of the 58 sacked workers at Adwest Engineering in Reading is another.

At Brixton, the state has limited pickets to two per gate, and has jumped the gun on Prior's Code of Practice and gone beyond it.

At Adwest, on two occasions, nobody was allowed to stand in front of the gate and picket. The pickets were told they could talk to scabs behind the police lines!

On the first occasion — 2 July — Adwest TGWU convenor Danny Broderick was arrested when he insisted on his rights and stood by himself in front of the gate. And on 14 July, 28 pickets were arrested when they militantly took back the right to picket denied them by the police.

At the mass picket on 11 August, the police conceded the right to picket, but limited the number to 10 standing in front of the gate.

We call on all workers and people who want to defend the few rights we have in this country to defend the right to picket. But not in a way which emphasises 'peaceful' picketing — instead, in a way which holds that, in struggles such as strikes, only the power and organisation of the working class is capable of defeating the bosses and the state which stands behind them, and that on a picket line, faced with the situation where 'peaceful' pickets are no longer widely respected, then effective mass pickets — large numbers of people who try to stop scabs going to work — are the best method of struggle.

And to get effective mass pickets, Prior's Employment Act, together with the TUC guidelines which would have been implemented had Labour got back into power, must be smashed!

We call on you to support our next mass picket on Monday 22 September from 6am at Adwest Engineering, Headley Road [East], Woodley, Reading, Berkshire.

ADWEST STRIKE COMMITTEE



St Benedict's Hospital

I am an old man with lots of people. I am 90 most of the people I know is St Benedict's Hospital are over 80. When we were watching television we were watching news we heard St Benedict's Hospital have to be closed down. The people were furious the staff wanted to keep it open. If they close it down the old people have to go some were there never been.

by Piyush Patel Age 11

St. Benedict's Occupation Committee have produced a booklet of poems by local schoolchildren about the plight of patients at the threatened hospital.

Help save our hospital

THE WORKERS at St Benedict's Hospital have been in occupation for over eight months. We are calling a mass picket for Tuesday September 2 to back the call to keep the hospital open.

As the leaflet calling for support for the picket says, "Having met Gerard Vaughan — the Tory Minister — and having stated our forceful opposition to the closure, we are still waiting for a definite decision from him. This is why we are calling a Mass Picket — because if he can't make his mind up, we can".

The work-in stopped the Area Health Authority closing St Benedict's [a geriatric hospital] under a temporary closure order — a trick used to shut Putney and Wimbledon hospitals and Queen Elizabeth House.

Many of the 117 patients who are still at St Benedict's have lived there for 20 or 30

years and so view it as their home. Transfer would cause serious problems of adjustment, and the policy of returning the elderly to the community is just completely unrealistic. Women in particular will be increasingly forced to give up jobs and stay at home to look after their relatives.

The picket will show the Tories that thousands of workers will not let any government wipe out the services and jobs we expect. We had paid for those services. We need those jobs. So do you!

The success of the picket is vital particularly with the Employment Act hanging over the trade union movement.

It is on September 2, 6pm to 8pm, at the hospital, in Church Lane, Tooting, London SW17 [nearest tube: Tooting Broadway].

DAVE McCALL [St Benedict's Support Ctee.]

Glasgow conference

TED KNIGHT, leader of Lambeth Council, will address a one-day conference on cuts in public spending and unemployment to be held in Glasgow on September 13th at Strathclyde University Union, John St. The conference, called by the Glasgow Campaign Against Cuts and Unemployment, will discuss how to build and organise a campaign against the cuts.

Hugh Wyper, General Council of the STUC, and Eric Clarke, Scottish Secretary of the NUM, will also speak in the morning session. The afternoon will be taken up with workshops on cuts in public transport, health and housing, youth unemployment, and welfare benefits.

Other workshops will be led by representatives of Glasgow Trades Council, Glasgow District Labour Party, and the

Women's Legal and Financial Independence Group.

We are aiming to build a broad based campaign that can stop the cuts and to link up with similar campaigns up and down the country. Contact: Conference Secretary, Glasgow Cuts Campaign, c/o 6 Ruthven St, Glasgow G12 9BS.

JOHN WILDE Publicity Ctee. Convenor

WRITE BACK

Write to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16

WORKERS' FIGHTBACK

9

Brixton: a victory for mass pickets

by STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

WORKERS at Brixton dole voted on 26 August to return to work — but said they will come out against unless full reinstatement is granted to Phil Corddell, Richard Cleverley, and three other workers threatened with being transferred to different offices.

Militant picketing has brought a partial victory: the Civil Service Appeals Board, meeting on the same day as a mass picket (August 13), told the press just before another mass picket (August 20) that it would say Corddell and Cleverley should not have been sacked for spending too much time on union activity.

But the Board also ordered that Corddell and Cleverley should be given a final warning, moved to another office and not paid for the time they were sacked.

Meanwhile, on the 20th, hundreds of cops were drafted in to Brixton to give the 400-strong picket at the dole office another taste of Prior's law.

A week before, 17 pickets were arrested as hundreds massed at the gates in support of Phil Corddell and Richard Cleverley, the two militants sacked from the office.

The mass pickets are an open challenge to the Tories' anti-picket laws, enforced enthusiastically by the police at Brixton before they had even become law. The police are restricting pickets to six (two on each gate). Everyone else has to stand on the waste ground on the other side of the road.

What has the CPSA leadership done to win this struggle? The union conference instructed them to get stuck in and support Corddell (Cleverley was sacked later). They did nothing. Wait for the Appeal Board's judgment, was all they said.

□□

And when people did pitch in to support the sacked militants, when MPs Stuart Holland and Reg Race went down to the picket lines, union leader Ken Thomas and TUC chief Len Murray joined Tory Minister Prior in telling them to keep their noses out.

Thomas and Murray want to keep up that cosy division of labour that exists between the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party leaders — each doing little more than playing 'King of the Castle' in their own sphere — which helps hamstringing the class struggle. But we need to unite the political and industrial wings of the move-

ment — even if most MPs and union leaders do see that as a challenge to their grip.

The main aim of Thomas' stinking circular to all CPSA members wasn't to raise money for the strikers or those arrested on the mass picket. It was to attack the Socialist Workers' Party.

Corddell and Cleverley are both members of the SWP, and the SWP has done a lot to mobilise for the pickets. That's entirely to their credit. Thomas — in America he would be called Ken the Fink, I'm sure — accuses them of "bamboozling money out of our members and branches" and other red-baiting nonsense.

The only people bamboozling the members out of money are people like Thomas and the rest of the trade union 'royalty' who live on our dues and do nothing to help our struggles.

Disgracefully, Thomas' attack had its left-wing counterpart in an article in *Militant* written by Bill Boyle. Boyle called for a national fight to win reinstatement and halt victimisation, and generously applauded the 'determination' of the Brixton strikers.

But he wanted the whole thing called off! The problem, he argued, was that the SWP is adventurist and the Brixton fight was isolated.

Within a week of Boyle's article appearing (*Militant*, 15 August), the Board offered to reinstate Cleverley and Corddell — though there were strings attached. Proof that the tactics Boyle spends his time attacking can bring victory.

This struggle does not involve thousands of workers — not even a hundred worked at the office where Corddell and Cleverley were sacked. But it is of enormous importance: it raises fundamental issues of trade union rights both inside the workplace and on the picket line; and, with the row about the MPs, basic issues of how the two wings of the labour movement should work together.

Realising this, the Tory truth machine in Fleet Street has been pulling out all the stops to lie and distort what is happening. The *Daily Mail* spends its time slandering Phil Corddell while the oh-so-objective *Sunday Times* has dreamt up an secret meeting between Stuart Holland and the strikers to provoke arrests.

These attacks have to be rebutted, and the campaign extended to win unqualified reinstatement. This campaign must include continuing pressure on the right-wing National Executive to do what the 1980 conference told it to do.

Prior's law, cops' law

by JIM FARRELL

PICKETING AT the Brixton Unemployment Benefit Office (UBO) is now in its ninth week. At first the police placed no limits on the pickets, but gradually they became more and more obstructive... and idiotic, to the extent of threatening pickets who booed those crossing the line.

Then Employment Minister Prior spoke on TV. He announced that his 'Code of Practice' would be the key to controlling pickets.

Next day, Phil Corddell, one of the two sacked UBO workers whom the pickets were supporting, was snatched by the police. According to the police, he was 'the seventh man', and only six were allowed on the picket line.

That's been the rule ever since, as far as the police

are concerned. They threaten to arrest if there are more than two pickets on any gate.

On August 13, a 12-strong delegation from the pickets went to the central gates of the UBO to Chief Inspector Newlove. The 12 included two MPs, Reg Race and Stuart Holland, a member of the CPSA National Executive, and delegates from the Fire Brigades Union, the Institute of Professional Civil Servants, and other unions.

The Chief Inspector was informed that the delegation was coming to speak to him, yet within two minutes one of them, a CPSA official, was arrested. That arrest was quickly followed by others. Clearly the police were provoking a confrontation.

When the other pickets saw what was happening they crossed the road, and the police slammed in again. The TV coverage showed scenes of police brutality,

but no police were arrested. 17 pickets were, all but one on obstruction charges.

All were bound over until the trial on October 29th. The binding-over effectively bars the 17 from picketing until then.

The police action has at-

tracted plenty of publicity to the sacking of Corddell and Cleverley. It has also exposed what the Tories' Employment Act and its 'Code of Practice' really mean. That makes it an issue for the whole trade union and labour movement.

Police in action on the 13th



Civil Service bosses on the attack

THE VICTIMISATIONS at Brixton dole are part of a pattern of attack by the Civil Service on the trade union movement.

The Civil Service Department has set out changes it wants to see in the existing 'Facilities Agreement' which governs trade union activity in work time.

The Department wants to ban from government premises any meeting "in which the principal purpose is the planning or promotion of industrial action". That means

stopping the unions meeting in the workplace... or giving the right wing in the union an alibi for campaigning for a no-strike clause!

The Civil Service Department also says that it will not recognise union representatives who have been the victims of disciplinary action within the preceding two years.

That really means giving the bosses the right to choose the reps. Union representatives are those who, if they are militants, are always risking disci-

plinary action.

Time off for trade union work is also to be cut. Worse still, the CSD says that it will have an annual review of this question "to assess the level of commitment to industrial relations". In addition, the CSD wants to charge the Civil Service unions half the cost of the administration of the cumbersome and hamstringing Whitley Councils.

This needs a national campaign, but a national campaign without a commitment to direct action will not mean much.

Vote Wright against the Right

WHO WILL BE the next President of the AUEW? Will the engineering union stay in the hands of Terry Duffy and the right-wing or will it register a shift to the left?

The Broad Left candidate is Bob Wright, who even the Tory press agrees can be a tough negotiator — quite different from Duffy, who was publicly described by one Midlands employer as "a prat, an amiable prat, but a prat nonetheless."

But that isn't the real issue. The real issue is political. Terry Duffy is the President who has presided over the sacking of Derek 'Red Robbo' Robinson, the throwing out of work of thousands of AUEW members and the weakening of shop floor organisation in scores of plants.

Duffy the Prat has connived with other silk-suited scab-herders like Frank Chapple of the EETPU to break the lagers' strike on the Isle of Grain; he has ignored the instruction of the TUC to oppose the Tories' anti-union laws and proposed that unions should take state money to pay for postal ballots; and he has supported all Callaghan's efforts to stamp out the movement for

more democracy in the Labour Party.

Of course, a prat — even a powerful prat like Duffy — couldn't do all that single-handed. It couldn't have been done without a right-wing Executive dominated by John Boyd. And he couldn't have done all that if the previous period of Hugh (now Lord) Scanlon's presidency had been one of clear left policies.

But it wasn't. Before Scanlon's shift to the right, there was a time when a supposedly left-wing leadership refused to back shop floor militancy, leaving important struggles like the 1972 sit-in battles in the lurch.

Bob Wright was the odds-on favourite to take over from Jim Conway as General Secretary when that right-winger died. But Boyd won the election.

And one of the most obvious reasons is that Bob Wright was seen as Hugh Scanlon's understudy.

There were other strong reasons too — not least the smashing of strong Broad Left (Communist Party dominated) organisation in the Manchester Area, the electoral base for Scanlon

and Wright. But Wright's failure to criticise Scanlon was decisive.

That doesn't make Wright the same as Duffy, of course.

Duffy (like his mentors Boyd and Chapple) is a hard-line anti-militant, a cold war anti-communist, a 24-carat class collaborator and a shameless advocate of

licking the boss's backside.

Speaking last January to his friends at the British Institute of Management, Duffy the Prat boasted his credentials as a crawler who had never done anything to lead his fellow workers in struggle. "At my old factory, Lucas", he reminisced, "I recall my wonderful

Wright gets the gag

EARLIER THIS year an Industrial Tribunal found that Sir John Boyd was guilty of unfair dismissal when he sacked two research workers, Alan Hughes and Trevor Eward.

Hughes and Eward were sacked basically for helping Bob Wright in his election campaign and for writing two articles condemning the way the union leaders handled the engineering claim last year.

Boyd could not sack Wright, who was telling public meetings how the Right was carving up the union and the claim, because, as Wright put it, "I am an elected officer of the union... I am an Assistant General Secretary. Not an assistant to the General Secretary!"

But the Executive tried to

gag Wright by stopping him addressing meetings.

This abuse of powers must be fought. Bob Wright must be free to address meetings as part of his election campaign, and he has every right to attack the union leadership and their record.

Many left-wing members, however, will be regretting that Wright didn't come out openly against Duffy and Boyd earlier — like over the Robinson affair. The rank and file were looking to him for a lead then, when the issues were live.

Waiting to speak out till elections come round smacks too much of the style of those MPs who aren't seen from one year's end to another but are quick to sound off at election times.

personnel manager who now works for the Bishop of Lichfield and was son of a managing director. We had no strike while I was there."

Wright has a bad record on many issues. On unemployment he has little to offer but speeches for import controls. But he does stand for turning the union to the Left. And, unlike Duffy, he stands for making the union what it once was: one of the most democratic in the British trade union movement.

It was a long way off perfect — there was no right of recall of officials, officials were not paid the average wage of the members and craft-snobbishness was rife — but all officials were regularly (though not annually) elected, and policy was totally in the hands of elected lay committees.

Wright has also given valuable support to the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, which is fighting for Labour Party democracy.

Duffy and Boyd have set out to break the democratic structure of the AUEW. Postal ballots have been introduced which mean that branch debate does not determine members' choice,

but much more the venomous distortions of popular columnists like Woodrow Wyatt (all thick as thieves with Duffy, Boyd and Chapple). And more recently, Duffy and Boyd have pressed for branch secretaries to be full-time paid appointees of the union.

They also proposed at the Rules Revision Conference to make the union's delegation to the Labour Party Conference not elected but appointed by the Executive.

The election of Wright as President is a must. It won't solve anything in itself, but it would mean an important first step to waging a fight for a strong union and a militant fightback against the attacks of the Tories and the employers.

The rank and file must organise to support Wright in the election. If he gets elected, that rank and file organisation must continue the fight, supporting Wright against the likes of Boyd and, if necessary, supporting workers in struggle against Wright.

We must rely on our own strength, but just now we must also use our strength to elect Bob Wright.

Consett: organise for direct action

THE FIGHT against unemployment in Consett has reached a critical stage. Only 3,000 workers and their families marched through Consett on July 25, compared with about 10,000 who marched through the freezing rain last March.

Morale was clearly lower too, with most of the BSC workforce going to work instead of marching.

There was the usual speechmaking from Bill Sims and local MPs. Only Dennis Skinner MP, who has called for the workers to occupy at Consett, managed to raise a real response from the audience, which had begun to drift off. Skinner denounced the Labour Right and the lack of democracy in the Labour Party.

But what of the workers facing unemployment? No real solution was put forward, though the idea of running the works as a co-operative is being taken more seriously now, rather than simply as a ploy to get a parliamentary debate.

But the facts are simple. The works cannot be run over and cannot be run without attacking the capitalists. There can be no islands of socialism within the system. There will be no progress without organising people for that fight.

Those who want to organise for direct action and adopt the tactics of the French steelworkers, are the only ones who have at least started along the right road.

PETE BURGESS



On the picket line at King Henry's

Pie firm recruits 12 year old scabs

A YOUNG woman who has been working for two weeks loses her fingers because her machine has no guard on it, and ends up with gangrene.

Holes in the roof where rain comes in, and soaking wet floors. Pigeons flying about where pies are being made. Kids of 12 to 14 working for slave wages.

A 19th century novel or a horror film? No, the conditions in King Henry's bakery, Levenshulme, where workers have been on strike for eight weeks to get their union recognised.

Manager Hollings drew up a list of 16 workers to be sacked, and 30 workers came out to fight his intimidation. Since then every place has been filled by non-union scab labour, who are driven through the picket line each morning by Hollings and his henchmen. Some of the scabs are probably only 12 years old.

an extent that Hollings is having to pay scab drivers £140 a week to take pies to Liverpool where the labels are taken off and changed for ones that don't have the King Henry trade-mark.

And the threat of blacking at Manchester and Liverpool docks has meant that all supplies have to be brought in by cowboy firms in plain trucks, which must be sending production costs soaring.

Hollings has made a new offer. He has said he'll take four workers back on — and the rest will be considered. To prove his generosity he has also written to the local press — claiming to have sacked only one worker, and protesting about damage done to his car by pickets. Yet Hollings himself kicked in the picket's car, and one of the strikers has been beaten up. Orders are being given to

see if they want a union. Not surprisingly, the answer was no!

The strikers are determined to beat this scab boss. Pickets from Liverpool have come across to help — but it's vital that the mass picketing is stepped up. So far Manchester's Chief Constable Anderton has not decided to enforce the six-picket rule. But we can't rely on the police continuing to take such a low profile as they have so far.

There is a mass picket called by the Bakers' Union nationally on August 29, which urgently needs support. Also, there are mass pickets every Tuesday and Friday from 9.30 at Rowen Oak Ave, Levenshulme, near Stockport Road. Bakers' Union, 4, George Street, Manchester M2 1BB. Tel: 274 1111. Fax: 274 1112.

Greenwich typists strike

GREENWICH Council's typists went on strike after the Council suspended one of them on August 12. Unless this victimisation is lifted, there could soon be an all-out stoppage by all Greenwich's white-collar staff.

The typist was suspended for blacking certain items of work — councillor's correspondence and committee work — in support of a regrading/productivity claim. It is the first time that Greenwich's Labour-controlled council has taken this kind of action against one of their workers for following official union instructions.

This is a reflection of the tight situation that Councils are in, with the Government's spending cuts. In this case the council obviously considered that they were taking it out on a weak group of workers, in a weak union.

They obviously misjudged! Immediately after the suspension 40 typists walked out in solidarity, and typists official picket lines and widespread publicity have been set up.

The claim for regrading was originally made over a year ago. The typists were fed up with a situation where they had always been regarded as 'bottom status' in the Town

Hall pecking order.

They began a work to rule in February, at which point management arranged a productivity study which showed that 11% more work was being produced compared with two years ago. They made an offer based on those findings, only to be overruled by the councillors, who withdrew the offer.

The typists' action was stepped up at the beginning of August, and as soon as it started to hit directly at councillors, the employers took their unprecedented step of suspension.

Support in the form of strike action by the rest of Greenwich NALGO is dependent on the result of a ballot which will be taken soon — the union is campaigning strongly for a yes vote, which could bring the council to a halt within hours of the result being known.

The Council's response has been to stand by their earlier offer to the typists, which involved the 'back door' introduction of word processor machines, and an advance payment to the typists of £50 each, to be recouped from any subsequent productivity deal. This has already been rejected as 'derisory'.

BOB SUGDEN

Trade Union Conference

LABOUR PARTY RANK & FILE TRADE UNIONISTS' CONFERENCE.

Called by the Labour Coordinating Committee. Co-sponsored by Socialist Organiser, ILP, and Clause 4 Saturday 15 November 1980, 10.30am to 5.45pm, at Leeds Town Hall.

11-11.30: Introduction — Arthur Scargill. 11.30-1.15: The Right to Work — Bernard Connolly (craft convenor, BSC Rotherham), Larry Connolly (Lucas), Pat Longman (Women's Fightback), Stuart Holland MP, plus discussion. 2-3.30: Demands and Policies — Ken Toman, Eddie

Loyden, Colin Lindsay, Audrey Wise, plus discussion.

3.45-5.45: How do we organise in the movement — Tony Banks, Phil Holt (POEU), Stephen Corbishley (CPSA), Anne Cesek.

Creche available. Delegate fee £1.25 (free for short-time workers and non-waged). Write to: LCC, 9 Poland St, London W1, or phone Tony Banks (01-767 4098) or John Bloxam (01-607 9052).

★ The separate Socialist Organiser trade union conference planned for November 1st has been put off.

BL workers say: Let's ELECT our committee

by a Longbridge T&G steward

IN THE 1960s and early '70s, BMC (later BL) car-workers were among the top paid manual workers in British industry — and many people seem to think we still are.

In fact, BL hourly paid workers are now among the lowest paid in engineering. A track worker at Longbridge, for instance, is lucky to take home more than £67 per week.

Last year (and the year before) most BL workers received only 5% pay rise.

This decline in BL workers' living standards has been brought about not only by the collapse of the car market and the increasingly hard-line stance of the bosses, but also by the cowardice and bureaucratism of the trade unions at every level.

Until this year, wage negotiations had been controlled by a body called the Leyland Combine Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC), the union side of which was made up of convenors, senior stewards, and national officials. In overall charge was the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (Confed).

Although highly bureaucratic and largely unaccountable, the JNC

was at least subject to some indirect pressure from the rank and file, via the convenors and senior stewards. Now the Confed (which is controlled by the right wing AUEW leadership) together with BL boss Michael Edwardes, have proposed a new JNC, to be totally dominated by full time officials.

This is being opposed by the T&G and by the unofficial combine committee — although what they are pushing for is a JNC much like the old one, but with a fairer balance between the various unions on it. Militants in BL (including the leadership of the Cowley Assembly Plant) have been arguing for a negotiating committee directly elected by and answerable to a conference of stewards from every plant.

The question of the make up of the negotiating committee is of vital importance. The old JNC was bad enough. But the new Edwardes/Confed JNC would be guaranteed to stitch up a rotten deal behind the membership's back every time.

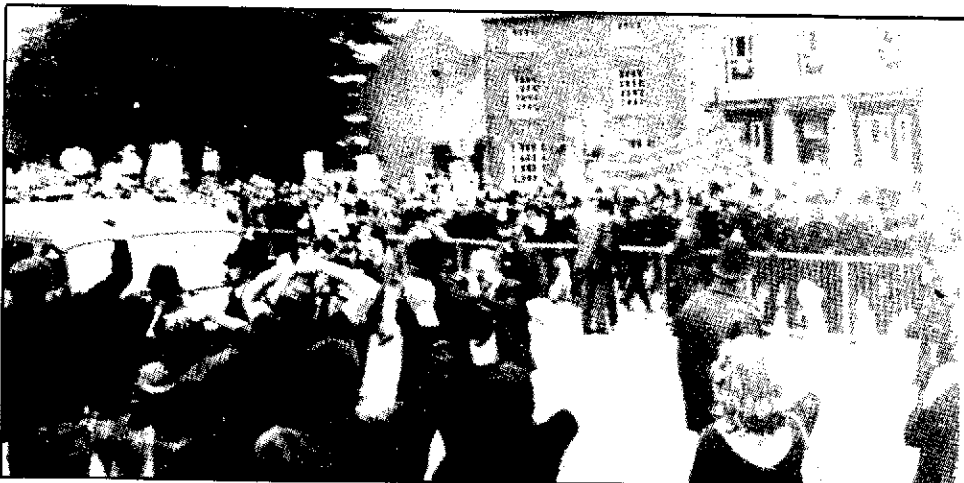
The combine committee met this month (for the first time since Derek Robinson was sacked last November) and put forward a 'single issue' wage claim (drawn up

by Longbridge convenor Jack Adams, and other Communist Party members) for £17.21 rise (before deductions) for all BL workers. The figure of £17.21 was worked out as 20% of the average of the five grade rates in BL.

This claim is not even enough to keep BL workers up with present rates of inflation, let alone start to claw back any of the last few years' lost ground.

Even so, the bosses seem unlikely even to negotiate seriously on the claim. At the moment, they are arguing that as the combine committee is an unofficial body, the claim has no legitimacy. Also, they have threatened disciplinary action against anyone attending 'unofficial' meetings (i.e. combine meetings on the claim).

In this situation, it is vital that the rank and file begin organising now around the combine claim (while arguing for the addition of such demands as a 35 hour week and inflation-proofing). The combine committee must be pressed to organise a truly representative conference of stewards to take control of negotiations and to organise action in support of the claim, if it has not been met by the November 1st settlement date.



Anti-fascists arrive in Nuneaton. Photo: Graham Smith.

A VICTORY DESPITE THE BANS

ANTI-FASCIST demonstrators were able to inflict a considerable defeat on the NF on August 17th — despite collaboration between the police and the fascists to keep the venue of the NF march secret and to obstruct anti-fascists trying to reach the march.

In West Bromwich, Martin Webster's planned 'three person' march through the town lasted approximately three seconds before he leaped back into his car and raced away from the 200-strong counter demo.

Meanwhile, in Leamington, about 800 anti-fascists stood by, waiting to hear exactly where the NG 'British jobs for British workers' march was to take place — Leamington, Nuneaton, or Rugby?

When the news came through that the fascists plus about 2,000 police had

begun assembling in Nuneaton, the majority of the counter demonstrators were prevented from leaving Leamington. Police stopped all coaches and most cars.

Nevertheless, by the end of their march, the NF were outnumbered by anti-fascists who managed to get there through the police cordon. If all those of us who arrived in Leamington had made it to Nuneaton, the NF march could have been stopped in its tracks.

As it was, the nazis were able to have their march — but were forced to scuttle away immediately afterwards under a hail of bricks and stones that smashed the windows of their coaches.

Those of us on the counter demo were given a very clear lesson in how the official bans on marching, originally requested by Chief Constable Philip Knight,

aided the Front — allowing them to negotiate a secret venue with the police and to throw the counter demonstrators into considerable confusion.

After the anti-fascist rally after the Nuneaton march, local MP Les Huckfield's call for more effective state bans was jeered by the great majority of us, who had just had first hand experience of what the bans really meant.

Not only did the bans aid the fascists, but they have also forced the cancellation of several labour movement mobilisations in the West Midlands — notably, marches against unemployment planned by Tipton Labour Party and by redundant Birmid Qualcast foundry workers. The lessons of the 17th must not be forgotten.

JIM DENHAM

EMPLOYMENT ACT

The closed shop

"The compulsory enforcement of the closed shop by parliamentary statute is the greatest disaster which has befallen liberty in my lifetime" (Paul Johns on). The Tory government would agree but they also know that a well-organised closed shop provides a potential increase in bargaining power for workers. Alarmed by the spread of closed shops in the last decade, they are determined to weaken existing closed shops and stop their extension.

Before the Act, the law did not compulsorily enforce the closed shop. The position was left to negotiation between union and employers. All the law said was that the employer was protected against an action for unfair dismissal if he dismissed a worker in a closed shop situation unless that worker could show that he objected to trade unionism on religious grounds. If the worker fell into this category he could get compensation at an industrial tribunal against the employer, but not his job back. The Act changes this position in two ways. If you have an existing closed shop then the exception on religious grounds is extended.

Workers can now opt out if they can show that they object to the particular union on grounds of conscience or other deeply held personal objections. As a management magazine pointed out, "The phrasing is so broad that the more interesting question is likely to be: what grounds do not fall within the protection?" If a Tory worker objects to his union contributing towards the Labour Party then presumably he can leave the union.

The position is worse if you are trying to negotiate a new closed shop. For the employer to be protected against legal action there must be a secret ballot of the workers involved. If 80% of those entitled to vote are in favour, you have an approved closed shop... except anybody who voted in the ballot is still entitled to opt out, full stop. Only new workers will have to join... unless, of course, they can show an objection on grounds of conscience.

A vital point is that if an employer is taken to a tribunal he can ask for workers who pressurised him to dismiss the blackleg to be joined to the action. Compensation in thousands could therefore be awarded against a shop

steward.

Whereas until now, workers expelled or refused admission to a union have only been able to take action if they could show the union rules met some basic requirements — right to know the charges, right to a hearing etc — and were followed. There was no opportunity to go to court and argue that the rules were unreasonable. Those who wished to do this if they worked in a closed shop could only take the matter to a special TUC Disputes Committee after exhausting the individual union procedure.

Under the Act, workers who feel that they have been unreasonably refused admission or expelled from a union in a closed shop situation will be able to take the case to an Appeals Tribunal, where s/he can be awarded up to £16,000.

These provisions give the judges, with their anti-union attitudes, the power to decide whether union rules are reasonable. Moreover, all these legal changes are to be read in the context of a Code of Practice on the Closed Shop which suggests, for example, periodic ballots to see if the workers still support the arrangement.

Attacking the weakest

A subsidiary intertwined purpose of the Act is to free the allegedly dynamic small capitalist from the crippling tentacles of Employment Protection legislation, which allegedly stifles his expansion; to make workers dependent on this kind of law, to stand on their own two feet, and to push women out of work and into the home.

In fact, Britain's Employment Protection legislation is already the worst in Europe. The median compensation in unfair dismissal cases is £375; there is no right to reinstatement, and the number of awards favourable to workers fell from 40% in 1975 to 28% in 1978. In this country, a woman receives 44 weeks statutory maternity leave only, 6 paid at a reduced rate of wages. In Italy, women receive 20 weeks' leave at 80% pay, in Hungary 20 weeks' leave at full pay, and in Germany 14 weeks at full pay. The law does not even meet the standards laid down by International Labour Organisation conventions.

Moreover, the government's own reports show that most small employers have not even heard of this legislation, let alone been crippled by it. In a 1979 survey, only 2% mentioned employment legislation as 'a difficulty'.

The Act makes a number of small changes, which, taken together, eradicate most of the little value these rights possessed. The government has already increased the qualification all workers need in order to claim unfair dismissal, from 26 to 52 weeks' employment. Workers in firms employing less than twenty will now need two years' employment to qualify.

With growing unemployment among women, even the limited legal right to return to the job after pregnancy might be useful in keeping the weakly-organised in a job. The Act's changes make the procedure more technical and bureaucratic, and thus make the right more difficult to exercise.

As well as the present hurdles in this obstacle

course, a woman must now write to her employer three weeks before she leaves, stating she will return; write to confirm within fourteen days that she will return if the employer requests confirmation after the birth, and write a third letter three weeks before. If these technical requirements are not met, tribunals rule out claims. Moreover, whereas a woman has been entitled to return to the same job, she can now be offered 'suitable, alternative employment' which may well involve substantial changes in cash conditions and job content.

Finally, the Act abolishes the ill-fated Section 11 of the Employment Protection Act by which unions were given a procedure to attempt to achieve recognition — limited anyway, and crippled by the courts. It also scraps a clause which allowed workers' terms and conditions to be improved through comparison with those of other workers. It was widely used to get around the Labour government's incomes policy.

Outlawing solidarity

continued from p.12

Blacking of goods will only be protected if you ask help from workers at a company which directly supplies your company, or at another company which is associated — linked by ownership — with you employer, which steps in to supply goods which would have been supplied by your employ-

er if he were not struck. Even then, blacking is only protected if the purpose is to disrupt the supply of goods and your action is likely to achieve that purpose.

This sounds straightforward, but in several cases judges have decided that secondary action was not intended to win the strike but taken for some ulterior motive and that it was

not likely to win the dispute. Basically, these sections of the Act give the judges the power to decide what industrial action is and is not legal.

If workers take action outside these protections they will be subject to injunctions and, as happened with the dockers in 1972, if these injunctions are not accepted they will end up inside.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

The aim of the Act

It would be fatal for trade unionists to see the Employment Act as simply motivated by the Tories' dislike of trade union activities. It is an essential part of the government's economic strategy. The Tories believe that by limiting the money supply, by cutting public expenditure and consumer spending, by allowing interest rates to rise and withdrawing from intervention in industry, they will force the bosses to face 'reality'. Millions will be thrown out of work, organised workers' bargaining power and therefore wages will be cut, inflation will fall, profitability will increase, reinvestment in dynamic new industries will take place and the ordinary worker having once again solved capitalism's problems will get pie in the sky!

The monetarists acknowledge that artificial con-

straints interfere with the perfect working of the market. Strong union organisation and aggressive action can limit these effects particularly as strong monopoly capital too is insulated. 'Reasonable' levels of unemployment pay mean workers are not forced to compete as vigorously as they should for jobs, thus exercising a downward pressure on the wages of the unemployed. This is where legislation comes in.

The central objective of the Employment Act is to limit the use of trade union organisation to interfere with the operation of the Tories' strategy. The aim of the new act is to make trade unions less successful in the fight against mass sackings, in the fight against wage cuts, in the fight against cuts in the social services.

PICKETS LIMITED to two at each entrance; police violence; scores arrested. The recent attack on this picketing at Brixton Social Security office in defence of two victimised branch officials is the rehearsal for coming confrontations this winter between trade unionists, the police and the law courts. Without disturbing the slumbers of Labour's front bench, the Employment Act has hit the statute book and its provisions will be gradually phased in in the next few months.

★ If you work in a closed shop situation and press-

urise the employer to sack non-members;
★ If you attend a picket line in solidarity with workers fighting for recognition or against victimisation;

★ If you black goods to a company which is being used to break a strike at a third company; You would be in breach of the Employment Act and subject to injunctions and damages. These and many other ordinary union activities are now illegal. What is the thinking behind the new act? What does it say? How does it work in practice and how can we fight it?

SECRET BALLOTS

A major prong of Tory policy has been the attempt to mobilise the 'backward workers' against the class conscious activists and a major tactic here has been the push for secret postal balloting, cutting back on union democracy as active involvement. However, the Tories have learned from the experience of the Industrial Relations Act that compulsory ballots can produce hostility and a closing of the ranks, as they are often seen as an invasion of union democracy.

The Act is therefore just another prod in the direction of secret ballots. It authorises the Minister to make regulations which would authorise payments towards

the cost of secret ballots on the calling or ending of a strike, or other industrial action, electing members to positions in the union, changing the union rules, amalgamation or any other purpose which the Minister may specify by order. The regulations will cover the circumstances in which, and the conditions subject to which payments may be made.

As the TUC points out, "public funds cannot be handed over to the unions without the acceptance of some degree of public accountability... unions which accept public money could well find their independence and autonomy under threat".

THE EMPLOYMENT ACT

Pickets who turn away workers at picket lines are legally said to be inducing those workers to break their contracts of employment and in the case, say, of a lorry driver, directly inducing a breach of the commercial contract between the lorry driver's employer and the pickets' employer.

If there were no specific statutory protection, almost all union action would be illegal. Since 1906, pickets have been protected against civil actions for breach of contract — where there is a trade dispute in certain limited circumstances, what the Tories call a 'privilege' is simply an 'immunity' essential if trade unions are to operate. However, pickets have always been open to criminal prosecution for obstruction of the highway, obstructing a policeman in the course of his duty, assault or intimidation.

In a series of legal judgements in the '60s and '70s, the courts held that if pickets stopped workers or vehicles against their will, even for a short time, they were guilty of obstructing the highway. You could only picket legally if, say, a lorry driver was willing to stop, and then only for as long as he wished to talk to you. All effective picketing was therefore illegal.

Although in many cases the police did not enforce the law, where crucial

intended to stiffen the police: "We have got to live with these people once the strike is over": Alan Goodson, Chief Constable of Leicester) and intimidate workers so that they will limit

another company to support a victimisation or recognition dispute: all would be open to civil actions for inducing breach of contract, and

steel. All of this picketing would be illegal under the new Act. All steel workers could do would be to picket their own workplaces... and even here they could be arrested if they halted lorries or office workers.

Again there will be a Code of Practice to be used by the courts and, judging by Brixton, by

goods which are undermining your stoppage, you are again legally inducing a breach of contract, and again, the law since 1906 has protected this if you were involved in a trade dispute. In a series of Court of Appeal judgements in the last few years, the judges have attempted to undermine this right. The judgements were reversed by the judges in the House of Lords, who said quite blatantly that the Court of Appeal was bending the law too obviously and too much, and allowing workers to see clearly that they were politically biased. Instead, these independent, impartial Law Lords recommended that the government should remove the protection given to unions and the new law basically re-enacts the Court of Appeal's decisions.

Outlawing solidarity

their use of this vital tactic.

The Act limits the already negligible right to picket your own workplace. Workers picketing another plant of their employer or their head office; workers picketing

legal orders or damages could be awarded against them.

To take the steel strike as an example, it is clear that to make the strike halfway effective, workers needed to picket stockholders, the private sector, the docks and companies using alternative

the police. This Code limits pickets to six, restricts their activities to 'explaining' their case, states that each picket line should be supervised by a union official and attempts to stop unions taking disciplinary action against scabs.

If you ask workers at another company to black

continued on p.11

It is designed to break us

The Tories' view of the Act's progress is clear. The police will take a stronger line with pickets; several will be successfully sued; this will make other workers limit their picketing. A shop steward will be successfully done for compensating for defending the closed shop. This will make other stewards more reluctant to do so. Whilst there is an obvious gap between this aim and its achievements, many of the left take an equally complacent view, quote the Pentonville dockers or

the AUEW in 1972, and believe that spontaneous rank and file action will magically cripple the Act.

Yet the position is far different today, with recession and 2 million unemployed. This legislation can work. The fight inside Parliament has been unbelievably feeble. Nor has any leadership come from the TUC. The Congress agenda contains no strong policy resolution, while Murray has stated that "there is little or no support for a repeat of

the Day of Action", and vetoed Regional TUCs holding demonstrations. The leaders of the ETU and the AUEW, given the mild reception to the blacklegging they have organised at the Isle of Grain, are unlikely to fear expulsion for breach of any vague or minimal policy which may be agreed.

The way forward for socialists, however, is clear. Firstly, we should fight at all levels of the union for a clear, formal policy — no closed shop ballots: dismiss-

al of non-unionists; no money for ballots; and no change in picketing or blacking — whatever the dispute requires, should be done. No penalties imposed under the Act should be met and solidarity action at the level of the unions and the TUC should be organised.

Secondly, we must fight within the Labour Party so that both nationally and locally, support is given in practical terms to those fighting the Act. The example of Reg Race and Stuart Holland on the Brixton picket line

(condemned irrationally by Murray) should be hammered home to all MPs, and union delegates to GMCs should press for motions on the above lines, plus practical support to any local disputes.

Thirdly, apart from ensuring the repeal of the legislation by the next Labour government, we have to consider what should replace it. Our experience with the legal system has been so appalling that we must start asking questions about the election of

judges and tribunal members, and the extension of the jury system, otherwise our experience with new laws will be as disillusioning as in the past. The next Labour government should not merely abolish the House of Lords, it should start taking steps to make the legal system itself accountable to the workers of this country.

by John
McIlroy