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Socialist Organiser



No.68 JANUARY 14, 1982 (CLAIMANTS AND STRIKERS, 10p) 20p

DEFEND LONDON TRANSPORT! - Page 3

AN OPEN LETTER
TO ARTHUR
SCARGILL AND
TONY BENN

THE POLISH workers' resistance continues. The factory occupations have been smashed by the militia, the miners' sit-in strikes have been starved out, but the workers continue to show their spirit of defiance.

As three Solidarnosc activists are put on trial in Warsaw, on charges of organising a strike at the Huta Warszawa steelworks, "People throng in the corridor outside, waving victory signs and wearing Solidarity badges with a black hand across them, or Virgin Mary badges."

"Mr Lipinski [one of the accused trade unionists] waved back yesterday with a victory salute after his hands were unmanacled" (Guardian, January 8).

And passive resistance continues in the factories.

Struggling as best they can against overwhelming military might, the Polish workers desperately need support from the labour movement elsewhere.

Domination

In British labour movement, the Polish workers should specially be able to expect support from people like yourselves, the best-known leaders of the Labour and trade union left.

If trade union militants were being killed, wounded, interned, and given long sentences by military authorities in Britain, you would protest loudly.

Yet on Poland Tony Benn has been silent. And last Sunday's Observer reported this interview with Arthur Scargill:

"Do you agree with Solidarity's opposition to the Polish government?"

Scargill was doubtful. Solidarity, it seems, was not quite as bad as the SDP, but all the same...

"Solidarity's not a trade union. That's been clearly established."

"You're saying it's a Catholic, reactionary movement," I [the interviewer] suggested; and Scargill didn't dissent.

We agree that Solidarnosc was not simply a trade union. Despite its proclaimed aim of reforming the state, reaching some com-

POLAND: WHERE DO LABOUR LEADERS STAND?



promise with the Party, and not questioning the Russian domination of their country, every single contest between Solidarnosc and the state/Party elite deepened further the drive of the working class to take over power in society.

Arthur Scargill is a believer in proportional representation. He was elected at pit head ballots by 70 per cent of his members, and has promised to re-submit himself to a vote every five years. He has demanded a greater say and power for working people in this country.

But he suddenly draws the line at the River Elbe.

Worse: the Observer also asked if his leaving the CP in 1961 was over Hungary. Scargill replied, "Oh no! I supported the Soviet Union over Hungary. The Hungarian Revolution was joined by known fascists".

Over past months Tony Benn has himself pointed out the parallels between the fight for democracy in the Labour Party which he heads, and the fight for workers' democracy in

Poland.

But now he is silent. Indeed, with the honourable (and ironic) exception of Scottish miners' leader and Communist Party member Mick McGahey, who proposed a minute's silence at a miners' conference last month, no prominent leader of the left in the trade unions or the Labour Party has spoken out loudly in defence of the Polish working class.

Do you want to maintain relations with the State functionaries of Eastern Europe, in the belief that they are somehow, after all, part of the socialist movement? Do you, Arthur Scargill, support and wish to maintain the NUM's contacts with official USSR state-run 'unions', contacts which led the NUM to accept the Kremlin story that the Russian miner and campaigner for free trade unions, Vladimir Klebanov, was 'mad'? (Klebanov is now being tortured in 'psychiatric hospital').

Surely the experience of Poland shows that the bureaucrats of the Kremlin and Eastern Europe are in fact among the most bitter enemies of working-class socialism.



Jaruzelski: The workers, not Thatcher, will settle with him

"We believed the Communists were really committed to reform but we have to admit to ourselves openly that we were wrong."

"For 16 months the Communist Party did its best to liquidate our union", said an illeg-

al bulletin from the Polish workers' movement Solidarnosc reported in the Morning Star last week, and now Poland is being turned into "one huge labour camp".

The bitter experience of the Polish workers is

underlining the fact that the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe must be overthrown by political revolution.

★ See inside, page 4: Solidarnosc leaders on the fight for workers' control.

Fight for Solidarity!

The labour movement needs to organise its own class solidarity with the Polish workers, completely independent from the cold war politics and actions of Reagan and Thatcher.

End martial law. Free Lech Walesa. Release all political and union prisoners. An end to all restrictions on Solidarnosc.

No Warsaw Pact intervention.

No to the state unions: build links with the underground workers' resistance. Send money, food

and literature to these organisations.

Unconditional support to the Polish workers' fight.

(Signed):

Reg Race MP
Jonathan Hammond (Vice-President, NUJ)
Oliver McDonald (Labour Focus on Eastern Europe)
(all in personal capacity)

Socialist Organiser Alliance
London Labour Briefing
Socialist Challenge

Is it that you accept the 'socialist' power as an accomplished fact? Can you identify socialism with the self-defence of a privileged bureaucracy against the mobilised workers (whatever confused ideas may or may not be in those workers' heads)?

How from that standpoint could you prove to be adequate leaders of the British working class when we too start challenging 'accomplished facts' more boldly than we have yet done?

Do you fear to aid the anti-communist Right by vocally supporting Solidarnosc?

Thatcher's or Chapple's propaganda antics are a tenth-rate issue compared to the fate of the Polish workers' movement. But in fact the leaders of the Left have only themselves to blame if the professional anti-communists have been able to have a field day.

Tories, Liberals, and right wing Labour and trade union personalities have all made their appearance at rallies, at demonstrations, and on television and radio, to solemnly declare their absolute 'solidarity with Solidarity'.

They are liars. Faced with a movement like Solidarnosc here in Britain, they would be its most venomous enemies.

But Poland is a long way away, and in the present war against the Left in the labour movement here every little bit helps. Side by side with bureaucratic manipulation, 'democratic' phrase-mongering and hypocrisy also has its part to play.

The problem is that there are only small voices to unmask them from the Left.

This week Len Murray has been refused permission to visit Poland on a fact-finding mission. But even this move by Murray is too little, too late.

It took six months for the TUC to establish links with Solidarnosc, the living ten million strong labour movement, and to junk its relations with the police state unions.

When the letter finally arrived from Len Murray in early January, the Polish trade unionists' first reaction was: "Who's he? What's that?"

But if Len Murray is now prepared to do something positive, let's see the leaders of the Left act too.

Instead of hearing Reagan brandishing his trade sanctions, let's hear you, Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill, calling for trade union blacking of Polish trade (food and essential supplies excepted) in solidarity with the workers. Let's hear you cutting relations with the Stalinist bureaucrats and pledging yourselves instead to help Solidarnosc and movements like it through out the Stalinist bloc.

Let's hear you proclaiming the truth that Reagan must lie about — that Solidarnosc was indeed moving towards a challenge for power — for workers' power — and it was quite right to do so!

Socialist Organiser will in any case be working flat-out to gather support for the solidarity appeal we have launched with other socialists, and for solidarity action wherever possible.



Campaign Cash!

Socialist Organiser has been dipping into its funds this week to help the Leyland Action Committee produce its new bulletin and organise its conference on January 23.

We're also beginning to run up expenses on the trade union conference jointly sponsored by London Labour Briefing and us, on March 6. And that's on top of the regular, ever-increasing bills.

Keep the contributions coming in! Send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Labour movement must combat wave of fascist violence

Statistics published by the anti-fascist journal Searchlight show that convictions of fascists for violent crime have doubled in the last year. Piyushi Kotecha spells out the need for a labour movement answer.

THE BUILD-UP of fascist activity since the spring of 1981 must be seen in the light of massive closures and redundancies, the growth of unemployment and poverty, the betrayal of the 1980 steel strike, and the vacuum of leadership in the labour movement, coupled with the growing public realisation that the Tory government is unable to solve the economic crisis.

If the facts ever emerge, this wave of fascist violence will be seen to have resulted in the death of probably over twenty black people.

Besides the countless stabbings, physical assaults, and fire-bombings, aimed at blacks — of which there are several thousand documented cases — there were also attacks on Labour Party buildings, meetings and militants, and on left bookshops.

For several weeks in Coventry the fascist gangs were able to keep most blacks out of the city centre, and all over the country cases have occurred where the fascists have driven black families to leave their homes.

The fascists cynically use gangs of unemployed youth who have been put on the scrap-heap by capitalism and are ignored by the Labour and TUC leadership.

They have skilfully directed the potentially revolutionary anti-establishment hatred and violence of these youth into racist attacks.

Public image

The fascists' programme of racist hatred and violence is specifically used to project their public image, show their seriousness, and through this appeal to the weak and confused layers of the middle classes.



Coventry youth show their readiness to drive fascists off the streets

Through their actions the fascists prove their usefulness to the ruling class.

Even when public outrage pressures the ruling class to act against the fascists, they take care never to do so without condemning the militant working class or black community leadership as well.

When they are forced to ban a march by the fascists because they fear the resistance it will provoke, they always take the opportunity of banning all labour movement activity as well.

Ten fascists threatening to march through Brixton or Foleshill provide the pretext for the state to end all mobilisations for the month. This is not something which the ruling class is ashamed to make use of. Although today only

small sectors of the ruling class actively support the fascists, the history of workers' struggle in Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, France, etc. show us how eagerly they can reach out to the fascists when there is no other option left open to them.

Links with Tories

Sections of the far right of the Tory party have always had links with fascism, and recently these links have been strengthened and extended to wider layers of the party.

With the intensification of class struggle, the ruling class cannot always rely on the army and police alone.

More reliable, more expendable, more flexible and more hardened with

anti-working class hatred, the fascists become an increasingly attractive and effective second club with which to cow the organised strength of the working class.

For those who for years peddled the illusion that racism was an issue that could be dealt with outside the struggle for a revolutionary leadership in the labour movement, the continued and accelerated growth of the fascists has come as a shock.

Thinking that the collapse of the National Front vote in the General Election signalled the success of their anti-racist propaganda campaigns, they moved on to other issues, leaving blacks and working class militants alone to face a fascist threat which, far

from receding, had grown sharper all the while.

As the recent Searchlight editorial argued, the anti-fascist movement is in disarray and showing an alarming inability even to out-mobilise the fascists.

Last year's expulsions and splits from the Socialist Workers' Party, involving differences over defence squads, illustrate the extent of disagreements among those who were the hard core of the Anti-Nazi League.

The Labour Party and trade unions, too, have largely been totally unable to mount any opposition to fascism.

And black organisations themselves are often split and divided on how to defend their communities.

The question faces every

member of the labour movement, and it must be answered soon. Only the organised strength of the labour movement can defeat fascism: but that strength has been dissipated through lack of clear perspective.

Black self-defence groups already exist in some areas. The working class youth, black and white, of Southall, Toxteth, Brixton and Moss Side, in a few hours did more to blunt the Tory offensive and halt the fascists than the labour movement reformists and bureaucrats, or the Anti-Nazi League leadership, have achieved in a lifetime of words and gestures.

But just a few months later, the Tory attacks are as strong and the fascists are out of the gutters and back on the streets again.

The growth or failure of fascism is ultimately determined by the course of the class struggle. Capitalism inevitably propels the classes into conflict, and the working class seeks to protect its interests. The determining question, though, is under whose leadership?

These struggles are easily defeated when they develop in isolation. Not only are industrial struggles kept isolated, but so too are political issues.

While the Leyland workers were struggling against the treachery of Duffy and Kitson, the racist Nationality Act became law.

It is the same labour leadership which helps slowly strangle strikes, which ignored Toxteth and Brixton, which formed the last Labour Government, and which gave way to racist pressure on every issue.

Anti-fascist rallies or carnivals that occur in a vacuum — divorced from the mobilisation of the working class and the political struggle for leadership — easily become so much indignant liberal hot air.

Middle class liberals of course recoil at all skin-heads, and feel that fascism is morally wrong — in the same way as they abhor the vandalising of telephone booths.

When the anti-fascist movement becomes politically dependent on the support of such people, it has lost its way.

Where sections of the middle classes are prepared to fight fascism, we must of course fight with them. But such people have never felt bound by the interests of the working class: and the working class should not for one second limit itself to the reformist programme pushed by the middle class liberals.

Socialist Organiser seeks to build for immediate defence against racist attacks by the state or fascists.

And we fight inside the organised labour movement for workers' self-defence. This fight must be pursued on every shop floor, in every school and college, and in every working class community.

The political battle must be won, to show that neither black nor white workers can rely on the police for

protection against the fascists, any more than they can rely on the state and its bosses' courts for protection against the police.

The labour movement cannot lead the fight against racism and fascism if it is left in the hands of the likes of Roy Hattersley and Merlyn Rees.

When they talk about abolishing the present Nationality Act, we know that they introduced previous equally racist immigration acts. When they talk about positive discrimination, it is not to bring forward the authentic voice and politics of the black working class and youth, but it is rather to make a shabby deal with the so-called 'black community leaders' and those black middle class opportunists who put their own advancement first.

The fight for workers' self-defence is the political struggle to make the working class impregnable to racist, fascist and state attacks.

It is the central demand around which to build a campaign in the labour movement, to turn every Trades Council anti-racist sub-committee, every Labour Party ward, into a fighting body that can play a role in politically and physically smashing the racist attacks of the fascists and the state.

Such a campaign around the need for workers' self-defence is the only way to coordinate the struggle nationally, and to build real support for the black self-defence groups that already exist.

Self-defence

Anti-fascist defence cannot be organised simply by the mainly white labour movement acting for, and over the heads of, the black communities. Unconditional support and assistance for the self-organisation of black activists to defend their communities has to be a starting point for our policy. But at the same time we must campaign for the whole labour movement to take up its political and physical responsibilities against racism and fascism.

In this way we can lay the basis for defence groups uniting black and white workers on a basis of equality, and provide black militants with links with the labour movement through which they can fight for supporting strike action and the full weight of the labour movement.

A national labour movement organisation against fascism would take up the following demands:

- Expel all fascists from labour movement bodies,
- Build the organisations of the unemployed and youth around working class policies,
- Build workplace defence of workers against racist attacks, and force the bosses to pay the expenses involved,
- Build students' unions in the schools to fight for their interests and counter the fascist offensive against youth,
- Unite anti-racist organisations, around a programme of struggle.

Militant 'no' to positive discrimination

by CHRIS ERSWELL

SUPPORTERS of the Militant tendency on Liverpool City Council have been arguing against Liberal proposals for positive action to recruit a higher proportion of blacks into council departments.

Hiding behind a pseudo 'class' position that such positive action would create a racist backlash in the white working class, and that blacks should only be allowed more jobs when jobs are available for all the working class, the Militant councillors' arguments amount in reality to an accommodation to the racism endemic in the white working class.

Instead of basing their political positions on the legitimate democratic, objective rights of the black working class for a percentage quota of jobs on the council corresponding to the percentage of blacks in the population as a whole, the Militant tendency prefer to accommodate to the subjective and

reactionary ideology prevailing in the white working class.

To counterpose, as do Militant, the correct demand for more jobs for all workers, to the entirely distinct question of the double oppression of blacks, who are oppressed as workers and again as blacks, is to evade the democratic right of blacks to equality of job opportunity.

Why oppose?

Does the Militant tendency deny that blacks are often as not the first to be made redundant? Then why oppose a proposal to apply positive discrimination as the policy for countering the legacy of this negative discrimination? Furthermore, the Militant's prattle about 'unity' of the working class being paramount at the expense of the legitimate democratic demands of the blacks,

begs the obvious question, 'unity on what policies?'

The policy of the denial of the blacks' right to equality of employment opportunity? Or, the policy of no compromise with racism in the white working class?

Backlash

Clearly, no-one can rule out the possibility that backward elements and fascists might seek to whip up a racist backlash to the implementation of positive discrimination; but whether or not it would be successful would depend on whether the left stood clearly and unequivocally in defence of black democratic rights.

Whilst it is clear that Militant supporters are not 'racists', as the Liberals have opportunistically labelled them, their policy represents an accommodation to racism, and racist ideology, in the white working class. And this represents a serious flaw in Militant's politics, a contradiction in the positions of Militant, which generally, of course, are much more seriously anti-racist than the Liberals'.

A similar flaw runs through the whole of Militant's politics.

On the question of positive discrimination for women, the argument is that it would create 'division' between men and women, because men wouldn't like it. Unity has to be preserved even at the expense of women's right to equality of employment opportunity.

On the question of Ireland, Militant refuse to give critical support to the Provisional IRA, or sharply oppose the reactionary pro-imperialist politics within the Northern Ireland Protestant working class, on the spurious grounds that it would 'divide the working class'. It is the same political method: tacit accommodation to the reactionary politics of Orangeism, whilst implicitly denying Ireland's right to self-determination and accepting the imperialist partition of Ireland.

Indeed, whenever a sharp issue arises involving prejudice and bigotry within the working class, Militant would rather deny the legitimacy of the rights of oppressed minorities (or majorities) — whether it be blacks, women, Irish nationalists, or gays — than face the unpleasant and often uphill struggle to challenge reactionary ideology.

The 'unity of the working class' must be an internationalist, non-sexist unity, or else it will be a chauvinist unity — a unity built on sand that will leave the working class a victim of its division, vulnerable to reactionary ideology, and which will cause the working class to be smashed by the bosses at the first major test.

Tory violence against women

WOMEN READERS will be pleased to know that Labour MP Jack Ashley's mind was set at rest by Tory Lord Chancellor Hailsham this week.

In the midst of the public furore over the 'hitch hike' rape judgment, Hailsham issued a statement repudiating the view that 'contributory negligence' should justify a lenient sentence for rape.

And Hailsham went further: he assured Ashley that he will now deal with the matter 'in his own way', and stressed the seriousness of the 'detestable crime of rape'.

So what is this? A Tory government coming down in favour of women's rights?

No, rather a Tory government moving belatedly to attempt to restore the tarnished credentials of the judiciary — one of whose number was unguarded enough to get caught with his prejudices showing.

The capitalist class and its legal system still often reproduce the feudal idea of women as the private property of men. This same view is reflected in the thinking of the majority of workers and the middle class, and has only in recent years come under a sustained and growing challenge from the women's movement and from socialists.

But Judge Richards' pronouncement, if used as a precedent, would reduce women to substantially below the status of private property. Who can imagine the plea of 'contributory negligence' successfully reducing the sentence for stealing an unlocked Rolls Royce or silverware from an unlocked country mansion?

By moving to oppose Richards' argument, therefore, Hailsham is restoring a certain consist-

ency to bourgeois law while — no doubt successfully — seeking to con some woolly-headed reformists like Ashley and even some women that the laws and the Tories really can defend women.

The opposite is the case. Rape — as the 'hitch hike' case itself shows — is not 'sex that has got out of hand', but a crime of brute violence and domination. The rise in the number of reported cases of rape is paralleled by a rise in violence against women and children in the home.

Both stem to a large extent from the social crisis unleashed by the Tories policies of recession which have brought bitter poverty and long-term unemployment to millions of men and women, and from the continued dominance of the ideology of the subordination and oppression of women, reinforced by the institutions of the state and by the mass media.

By stepping up its attacks on jobs, wages, and conditions; on social services, health, housing, and education; on unemployment benefit, social security and pensions; the Tory government is both triggering additional frustration which fuels violence and itself inflicting its own brand of violence on millions of women.

Who can gauge the deep psychological violence inflicted on countless thousands of young women denied any prospect of a job that can utilise their talents and skills and enable them to develop their independence as individuals?

Who can measure the oppression of young women driven today by unemployment to abandon their hopes of a career and seek refuge in early marriage and child-rearing — at a time of a grow-

ing housing shortage, soaring rents, and dwindling health services?

How can we measure the depression and isolation of the hundreds of thousands of married women workers driven out of the workforce by closures in industry and the cuts in the public sector — stripped of their economic independence, denied even unemployment benefit, and confined to the drudgery of domestic toil in the home? Even accurate numbers of such women are hard to find, since they are 'hidden' by official statistics of unemployment.

Who can assess the scale of the toil and oppression endured by growing numbers of daughters forced to care in their own homes for sick and elderly relatives cast adrift by Tory cuts and by capitalism's failure to provide adequate social provision?

With such state attacks part of the daily reality of life for millions of women, who can seriously believe that the law can protect them? Would heavier sentences be anything but trying to beat down the symptoms while the disease continues unchecked?

Judge Richards' notorious sentence is simply the tip of an iceberg of male prejudice in the judicial system: prejudice which has meant that only one raped woman in 20 dares to go to the police to complain, and that sentences for this most savage of crimes have been steadily falling even for the small percentage of rapists found guilty.

Will the capitalist police and courts ever deal with rape from the point of view of identifying with the victim rather than the criminal? Women need

to rely on their own strength — to organise to learn self-defence, and to demand self-defence classes for girls at school.

They must insist the labour movement supports women's refuges and Rape Crisis Centres, and backs women's demands for changes in the rape law.

But there is no prospect of an improvement of the plight of women so long as this Tory government remains in office.

Against this toll of misery, psychological torture, exploitation and oppression, women have only one recourse: they must organise in the unions and in the Labour Party, and drive forward the struggle for action to defeat the Thatcher government and for socialist policies which can begin to lift the burden.

Such policies would include immediate reversal of the cuts in the public sector and a crash programme of public works to provide vital improvements in health, education and housing as well as new jobs for both women and men; legislation to give women the right to choose abortion; a dramatic extension of childcare facilities to make equality of opportunity a reality for women; and steps towards the socialisation of domestic tasks such as cooking and laundry which presently fall upon women.

The fight for policies such as these requires a struggle within the labour movement against sexism at all levels and against the present leadership, which is committed to the values and prejudices of the capitalist system. Socialist Organiser urges women readers to join with us in this fight.

Build struggle to save London Transport

LABOUR turncoats, together with SDP, Liberal and Tory councillors, committed the Greater London Council this Tuesday, 12th, to raising London Transport fares in line with the Law Lords' judgment.

Fares are due to rise 100% on March 21. A further rise, later this year, will bring the total increase up to 200%. Special fares for the elderly are to be abolished.

Services will be cut by up to 25%, and some 5,000 plus jobs stand to be lost.

The London Labour Party Regional Executive had voted 25 to 7 to ask the GLC Labour group to defy the Lords. The Labour group voted 23 to 22 to support this recommendation (and its own manifesto).

But before that vote the Labour group had already decided not to impose a whip on the issue. Thus, even with most of the Tories abstaining, there was a 27 to 24 majority on the council for the fare rises.

The argument of the Labour fare-raisers was that defying the Lords could lead to surcharge. But, even if a few Tory-minded judges could declare Labour's chief GLC manifesto plank illegal, it is not so clear that the Tories could get away with sweeping penalties against Labour councillors for sticking to that manifesto.

London Transport unions are already discussing a one day strike against the cuts and fare rises. GLC Labour councillors met on Monday 11th with 35 trade union representatives who said they would support defiance. "All hell is going to break loose if this [fare rise/cuts package] is accepted", said one NUR representative.

When GLC leader Ken Livingstone — who personally supported defiance —

spoke on the issue at a public meeting in Dagenham, the attendance was 400.

A strong fighting alliance can still be built between the London Labour Party, the loyal Labour councillors, the LT unions, and London passengers — one strong enough to beat the fare rises and cuts even now. Union backing of the fare rise/cuts plan, coupled with a public campaign for mass refusal to pay the increases, could force the Tories and their bewigged friends to back down.

If not, it means a serious cost of living increase, reduced services, and lost jobs, not only for Londoners, but probably also in many other areas.

Solihull Tory council is already taking the Labour West Midlands County Council to court over its

cheap fares, promised in last May's election like the GLC's were.

The Labour group has yet to discuss the issue — but

group leader Gordon Morgan has publicly promised that all decisions will be 'within the law'.



Files on ranks

MICHAEL Foot will have to shift himself a bit sharpish if he's not to lose valuable ammunition for his inquiries. Retiring Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall John Alderson has

ordered the 'weeding out' of the files of the 30-strong Devon & Cornwall Special Branch.

Among the several hundred files amassed over the last 20 years are such

entries as 'X had meal with Wedgwood Benn'.

This 'weeding out' is not unprecedented in human history. After a judicial inquiry into Special Branch records in South Australia, then premier Don Dunstan ordered the destruction of most records.

They included files on all Labour politicians, all left or radical university persons, all prominent demonstrators, homosexuals, feminists and divorce law reform campaigners.

Fair enough, you may say, such troublesome rabble are asking for it. Special Branch also had files on half the Supreme Court judges! Biter bit?

So how come Judge Richards, who was acting in the finest traditions of the judiciary, got such a bad press?

Of course, you expect it from the pinko Guardian and the Observer. They make a profession out of undermining the police and judiciary. But it comes to a pretty pass when the Sun, the Mail and the Star are giving lectures to judges on the punishment of rapists.

Yo-ho-ho on pages 3 and 5 and moralising on pages 1 and 2.

The Sun, for example, led one edition with the news that the 18 year old rape victim had married — or rather, 'rape girl is a bride'.

This demonstrated that even someone who has been defiled can be brought back to the land of the virtuous through the courtesy of a 'decent' man.

The victim shared this honour, and the front page, with Anna Ford, who overcame her handicap at being a newsreader and was smiling out of page 1 under the adjacent headline, 'Anna's a mama'.

On page 3, meanwhile, there was Heavenly Helle, 'a 23 year old cutie from Copenhagen', brazenly contributing to her own rape.

Streaker

The Star had a picture of 'Delightful' Angie Layne at the Boat Show (you wouldn't need a 'press gang' to find a 'sex' love) above a story that the Rugby League club 'Doncaster' was advertising for a 'streaker' with a '3 1/2 inch bust' to boost dwindling sales.

Maybe 'heh' it's simply self-interest on the part of the tabloids to present a façade of righteous indignation. But the Star's attack on the judge (This is the brute the judge set free) goes deeper than a desire to pre-

serve its own models.

The paper returns the attack under the headline 'An error, a smear, an insult'.

It began this piece by stating, 'Judge Bertrand Richards has not only insulted the women of Britain by his rape case judgment, he has also smeared every man.'

'Out of step'

It also quotes another judge, Sir Melfort Stevenson, aged 79, as 'backing up Judge Richards by saying, "Girls who hitch-hike in this way are seeking the excitement of danger. If she is a personable woman, isn't it so simple? It really doesn't need explanation."

But the Star quotes this judge only to conclude that he is out of step with the mainstream of the judiciary. 'Is this the general view of the legal profession? The Daily Star knows that it is not. Most legal authorities questioned say Judge Richards was too lenient.'

There is no doubt that women have forced significant changes in the handling of rape cases.

The press is barred from giving the names of rape victims. Past sexual experience cannot now be directly used against the woman in court (though it continues to be used to smear the woman indirectly).

But in attacking Judge Richards the press is not protecting women: it is protecting the judiciary. Decisions like his bring the judiciary into such obvious contempt that the credibility of judges is damaged at a time when they are being forced into the front line of the ruling class as saviours.

The newspapers know, even if Judge Richards does not, that judgments like this cannot be allowed to pass without comment, at a time when judges are becoming an acceptable target for jokes.



by Gerry Byrne



Attlee

Planning race law

THIS 30-year rule is proving very illuminating. We all knew it was a Labour government in 1958 who introduced the first immigration act, but did you know how long it was in the planning?

The Ede committee was set up by the Attlee government to review means which might be adopted to

check the immigration into this country of coloured people from the British colonial territories.

Rejected

It rejected the idea of immigration controls at that time, but reported:

"Any solution depending on an apparent or conceal-

ed colour test would be so invidious as to make it impossible of adoption. Nevertheless, the use of any powers taken to restrict the free entry of British subjects to this country would, as a general rule, be more or less confined to coloured persons."

So much for non-racist immigration controls.

World News

Solidarność

Bitter lessons of fight to 'reform' away Polish bureaucracy

As the Army's grip descended, Solidarity workers were beginning to move towards a revolutionary struggle for power. Here we summarise and excerpt an account by Lodz Solidarity leader Z.Kowalewski (who came to France just before the coup) in the Paris paper Le Monde (January 7).

AFTER THE shock of the raid on the firemen's academy in Warsaw by the hated militia, in all the factories of our region, Solidarity militants and activists were on full alert.

At this crucial moment, Andrzej Slowik, president of Lodz region Solidarity, left for Warsaw to take part in an emergency meeting of Solidarity's national leadership.

In Warsaw, Slowik presented a proposal for union action: an active strike movement together with the creation of workers' militias. Such measures were necessary because, we arrived at the conclusion... that the crisis had already assumed a revolutionary character.

For months the Party, liberals and hardliners alike, was pushing the idea of a National Salvation Front as a replacement for the crumbling National Unity Front - a creature of the PUWP which pulled in

other supposedly 'independent' parties behind the PUWP on the single list for elections to the Polish Parliament.

The PUWP's idea was fairly transparent. In the new 'Front' the union and the working class would provide the labour and sacrifice, while the PUWP would have the whip hand.

Kowalewski responded: Our position was the following: National Salvation Front - No! Entente - Yes!

The content of any agreement had to be determined by three forces: the power of the state, the church whose moral authority no-one questioned, and Solidarity as the major social movement...

The basis of such an agreement could only be the theses adopted by Solidarity's Congress. The agreement would have to relate to three points:

- * The fight against the crisis,
- * The implementation of economic reforms,
- * The creation of a self-managing republic.

But Polish society was on the point of breaking up as hunger threatened millions of people. All the fine promises of the Party about 'reforms' had come to nothing - the PUWP's main preoccupation was to fight

battles against the workers' insistent demands to take over control of the factories and economic management.

Elsewhere in his account Kowalewski poses the relations between the workers and the state machine not in terms of different bases for an agreement, but stark conflict.

During the Presidium meeting at Radom, Lech Walesa and numerous other leaders had become convinced, as we in Lodz already had, about the revolutionary situation, and for the first time began to pose the question: who is to rule? A bureaucracy minority or the working masses?

Provincial administrations were incapable of determining even the precise number of people who should receive ration cards. Cards were distributed in secret to people closely linked to the power structure.

Nobody controlled the destruction of these cards after they had been used: they found their way into circulation again.

The result: to obtain something even with ration coupons, it was necessary to queue for a whole day, sometimes even for two or three days. For workers in particular the situation was tragic.

So the union took over the distribution of ration cards printed by Solidarity

itself. Lodz was the only region in the country where this occurred.

A control commission consisting of union and city officials... took over the distribution of ration cards and this allowed us to put an end to the privileged access to foodstuffs. And we were successful in this.

Central government refused Solidarity the right to control food distribution, arguing that it represented an encroachment on their prerogatives and power. As vice prime minister Rakowski had told Walesa, 'In this country he who maintains control of food distribution has, by virtue of this, power'.

But in our region we already exercised such control... Special teams of trade unionists controlled the situation in the countryside, in the abattoirs, the warehouses, and in wholesale and retail outlets...

Thanks to our activities, the feeding of the population was greatly improved and the queues shortened. We already had prepared a plan dealing with the control of industrial production in the area.

The idea of workers' control was already being enthusiastically discussed and pushed for in Lodz as early as January 1981, months before the issue



Marion Jurezyk (centre), Szczecin shipyard leader, now faces charges of high treason for advocating that the government "should be hung".

exploded on the national political scene, their slogan was 'power to the workers in the factory'. Factory councils linked up at regional level, and those regional bodies were grouped together in a National Federation of Self-Management Bodies in October 1981, covering 26 regions.

Combat

At regional level, writes Kowalewski, we were convinced that the only method the working class could employ was the active strike. Active strike action consists of taking control of production by the strike committees, and this control to be based on a plan worked out by the workers themselves to meet society's needs...

On 9th December, six members of the area Presidium met with workers in the 12 largest enterprises of Lodz. At mass meetings the active strike was discussed, as was the setting up of workers' militias and other measures to combat economic sabotage.

The immense majority of workers were for such forms of action. The military takeover and imposition of martial law cut short this drive by the working class to collectively take over the running of society. The Party and the bureaucracy could not simply be pushed off the political scene: their dominance could not be whittled away quietly.

Inadequate

Talk of 'reform', 'easing out the Party', or leaving the Party intact while revolutionising the rest of society, became hollow when the PUWP, despite all its overtures, concessions and manoeuvres, point blank refused to become simply a fifth wheel in Polish society.

The question was simply and brutally, as Kowalewski says, who has power? The workers, or a bureaucratic minority?

Unprepared, with events rapidly overtaking it, and having worked and struggled for months with inadequate ideas and conceptions about how to transform society, the ten million strong workers' movement has been overwhelmed. But the lessons will not be lost.

Inside an occupied mine

Le Monde (January 8) also carried an account by a miner of the sit-in strike by him and his comrades against the martial law.

IT WAS on the evening of December 14, the day after the declaration of martial law, that we decided not to come out of the pit. Two thousand miners took part in the occupation.

The population sent us down food and drink without interference from the police.

The strike committee rationed the food: a small cake, a bit of sausage, and a piece of chocolate, was our daily ration.

At night it was extremely cold and we huddled together. After five days, the food deliveries were stopped and our rations became more and more miserable.

After Christmas Day, each of us had no more than one third of a cake, a tiny piece of sausage, and two cups of water a day. The miners began searching round for the crumbs dropped on previous days.

The priests tried to persuade us to give up the occupation, saying that it was all a lost cause. We had the feeling that they were sent by the government.

After learning from the strike committee that we had no intention of stopping our action, the priests left promising to return the next day to say Mass. But they never returned.

It was very disillusioning. Most of us are believers.

After Christmas Day the food situation became unbearable. The strike committee, after hearing that the occupations in other mines had finished, proposed the management that we would end our occupation in return for a guarantee that no reprisals be taken and that work would recommence normally.

Management having agreed to this, we left the pit on December 27.

Most miners, like myself, left the place, which was full of militia and military. But the strike committee was arrested and taken away in buses.

The following Monday we realised that the other promises weren't kept either.

We were all sacked. We had to reapply for work, and management decided to take us on only if we agreed to sign a declaration that we would never strike again and renounced our membership of Solidarity.

REFUGEES CHALLENGE HAITI DICTATORSHIP

BERNARD Sansaricq plans to invade Haiti and end the vicious dictatorship of Jean Claude Duvalier (called Baby Doc, a rather cuddly name for a particularly grisly gangster).

While the press have found the somewhat Heath Robinson nature of the planned invasion the source of some mirth, it does put the spotlight on the extreme corruption and brutality of the Reagan-backed regime (members of Sansaricq's family were massacred by Duvalier).

This is a source of some embarrassment for the US, as is the detention of 3,200 Haitian refugees in the US.

The refugees are being held in camps like Krome Avenue Detention Facility, an ex-missile base with no recreation facilities, until

their claims for political asylum are processed by immigration authorities. The prospects even then are bleak - most will be deported back to Haiti.

Art Brill, spokesperson for the US Justice Department, says of these people, many of whom made the perilous sea-crossing in horrendous conditions, 'They are illegal aliens'.

Rumours

Conditions in the camps are appalling. Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste, head of the Haitian Refugee Centre, says of the Krome Ave camp near Miami: 'The camp is like a concentration camp. Haitians are dying little by little'. But the detainees are fighting back.



Claude Duvalier

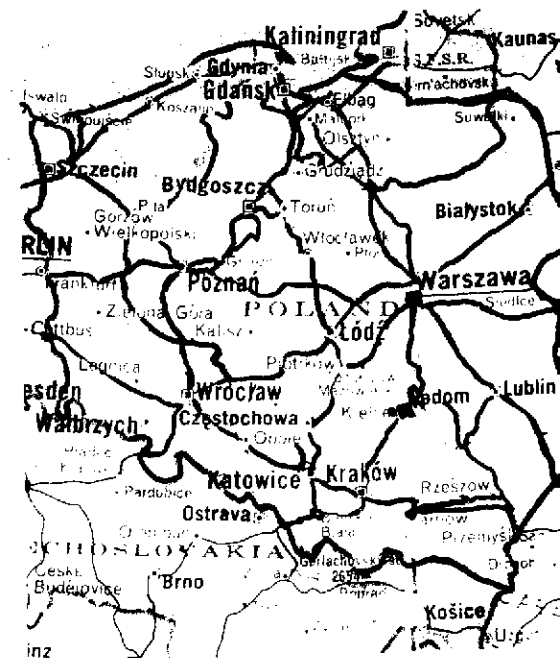
On Christmas Eve, 650 of the 711 detainees began a hunger strike. A few days later, 500-plus demonstrators assembled outside, after rumours that several hunger strikers were ill

and being refused medical treatment. A riot began after they were refused entry to see their fellow Haitians.

Riot police and security guards came under a hail of bottles and rocks: 200 Haitians managed to break through, and in the ensuing battle 200 acres of the Everglades were set fire and 101 prisoners escaped.

There has been resistance in other camps, too.

At Fort Allen, Puerto Rico, three guards were injured in a rock-throwing riot by 200 demonstrators and 100 Border Patrol guards were immediately added to the camp's security force. At the Brooklyn Detention Centre, 35 Haitian women are still on hunger strike.



Rawlings ousts Ghana rulers

ON NEW Year's Eve in Ghana, an ex-British colony on the West coast of Africa, Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings led sections of the armed forces in a coup against the corrupt pro-imperialist regime of Dr. Hilla Limann.

A Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) of military officers was set up, and measures of martial law introduced.

Limann and other officials of his People's National Party (PNP) were arrested, along with reactionary officers, and key economic and communications installations were occupied.

Within a week, Rawlings was in control.

The PNDC broadcast decrees announcing cuts in food prices and fares. People's courts and people's defence committees have been set up by the PNDC.

The PNDC has come to power on a platform of democratic and economic reforms. In Rawlings' words:

"Democracy involves food, clothing and shelter. The time has come for us to restructure this society in a real and meaningful democratic way, so as to ensure the active involvement of the whole people in decision-making. Only a revolution can rectify the problems produced by the worst regime in Ghana's history."

These words have great support amongst the mass of working people, who have known only hardship and oppression under the successive neo-colonial bosses' governments since independence.

During Limann's rule shortages of food and other basics have become critical, inflation has reached over 100% and unemployment has risen above even its 'normal' massive levels.

These conditions show the impact of the world capitalist crisis on Ghana, whose economy is totally geared to the production of profits for the imperialist bankers and bosses, and their lackeys in Ghana.

The wealth produced by the workers is wasted on private profits and on financing the repressive state needed to protect these profits.

Masses of working people have no jobs, or lose their jobs, for the sole reason that the bosses do not see profits coming from investing in production and services. Peasants are forced to suffer without enough land, without cheap credit, without access to manufactured goods and machinery.

The mass of the people is in a constant struggle to get even the minimum daily needs of life. There was deep and growing anger against Limann and the bosses behind him.

This anger focussed on the blatant corruption of the regime — which is in fact just the most obvious part of the alliance between the bosses' politicians and the bosses. The politicians and officers are handsomely rewarded for their services to the bosses, while the people suffer.

Rawlings is speaking to the anger and the experience of hardship amongst



Jerry Rawlings: revolutionary or opportunist?

the working masses. He has come to power, not through the mobilisation of the masses, but through their passive support.

Resistance to the coup amongst reactionary officers and bosses' politicians found no support amongst the people — and was quickly crushed.

Rawlings' reputation as a champion of the cause of the oppressed stems from the coup which he led in 1979 to end the corruption of the previous regime.

He quickly handed power over to Limann after elections. Limann was soon exposed as an enemy of the people, while Rawlings remained a hero.

He and his programme of reform have not been tested by the workers.

Even if Rawlings is not an opportunist, but genuinely on the side of the oppressed, it remains the case that any reliance on

Rawlings by the working class is dangerous.

Lacking any coherent perspective of socialist revolution, he is forced to balance uneasily between the pressure of the international and national capitalists, the contradictory aspirations of his supporters in the armed forces, and the demands of the working masses.

In the new conditions opened up by the latest coup, the working class must develop its struggles, building independent organisations that can put forward their own demands as a class and give a lead to the peasantry and petit bourgeois in the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government.

From this standpoint it is correct to put demands on Rawlings to implement his call for 'revolution'. Not one of his goals can be achieved while capitalism

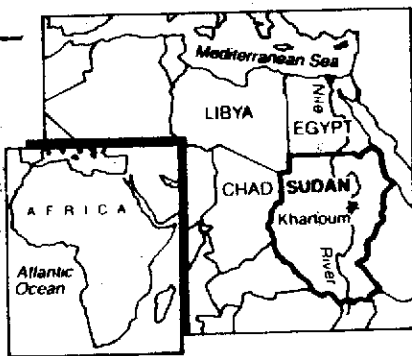
remains intact.

Workers must demand the establishment of a Constituent Assembly to carry through demands that meet the needs of Ghana's proletariat and peasantry, together with the guarantee of democratic rights for the working masses.

They must call on Rawlings to break all links with Ghana's capitalists and arm the workers and peasants, who alone can defend a revolutionary regime against internal and external capitalist attack.

And while forming in each area revolutionary committees to mobilise workers and poor peasants, they must call for the establishment of committees of rank and file soldiers to build a solid base of revolutionary struggle within the armed forces.

JIM FARNHAM



Sudan rioters attacked

WORKING CLASS youth and students in Omdurman and Khartoum (capital of Sudan) came out onto the streets last week in a fighting protest against massive increases in the price of sugar (up by 62%) and other basics.



Numeiri

They were attacked by police and solidiers of Numeiri's bloody regime.

But if Numeiri and the bosses behind him thought that terror would crush the protest, they were soon proved wrong. The mobilisation, far from being broken, grew in strength and size.

By the weekend, Numeiri had ordered all schools closed down, and sent troops to occupy the university in Khartoum.

At least two people have been killed by government forces, and reports speak of the worst since 1976 — when prices of basic necessities were increased by 100% and 200% in a series of steps.

is very thin. In particular, it is not yet known to what extent workers have added their strength to the youth mobilisation. The explosion of militancy amongst the youth is a barometer of the anger and militancy within the working class as a whole.

Last June, 40,000 workers brought the railway system to a halt in a three week long wage strike (after which Numeiri threatened to execute union officials and strike leaders).

Before announcing the price rises, the government had launched a massive campaign in Khartoum and other towns, expelling unemployed workers and

striking the rural areas. This was part of a policy of terror against the working class, aimed at crushing any potential for resistance.

The latest price increases are part of the conditions laid down by the bankers of the IMF for a loan that is vital to keep the crippled Sudanese economy ticking over. The repayments on such loans are part of the profits squeezed from Sudanese working people by the imperialists.

At the same time, the imperialists — and particularly the US imperialists — are looking to Numeiri's regime to help them build up their military power in the region.

In return, Reagan has sent huge shipments of weapons, on the pretext of helping Sudan defend itself from Libyan attack.

Even while the Sudan is being used as a base for US imperialism, the Sudanese working class is struggling against the imperialist regime. The Sudanese working class is the only force that can bring about a genuine revolution in the Sudan.

World News

Labour movement conference on Ireland: Feb 27

THE Labour Committee on Ireland is co-sponsoring a labour movement conference on Ireland on February 27th in London under the title "Ireland: time for Tory policies to go".

The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss the situation in Ireland and the LCI will be arguing for the labour movement to adopt policies that represent a clear break with bipartisanship and recognise that Britain can play no progressive role in Ireland.

Hostile

This task is particularly urgent in the unions. For years most British unions have been actively hostile to any attempt to raise the question of Britain's role in Ireland.

They use the argument that any open opposition to

British repression or to partition simply divides the trade unions in the North of Ireland and they hide behind the barely-existent "Better Life for All Campaign".

Strategic

The unions' position was graphically demonstrated at the 1981 Labour Party Conference. A large proportion of CLPs voted for resolutions supporting British withdrawal, but only two small unions did so.

The February 27th conference aims to provide delegates with the arguments to fight to commit their organisations to support British withdrawal and oppose partition.

Trade unionists from Ireland and Britain will be speaking on the situation in the labour movement in both countries. Clive Soley MP and Ken Livingstone will be introducing a section on "The need for an end to bipartisanship", which will be followed by a considerable period of open discussion by delegates.

The conference is on

February 27th at 11am at The Theatre, 309 Regent Street, London W1. Delegates or observers' credentials cost £2 and are available from Labour Movement Conference on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W14.

The LCI will be holding its AGM on February 6th in Birmingham. It is open to paid-up members for 1981 (with speaking and voting rights, fee £1.50), other Labour Party members (with speaking rights only, £2) and non-Labour Party observers (£3.50).

The AGM will be looking at the last year's work, discussing motions and forthcoming activities and electing new officers. There will also be workshops covering work in the unions, work with women and with youth and in CND, as well as one discussing different strategies for British withdrawal from Ireland.

Further details of the AGM are available from Don Flynn, c/o LCI, Box BM 5355, London WC1.



IN TURKEY, the trial continues of leaders of the DISK trade union confederation by the Evren junta. In Britain the Turkey Solidarity Campaign is organising a speaking tour by DISK leaders in Europe, to take place

between March 24 and April 2.

Labour movement bodies are invited to affiliate to the TSC and sponsor the tour. The TSC can be contacted at BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

Workers
Socialist
Review 1
50p



LABOUR PARTY

Cut the cant: press home the fight!

John O'Mahony charts the retreat of the Left

THE ANCHOR-line argument of a section of the Left now is that, really, the Marxists don't care about defeating the Tories and returning a Labour government, and that therefore they are disinclined to seek a compromise with the Right.

Jumping into line in response to the blackmail and threats of the Right, the trade union bureaucrats, and the Foot-Kinnock centre, these left wingers throw this accusation over their shoulders at the Marxists. It is what the Right and the Kinnock faction say to them, and by slanderously passing the accusation on to us, they disguise from themselves what role they are now playing.

Buckling under pressure, they present what they are doing as a free choice made to secure a respect-worthy objective — a new Labour government. Naturally, they argue, only those who reject this goal can fail to follow such a lead.

Thus those who set out to make sure that 'never again' would there be a Labour government like Callaghan's, now reach the verge of witch-hunting the Left which refuses to forget it.

Most disturbing is the rationalisation for their own capitulation to the blackmailers used by some of the Left.

Overthrow

They are serving a higher goal. Things will turn out for the best — although we have had serious setbacks since the Party conference, although we have had a limited defeat.



Carving up the jobs in the next Labour government? Kinnock and Healey at Brighton.

Instead of realistically facing up to the facts and proceeding to change them, we have self-consoling cant and venom for the Marxist Left.

Twenty years ago the leaders of the then quite imposing Left retreated before the bludgeoning and the blackmailing of the right wing, and its furious fightback against the 1960 conference decision for unilateral nuclear disarmament. Acting on Nye Bevan's dying advice against underestimating the Labour Party's desire for unity, the Left leader of that time, Michael Foot, sought compromises. In the process he surrendered bit by bit to the Right, which overthrew unilateralism at the October 1961 conference.

Consoling cant about unity played its role then too. So did 'investigation' (by the Tribune Victory For Socialism group) and witch-hunting of the Marxists by the Right and sections of the Left. (We were not really unilateralists, you see, not pacifists).

It has taken almost 20 years for the Labour Left to recover the ground light-mindedly and cravenly surrendered without a serious fight by Foot and Co. in 1961. The Labour movement does not have 20 years to squander again.

To kick out the Tories would be a great achievement even if the ghost of James Callaghan or Harold Wilson were to be the replacement for Thatcher. We want to kick out the Tories and we want a Labour government.

Crippling

But where did Thatcher come from? From the failures of the Wilson-Callaghan government. Another such government will inevitably fail, resoundingly and probably messily.

It will be certain to rat on, disappoint, and disillusion its supporters. And then what? After a new Wilson-Callaghan type government may come not a new Thatcher but worse.

The decay and crisis of British society continues

and accelerates. We don't have all the time in the world. If we don't make decisive changes in the politics and structure of the Labour movement now, then the chance may go again for decades.

With it will go for the foreseeable period ahead the chance that the Labour movement will be able to carry through a socialist transformation of Britain. If that goes, then the probability in the medium term is for the destruction or drastic crippling of British democracy and with it the British Labour movement.

There will be no miracles. If we don't secure the future of the working class and the Labour movement, no-one will. The present trajectory of British society and the British Labour movement is towards a smash-up. If we don't avert it, then there will certainly be a smash-up.

A new Callaghan-type Labour government will be a stage on the road towards smash-up — possibly the last stage — not the discovery of the brave new road we have been talking about for 2½ years.

That is the issue now — to continue the struggle to remake the Labour movement or to accept the right wing's definition of the situation and abandon that irreplaceable fight, adopting instead the goal of a new Wilson/Callaghan type Labour government.

Those who say that winning the next election on the right wing's terms is the supreme goal now, to which everything else is subordinate, adopt for practical purpose the operational politics of the right wing.

It's not that we forget about fighting the Tories, but that those who are now parting company with us 'forget' about the need to have something to replace them by.

We must combine the job of kicking out the Tories and returning a Labour government with a continuing struggle to change and transform the Labour Party and Labour movement.

UNTIL last Wednesday, the basic issue was how the Left would go forward from the Benn campaign in the fight against the Right. After Bishops Stortford, the debate is now about a deal with the Right — and a deal that is apparently already signed and delivered.

The stand-pat decisions at the NEC Organisation Sub-committee on Monday 11th show that something was agreed at Bishops Stortford. What? The rank and file are the last to know.

The drive for a deal was clearly signalled by Chris Mullin in Tribune of January 1.

Call a halt

"Several members of the NEC", he wrote, "are prepared to contemplate a deal along the following lines."

"The Right would be asked (1) to call a halt to the purge; (2) to support the endorsement of all properly selected parliamentary candidates; (3) not to tamper with re-selection or the electoral college at least until the next election is out of the way."

"In return for this the Left would be asked (1) to undertake not to contest either the leadership or deputy leadership until after the next election; and (2) to concentrate on campaigning for policy rather than internal constitutional reforms."

"A face-saving formula would also have to be found to enable Peter Tatchell to remain a candidate for Bermondsey without unduly embarrassing Michael Foot."

Until then most of the 'Bennite' hard core had wanted to fight. In mid-December they played a major role in the two-to-one defeat at the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM of Vladimir Derer's argument that retreat and compromise were necessary.

Crippled

Sometime over Christmas, presumably, these 'Bennites' changed their minds, and accepted the basic argument which has crippled the Left again and again: that Labour must sink its differences to win elections, and that therefore, since the right wing won't give ground on essentials, the Left must.

"If they are able to put together a package acceptable to both Left and Right", Mullin wrote, "there may still be some hope for Labour at the next election."



Peter Tatchell

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by JILL SMITH
(Women against
Violence against
Women)

RAPE CASE: SACK JUDGE RICHARDS!

THE JUDGMENT of Justice
Bertrand Richards on
convicted rapist John Allen
is outrageous.

It is an insult to all women.
It allows this rapist to go
free to attack other women.
It will certainly not deter
other men, in fact it constitutes
a licence for men to rape women.

It denies women freedom
and is a dangerous precedent
which withholds from women
legal protection against
violent crime.

Rape is a violent crime,
and one which over the last
ten years has risen dramatically.
Its scars may or may
not be visible, but can last
a lifetime. A fine is not an
appropriate sentence for
violent crime.

In finding the raped
woman guilty of 'contributory
negligence', the
judge has found her guilty
of being a woman. We, as
women, refuse to accept
responsibility for acts of
male violence committed
against women.

The judge's remarks and
those of Melford Stevenson
amount to an attempt to put
a curfew on women. It is
men, not women, who rape.
It is men, not women, who
should be subject to curfew.
Women have the right to

go where they will, travel
as they please. We demand
that the law protects our
rights, and punishes those
who attack us.

Women angry at this
sentence have protested against
this demonstration of male
bias in the law outside the
Royal Courts of Justice.

Women have marched
through Soho, reclaiming
the night, to show that we
have the right to use the
streets at any time we
choose.

On Monday January 18
there will be a march and
mass lobby of parliament
by women to express their
anger over the failure of the
law to recognise this case of
male violence as a serious
crime. We will be demanding:

1. the sacking of Judge
Richards, who showed such
a clear prejudice against
women;

2. Mandatory prison for
rapists: men should not walk
freely from a court of law to
rape again.

3. That male violence against
women should be recognised
as a serious political issue.

All women angered by
this case are invited to join
this lobby. Assemble 2pm,
Speakers' Corner: 2.30pm,
march to the House of
Commons; 3.30pm lobby
of MPs; 6pm meeting in the
House of Commons.

Protest, give voice to
your anger, lobby your MP
on January 18. Note: this is
an all-women protest and
lobby.



Women
in
struggle



Backdoor attack on abortion rights

by Nelle Darlington

DESPITE the defeat of the
Corrie anti-abortion bill
in 1979, the Tory government
has successfully reduced the grounds
for legal abortion. It has done
this by altering the form
that has to be completed by
doctors when a woman
requests an abortion.

Under the 1967 Act the
grounds for abortion include
the following: the pregnancy
would cause grave risk to the
life of the woman, or physical or
mental injury to her or
existing children; or, there
is a risk that the pregnancy
would result in a
handicapped child.

New form

The DHSS's new form
makes no provision for the
doctor to nominate the
'social' grounds for author-
ising an abortion — though
these have been named in
80% of abortions under the
1967 Act. Effectively,
conditions like poverty,
homelessness and unemploy-
ment cannot be grounds for
abortion unless the woman can
prove they will lead to a medical
condition.

We must remember
that women do not have the
right to choose abortion.
Abortion is legal only before
28 weeks of pregnancy and
with the consent of two doctors.

In 1975, 141,000 legal
abortions were performed
in this country. Probably
one half of all legal abortions
are performed on the
NHS, the rest have to be
paid for.

The cheapest type of
private abortion (in the first
12 weeks of pregnancy)
costs about £80 from a
charitable organisation like
BPAS or PAS.

Unemployed

In some areas like Birmingham,
as few as ten per cent
of abortions are performed
on the NHS. How can women
who are unemployed, trying to
cope on supplementary benefit,
or facing low wages, find an
extra £80? They can't!

Cuts in NHS abortion
facilities and lack of advice
on contraception add to the
squeeze. The government

may have nationalised the
Family Planning Association
in 1974, but in places
like Leigh, where I live,
there is one family planning
clinic a week, and few pro-
choice doctors in the area.

Increase

The dangerous side-
effects of the pill (which
have caused many women
to use less reliable types of
contraception) and increasing
poverty have started to
push the abortion figures
up again.

Back street abortion was
something of the past, but
soon it will be something
of the future!

Anti-abortion organisa-
tions have been much more
active and vociferous than
socialists, and they have
organised more effectively
on Community Health
Councils and Area Health
Authorities. LIFE is trying
to introduce a Private
Member's Bill which will
make abortion on grounds

of foetal abnormality
illegal.

The Bill, if passed, will
also make abortion on
grounds of the sex of the
foetus illegal.

As socialists we must
support the right of each
woman to decide whether
to have a handicapped child
or not.

The National Abortion
Campaign believes that this
Bill is a little 'over the top'.
But we must not be too
complacent, and we must
oppose it and any others
like it.

Little progress

In real terms the fight for
a woman's right to choose
has not progressed very
far. As far back as 1934,
the Women's Cooperative
Guild passed a resolution
calling for the decriminalisation
of abortion.

In 1977 the Labour Party
conference voted for a
woman's right to choose,
and yet today women can

still not decide for them-
selves.

Many Labour Party
members have done little
to make Labour Party policy
a reality. There are rather
abstract discussions about
mandating and accounta-
bility of MPs, but these
discussions have not been
connected with the import-
ance of mandating MPs to
support Labour Party policy
on abortion.

It's about time the left
put action where words
are, and pressed for CLPs
to mandate their MPs. At
the same time the National
Executive Committee must
be forced to put Labour
Party policy on abortion
and contraception in the
manifesto.

On the NHS

All socialists should be
campaigning where they
can for adequate abortion
and contraception facilities
on the NHS.

At present rich women
can pay, and can therefore
choose, but working class
women will be pushed into
the inevitable last resort of
back street abortion like
our mothers were — unless
we fight now!



Women's Fightback meeting
'Women Against the Bomb'
Tuesday February 2, 7.30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq.

Women's Fightback Trade union conference



Coventry Council strikers

Time and again women trade unionists have come forward
to fight the Tory onslaught on their rights and living stan-
dards. And each time they have run up against the limita-
tions or outright treachery of the existing bureaucratic
leaders.

And they have found a movement which has for decades
ignored the issues and problems faced by women.

The March 27 Trade Union conference called by
Women's Fightback is designed as a focus for a movement
to change the unions and challenge their present leadership.

The conference is open to women either as individuals
or as delegates from any group, workplace organisation,
branch or women's group at local, regional or national
level.

There will be an all-day crèche. Workshops on various
topics under main groups: Pay; public sector and the cuts;
jobs; fighting sexism; racism and the Third World.

The conference fee is £3.50 (£2 for low-waged or
unwaged non-delegates). Credentials from 41 Ellington
Street, London NW7.

MARCH 27

Where we stand

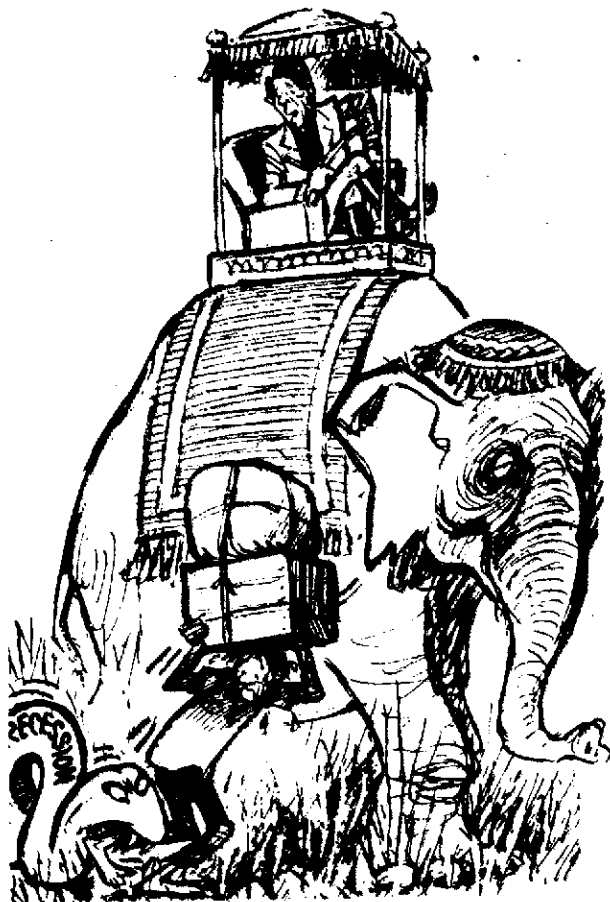
- * Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket-line; no state interference in our unions! No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions.
- * Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. For a price index calculated by working class organisations, as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class. The same inflation-proofing should apply to state benefits, grants and pensions.
- * Fight for improvements in the social services, and against cuts. Protection for those services against inflation by automatic inflation-proofing of expenditure. For occupations and supporting strike action to defend jobs and services.
- * End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs. Fight for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime. Demand work-sharing without loss of pay. Organise the unemployed — campaign for a programme of useful public works to create new jobs for the unemployed.

- * Defend all jobs! Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers and bankers, to elected trade union committees. For occupation and blocking action to halt the closures. For nationalisation without compensation under workers' management.
- * 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. Build workers' defence squads.
- * The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5, etc.), public accountability, etc.
- * Free abortion on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women. Defend and extend free state nursery and childcare provision.
- * 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 affirm their stand 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 should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.
- * It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reelection 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 alternative in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and the bosses.

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF 'REAGANOMICS'

by BOB SUTCLIFFE



'I hope it's nothing serious!'

THE 11th COMMANDMENT
THOU SHALT SPEAK NO EVIL OF THY FELLOW
REPUBLICAN
PRESIDENT ROYALTY OF AGAN



Stockman addressing Republican rally in Mid West

PRESIDENT Reagan and his recently disgraced Budget Director David Stockman say that the US Federal budget deficit is going to fall. Most forecasters say it will go through the roof.

Reagan and several influential advisers say that supply side economics (making the world more profitable for capitalists by cutting taxes) is the key to economic recovery. Vice President Bush says it is "voodoo economics", and Stockman says it is "the wrong atmospheric".

Reagan and his Treasury Secretary Donald Regan say that interest rates are too high and money is too tight. Paul Volcker, head of the Federal Reserve Board (the US equivalent of the Bank of England) says tight money is the answer to everything.

CONFUSED? You won't be after you've understood that in only a few months Reaganomics has become almost a synonym for total confusion.

One difference between Thatcherism and Reaganomics is that its passage from authority and self-confidence to confusion and self-contradiction has been even quicker. In the last few weeks Reagan, like Thatcher, has abandoned just about every one of his stated objectives and has postponed further into the future the great economic recovery which he promised when he came to power.

What the Reagan administration has managed to do, however, again like Thatcher, is begin to implement a programme which cuts the standard of living of ordinary Americans in hundreds of ways and which benefits the rich and the capitalists.

The Reagan administration, like Thatcher, believes both in the control of the money supply and in cuts in government spending to balance the state budget: it advocates widespread deregulation the dismantling of govern-



Triumph of election not followed up by triumphant achievements in government

ment controls on the activities of capitalists). The objective is to reverse the fall in the rate of profit and to make a historic turnaround in the role of government in the economy.

Compared with its immediate predecessors, Reaganomics is a radical new attempt to solve the problems of capitalist crisis, clearly in the interests of the capitalist class.

Radical and new it may be — but intellectually coherent it is not. In fact, the Reagan administration consists of an alliance — or perhaps more appropriately a scrambled mish-mash of several economic ideas.

First there are the budget balancers, led until recently by Reagan himself. Their main economic objective in the period up to 1984 is the complete elimination of the budget deficit.

Given that Reagan was elected on a grandoise promise to cut taxes by 30% during his term of office and at the same time to vastly increase military spending, this means that the policy of cutting the deficit implies huge cuts in government spending on virtually everything else other than the military.

No-one actually knows precisely how big the cuts would have to be since the figures bandied about change almost every day. Virtually every week since Reagan won his first spending cutback vote in Congress, the administration has asked Congress to cut the budget still further.

The 1982-3 budget has still not been voted to Reagan's satisfaction, so the Federal government today is financed by short-term emergency appropriations bills.

Reagan vetoed the Congress' latest 1982-3 budget in late November because it failed to cut non-military spending by the amount he had demanded. Reagan forced the Congress into extending the

emergency budget by three weeks and meanwhile set about closing down all "non-essential" Federal government (i.e. that part which caters for the welfare of the citizen). This unprecedented move was another example of Reagan's technique of "shooting from the hip".

Sacrosanct

Until lately, Reagan's chief lieutenant in his programme of ruthless cuts has been David Stockman, a 35 year old former Congressman, and appointed by Reagan as Director of the Office of Management and the Budget. From the OMB Stockman has in the last year conducted an obnoxious drive against every aspect of government spending.

A large proportion of Congressional time in the last few months has been devoted to committees listening to evidence from Stockman and his staff about why more and more and more cuts in Federal spending should be made. After the successful congressional passage of Reagan's first batch of budget cuts in July, Stockman became the main advocate of the new round of cuts which would be necessary if the budget was to be balanced as promised in 1984.

Stockman even wanted to make a substantial cut in the sacrosanct military budget, though in the end he was forced by Reagan to compromise on only a token military cut.

If Stockman had his way, Reaganomics would be massively deflationary at a moment when the economy is sinking into slump without help from the federal government.

Stockman admitted in a recent, now notorious, interview that most of the OMB's figures were guesswork anyway. And he unwittingly revealed how, since every new calculation on the computer gave a bigger predicted deficit,

he, Stockman, during the course of the last summer, eventually flipped and launched a kind of public delirium against the supply side economists who didn't appreciate his budget-cutting efforts anyway.

This second group of Reaganites, the supply-siders, are not enthusiastic for cuts in public spending as such. David Stockman has, however, commended the book 'Wealth and Poverty' by George Gilder as 'Promethean in its intellectual power and insight', and journalist Gilder once returned the compliment.

In 'Wealth and Poverty', the new radical right's latest best-seller, Gilder attributes most of the world's ills to the undermining of the dominant role of men.

He also accepts the economic theories of an obscure Southern Californian Professor of Business named Arthur Laffer, and endorses the similar ideas of Wall Street Journal editor Jude Wanniski, author of 'The Way the World Works'. Of the latter work, Laffer has said, 'In all honesty, I believe it is the best book on economics ever written'.

Just as they insist that capitalists thrive on profits and men thrive on dominance in the family, supply-siders themselves thrive on adulation (most of it mutual).

Disciple

These intellectual (for want of a better word) high priests of the supply side all say that, for capital to recover, all assistance must be given to the present and potential entrepreneur. That means (they say) allowing capitalist investors to pocket more of their earnings — and so, more than anything, reducing taxes, especially on profits and any other form of capitalist income.

Arthur Laffer has invented the now famous 'Laffer



Fed chief Volcker



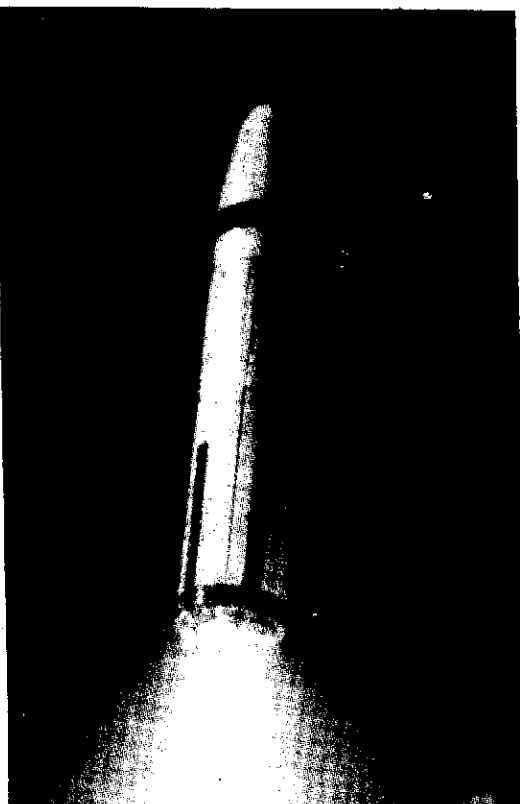
CE
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...which is alleged to show that if tax rates are reduced then the response in terms of revived entrepreneurship will be so great that at least as much government revenue will be produced by the lower tax rate. Income, production, and profit will all go up. The main Congressional principle of supply-side economics is Representative Jack Kemp of New York State, the author of the Kemp-Roth tax cut bill which was accepted by Reagan. The Kemp-Roth tax cuts would be dramatic — a 10% cut in all Federal income tax rates in three successive years. In practice they are not nearly as great as they look, even if they are not quite as fraudulent as the Thatcher tax cuts (which were matched by a more than proportionate increase in VAT in the same budget).

'Preventing'

First, Kemp-Roth was reduced in the legislature to a 5% cut in the first year as to lessen its immediate impact on the budget deficit. Second, the personal and other tax-free allowances have not been increased, and so in real terms are being eroded every day by inflation. That means that, in spite of the tax cut, the number of people paying federal incomes tax continues to grow; and it also means a higher proportion of everyone's income is subject to taxes as income rises in money, but not in real terms. The tax cuts will make very little difference to the real take-home pay of lower and middle-paid workers. All that can be said is that without the tax cuts, the amount they pay in taxes would have tended to go up. A leading accountant recently concluded, "We are not really cutting taxes for most people; we're simply preventing them from going higher." The net result of the tax cuts will be that Federal income tax as a share of the National Product will stay



Rocketing arms spending

at about the same level for the next few years, but it will not go down.

But just about all Americans will find their tax bills increased as a result of other aspects of the Administration's policies. First, because the Congress and the Treasury are already talking about raising other taxes to close the obstinate Federal deficit. Second, because the cutting of many Federal programmes is throwing new burdens back on the States and cities.

And if they are to cover even part of the glaring social needs, they will have to raise local taxes to finance higher spending. Virtually every state and city legislature is at present in the throes of discussing spending cutbacks and tax increases.

In the face of all this, supply-siders are increasingly disowning the Kemp-Roth cuts, saying that their tax cuts would have been different.

Tax cuts were never very popular with the third element in the Reaganomics coalition — the monetarists, whose high priest, of course, is Milton Friedman. Though Reagan himself is much less dogmatically monetarist than, for example, the Thatcher government, it is ironically the monetarists who have so far achieved more of their stated policy than any other part of the coalition.

Bankruptcy

And this, also ironically, is due to an appointee of President Jimmy Carter: Paul Volcker, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board (known as the 'Fed'), who has turned out to be so successful at cutting the money supply that the senior members of the Reagan administration, from the President downwards, have been publicly asking him to stop.

One of their worries is that one particular aspect of his tight monetarist policies — the high interest rates — are, just as in Britain, imposing serious financial burdens on those buying a home on a mortgage or goods on HP (in response to falling real wages, credit purchases have expanded rapidly in recent years in the USA). High interest rates are also leading many unprofitable, debt-laden firms dangerously close to the edge of bankruptcy.

For this reason the monetarist aspect of Reaganomics is something on the whole unpopular with nearly all of US industrial capital, though the bankers are, as in London, making good money out of it.

High interest rates have been the scourge of two industries in particular: the automobile industry (most private cars are bought on credit), and the construction industry (virtually all

private homes are bought on mortgages, which are becoming impossibly expensive).

Fed chairman Volcker and Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, are now engaged in a public shouting match about the money supply. Volcker says that 'inflating the money supply now would only aggravate the situation'. But Regan points out that the Fed has cut money supply growth to 4 per cent a year — 2 per cent below even the minimum of the target range agreed between the Fed and the Administration earlier this year.

Contradict

'I think we're going to insist', Regan has warned, 'that they [the Fed] stay on target. We as an Administration cannot be content to see the economy stay flat quarter after quarter. We want a growing economy that is producing jobs.'

And that was said before the Administration was forced to recognise the intensity of the present recession.

Donald Regan seems to occupy a middle position in just about all the disputes in the Reagan Administration. Which means he appears in his public statements as just about the most confused of its members: today's statements contradict yesterday's.

On one thing he has agreed with Volcker: that 'the right solution is the hard solution — to cut the budget'. Though he rejects Volcker's blackmail on the money supply — the policy of refusing to ease up until the Federal government does its job of cutting the budget.

Some days Regan seems to go along with the President's present determination not to increase taxes to cover the budget deficit. And on that score he has several times crossed swords with Stockman who, despairing of cutting spending fast enough, has become the main advocate (along with some Republican and Democratic Senators) of raising taxes or even delaying the tax cuts already voted.

Floating

But on other days Regan has popularised the idea that the deficit could be closed by a series of 'painless' tax increases — on gasoline, cigarettes, and liquor.

Aside from the bill in the name of Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Gary Hart of Colorado which would delay all personal tax cuts until the Federal budget was in balance, several other ideas for tax increases are presently floating around Capitol



Treasury chief Donald Regan

Hill. Some of them have strong support in the upper reaches of the Republican Party and so have some chance of passing, which Hart's largely propaganda Bill does not.

Adamant

As well as Regan's painful increases in the cost of living they include proposals to end tax concessions now available for consumer interest payments (except — to satisfy the automobile lobby — for cars), proposals to tax social security benefits (à la Thatcher), cuts in tax allowances for medical expenses (so there are benefits only if medical expenses are over 15 per cent of income, instead of 3 per cent as now), and a few proposals to tax businesses.

All these tax rises and many others are being disguised by their proposers with 'euphemisms' which reduce them to 'measures of revenue enhancement'. They do not please the born-again supply-side faction of the Administration's support — in particular the outspoken and quotable Jack Kemp, who to give him his due seems to be a very consistent expansionist.

'You don't start advocating new taxes in a recession', he says like a true Keynesian. And he is just as adamant on spending, 'I wasn't elected to cut spending', he often remarks, 'I was elected to cut taxes'. He has even daringly suggested that 'Republicans no longer worship at the shrine of the balanced budget'.

Credibility

President Reagan still does worship there, but perhaps he is beginning to realise that Kemp's expansionist rhetoric represents the populist and popular part of Reaganism, which is why his visits to the shrine are becoming less frequent. Now instead of balancing the Budget in 1984 he only wants to be 'headed in that direction'.

Even David Stockman, the high priest of the shrine, has begun in desperation to tone down his zeal. His latest encyclical on the doctrine states that, 'I don't think anybody's talking about literal accounting balance or making a fetish of a balanced budget'.

The inconsistencies and contradictions between the various component parts of Reagan's economic strategy are now being widely recognised and debated — though mostly by those whose alternatives are not more coherent. But the decline of credibility is so great that the Administration feels obliged to take every chance to square the

circle by claiming the consistency of its policies.

For instance, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Paul Craig Roberts, was recently assigned to write an article in Fortune magazine, the glossy business monthly, showing how the three elements of the policy were consistent with each other.

Supply-siders really love monetarists, he said, because they keep inflation down and inflation would undermine the real value of the tax cuts; and they both love budget-cutters because they help control the money supply, stimulate private initiative to replace Federal programmes, and allow further tax cuts in the future.

Alas, he might have sounded more convincing if in the month that the US economy approached its worst unemployment since the war and consumer price inflation jumped, he had not concluded on the following note, 'Much has been accomplished in a short period of time. Federal spending is coming under control and incentives to work, save and invest are being restored. Inflation is falling.'



Jobless queue in Detroit



Wall St broker tries to figure out situation created by Reagan's policies



'You mean there's a limit to the number of wishes I get?'

But what mostly made his efforts futile was that the public squabbling has got sharper than ever.

The main responsibility for that goes to a sensational article in the December issue of the Atlantic Monthly, based on 18 tape-recorded interviews with David Stockman. It revealed, if not all, then enough of the confusion and discord within the Administration to be a very serious blow to the prestige of Reagan's presidency.

Particularly damaging was Stockman's candid opinion that the supply-side economics of Reagan's plan was a 'Trojan Horse' for handing out benefits to the rich.

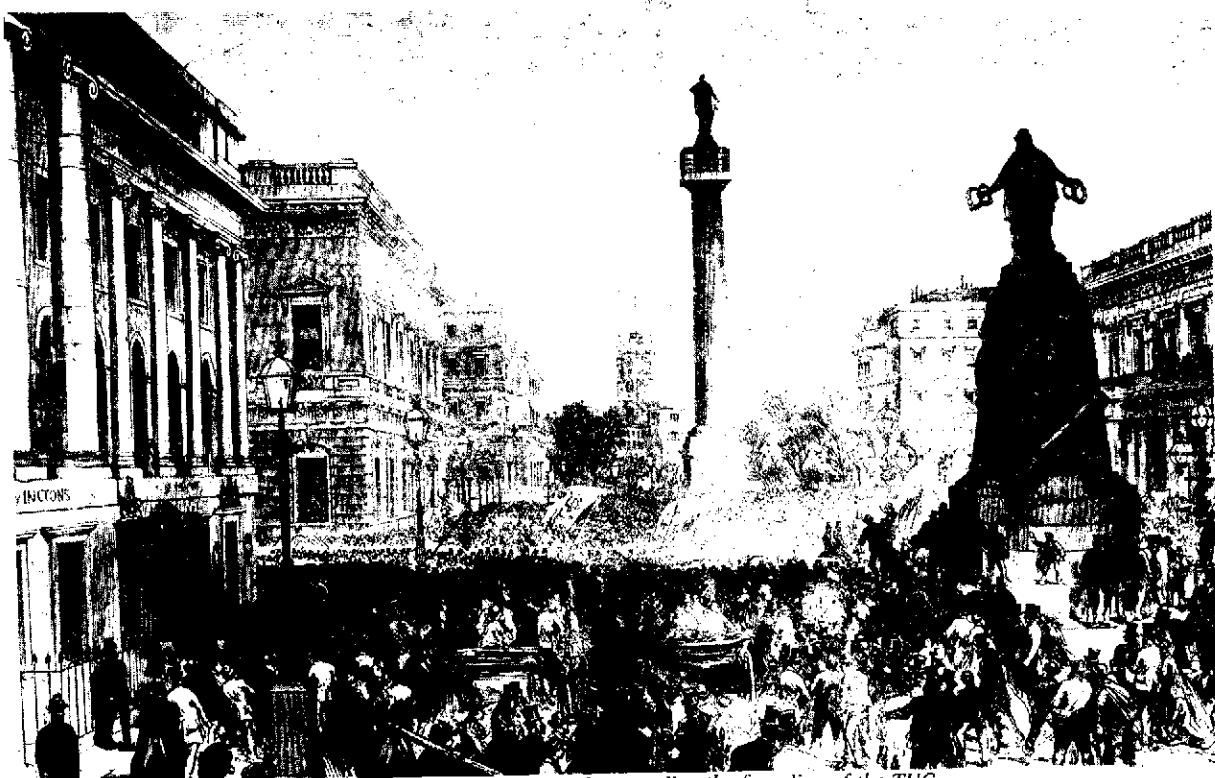
Stockman's indiscretions have exposed further the huge gulf which exists between Reaganomics in theory and Reaganomics in practice. In theory what was supposed to happen was that government spending should have been curtailed, but that no-one would suffer too much because the private sector would be rising like a Phoenix from the ashes of excessive government reg-

ulation and high taxes. A new spirit of capitalist initiative would be leading the economy into a new period of boom.

Instead what is happening is that cuts in government spending are throwing government and private sector workers out of work and removing the already inadequate prop of welfare from many in acute need. And monetarism and high interest rates are intensifying the slump, most of all in already severely depressed industries like house construction and automobiles.

Ordinary Americans — workers and the middle class — who were promised lower tax rates find themselves paying almost as much in tax as before, or more, and they have stopped hearing promises of further reductions.

They hear a babel of conflicting voices from the Administration and Congressional leaders. And from the President they no longer hear confident predictions but rather vague and ambiguous conjectures — much like the astrology on which he and Nancy Reagan are said to be very dependent.



Trade union demonstration in Waterloo Place in 1867 - shortly preceding the founding of the TUC



Troops in use against strikers in the 1911 Dock Strike.

IS THE Thatcher government a democratic government? A strong case can be made out that it is the opposite of a democratic government — according to the conception of democracy it claims to base itself on.

One could, as we shall see, justify even armed insurrection against this government according to the principles of classic bourgeois democracy!

But Michael Foot, who should be leading the fight to drive it from office before its time is due, doesn't think so. This Tory government, which acts towards the majority of its own people almost like an alien and hostile occupying power, not scrupling to devastate the society and inflict poverty, unemployment, want and deprivation — this government, in Michael Foot's view, has impeccable democratic credentials.

He hauled Peter Tatchell up by his heels before the grinning ranks of Tories, SDPers, and the Parliamentary Labour Party, and proceeded symbolically to butcher him on the altar of Parliamentary Democracy for advocating mild extra-parliamentary action against the Thatcher government.

Foot thereby also signalled to the entire working class — and to Thatcher — his acceptance that the Thatcher government has a perfect democratic right to devastate working class communities, slash the social services, and drive down wages.

After he had finished his summary public political execution of Peter Tatchell — to whom he had given neither a trial, nor a hearing, nor the right to defend himself — super-democrat Foot might as well have shouted across the floor of the Commons to Mrs Thatcher, "I disagree with everything you are doing, but I'll defend to the death your democratic right to do it".

Mask

In the Observer of Sunday 10th Foot published the first part of his reply to Peter Tatchell and the entire current of opinion among the rank and file of the Labour Party and trade unions which supports views for a mild version of which Tatchell was victimised. He addresses those who reject, downgrade, or are impatient with legalism and parliamentarism.

The mask of Torquemada raised like a visor above his face, Michael Foot mounts the rostrum of the Observer to preach a

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

PART TWO of a discussion article in which JOHN O'MAHONY replies to the falsifications of Marxism by the right wing and by Labour's 'soft Left', and exposes the hollowness of these leaders' own "democratic" credentials.



sermon on democracy to his loyal supporters and to the heretics. It is more civilised than witch-burning; but we will have to see whether it is instead of bonfires, or part of the preparation for them.

Enough is said in part 1 to establish Foot's basic concepts and basic alternative to what he defines as Marxism. He deserves a reply.

Shut out

Foot invokes the saints of British radicalism (even the suffragettes — who were, technically, small-scale terrorists and mostly not at all radical except on votes for women. He justifies their extra-parliamentary actions and claims their tradition for himself.

But today it is different, he says — because then, either Parliament was not available to the people at all, or the radicals were fighting for a sectional interest shut out from its all-transforming portals.

Wat Tyler (who led the Peasants' Revolt 600 years ago) "had no representative to whom he could put his case". Did Oliver Cromwell knock Parliament about a bit? By Cromwell Parliament was 'first saved... and then shut down when it proved obstreperous'. Foot considers that there were 'good democratic grounds' for the action because 'the men of Cromwell's armies... did represent a much larger total of the British people of their century than the Parliament' which Cromwell shut down.

So Foot can set it all to democratic rights in his head by an arithmetical compilation, three and a

quarter centuries later, and Cromwell was a good democrat even against Parliament.

As to the first mass workers' party, the Chartists: 'Their declared aim was to establish a Parliament which they could trust, not one they wished to bypass. Extra-parliamentary action was important since they had no voice inside; actually to win the voice inside was the aim'. So Foot, summary executioner of Peter Tatchell, approves of their extra-parliamentary action.

In fact the Chartists wanted a lot more than a voice. They wanted power to subordinate society to their own interests. Then the vote was power, which is why the ruling class would have had civil war rather than working-class suffrage.

Even if the Chartists' formal demands now seem moderate, in their time the Chartists were like the 'moderates' in James Connolly's song — 'We only want the earth'.

Foot is wrong too to imply that the Chartists won even the formal goals for which 'they were right' to fight outside Parliament. They demanded annual parliaments. Where would Mrs Thatcher be now if that elementary precondition of a healthy democracy had in fact been won? Logically, if he thinks the Chartists were right to fight for annual parliaments, Foot should favour struggle now to bring down the Tory government.

The suffragettes wrecked property, attacked Parliament, raised fires and planted small bombs. But Foot argues that they were justified, too, 'precisely because they too were denied the right to speak

and act inside Parliament'. 'It is an irony', says Foot, 'that they should now be paraded as the opponents of Parliamentary methods'.

But surely not as big an irony as that they should be presented — because their aim was to get the Parliamentary vote — as exponents of Parliamentary methods!

In fact they were characterised above all by rejection of Parliamentary methods: they hived off from the mere suffragists who favoured Parliamentary methods, and from a large lobby of MPs which fought on the issue year in and year out around Private Members' Bills (like the almost perennial abortion lobby private members' bills now).

Far from 'lacking a voice' in Parliament, in fact they actually got a majority in the House of Commons at least once, only to be frustrated by the House of Lords veto. That veto had been curbed by the time of the wildest suffragette activities.

Destroying

So it was permissible to the suffragettes to act as they did from impatience with Parliament, and, before 1911, from frustration with the House of Lords' entrenched power? Or was it their own exclusion as women from direct participation that justified them?

And what about the working class now? Thatcher and Co. are destroying jobs and communities that will not be restored quickly, if ever. Why do we not have the same right of impatience with Parliament and the Parliamentary

processes? Why in addition do we not have the right of extra-parliamentary activity for self-defence?

Danger

After the ruling against London Transport, do we not have as good grounds for impatience with the House of Lords as the suffragettes did? If and when the undemocratic legal reserve powers of the British state (see last article) are used, why should we not treat legality as the suffragettes (with Foot's approval) did?

There is no reason why we shouldn't. Foot's invocation of the now safe [because past] causes celebrates of his radical tradition implies, justifies, and recommends not his politics but ours!

Of all his historical examples, Foot says, in effect: 'Of course, to achieve such results [a voice in Parliament] it was necessary to take action outside Parliament, and with every justice'. The message is necessarily that those were bad days, and now we have a perfect democratic machine (even if not quite what the Chartists fought for).

Rhetorically Michael Foot even offers the following advice to 'those self-styled revolutionaries who speak today too readily of the resort to illegal methods or to street battles' — 'Those who think socialism is to be won there should at least train to become soldiers or policemen — to face the storm troopers'.

And what if the coming of the storm troopers does not depend on us on the streets, but on us on the ballot? What if the storm troopers are likely to be the

result of an electoral victory by a radical government? Perhaps the same conclusion would follow, and not only rhetorically.

Jack Jones, Michael Foot's trade union alter ego during the last Labour government, has publicly explained the right turn of the trade union leaders and the government in July 1975 in terms of the terrible dangers facing Britain — including the danger of a military coup.

The danger of the ruling class using its reserve powers or the armed forces, or both, against a properly elected democratic government, is a central problem of the 1980s — what Benn calls 'the Allende question'.

Foot believes that democracy is secure when the ruling class and its storm troopers are armed to the teeth and the labour movement is disarmed. A serious working class leader, faced with the facts of history and with the personal experience of the British armed forces' reaction to labour militancy and the election of a Labour government in 1974, would reach Foot's conclusion above not rhetorically but in deadly earnest. He or she would campaign for the disbandment of the armed forces and the creation of a workers' militia.

In fact Foot is mesmerised by the democratic forms and facades of parliamentary democracy. He forgets that democracy is democracy if it allows the people to actually govern themselves in their own interests.

Like all the Right and the soft Left, Foot lies to himself and to the labour movement about the present condition of parliamentary democracy (see last article).

They lie even when they pretend that it is the best form of parliamentary democracy.

On the contrary: the system we have falls short of the six-point programme of the Parliamentary system around which the working class first organised 150 years ago — and Parliamentary system since developed functions, and relations undreamed of 150 years ago.

Foot and his friends about the historic role of the mass of the people and their concerns struggles to Parliament. When Michael Foot last year of raising a year of protest against Government, and great march through the pool, he was rather carrying on the realisations of those struggles when he cants a Tatchell he is better than them.

He invokes the ancient, and now radical causes, better to attack those actually stand now living continuity of causes, and to pretend we have in today's world a perfect democratic machine.

Thatcher holds the democratic mandate — a big majority in Parliament, won in an election that was as fair and as democratic as any election in Britain.

Yet she does not have the mandate — and Foot should not say she has — to do what has done to the young whole industries communities. Nobody for that: Thatcher — to go by the polls — elections — have dismissed within a election if the election had any mechanism which to dismiss the mechanism exists.

Is this then a democratic government? Yes, according to the standards of democracy in Britain (which is the bourgeois democracy). No, if by democracy meant the best approximation to self-rule, or a system minimally responsive to the interests of the people (and we are here remembering, about the vital interests of communities and the generation of people).

The system is not so simple enough to supply the chance the youth, the cities of South Wales, the unemployed thumbs-up or down sign. The present is a monarchist for five years.

The point is that parliamentary democracy

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

ANNE CONNELL continues our series with a review of Dale Spender's book 'Man Made Language' (published by Routledge).

THE ONLY book I have read recently which rendered me literally speechless (well, very nearly) was Dale Spender's 'Man-Made Language'. That many words and many of the ways we use

words are sexist is now a commonplace. Words like chairman, spokesman, mankind — referring to all trade unionists as 'brothers' — the use of expressions such as 'the man in the street' or 'one man, one vote' — all these clearly reflect a grossly male-dominated society.

Moreover, their use is increasingly being frowned on by women and men who accept — in principle, at any rate — equality between the sexes. And quite right too. So is that all we need to do about language? Like hell it is.

Dale Spender's book looks at many different aspects of verbal communication — including listen-

ing — but her whole thesis rests on the notion that language is not a totally dispassionate machine, invented in a rational way to facilitate communication (rather like a telephone system) but is an organic part of that communication and affects the way we see reality just as much as it reflects it.

This idea is directly analogous to the position of the black rights activists. Early on in the movement, the use of the word 'black' (a word codified by the activists themselves) was seen to be very important against the use of the word 'negro' (a word codified by the white oppressors).

Spender's book is full of significant pieces of research and thoughtful insights such as, when in mixed groups, women talk far less than men do, and in the rare cases when a woman does talk for as much time as the average male in the group, she is always seen by the men as being 'very garrulous' or 'too talkative'.

Looking at the connotations of words, she points out how, where words started out as direct male/female equivalents, the female version has acquired dubious double meanings, while the male version has retained its 'purity'. Examples are sir/madam, courtier/courtesan, mast-

er/mistress.

However, fascinating though these snippets are, the book's main thrust is the contention that women are effectively disenfranchised at the very source of all social interaction — language.

Foreign

Men have very largely defined the world, and have also defined the tools for describing it. So, as well as the acknowledged difficulties that women have in speaking out at all, they have the additional burden of speaking in what is, in effect, a foreign language. We have, for example, no real words to speak in our

own way about our own sexuality.

If Dale Spender is right, then this is no mere philosophical game-playing, designed for middle-class feminists with nothing better to do while the kiddies are at kindergarten and the spinach quiche browns in the oven. If we are serious about women's rights in society, and about women's right to tell their own story with their own voice, then we cannot ignore the tools with which we intend to do the job.

With all the goodwill in the world, if the tools are warped, then the end result will be screwed up — and there's a male metaphor for you.



Extra-parliamentary action: Luddite 1812.



Extra-parliamentary action: Saltley Gates mass picket 1972



Extra-parliamentary action: Cromwell

em is geared not to mass self-rule, but to administering the country according to the interests — in the last analysis, after consultation and cooption — of the owners of large property.

It is 150 years since the British labour movement emblazoned on its programme the demand for annual parliaments. Under such a system what has happened in Britain in the last two years would have been stopped in June 1980 (in so far as a government replacing Thatcher could stop it). Yet those on the Right of the labour movement who insist (I think rightly) that a socialist government should be willing to accept its own dismissal by a majority of the electorate (in Britain, anyway, that would be a clear working class majority), are content that Thatcher should be free to play Nero for five years. They have forgotten the whole working-class socialist notion of developing and deepening the existing democratic system, and they denounce those like Tony Benn who want to develop it (I think very inadequately) as anti-democrats.

Sins?

Foot is ambitious: he wants to decorate the right-wing Labour float in the democratic carnival with the heads of Marx, Engels and Trotsky.

Marx and Engels envisaged, says Foot, that in England there might be a peaceful transition to socialism. He quotes Engels (selectively) to this effect.

This is less than serious. Marx and Engels did talk about the possibility of peaceful socialist transformation in Britain, the USA and perhaps (Marx said he didn't know enough about its institutions to be sure) Holland. Why? Because in those states the bureaucratic/military syst-

em was not a major force. And is that still true in Britain today? Read Tony Benn's account of the realities of rule in Britain today!

Trotsky and Lenin, says Foot, only 'thought perhaps that other Parliaments might be as futile or obstructive for their purposes as the Russian Duma'. They made the mistake of thinking the British Parliament was 'fashioned in the same mould' as the Duma!

This assertion means only that Foot has not read, for example, Trotsky's detailed analysis of British politics, 'Where is Britain Going'?

Trotsky, says Foot, 'would never have been guilty of the infantile, querulous condemnations of Parliament and Parliamentary action which some of his self-styled followers adopt... Trotsky, the foremost literary genius brought forth by the Soviet Revolution, would surely have disowned with one sweep of his pen the whole breed of modern Trotskyists' (because of our sins of literary style?).

It is quite true that some of those calling themselves Trotskyists have many of the traits of anarchism, and sometimes come close to rejecting Parliamentary action. The attitude of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) to the Labour Party, for example, is a necessary by-product of its attitude to parliamentary action — one of dismissal and the pretence that it is irrelevant. (But they do of course believe in democracy — workers' democracy, through workers' councils).

Sympathetic

Effectively the SWP rejects political action — except for general socialist propaganda, work to 'build the party', and promises of what they may do sometime

in the future, counterposed to the realities of the labour movement now. Marx polemicised against the sort of 'political indifference' the SWP represents. So did Trotsky. But there aren't any SWPers in the Labour Party.

Foot is trying to tar Labour Party activists with this brush, not because they share the SWP's anti-political traits, but on the contrary because they have, with some success, shaken up the political structures of the labour movement.

He drags this in to cover his own tracks, and separate himself from the present-day radicals and revolutionaries whose traditions he invokes, tries to appropriate, and seems to genuinely respect. (He has written at least one very sympathetic essay about Trotsky — in Tribune, many years ago now).

He concedes that, 'it is not possible or desirable that the socialist acceptance of parliamentary institutions should be automatic or uncritical or unqualified'. Foot himself, of course, does accept these institutions uncritically and without other than historical qualification, and accepts confinement to them not just automatically but by reflex.

So much so that he says one of the key questions is, 'Were those who framed the Labour Party constitution right in their sense of balance when they declared that their objective (my emphasis) was to sustain a Labour Party in Parliament and in the country?'.

Surely this is Foot defining the poverty-stricken, dead-end 'goal' that motivates him now and which led him to wheel and deal like an old Tammany Hall apprentice during the last Labour Government. It is Foot's present shadow getting in his light and obscuring the goal which was in 1918 declared to be: the common ownership of

the means of production, distribution and exchange (Clause IV part 4).

Even as late as the 1974 election, Labour's aim was declared to be: 'to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families'. 'Sustaining' the Labour Government in Parliament displaced that goal, too.

Scarecrow

Naturally Foot points to the scarecrow of Stalinism: because the Stalinist states display 'the apparent incapacity' to develop or protect genuine, independent institutions of almost any kind', Foot concludes: 'Whatever its other manifold deficiencies, Parliament can still symbolise the attempt to settle disputes by better methods than brute force'.

But this is only another way of saying out of the long history of class struggles in Britain (the decisive ones outside Parliament), the British bourgeoisie has secured a stable system, crowned by Parliament; and that, so far, the main political focus of the modern labour movement has been within the parliamentary-political structures of the bourgeoisie, only episodically (for example in 1972) overflowing those boundaries.

Whether the future struggle can be so confined is the question. The history indicates that beyond a certain point they cannot. Foot's talk of storm-troopers means that he accepts that at a certain point they cannot. What if, outside the will or initiative of any conspiratorial group, there are, for example, mass strikes, and the situation escalates to violent clashes. What, as we asked above, if a radical Parliamentary majority is met by the use of the state reserve

powers?

Foot's radical conscience pays hypocritical tribute to his current vices: 'the Labour Party needs to use Parliament more ambitiously and more deliberately than ever before'. Yes! Even the quasi-syndicalists of the SWP would agree with that, and of course Peter Tatchell wanted to get into Parliament to help do that.

So why does Party leader Foot continue to collaborate with Thatcher? Why not take up Tony Benn's call for 'disengagement' — i.e. boycott of the Tory structures? That would not be enough, but it would be something.

In fact Foot only mentions this point because he needs an alternative to offer instead of the use of trade union power against Thatcher: 'The dominant need is to turn the nation's mind to parliamentary action'. 'Trade union power cannot save us, particularly since at such a perilous time the trade unions are compelled to conduct defensive, rearguard battles'.

Trade unions as trade unions cannot offer an overall framework for socialist transformation, unless they become a great deal more than trade unions. But they can resist, fight back, make it impossible for the government to govern. They could even bring down the government.

His account of what happened in 1973-4 is a travesty, and his account of what happened after Labour was returned is a meandering fairy-story.

It was a windfall in 1974, argues Foot, that Edward Heath chose 'to use a General Election to win a constitutional battle against people engaged strictly in an industrial dispute' (my emphasis). In deference to Parliament, the initiative to use industrial (and other) extra-parliamentary strength must always come from the government.

What does Foot think of

1972, when a wave of spontaneous political strikes followed by the TUC decision for a one-day general strike for a political purpose forced the government to release the five dockers quite legally jailed according to an Act of Parliament democratically stamped and signed according to the best of all possible Parliamentary Democratic constitutions?

A petition to Parliament should have been organised?

Direct action, against the democratically elected government's democratically decided law, released the dockers; the lack of direct action (partly because people relied on the Labour government) was probably decisive in keeping the Shrewsbury building pickets in jail (in Des Warren's case, for three years).

This is the crux of it: for Foot, radical direct action is now superseded by Parliament. The labour movement must bow down to Parliament.

The great bourgeois revolutions, born of struggle against oppressive systems and tyrants, wrote into their constitutions the right of revolt. The American Declaration of Independence, for example, states:

'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'

'That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness...'

...when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security'.

Tyranny

It could be argued according to this that for Thatcher to do what is being done now — and which cannot be undone easily — is such sustained tyranny and oppression as to justify an armed revolt against the Tory government.

If the constitution does not oblige Thatcher to let

the electorate throw her out, why should the electorate be bound by such a manifestly inadequate constitution? The labour movement has every right to struggle outside of Parliament against the government — even according to the idea of democracy in which in the last analysis Parliament has power and authority.

The classic bourgeois theory of parliamentary democracy not only recognised this right of resistance, but proclaimed it one of the basic principles of democratic government.

The Labour Right and Foot do not stand for the spirit or letter of parliamentary democracy as understood by those like the US revolutionaries for whom it was a real, practical, living, vital set of principles for their class in its time of vigour and progress.

By parliamentary democracy they mean the shell and the forms. Theirs is the conservative and timid constitutionalism that would have sustained the status quo of Charles I, the unreformed Parliament before 1832, or the exclusively middle-class Parliament before 1867.

It happens that theirs is the constitutionalism of a formally advanced bourgeois democracy.

They do not stand in the true line of those who cranked that parliamentary democracy forward by way of revolution (the 1640s, 1688-9) and successive reforms. They counterpose the partly ossified, reshaped and neutralised, and now inadequate, results of past revolutions and mass struggles to the present living labour movement with its needs and struggles — the struggles to deepen democracy, to defend the labour movement, for a different, socialist, system, or for a radically different form of democratic self-rule.

Michael Foot and all his political brothers worship not the once-radiant face of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, but its historic backside. Its face belongs to us.

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We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words. Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

Support YOP campaign!

WHILE welcoming the Socialist Organiser centre-spread on YOPs, I think it is necessary to criticise comrade Mick Liggins' article. Firstly, you must recognise that two distinct and separate forms of perspective exist for combatting YOPs as they presently exist. One is to argue for non-cooperation with YOPs

and for withdrawal of union involvement in any cases where YOPs are employed or being run. Secondly, you can recognise that YOPs can be transformed by organising these schemes into unions on union rates of pay. Comrade Liggins advocates both, and creates a rather confused critique of the role of the unions. Either the unions should

withdraw support and threaten the whole existence of YOPs, or YOPs should be unionised. From my experience of the TUC Jobs Express and the debates between these alternatives, I favour the unionisation. It is clear to me that both cannot be done. Secondly, the comrade incredibly fails to mention the YOPs Trade Union

Rights Campaign (YOPSTURC) initiated by the LPYS and backed nationally by the TGWU and NUPE. On November 21st it organised a founding conference of 300 YOP trade unionists. It campaigns for union rates of pay for YOPs; for the existing rights on YOPs to be put into practice; five weeks' holidays; and much more.

The YOPSTURC issues a monthly bulletin, 'Get Organised'. It has won widespread support, and two weeks ago it organised a Glasgow-wide strike of hundreds of YOPers for union rights. It also recruits them to LPYS, and is presently the main YOP campaign.

It has called a national activists' conference on 31st January in London and a national lobby of Parliament for February. This is the major campaign of the LPYS, and I am surprised comrade Mick did not at least mention it. All Socialist Organiser supporters should get involved in it if they want to seriously unionise YOPs.

Thirdly, the unions are attacked for not unionising YOPs. But rather than blanket critique, the work of NUPE in the North-East and TGWU in the North-West should be illustrated. I would also like to know what is minimal about unionising YOPs for higher wages, more holidays and a disciplinary procedure. On what other basis are unions built?

NUPE puts them on part-time status so they can pay lower dues, hardly 'insulting' them.

EVERTON WILLIAMS, West London

One-sided on Scarman?

OUR REPORT on the Scarman Report (Andrew Hornung and Pyushi Kotecha) struck me as one-sided.

The main question which faces revolutionaries now with respect to the police is the relation between direct action and self-defence on the one hand, and public accountability on the other.

While the youth of Brixton this summer took to the streets, the overwhelming view of socialists in the official labour movement was to call for democratic controls over the police. We cannot — as the authors did — simply ignore this call.

One of the unfortunate features of socialist politics on the police has been a tendency to counterpose direct action to accountability. What this wholly arbitrary opposition does is to reflect the material division between Brixton youth and the official labour movement.

Workers' defence squads can and should be fought for where appropriate; but so should control of the police. We cannot simply ditch the fight to oust racists from the police force, to get rid of murderous chief constables like Ken Oxford, to demonstrate to Oxford's successor that he too may receive the same treatment, to give local authorities the power to keep the SPG off their streets and parliament the power to disband the SPG and like units altogether, to protect the rights of defendants under interrogation, to open up the police stations to public scrutiny, etc. etc.

Under capitalism workers of course never fully control the police. But what is happening now is that the restrictions which our movement has won over police powers are rapidly being eroded as part of the present class onslaught.

It would be criminal to neglect the defence of existing forms of accountability — with its implicit dynamic towards an aggressive programme for more radical forms of accountability — as to withhold our support from the

youth of Brixton and Moss Side.

Our general strategy vis-a-vis Scarman seems misplaced to me. We missed an opportunity during the investigation to make effective propaganda because of our boycott of it.

Now we are losing the opportunity to give a lead both to the 'youth' of Brixton and to left sections of the official labour movement, by limiting ourselves simply to singing the praises of the former and ignoring the latter.

BOB FINE, Islington.

Tip of the iceberg

I AM writing this letter in response to your feature on the Scarman Report.

Although the figures concerning racial attacks must be much larger than they appear to be, racial abuse is rarely taken into consideration. This not only includes the common use of 'nigger' and 'paki' by everyday racists, but involves refusals to be admitted into pubs and discos, partiality in shopping queues, and underestimation in educational establishments.

To the coloured immigrants of this country, myself included, Whitelaw, the NF and the BM are only the

tip of the iceberg. Like it or not, racism is a common feature of British society.

Unfortunately, the majority of my Asian and West Indian friends regard the Tories and the Labour Party in the same light. Neither Party seems to be taking on a firm stance against racism, not even against the National Front.

Before they are willing to give us their support, we must be prepared to give them positive action. The result of the Foot/Tariq Ali issue can only add salt to the wound.

NICK ALVAREZ, York.

SWPers disgusted

WE WERE disgusted to read Martin Thomas's article and also Tom Hart and John McIlroy's column on the Labour Party in Socialist Organiser no.65.

Firstly, Thomas proclaims, 'Marxists are for parliamentary democracy'. Since when? Surely there can be no clearer confirmation that Socialist Organiser is in reality a left reformist paper.

Didn't Lenin once say, 'We support the Labour Party like a rope supports a hanging man'. Yet Hart and McIlroy say, 'We support the Labour Party so we can get into Parliament'. One can almost hear them straining at the leash to step into Woy and Shirl's shoes!

The comrades would do well to read Tony Cliff's excellent four-volume work 'Lenin'. Indeed, imagine

if Lenin had succumbed to the same liquidationist temptations presently seducing Hart and McIlroy, to reabsorb (or build a 'Broad Left') in the RSDLP in say 1914 — we would have had no Russian Revolution at all!

The comrades are fascinated with the machinations of a handful of pro-capitalist politicians (Benn, P.Tatchell) and union bureaucrats.

It does not matter what happens in the AUEW elections, power lies on the shop floor not in Terry Duffy's office. Ask the lads and lassies at Laurence Scotts — their support has come from other workers in factories, not from obscure officials in London.

Iran shows this to be true as well. In the struggle against the Shah, the vast mass of workers didn't give

a toss whether this or that politician or intellectual agreed or disagreed with the Shah — the bloody lot were thrown in the dust bin once the people took to the streets.

Today we are seeing the Labour Party being crushed between the SDP on the right and the SWP on the left. The Labour Party is bleeding to death and so doing is reaping its just reward for decades of treachery. Workers can be won to genuine socialism.

Only last week, for example, over 40 Socialist Workers were sold in Warrington Town Centre alone. Imagine what could be achieved if the Thomases, Harts and McIlroys were to join us.

BARNEY DAVIES and CYNTHIA McPOWELL, Warrington.



Wrong on typists!

I MUST protest about the article 'Typists go back to work' (Socialist Organiser no.66), written by Chris Erswell. Two-thirds of the article is factually incorrect, and its conclusions are therefore inappropriate.

Chris is correct in stating that the final sticking point for a settlement was a demand by the Liberals that there should be no disciplinary action taken against scabs. However, from then on he gets everything else wrong.

The NALGO branch officers did not give way on this as Chris stated, but on the contrary organised a mass meeting of the whole Branch membership to totally oppose this.

This meeting took place in the Liverpool Stadium on 7th December, and was probably the biggest meeting of the Branch ever, with over 3500 members present. This meeting threw out the Liberals' demands and agreed to escalate the dispute if the City Council did not honour the agreement with the typists.

It also voted by an overwhelming majority for an all-out strike should anyone be sacked, as the Liberals and Tories were threatening. The Branch Officers proposed and argued strongly for all these positions. The only people 'left bewildered and exasperated' by this were the right

wing.

Three days later the Liberals withdrew their demands concerning the scabs, and the City Council agreed to implement the arbitration agreement. The following Monday, 14th December, the typists agreed to return to work the next day.

The disappointing aspect of the dispute is that the outcome has been arbitration and not a clear-cut victory.

There are many reasons for this — the lack of a national campaign which left the Liverpool Branch to fight alone; the lack of support from other trade unionists for the typists' picket lines; and the existence of a sizeable right wing in the Liverpool NALGO branch who at times successfully mobilised against the typists to prevent other members of the Branch escalating the dispute and taking solidarity action in support of the typists' strike.

The strength of the right wing was evident in this year's re-election of the Branch Secretary (which under the Branch Rules must be conducted by postal ballot and not at the AGM as Chris reported).

In the ballot, which took place before the mass meeting referred to earlier, a right-wing 'moderate' well-known for his anti-typists views defeated Peter

er Cresswell, the incumbent Branch Secretary and one of the principal strike leaders.

However, the decisions of the mass meeting on the 7th December were seen by everyone as a massive vote of confidence in Peter Cresswell and the other strike leaders. There were 50% more people at the meeting than voted in the ballot for branch secretary.

This showed up to everyone the inadequacy of postal ballots and the importance of the mass involvement of members in decision-making at branch meetings.

Lessons

So much so, that a rank and file campaign led by the typists is already underway to reinstate Peter Cresswell as Branch Secretary. This began with a motion of No Confidence in the new secretary being carried at the Branch AGM on 10th December.

Whatever misgivings there may be about the arbitration agreement, there are important lessons from the typists' strike that should not be lost to the readers of Socialist Organiser.

That under class-struggle leadership the mass of members of the Liverpool Branch of NALGO have shown by taking strike action in response to 'suspensions' or lay-offs, and by refusing to back down over the scabs, that they will take action in response to attacks upon the Branch's right to organise as a trade union.

And, at the same time, they have demonstrated overwhelmingly their willingness to take strike action in defence of their jobs which will be under direct threat in the coming months as a result of Liberal/Tory cutbacks.

ALAN WALKER, vice-chairperson, Liverpool NALGO branch.

Quality of life

I WANT to take up issues raised by Ann Evans in Socialist Organiser 64.

She maintains that, opposing SPUC and LH, socialists must make a distinction between foetus in the womb which is totally dependent on woman carrying it, and new-born baby which is looked after by a body.

I completely disagree with two reasons. Firstly, a woman who has given birth to a handicapped child is simply faced with a cruel choice as to who to after it.

In practice now, if a child is to live, the choice is between one who devoting her life to it, the child being dumb in an institution where personality will be crushed and deformed.

Usually the woman has intense feelings of attachment to the child, mixed with guilt. Could she fight those feelings knowing the child was alive and suffering in hospital?

The decisions women in this position have to make are hard enough without socialists making harder.

Secondly, socialists have a different set of values. Say, Catholics. Surely don't see anything inherently good in being born in dying. It's the quality of the life in between that matters.

If some women say they don't want to children into the world with extra handicaps [as well as the usual of poverty, sexism, etc] we should support them.

I want to finish supporting everything Ann Evans says changing our attitude to the disabled.

PAUL BAILEY, Harlow



Boilermakers: Officials admit phony ballot

LEADERS of the Boilermakers' Society this week admitted in court that many ballot papers were forged in its June 1980 election for General Secretary.

Merseyside organiser Barry Williams has taken the union into the courts in an effort to unseat right-winger James Murray, who was declared winner of the ballot.

The result was contested from the outset. At first Murray was declared the winner by 2,031 votes to 1,903. After protests this was altered to 1,841 to 1,435.

Then there was an appeal to the union's general council which produced yet a third set of figures — 1,795 to Murray as against 1,544 to Williams.

Since the union has 129,000 members, the level of participation is clearly abysmally low — particularly when it has now been admitted that not all of the votes cast were cast by

rank and file members.

The union has declared that it will not contest Williams' claim that the 102 votes cast by the Belfast no.1 branch should not be cast in Murray's favour.

In fact only eleven members had been at the Belfast meeting which sent in 102 ballot papers.

And in admitting the fraud in Belfast the union leadership claimed at the same time that there was a 'serious doubt' over votes cast in favour of Williams at Dudley and West Bromwich.

Handwriting experts were called in to show conclusively the fraud in the Belfast ballot papers.

Here the Boilermakers' scandal differs from previous ballot-rigging scandals in the TGWU — where it is unnecessary for branch officials to go through the laborious process of completing ballot forms, since only total figures need to

be forwarded to 'scrutineers'.

But the whole case highlights the basis of corruption and deliberately maintained inactivity at branch level on which whole sections of the right wing bureaucracy depend for their positions.

The struggle for democracy in the labour movement is not simply a fight for regular, open and democratic elections, but also a fight for increased rank and file involvement and for policies which can offer a genuine alternative to the line of the present leadership.

These issues will be at the forefront of the trade union conference on March 6 co-sponsored by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing.

We urge readers to attend and to fight for their union branches and Labour Parties to send delegates to this conference.

COHSE leaders ignore vote

THE Executive of the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) has overruled the union's conference decision to affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign.

Having failed to restrict debate on the issue at conference, the Exec now are quite willing to succumb to pressure from anti-abortion organisations and reverse the decision.

NAC is asking COHSE branches to affiliate at local level and to demand that the Exec sticks to conference decisions.

Campaign for LABOUR PARTY Democracy

IN THE aftermath of Bishops Stortford and all the talk of 'deals' and 'truces', CLPD becomes the focus of much attention.

Its AGM declared that 'there can be no unity as long as Labour's parliamentary representatives insist on their right to sabo-

tage Party policy and no peace as long as the right wing organise to reverse the democratic reforms.' That is a quite clear statement of the conditions which the CLPD expects to form the basis of any 'unity'.

If those conditions are met, and the witch-hunts and non-endorsements are called off, however, does that mean that CLPD would be expected to cease its activities in return?

Fortunately, I believe the problem need not arise. If conditions of unity are established between left and right, CLPD would certainly be expected not

Trade union conference

DEMOCRATISE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT!

WHERE: Lanchester Poly, Priory Street, Coventry.

WHEN: Saturday March 6, 11-4.30.

INITIAL SPONSORS: Socialist Organiser Alliance and London Labour Briefing.

WRITE TO: Democracy Conference, c/o SO, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

THE struggle to democratise the Labour Party has sharply exposed the lack of democracy in the trade unions. Tony Benn's deputy leadership campaign was met by a refusal of most union leaders to consult their members, a farce of a 'consultation' exercise by the TGWU, and evidence of the failure of NUPE's left-talking leaders to translate their words into rank and file involvement.

Industrial struggles

too show the need for an accountable leadership. At BL, eleven General Secretaries stepped in over the heads of the Joint Negotiating Committee to fix a sell-out. And AUEW leaders flouted their union's rules to withdraw official support from the Laurence Scott fight in Manchester.

Meanwhile growing numbers of working class women have taken up the demand that the labour move-

ment be transformed to meet their needs.

The conference called on March 6 by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing will discuss these issues, exchange experiences, and work out a common platform.

Labour movement organisations are invited to co-sponsor the conference or send delegates. Individual observers are also welcome.

Credential fee £2.



more than a 'tidying-up' of the existing rules; positive discrimination is not exclusively a 'left' issue (except perhaps by default); PLP democracy is at least partly supported by people like Giles Radice and Philip Whitehead, and even had the support of the now-departed Mike Thomas; public ownership is not even a constitutional issue.

That leaves only the issues of local government democracy and the extension of recorded voting. The latter is merely a mechanism of accountability rather than a shift of power, and local government democracy is almost a

non-starter on account of the moribund nature of the CLPD's Local Government Action Committee.

CLPD's current programme of reform is, then, moderate and unexceptional. There is no reason why it should be part of any 'deal' or 'truce'.

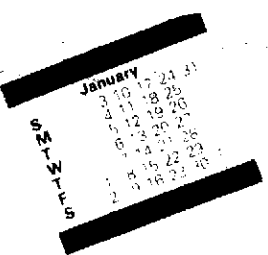
But the conditions which CLPD expects to be part of any basis of unity could not have been spelt out more clearly. If they are not met, then all bets must be off.

More problematically, if the right-wing did agree to stop insisting 'on their right to sabotage Party policy', their track record

will not inspire confidence on the left in their sincerity.

So the ball will then be in their court, and it will be up to them to prove their good faith immediately — not only must Peter Tatchell be endorsed and the witch-hunt be called off, but work must begin on a draft manifesto to be presented to this year's conference, which will contain clear commitments, agreed unconditionally by the Shadow Cabinet, to carry out TUC and Labour policy on key issues.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON
(CLPD Executive)



WHAT'S ON

Ads for Socialist Organiser events and many campaigns are carried free. Paid ads: 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send to: Socialist Organiser (What's On), 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Poland Solidarity Committee, Glasgow: demonstration, Saturday January 23, 1.30pm from Queen Margaret Drive. Rally 3pm at Partick Burgh Halls: speakers, member of Solidarnosc, John Maxton MP, Dennis Canavan MP, Helen Monaghan, Jimmy Reid, and others. End Martial Law! Free all Polish political prisoners! Free trade unions, east and west!

IRELAND

Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration, 31 January in Coventry: called by Sinn Féin. Leicester Labour Committee on Ireland: showing of 'The Patriot Game', Thursday January 21, 7.30 at the Socialist Centre.

Glasgow Labour Committee on Ireland are showing 'Ireland's Hunger Strike', a video made in April 1981, followed by discussion. Sunday January 24, 2.30 at Queen Margaret Building, Glasgow University.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

LAMBETH: Sundays at 7pm. For venue phone 609 3071.

Jan.31: Stalinism. Feb.28: The origins of the Labour Party.

NORTH WEST LONDON: 'Organise the Left', with speakers Merle Amory (Brent councillor), Rachel Lever (CLPD Exec.), and Steve Marsling (Asst. Sec. Bermondsey CLP). Tuesday January 26, 7.30 at Kent Room, Anson Hall, Anson Rd, London NW2.

LEICESTER: 7.30 Sundays at the Socialist Centre, World'. Jan.17: Jim Marshall MP on 'The crisis in the Labour Party'. Jan.24: Poland.

LEIGH: Every other Sunday 7.30 at the 'White Lion' (opposite the market).

Jan.24: Iran — what has happened and what's happening now?

Feb.7: Women's liberation. Feb.21: Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion.

ISLINGTON: meetings every other Thursday from January 28, at the Florence, Florence St.

SOUTH AFRICA

Broadsheet on the Car Industry in South Africa, published 'in an effort to extend the campaign to win basic rights for South African workers' by the Welsh Anti-Apartheid Movement — 33 Romilly Road, Cardiff.

Socialist Forum for Southern Africa Solidarity (SOFASAS): next meeting, 3pm, Saturday January 16, at Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19. Richard Carver on Zimbabwe since independence.

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism: alternate Fridays, next class January 22 on the Communist Manifesto. For details of registration and venue, write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Critique conference: The New Cold War? January 15-16, at University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. Registration £3 the weekend or £1.50 per session from Critique, 31 Clevedon Road, Glasgow G12 0PH.

'The Socialist Society': Foundation Conference, January 23-24, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. More details c/o 7 Carlisle St, London W1V 6NL.

COHSE Broad Left inaugural meeting, Saturday January 23, 12 to 4 at UMIST, Sackville St, Manchester.

WOMEN

'Women for communism' — public meetings. For further details phone Carol, (061) 226 4559.

Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work: National Organising Conference. Feb.20. Contact: 181 Richmond Rd, London E8.

Sexual Politics Conference: Feb.6-7, at Edinburgh University. Sponsored by NUS Scotland. Open to all interested. Starts 10.30am Saturday. More details from Glasgow School of Art SRC, 041 332 0691.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

SUPPORT ST. MARY'S



Women's Fightback — 10p plus postage from 41 Ellington St, London N7

ANTI-FASCISM

Brons out... now! Andrew Brons, NF chairman and politics lecturer and Harrogate College FE. Anti-fascist demonstration assemblies college main building, 12.30, Wednesday January 27. Details: Nick, 0904 56603.

POST-MORTEM ON FORD SELL-OUT

THERE WERE plenty of smiles at the outcome of this year's Ford pay struggle: grins were to be seen in Downing Street, in boardrooms around the country, and in the TUC headquarters, the focal point of those fighting to avoid any struggle with the Tories.

But thousands of angry trade unionists will be conducting their own investigation of the 'carbon copy' pay sell-outs in Ford and BL which have strengthened the morale of the employers while signing away both living standards and working conditions.

Encouraged by the continued capitulations and betrayals by union leaders, and egged on by the Thatcher government, even nondescript bosses like Peter Parker of British Rail are issuing Edwardes-style threats to suspend striking train drivers. The sell-out has given new

heart to Coal Board chief Sir Derek Ezra in his efforts to force home a pit pay offer well below the rise in the cost of living.

And in the remainder of the engineering industry, where few firms are as profitable as Ford, the Ford settlement for a mere 7.4 per cent will knock the stuffing out of many pay claims, and strengthen the employers' resolve to demand humiliating 'strings'.

How was this substantial setback, with its widespread implications, imposed upon Ford workers? A post-mortem reveals astonishing similarities to the BL betrayal.

The companies of course are very different. BL is publicly advertised as 'bankrupt', limping from one closure threat to the next, and waving its tatty credentials as the last surviving 'British' car manufacturer. That,

according to union leaders, was the reason for their urgent wish to avoid a battle with BL.

Yet they had exactly the same approach with Ford, which is a model of profitability — currently the most profitable section of the loss-making American multinational corporation!

The common factor is that both firms are able to call upon the expertise of British union leaders, who have proved themselves world-beaters in grovelling and prostration.

In both cases, under shop floor pressure, the claim submitted was for a £20 increase. In both cases the 'final' offer in reply was well below even the level of inflation. In BL it was 3.8 per cent, in Ford 7.4 per cent.

But also in both cases the money offer was tied to an obscure and open-ended package of productivity 'strings', the final details of which were not revealed to workers on the shop floor. And in both Ford and BL, the verdict of the shop floor on these 'final' offers was the same: an overwhelming vote at mass meetings for rejection and all-out strike action.

Obviously working from the same handbook, both Edwardes and Ford negotiator Paul Roots left the union leaders to stew in



their own juice until the eleventh hour before making behind-the-scenes moves to ram home the sell-out.

In Ford the 'new' offer, put directly to chief negotiator Ron Todd over the heads of the negotiating committee, gave workers nothing except an earlier introduction of the 39 hour week and negotiations on pensions. The money — as at BL — was unchanged.

Todd — his knees knocking at the prospect of a strike — grasped at the chance for escape. He put the new deal to the 56-man Joint Negotiating Committee. Like at BL, this committee is heavily stacked with full-time union officials

who don't even work for Ford: on the Ford committee, full-timers outnumber plant convenors by 32 to 24.

With the officials' votes, and a minority of convenors backing the deal, the committee accepted it and even went further than the BL betrayal by calling off the strike — though some plants defied this appeal.

(It is useful to note that among the 'strings' demanded by Ford and conceded by Todd is an arrangement whereby details of new productivity arrangements — like in Edwardes' package in BL — are to be handed almost exclusively by these same full-time officials).

But even with a recommendation for acceptance by both Todd and the com-

mittee, and with the strike going off half-cock on the Tuesday morning, shop floor workers, like their brothers and sisters in BL, were far from convinced. In several plants, where a firm lead was given for rejection, the offer was thrown out by large majorities.

In Swansea a vote of no confidence in Todd was carried. Convenor Brian Phillips denounced the fact that:

"It seems that a deal was done with just a couple of phone calls between Ron Todd, ACAS, and the Ford management".

Only after it was plain that they could not hold out alone on the offer did workers at Halewood, Bridgend and Swansea vote reluctantly for acceptance. That reluctance and the strength of their stand indicate that while this battle might be over, Ford have by no means won the war to impose their strings.

Just as Edwardes has faced rearguard resistance in Longbridge and Cowley since the settlement, so the Ford management can expect a rough ride if they seek to attack existing conditions.

But this strength on the shop floor remains despite the role of union leaders, who have consistently refused to lift a finger — let alone wage coordinated mass action — against the offensive by employers and the Tory government. On the one hand union leaders accept the employers' argument that the first priority is to preserve profitability — even at the expense of jobs and wages. On the other hand, union bureaucrats, sponging off the workers' movement, fear that the working class in defeating Thatcher would then go on to drive out the reactionaries in their own organisations, thus toppling the officials from their positions of influence and privilege.

As train drivers, steel workers, lorry drivers and others face the necessity to struggle in defence of their jobs and living standards, the bitter but vital lesson of the 'carbon copy' sell-outs is the need for a new revolutionary leadership to carry through the fight to defeat the Tories. We urge readers to join us in fighting for such a leadership.



Industrial News

Work to rule against cuts

A NEW Year's directive from Haringey Labour council to cut back on maintenance workers' bonus payments has been met by an effective work to rule.

The almost unanimous vote came after the shop floor had been pushed back over the last year under the pressure of the Government and Land Act, and the failure of any leadership from the national

unions or Labour councils in combatting the Tory offensive.

The reaction of the council to the work to rule has been to declare it a breach of contract and to stop payment of wages from next week, effectively declaring a lock-out.

The response of the maintenance stewards was

to take out a temporary injunction against the council to block this move. But this legal move is seen as only one strand in the fightback.

Many maintenance stewards see the need to place no reliance on the courts, and to continue (if necessary, to escalate) the fight on the shop floor whatever the outcome in court.

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN



Desperate conditions in hospital

IN THE Royal Edinburgh Hospital, understaffing, overwork and overcrowding have produced a situation which is an insult to the people who live and work there.

For years, the staff of the hospital have toiled under the strain of NHS cut-backs, low pay, and low staffing levels. Over the past few months, unions have repeatedly approached management to demand that more resources be made

available to care for the chronic sick and elderly.

In one ward in particular, the staff have been singularly courageous in protesting about the plight of the patients. Understaffing is so bad there that an elderly bed-ridden woman was once not attended to for eight hours. This patient was in the terminal stages of her illness, and the hospital could not provide the most basic nursing care for her.

The management gave unions an assurance that this situation would never arise again. However, five months later we heard that everything was back to square one.

Staff were expected to lift patients without any assistance, and many patients were locked into geriatric chairs for four hours or more (resulting in pressure sores).

The staff were forced to admit failure in providing basic nursing care.

On night duty conditions are just as bad. In one clinic shifts can be up to seven trained nurses short; and wards are sometimes left understaffed.

Management still offers nothing but excuses, so the unions have been mandated by their members to impose a total ban on overtime and a work to rule, demanding massive recruitment of staff and regular changes of ward for nurses to ensure a fair distribution of workload.

The unions have also suggested that management should provide crèche facilities, making it easier to recruit nurses with family commitments.

JOHN CHALMERS
JEAN McINTYRE

Textile pay strike

260 WORKERS at the G.H. Heath factory, one of the biggest textile mills in North Staffordshire, are on strike.

After receiving no pay increases at all for the last two years, this year they were offered a rise working out at £3.70 a week.

The company, a subsidiary of Nottingham Mills, offered a package of £50,000 for the year, to be shared out among the 260 workers. They wanted the union to determine how the money would be shared out. Divided equally, it would give an average £3.70 a week, a rise of 8 per cent for the women on day shift but only 3 per cent for the men on continental shift.

The basic wage for women at Heath's is a miserable £52, even less than the £63 basic for other textile workers in the area. Shop steward John Callear of the

Amalgamated Society of Textile Workers and Kindred Trades says the management will not even negotiate over the claim for a 10 per cent rise and consolidation.

But the workers' main obstacle comes from their own union officials. Union general secretary Bert Lisle, who at 74 is rather past the normal retirement age, has written to branch officials and again to all workers: 'I am saying quite clearly: get back to work'.

He has threatened the stewards with withdrawal of credentials, and one steward has received confirmation of this threat.

But the strike has been solid, with only two scabs going in (though the firm is advertising for scabs).

Branch secretary Hilda Gibson told me that the branch officials had the full support of the workers. According to Lisle the

strike was caused by 'a few irresponsible shop stewards', but all the workers are taking their turns in a 24 hour picket.

In a secret ballot organised by the stewards, 137 workers voted against accepting the company's package, 49 for accepting, with 42 abstaining and 25 not voting. A mass meeting passed a vote of no confidence in Lisle.

Little is going into the works, and with no one inside to do the work it makes little difference anyway. But it is still important to press for the strike to be made official, and for the T&G to instruct drivers at the works to come out in support.

Messages/money to: G.H. Heath (Textile Workers' Strike Fund, c/o Mrs. H. Gibson, 21 Mitchell Drive, Butt Lane, Talke, Staffordshire.

ARTHUR BOUGH

Tuttons victory

TGWU restaurant workers at Tuttons, Covent Garden, London, have won their strike.

The restaurant owner has withdrawn the wage cut and victimisations which provoked the strike, and recognised the union.

Strong support from TGWU delivery workers and NUPE refuse collectors helped gain this victory.

37 AUEW and TGWU members have been on official strike at the Jewel Razor company in Sheffield for six weeks.

The management had sacked the convenor for organising the workers into the unions. The whole workforce came out in his support.

Messages/money: D. Brameld, 10 Parson Cross Rd, Sheffield 6.

Books available from Socialist Organiser include:

Cannon, Notebook of an Agitator, £2.20
Trotsky, The Transitional Programme, 30p
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Industrial News

Laurence Scott: call to oust AUEW leadership

"WE'RE still here, and we're still fighting". That was the message from the mass picket of Laurence Scotts workers last Friday, 8th. Despite blizzard conditions, about 180 turned up to show Scotts boss Snipe and the AUEW executive that it wasn't just 'left wing agitators' keeping the dispute going. "The best thing about the picket was that it boosted our own morale", said Pete Rowan, chairperson of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee. "With the shift system we have on the picket-lines, some people had started to think that their shift were the only ones left and had become a bit despondent. Seeing everyone together cheered everyone up".

The main problem now, with the ending of the Doncaster picket, is how to put direct pressure on Snipe — not that he is having an easy time himself. He is being taken to a tribunal by 95 workers at his Norwich factory who were sacked at

an hour's notice, and he is also involved in a costly court case. And £2 million worth of orders are still shut up inside the Louisa St plant. A meeting has been arranged at Snipe's request between AUEW district secretary John Tocher and the Engineering Employers' Federation. This is mainly to discuss payment of pensions and any other outstanding sums to the Scotts workers, but they are hoping that the meeting can be used to reopen discussions on the issue of their jobs. Local factories are being circulated again with an appeal for funds. It seems that some of them need their memories jogging on the fact that the strike is still on. A new issue of the strike bulletin is also being printed. A major stumbling block to winning the dispute is still, as ever, the trade union bureaucrats. Pete Rowan is not at all impressed with the election of Arthur Scargill as president of the NUM. "He said in his election address

that he would fight for jobs anywhere in the country. But he's given no lead in our case. [Snipe makes machinery for the mines.] He even sent out a letter round the Yorkshire NUM lodges telling them that they were going too far on their blacking". As for their own leadership — the AUEW Executive — the Scotts strikers have decided to use Rule 14 to try to force a ballot of the membership to remove the current Exec. They need the support of 10 per cent of the branches to get this through, and are asking all AUEW branches to pass the following resolution: "This branch believes that Executive Council has seriously mishandled the Laurence Scotts dispute. As this is an issue of concern to all AUEW members, the branch demands a ballot for the removal of Executive Council in line with Rule 14 para 5." All resolutions should be sent to the AUEW general office and to the strike committee at 20 Round Croft, Romiley, Cheshire. "We probably won't win a ballot — we need two thirds of the membership for that — but we might embarrass the Exec into doing something".

Sackings at St Mary's

MANAGEMENT at St Mary's H spinal, London W9, are continuing their campaign to demoralise the workforce. Last week two workers were sacked on the spot — the night telephonist and a theatre operator. The telephonist had finished his shift but had not been relieved. He waited 40 minutes for his replacement, who he knew was in the building, before he left to go home.



MINERS DECIDE

by John Cunningham [Dinnington NUM]

AS WE go to press, voting for the NUM pay claim is only a few days away. In Yorkshire area officials have organised meeting on the pay claim and the ballot — and the mood has definitely shifted in a more militant direction over the past few weeks. If Yorkshire is typical, which is hard to judge, then there'll be a decisive majority for

rejection of the Coal Board offer. At the South Yorkshire region meeting in Silverwood Club, near Rotherham, Arthur Scargill made the point a number of time that he saw rejection of the NCB offer not as a vote to strike but as a vote of confidence in the NEC for them to use in future negotiations to get more cash on the table.

Nerve

But a Socialist Organiser leaflet issued jointly with the Hatfield Main miners' broadsheet 'Hot Gossip' and distributed at pits and other meetings throughout the coalfield, said, 'This is no time to lose our nerve. If we stick fast behind the NEC recommendation, we can secure a massive yes vote, and we can win this claim'.

Cowley climbdown

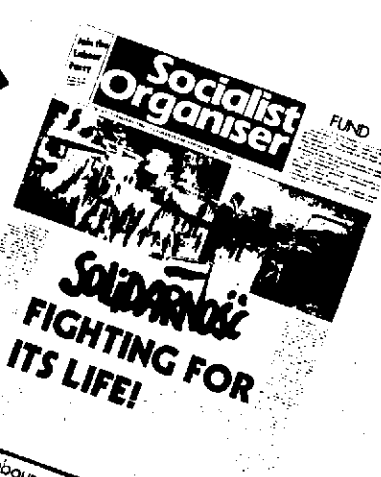
MANAGEMENT at the BL Cowley Assembly Plant have backed down — for now — on their plans to cut Relaxation Allowance (RA) breaks by 10 minutes a shift. Mass meetings last week voted to counter the 10-minute cut by reducing the working day and night by 15 minutes, i.e. clocking off 15 minutes early. Management responded by calling in the officials, who agreed to attend the conference only if BL withdrew their plans to

implement the ten minute cut unilaterally from January 11. Management agreed, and a conference was held on Tuesday 12th. At the conference, they withdrew their proposals on the RA, and are talking about some other form of 'funding' the reduction in the working week from 40 to 39 hours under the national engineering agreement. A further conference is to be held as we go to press.

Management say that if the unions fail to agree, they will announce a new date for the implementation of their new proposals. The sell-out of the RA strike at Longbridge is the background to all these moves. At the Cowley Body Plant, management are talking about the Longbridge agreement, but have not yet mentioned an implementation date. BILL PETERS

Socialist Organiser

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Call for labour movement solidarity—p.3

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Leyland Action Conference

THE sell-out of the November 1 wage review at BL revealed more clearly than ever before the massive gulf which exists between the shop floor and national trade union officials.

Meanwhile the all-out management offensive against the work-force is going on with even greater intensity; the company's drive for speed-up and demanning now directly threatens basic shop floor organisation.

The tasks facing militants in BL centre on these chronic problems of leadership at all levels of the unions. The Leyland Action

Committee, which played an important role in the preparation of and during the wages strike, has called a conference to discuss the new situation in BL and the practical steps necessary to defend workers' interests.

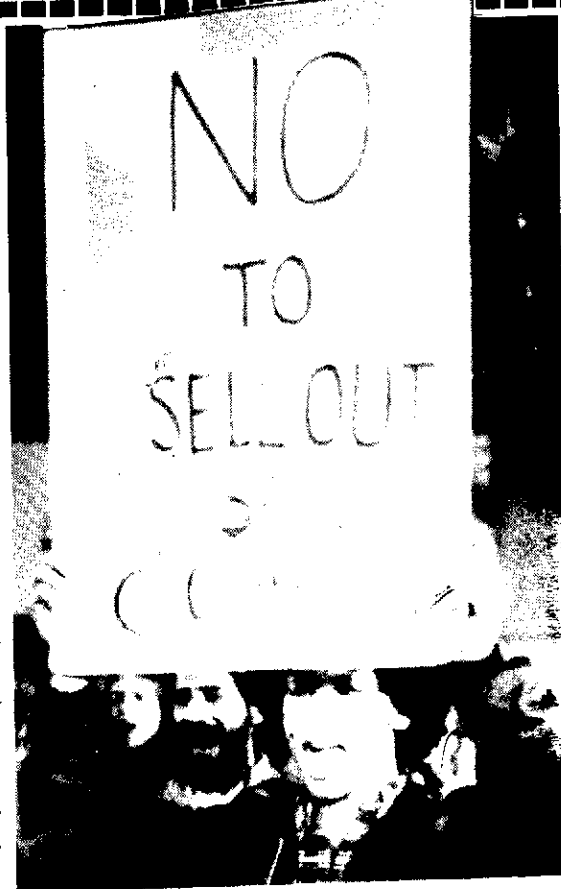
As well as reports from factories in BL Cars there will be a first-hand report on the situation in Leyland Vehicles from a delegation of LAC supporters in those plants.

An important part of the agenda will be organising resistance to the company's new procedure document.

All BL workers who support the general aims and objectives of the LAC are urged to attend.

The Conference will be held at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham, on Saturday January 23 1982 from 10.30 to 5.00 pm. Conference fee will be £1.





Published by the Socialist Organiser Alliance, 28 Middle Lane, London N8, and printed by East End Offset (TUV). Registered at a printing office in the U.K. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor.