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Once again we have to stretch the already frayed financial shoe-string on which Socialist Organiser runs. To help fight for policies which can point the way to victory for the Leyland Vehicles jobs fightback, and link up that fightback with the militancy in the BL Cars division, comrades have travelled to Lancashire to make contact, get reports, and produce bulletins. But all this costs money!

Help us make our contribution to the struggle. Send donations to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

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ITISH

LEYLAND



LEYLAND WORKERS STRIKE BACK!

by Jim Denham

AT LONG LAST, a group of workers has stood up and said no to the Edwardes jobs massacre at BL.

Over 12,000 workers are now on strike at Leyland Vehicles plants in Leyland, Chorley, and Bathgate. They are fighting a company plan that would mean 4,100 redundancies in 1982, paving the way for the decimation of Leyland Vehicles and the privatisation of profitable areas in the near future.

Workers at Leyland Vehicles are traditionally moderate. Unlike the BL Cars division, where Edwardes has only succeeded because rank and file resistance has been repeatedly sabotaged by union officials, at Leyland Vehicles the workforce has accepted a 50% cut in jobs since 1977 and several single-figure wage increases (4% for the 1981-2 review) with no resistance at all.

Astonishing

But now they are fighting. And the solidarity that the LV workers are showing is astonishing.



The dispute started on Thursday 21st, when workers at the Leyland Technical Centre refused to touch the MT207 (Boxer replacement) transferred from Bathgate. When management took a fitter off the clock for blacking the work, 120 other workers walked out immediately.

Halted

By Friday 22nd the whole of Leyland Vehicles production in Lancashire was halted, with 8,500 manual and clerical workers at Leyland and Chorley having voted overwhelmingly for strike action.

That day, 3,600 workers at Bathgate near Glasgow (where 1,365 jobs are due to

be chopped) joined the strike, occupying their plant and impounding completed vehicles.

The solidarity being demonstrated by the strikers is magnificent. At the Spurrier and Farrington gates at Leyland, foremen (ASTMS members), male and female clerks (APEX members), women canteen staff (T&G members), are all on the picket line alongside the predominantly AUEW hourly paid manual workers - an unprecedented occurrence in BL.

The major problem facing the LV strikers is the national AUEW leadership, who have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to save Edwardes' bacon by sabotaging rank and file

struggle.

Only a few weeks ago, for instance, AUEW executive member Gerry Russell told a mass meeting at Leyland: 'We must beware of those people who spread false hopes that there is an alternative to all pulling together to save the only British motor company'.

Unfortunately, the strategy of the Leyland Joint Works Committee in Lancashire offers no adequate real alternative to the AUEW leadership's treachery. The central demand put forward by convenor Mick Coyne and the LV Works Committee is for a six month postponement of the corporate plan and for management to consider an alternative plan

to be prepared by the Works Committee.

An alternative workers' plan for BL is necessary. But plans on paper never convinced the employers or saved a single job: the experience at Vickers on Tyneside, where great efforts were put into the 'workers' plan', yet the fightback folded up weakly, underlines that.

And the 'alternatives' the Works Committee has been talking about, based on import controls and a return to workers' participation and increased investment are no more adequate than the whole project of reviving British capitalism through a policy of nationalism, class collaboration, and retrenchment.

To defeat Edwardes and

the Leyland management, LV workers must fight for a policy of occupation of all LV plants (not just Bathgate); flying pickets out to all LV plants not taking action (including Guys in Wolverhampton, where 740 workers have voted to accept closure); work-sharing with no loss of pay to protect all LV jobs.

Workers in BL Cars division must push for maximum support for the LV strikers. Immediately that means sending messages of congratulations and support; organising delegations to Lancashire and Bathgate; demanding an emergency meeting of the BL combine committee; and taking collections in every plant.

Beyond these immediate

activities, we must push for solidarity strike action throughout BL.

Leyland Vehicles must be the spearhead of an all out fight to protect jobs and defeat Edwardes once and for all.

Inside

CENTRE PAGES:
Background to
the Leyland
jobs fightback;
Leyland Action
Committee
conference

First meeting of Labour Liaison '82

FIGHTING TALK-BUT NO CONCLUSIONS

Rachel Lever reports

LABOUR LIAISON 82, meeting for the first time on January 23rd, was bound to be a tricky proposition.

Though it had been in preparation since the Brighton conference, this gathering of representatives of the left in the PLP, the CLPs, local government and the unions coincidentally took place very shortly after 'peace' was said to have broken out in the Labour Party.

For anyone who might have entered into any deals at Bishops Stortford, or who felt constrained by the alleged existence of such deals even if they hadn't actually happened, the meeting threatened to blow it all apart.

And for those who had come to the meeting looking for a lead against the right wing offensive, the question was: could the confidence and optimism that came to a peak with the Deputy Leadership campaign last summer be resurrected in the aftermath of the defeats at Brighton and the four months' silence since then, the simmering witch hunt and the

right's coup at Bishops Stortford?

The result was as follows: carefully worded, anodyne press releases stressing party unity; and in the meeting, fighting talk within prescribed boundaries, leading to no decisions.

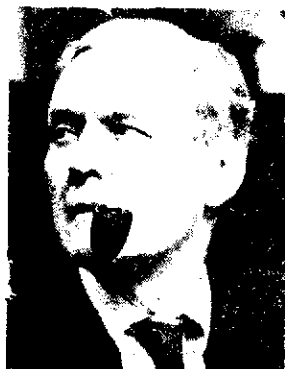
Flagrantly

Tony Benn set the tone with a reassuring speech denying any deals, but it was his press release that told the true story of a tacit pledge to public silence.

Only three speakers explicitly called for the left to mark time or back-track: Tony Saunois of Militant, Ron Leighton MP, and Pete Willsman, who spoke as a CLPD delegate but flagrantly departed from his mandate.

And there were plenty of good ideas: at the end of the meeting someone had counted up 33 different suggestions for action by the left.

Yet we were exhorted to confidentiality; to a silence that can do no good if the aim is to continue campaigning to democratise the



party and fight the right wing — and whose only purpose is to curry favour with those in the party who want to gag and bind the left.

The real value of the

meeting was as an indicator of the state of health of the movement. In no way did it reveal a mood of retreat or demoralisation. On the contrary, it showed a desire to extend the fight into new areas, such as an offensive for trade union democracy (though the main emphasis was on those unions controlled by the hard right).

Speeches emphasised the need to support and organise confrontations with Tory law (especially Heseltine and Tebbit); there was tremendous applause for Steve Longshaw's brave speech from Laurence Scotts; Ernie Roberts wanted a one-day general strike to demand a general election; and the meeting sent solidarity greetings to the

rail strikers.

Peter Tatchell voiced his conviction that if he were to be endorsed as Bermondsey's PPC it would be as a result of winning a fight, rather than a concession from the right after a decent lapse of time. And nobody made any distinction between defending Bermondsey and defending Militant.

Reg Race and Les Huckfield both spoke quite fiercely against any 'deals'; Hackney councillor Ron Heisler wanted a time limit for the dropping of the witch hunt and the endorsement of Tatchell.

Seventy five people represented 33 organisations, including trade union broad

leaves. Thus, a major question for the meeting was: would Labour Liaison give a lead, try to forge some campaigning unity of the left at least on those questions where there is general consensus (eg against the witch hunt, for early publication and open discussion of the Manifesto, for a united left approach to the NEC elections), and stand by in readiness to mount a leadership campaign? Or would it just be a talking shop serving a limited purpose of exchanging views, ideas and information but making no practical mark on the functioning of its components?

Norman Atkinson, chairing, stressed the latter: it was simply 'operation link'.

The difficulties of achieving common action were emphasised, rather than the possibilities and past successes such as the Rank & File Mobilising Cttee.

Tony Benn thought it should meet 'from time to time', and he put forward the sophisticated rationale that we were the Labour Party because we represented its policies, and if we were to form an organisational unity of any sort we would be 'minoritising' ourselves.

But in face of the mood of the meeting for action, it was agreed to get together again in a month's time. If that meeting is a repeat of the last one, it probably won't be recalled again in a hurry. If it does decide to act, it could launch very powerful initiatives indeed.

Unions must act to defend London Transport!



IN LINE with the Law Lords' decision, LT plans to axe bus services by 10% and close seven tube stations and three branch lines.

In addition the Underground will start half an hour later — at 6am — and close half an hour earlier, at midnight.

Underground sections under threat include: the Central Line between Epping and Ongar; the East London Metropolitan line from Whitechapel to Shoreditch (and possibly the Whitechapel to New Cross line); the Piccadilly peak-hour service between Holborn and Aldwych; Regent's Park and Edgware Road on the Bakerloo line; and Fairlop on the Central line.

GLC councillor Valerie Wise spoke to Socialist Organiser:

IT IS obvious that the decision of the Law Lords over the 'Fares Fair' policy is simply outrageous. Above all it is dangerous in that it puts democracy in London under threat.

It seems that the decision of five men is more weighty than the express democratic choice of the London electorate.

We have to mount an enormous campaign to force the government to introduce legislation allowing the right to local government to subsidise essential public services like transport.

The GLC is mounting a campaign of its own with as much press publicity as

possible. We will be leaf-letting on the cheap fares, and putting posters and adverts all over London buses and tubes.

However, personally I think that the GLC must not rely simply on its own devices. Unity with other bodies, above all unions, the Labour Parties, and community groups, is essential.

In particular I also think that the present fightback

against the fare increases must have an orientation to women.

In families with only one car (the case with most working-class car owners) it will invariably be the man who will have first use of it — and women, due to the increased cost and deteriorating service, will find themselves spending more and more time doing basic chores such as shopping and taking their kids to

schools — on top of their jobs.

I am hoping that the GLC Labour group members and left wing Labour MPs will take up the call for the 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' campaign.

From the date that the new fares come into operation, we should urge that London commuters refuse to pay the increase, and leave their name and address with the transport

staff.

If this is done in cooperation with the transport unions the campaign could succeed and make it impossible for LT to prosecute 'fare dodgers'. They can't prosecute millions of people!

[Valerie Wise was speaking in a personal capacity].

Why we stand firm

ON MONDAY January 25 the Labour-controlled West Midlands County Council voted to drop Labour's manifesto promise to cut fares, and instead to impose a 70% increase.

After threats of legal action, the Labour group had decided to put on a three line whip to get the fare rises through.

But two councillors — Christine Thomeycroft and Dave Spencer — voted against the fare increase. In a statement, they explained why:

1. The Manifesto, 'Travel Our Way' was the title of our Labour Party manifesto for the May elections, 1981. This showed the importance to us of our cheap fares

The policy was arrived at after a full discussion and consultation in the County Labour Party, and after a proper and detailed costing. It was with great pride that we began to implement this policy. We advertised it widely on the buses and shelters, and the railway stations.

It is a popular policy, and there has been an improvement in the numbers of people travelling.

A cheap fares policy is essential to an overall socialist transport policy. On the one hand it provides a social benefit for the needy, on the other hand, it is efficient, whereas the motor car wastes energy and resources.

2. Our fiduciary duty.

The judgment of the five Law Lords against the GLC is a political and class-biased judgment.

It means the end of local democracy as we know it, and we do not say this lightly. The Law Lords will apparently decide what can be subsidised and what cannot, not the people who cast votes.

Note that the government can take £16 per week per family for defence. How do they balance the books there?

Our fiduciary duty is to the people who voted for us last May and whom we represent. In this case it means fighting to get the law changed.

3. Campaigns. We represent Coventry South East constituency. Four large council estates dominate the area, with lower than average car ownership and higher than average unemployment.

Higher fares mean yet another cut in their living standards.

The Coventry South East CLP voted, with nobody against, to deplore the fare increases and to call upon its three county councillors to vote against the increases at the council meeting.

We intend to campaign in our area for a socialist transport policy and against the Tory government's cuts. Ideally we would like a similar situation to that in South Yorkshire reported in this week's Labour Weekly.

Women's Fightback Trade union conference

Time and again women trade unionists have come forward to fight the Tory onslaught on their rights and living standards. And each time they have run up against the limitations 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 N7.

MARCH 27

Miners' vote: a product of isolation and betrayal

THE decision of the National Union of Mineworkers to accept the 9.3% offered to them by the National Coal Board is a setback both for the miners and the working class as a whole.

To see it in any other light would be dishonest. It is now time for a calm reflection on yet another grossly inadequate wage settlement in the mining industry.

Only two areas—Yorkshire and Scotland—voted yes to give the Executive a mandate to take industrial action if necessary in pursuit of the union's claim of a minimum wage for surface workers of £100 a week.

Instead of squarely insisting that workers should not pay for the bosses' crisis,

demanding automatic inflation-proofing of wages, and thus laying the basis for a united struggle, the union leaders all argued that workers could only hope to scrape a few per cent.

Thus the miners' nine per cent deal could be sold as the best offer of this pay round — even though it is 3% below inflation.

The total 'yes' vote was 91,477. The total vote opposing industrial action and therefore in effect accepting the offer was 113,144. 55% voted no and 45% voted yes.

Many of the left leaders, particularly Arthur Scargill and Mick McGahey, the

NUM vice-president, have raised a hue-and-cry over an article in the Daily Express by retiring President Joe Gormley, in which Gormley urged members to accept the NCB's paltry offer.

Yet this looks very much like a face-saving exercise. The article appeared in a paper little read by miners at a time when most of them would already have made up their mind.

What almost certainly did affect the vote—probably decisively—was campaigning. Where the area leaderships organised meetings and distributed literature, as in Yorkshire and Scotland, then a 'yes' vote was secured.

The setback in mining

cannot be separated from developments elsewhere. Many people still think that miners are a different breed to other mortals. That is certainly no longer true, if it ever was. The pressures of living in a crisis-ridden society, with all the insecurity that entails, means that miners are now more wary than in 1972 of going out on the streets.

The defeat at British Leyland and the Ford settlement also had their effect on the miners. The miners' settlement date was November 1, the same as BL and earlier than Ford. Yet Joe Gormley deliberately delayed the miners' pay talks

until after the BL struggle. And then there was no outcry from Scargill and McGahey.

BL and Ford were both isolated. Both were sold out. So then the NUM was isolated too.

Also, despite a lot of hot air, there is no triple alliance between the NUR, the ISTC and the NUM.

The railworkers now face BR's productivity attacks. Steelworkers face zero pay rises and over 15,000 job cuts.

If there was a real triple alliance, a commitment to take action together, then the situation might now be very different. A major job for the future is to stop talking about the triple

alliance and start doing something about it.

In the coalfields, the productivity scheme has split the union down the middle. Areas where the bonus is paying out voted to reject the strike call which, coupled with the votes of the white collar section of the union, COSA, gave the decisive majority.

Progress in the industry is going to be difficult as long as the bonus system divides not only area from area but also pit from pit.

Any long term strategy by the left in the union must of necessity have as a central point the defeat of the bonus system and the return to the basic wage.

In 1912 when the South Wales Miners Federation was faced with similar problems groups of militants formed themselves into the Unofficial Reform Committee to work out a strategy for the Federation.

The result of their discussions was the famous pamphlet 'The Miners' Next Step'. There is a crying need for a similar development at this time.

And not only in the mines. In today's crisis, isolation means defeat: and the present leadership of the labour movement is working to isolate and delay struggles. That is the lesson of the miners' vote.

PRESS GANG

Familiar faces in a new setting

ALAN CLINTON reports on last weekend's inaugural meeting of the Socialist Society.

WATERLOO station manager John Macey was approached by Sun reporters who asked him to help them talk to ASLEF and NUR members blacking their paper.

The station manager's reaction was unexpected — he threw the reporter off the platform. They are out because of the headline in your paper', he said. 'I'm not going to help you meet them. We have a bloody railway we are trying to run, and your presence doesn't help'.

An ASLEF official was sent to see the reporters with a blunter message. 'You'd better keep out of where the drivers are waiting. There could be a lynching'.

One train driver approached the reporters with the simple question, 'Whose head do I have to kick in?'.

Even the Sun was beginning to get the message. Its story on January 22 headlined 'Taken For A Ride' recounted unspecific tales of railmen dancing, drinking and sleeping while they were supposed to be driving trains.

The purpose of the story was transparent — to discredit the drivers on strike, stating they were liars and cheats who put the lives of rail users at risk.

It fits with a long line of similar attacks on other workers in dispute — notably the BL carworkers and the lorry drivers in their 1979 strike.

But the attack has surely rebounded. The blacking of deliveries of all News Group newspapers (including the Times, Sunday Times, and News of the World) has proved a powerful right of reply.

The decision by Kings Cross railworkers to continue the blacking despite the High Court intervention has

threatened to make nonsense out of the law. (Incidentally, while we are not talking about martial law in Poland, how liberating it is to have a law which permits a judge to tell union branch officers what positions they must argue at branch meetings).

Inside the Sun, a team of reporters collected the various threats that had been made against them. But a funny thing began to emerge from the pages of 'Britain's no.1 paper'. Somehow the swagger had gone out of it. There was a smell of fear arising from the pages.

Naturally the reporters were frightened because their physical safety was at risk. The proprietors were frightened because their profits were at risk.

It was inevitable that the paper would run to the courts. So far, this has proved completely ineffectual.

There still remains the prospect of a judge directing the majority of branch members how to vote at a meeting. Presumably, the official solicitor will have to attend to see who voted which way and to make sure that the artificial majority wins the day.

Until that stage is reached, there remains the enjoyable site of watching branch officials solemnly going to their members and giving them advice ordered by the judge which they know (and are glad they know) will be totally disregarded.

It must have proved demoralising for the Sun. It must have proved more demoralising to know that one of their two stool-pigeons was due in court himself on charges of fiddling his overtime!

THE GENERATION of the 1968 found a new staging post last weekend (January 23-24) at the 1,000-strong founding conference of the 'Socialist Society'.

Many of the old familiar faces were there — Robin Blackburn and Meghnad Desai from the LSE of those long gone days, Pat Jordan and Tariq Ali from the Grosvenor Square marches against the Vietnam war, and many more people whose faces have gone past on so many demos, at so many such meetings.

Yet there were new elements also, many for whom 'student power' and May 68 were distant history like Hitler or Alexander the Great.

Most conspicuous of all the new elements were the feminists. As at all such assemblies nowadays, they

affected the form of the conference and the structure of its discussions, though they remained strangely absent from the fibre of its politics.

There have been many other staging posts for this section of the enlightened middle class over the years. There were some who even recalled and went back to the 'Socialist Forum' movement of the late 1950s, after the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

High Priest

There were more from the days of the short-lived Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation of the late 1960s and the various sub-groups of intellectual endeavour that have since mushroomed in the Conference of Socialist Econ-

omists, Critique, History Workshop and so forth.

It has to be said that some of these efforts have been ineffectual, abortive, or an avoidance of real political activity.

However, a new seriousness has been forced on the participants in such enterprises by the massive attacks on the public sector — including the cuts in education, from which many of them earn their living.

There is also a genuine frustration that the madhouse logic of Joseph and Thatcher has achieved an intellectual respectability for theories which were thought to have become extinct as the dodo.

Also, there is a concern that the alternative to this might be the discredited policies of Wilson and Call-

aghan, tied up with a red and blue bow of vacuous public relations and re-entitled the SDP.

Perhaps the most notable new feature for those present was a recognition that there had been some significant developments around the Labour Party in recent years.

In case anybody might decide to take a serious attitude to the mass movement as a result, there were those to prevent them doing so. The Socialist Workers' Party intoned the phrase 'Leninist Party' as if it provided an answer to every political problem.

And Professor Miliband, the high priest of scepticism, said that even he had had his doubts last summer, but now the right wing were fighting back all of his old prejudices had been confirmed.

The issue of the Labour Party loomed large over the conference, but it was easily diffused by those who said that it was one issue among many.

Despite a friendly reception to a skilful speech by Tony Benn, in the end the conference decided, after its sharpest discussion, that the Society would not even consider the question of affiliation.

Avoidance

What was behind this was something more than a determination to be ineffectual. There was also an avoidance of the major political issues for the sake of 'unity'.

The Communist Party, whose members were prominent, particularly — it is interesting to note — in discussions about the Labour Party, are of course past masters at this.

There was even an argument in one of the discussion groups that the national struggle in Ireland did not concern socialists there!

In an interesting way the Communist Party and some others were able to capitalise on that same mood sweeping sections of the petty bourgeoisie, for poli-

tics with all the effort and difficult choices missed out, as is reflected in their own different way in the rise of the SDP.

Supporters of Socialist Organiser will naturally be appalled by all this. They will be repelled by the conscious avoidance of serious political questions and political activity.

They will find it especially necessary to condemn the prevalent opinion that there could be a socialist movement without the working class.

Democratic

For all that, there were still positive aspects of the venture.

Under the umbrella of the new society, a meeting of almost 200 people discussed with Ken Livingstone the theory and practice of a campaign against the London fare increases, and there was an excellent speech from GLC councillor Valerie Wise outlining future action on the matter.

It is a forum where it is possible to draw out the lessons of Poland for socialism in the same way that it was possible for Trotskyists to argue on the meaning of Hungary twenty-five years ago.

There is one other point that needs to be squarely faced by supporters of this paper. This is the fact that a number of significant and general political developments have affected the socialist movement in recent years in ways that have been separated from its practical activities.

New aims and attitudes derived from the women's movement, and from the realisation of the democratic character of socialism, have come through discussions of the sort that the Socialist Society seeks to initiate.

There are in which this new Socialist Society can provide an adjunct to serious politics — though not the substitute some would like. Therefore it can be given a welcome, however much we will need to qualify it.



By Gerry Byrne

Gift of site

ASSET-STRIPPING 1982: The Government has decided to sell back the St Georges Hospital site at Hyde Park Corner to its original owner, the Grosvenor Estate, whose present heir, the Duke of Westminster, is worth £2,000 million, at cost price — £23,700. The site is reckoned to be worth around £20 million on the open market.

The site had been occupied by the hospital for over 200 years, at a nominal rent, with the proviso that if the land ceased to be

used for medical purposes it should be sold back to the estate at its original price.

When the closure was first announced, the workers occupied the hospital. Rumours were rife at the time that private medicine would make a killing by buying up this prime site in the centre of London, at the expense of the NHS.

Now it seems that even that is not to be. The site is due to be 'developed' for offices, and one of the richest men in the country will pocket £20 million. To them that have

"Asking for it"

THE DOCTRINE that women who are raped are 'asking for it' reached a new level of hideousness in an American court. A man who raped a five year old girl was given 90 days in prison with work-release privileges after the judge described the child as 'an unusually sexually promiscuous young lady'.

Do as I say

HARD TIME: pity poor Dick Giordano, top executive with British Oxygen Company. He's coming in for a lot of stick from the mean-minded and spiteful sections of our society, simply for accepting a just reward for his efforts.

BOC's profits were up 50% last year, so quite rightly they thanked Giordano with a £200,000 a year pay rise. Which is only fair when you consider that if that amount was given to BOC's workers who actually produced that profit, they'd only go and squander it and give a bad example to all the other workers who are tied to four per cent.



World News

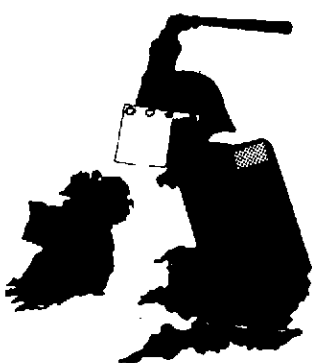
Prior's plan to reshape British rule

SINCE THE abolition of Stormont in 1972, each Westminster government has tried to launch a 'political initiative' to break the deadlock of direct rule. All have failed, caught between Paisley's refusal to accept any power-sharing with the Catholic minority and demand for full powers for a Northern Ireland parliament, and the continuing resistance of the Republicans, who refuse to accept any British presence.

Paisley, who wrecked the power-sharing assembly through the UWC strike in 1974, now has clearly eclipsed the support for the Official Unionists among the Loyalists. On the other side, the SDLP has been losing support electorally, and has also gradually fragmented.

In this situation, Prior's new plan, which was leaked by the Guardian on January 14, tries to bypass these problems by adopting a gradualist approach, in which the handing back of power from Westminster to a new, refurbished Northern Ireland Assembly will depend on good behaviour by the political parties that receive it.

Bruce Robinson examines the proposals in James Prior's latest scheme for the North of Ireland.



Prior plans to set up another elected Northern Ireland Assembly, but to keep the real power for an Executive which he will himself head. If the parties in the Assembly refuse to take part in the Executive, their place will be given to Northern Ireland ministers or other Westminster MPs.

Initially, Prior himself

will have power over finance, security, and foreign affairs. The Executive as a whole will deal with 'less sensitive' functions. The elected Assembly would only be able to legislate with 70 per cent of the members voting for a Bill.

As Lord Gowrie, Prior's no.2, put it, 'The various groupings only receive power as they show they are able to operate it'.

Why should Prior think that the various Loyalists and the SDLP will agree to this scheme, which makes them dependent on his whims?

Strings

One reason is that he hopes to play on rivalries among the Unionists and draw the Official Unionists into the Executive. The SDLP is also a major target for Prior.

The carrot in Prior's plan is the £91 million aid programme, mainly aimed at housing and industry, announced earlier this month. He hopes to gain political support by showing that Northern Ireland's economic problems require aid from the Westminster government.

Negotiations over the fate of the De Lorean car company are still going on. Shorts engineering has announced redundancies. The effects of the recession in Northern Ireland put a lot of strings into the hands of the British government.

Venture

The stick — as far as the Unionists are concerned — comes from the threat — in the longer term, if Prior's plan fails — for dual British/Irish nationality for those who want it in the North, and in the even longer term joint administration between London and Dublin.

Prior has already discussed this with the SDLP and is likely to keep it in the background as a threat/promise for the future.

Another aspect is put succinctly in the Guardian: 'One thing which is seen to govern the outcome is the security situation, and there are fears that any political progress could be impossible unless new steps are taken against the IRA.'

'Such action by the British government would certainly improve the chances of a political venture being more acceptable to the



NOLS students to discuss Ireland

TRENT Polytechnic Labour Club has called a one-day conference on Ireland on February 13, to remedy the scandalous situation where NOLS, the Labour student organisation, has no position on Ireland.

Clause 4, a Tribune organisation, holds on to NOLS with a tenuous majority. Although they are prepared to talk about the anti-imperialist struggle in Palestine, this generous 'anti-imperialism' falters considerably as it approaches the shores of England.

The draft statement to the conference, however, reflects the position on Ireland of the Militant tendency.

It avoids the call for an immediate withdrawal of British troops, and stresses the establishment of a Labour Party in Ireland as a cure-all.

The document indicts 'low wages, slum housing, unemployment, sectarianism and repression and the past tactics of the British ruling class', but it underplays the role that the partition of Ireland has played in imposing widespread discrimination against Catholics and leading Protestant workers to identify their interests with the maintenance of the Union, rather than with Catholic workers.



In denouncing 'sectarianism', the document equates the forces of reaction such as Protestant paramilitary groups with anti-imperialist organisations, such as the IRA and INLA, which arose from a background of brutal discrimination and repression against the Catholic community by British imperialism and Protestant bigotry.

The document also fails to point out that the 'past tactics of the British ruling class' have been carried out as viciously by Labour governments as Tory.

Labour's 'bi-partisan' approach to Ireland must be changed, and the likes

Trent Poly Labour Club: Conference on Northern Ireland. Saturday February 13: registration from 11am. At Trent Poly Student Union, Byron Building, Shakespeare St, Nottingham. Social in evening. Visitors' credentials 75p on the day; delegates' credentials £1.50 from TPLC, address as above.

of Labour spokesperson Don Concannon, who went to the dying Bobby Sands MP to gloat over his 'lack of support', should be removed.

Bobby Sands, according to Militant, should presumably have waited for a 'labour movement inquiry' to deliberate whether or not he deserved to benefit from prison reform.

NOLS members who stand for solidarity with the fight for a united and independent Ireland need to make our voice heard in this debate.

The statement is open for amendments (no longer than 350 words), which should be sent to Trent Poly Labour Club via a Labour Club by February 5.

The deadline for delegates (one per club) is February 10, and the fee is £1.50. Visitors can register on the day, and as long as they are Labour students or Labour Party members have speaking rights.

McAliskey killers jailed

LAST WEEK three Ulster Defence Association members — one of them a former soldier in the Ulster Defence Regiment — were jailed after pleading guilty to shooting Bernadette and Michael McAliskey last January.

The press made much of Bernadette McAliskey's tribute to the army surgeon who saved her life, but not so much of her insistence that questions remained unanswered about the British Army's role in the assassination attempt.

Scottish soldiers based in the area arrived not long after the shooting, gave the

McAliskys first aid, and got them to hospital. But before then, some soldiers speaking in English accents had been in the house where the McAliskys were lying wounded, without giving any help.

No credible explanation has been given by the Army of why either group of soldiers came to the house.

"Looking at it every way", Michael McAliskey concluded at the time, "I can't see that those soldiers [the first group] were anything but SAS".

By Martin Thomas

Turkish prison gas attack

SHERIF Yazar and Hablan Mermercioglu have been killed in the Alemdag prison in Istanbul.

The prison authorities launched a tear-gas attack to break up a protest by 100 political prisoners. It was the gas which killed the two and left several others in a coma.

The protest had begun when a new group of detainees — who had been tortured while they were held for a month in Istanbul's main police station — were transferred to Alemdag.

Junta

This atrocity is simply another page in the growing catalogue of torture and violence meted out by the Evren junta against the left.

For details of how you can help fight back, contact the Turkey Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 5695, London WC1N 3XX.



Unionists'.

In other words, if the plan is to stand a chance of getting off the ground, the first result will be a further beating-down of the Catholic ghettos. Prior's plan is only the latest attempt of the Tories to placate 'moderate' Unionism, while using the willing SDLP to disguise what he is doing.

Prior wants to get his plan off the ground quickly before it gets too close to the next elections. While Paisley and the Provisionals both retain substantial support, his chances of success are slim.

If Prior's 'initiative' goes the way of its predecessors, it will be because British imperialism is propping up a fundamentally undemocratic and un-reformable state in the Six Counties. No amount of tinkering will reconcile the irreconcilable. There is no solution for Ireland without an end to Partition and British occupation.

Masses defy Gandhi

DESPITE fierce repression, Indian trade union leaders reported a big turnout for their general strike against prime minister Indira Gandhi's emergency powers last Tuesday, 19th.

The states of West Bengal and Kerala were almost completely shut down.

But police opened fire on strikers in many areas. At least 12 people were killed and some 300 injured — and 25,000 were arrested.

CONFERENCE

'IRELAND — TIME FOR TORY POLICIES TO GO'. Labour movement conference organised by Labour Committee on Ireland and Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. Saturday February 27, starting 11am at The Theatre, 309 Regent St, London W1. Delegates' or observer's credentials £2 from 1 North End Road, London W14.

Advertisement

WORKERS Socialist REVIEW 1

50p

SAVE ST. GEORGES

'Capitalist Crisis and Socialist Alternative', a detailed study of the breakdown of the boom, by Bob Sutcliffe. 50p plus postage from PO Box 135, London N10DD.

POLAND

Junta's plan for fake unions

By Alexis Carras

THE POLISH military authorities have announced, in the army's daily paper, their new master plan for incorporating a totally disaffected working class into the running of the system.

The WRON (the Military Council, headed by Jaruzelski and certain figures from the old PUWP Politbureau) puts forward the idea of some new trade union organisation to replace the outlawed (or, as the WRON would have it, 'suspended') Solidarnosc.

These trade unions would be strictly limited to what the regime calls 'social problems', and will be confined 'to the premises of a given factory'.

The regime will under no circumstances relinquish its control of the factories. It dresses this up with pseudo-arguments to the effect that decisions on production, choice of technology, investment and exports, 'are reserved for expert authority and cannot be executed according to the principle of demo-

factory's income is distributed, and over social and housing funds. The future tame unions are promised information 'about the economic issues of the enterprise so as to have a realistic ground for (their) fight in defence of the workers' social interests'.

But trade unions with any strength or independence, or moves by workers to challenge more than minor details of the bureaucrats' policies, are ruled out.

Torn Apart

Industry is working below capacity already, and now the western banks are pushing for the resumption of interest payments due late last year. This means an extra shift of resources from buying necessary imports to the banks.

Result? Further grinding down of industrial activity as basic components run short and a deteriorating food supply. Animal feeds are already in short



encies only. Despite government assurances, the rations allocated, barely enough to keep above subsistence, are not being honoured.

The rural economy is being torn apart between the more well-to-do farmers, whose direct supply to urban areas has allowed them to amass a certain stock of black market currency, and the poorer farmers who have no such outlet.

There is talk of the government moving to seize food supplies by force, given the unwillingness of the farmers to sell their produce for useless zlotys.

Even basic barter between central authorities and the farmers has broken down, due to the State's inability to deliver essential fertilisers, fuels and pesticides.

But the WRON will honour its debts to the West, and above all it will tenaciously cling to power for the bureaucracy, even if it means starving the workers.



cracy'. In other words, the bureaucrats say: we will continue as we have always done in mismanaging the economy, because only 'we' are expert enough at this. And we will continue to put 'our boys' into the cushy, well-paid seats.

The regime does foresee 'the democratic voice of the employees (coming) into effect' in the way the

supply, and this is leading to large-scale slaughtering of livestock, which will produce a chronic meat shortage after the temporary bulge in supply is past. It takes years to rebuild livestock.

The shortages, the price increases, and the downward spiral of the zloty have resulted in a flourishing black market in food, which deals in foreign cur-



Polish food queue: debts paid to Western banks while workers starve

200 at Oxford rally

An audience of over 200, including many workers and students, packed into Oxford Town Hall to attend a rally in support of Solidarnosc called by Oxford Trades Council.

Speakers came from the London office of Solidarnosc, from the East European Solidarity Campaign and from the local labour

From the Trades Council International sub-committee Pat Lally pointed to the hypocrisy of the Reagan campaign on Poland while US arms back the junta in El Salvador: a demonstration in solidarity with the Central American struggle is to be held in Oxford on Saturday January 30.

A labour movement campaign of solidarity with Solidarnosc was established.

Who speaks for counter-revolution?

Lodz Solidarnosc leader Zbigniew Kowalewski told a rally of CGT trade unionists in Paris recently what Solidarnosc really is

THE PROPAGANDA of the PUWP asserts that Solidarnosc is a counter-revolutionary organisation whose aim was to overthrow the socialist regime in Poland. It is a lie.

Who are the real representatives of the counter-revolution in Poland? Those who have oppressed the people for 36 years? Those who have destroyed the national heritage created by the workers?

Or Solidarnosc, which was created because the workers went into struggle for their rights and for their democratic liberties?

Who are the counter-revolutionaries?

A small group of bureaucrats who reap their privileges and impose a dictatorship? Or the members of Solidarnosc who struggle

for the socialisation of the means of production, for self-management in the factories, for the rights of the workers, for them to benefit from the fruits of their labour?

Who are the counter-revolutionaries?

Those who use tanks, the army, and the police against ten million workers, and deport thousands of workers to concentration camps? Or those who resist?

Today Poland is governed by the same leaders who massacred the workers in 1956 at Poznan and in December 1970 on the Baltic coast, and who beat and tortured workers at Radom and Ursus in 1976.

Their coup d'etat on December 13 is a purely counter-revolutionary act.

The Polish authorities do not want a real socialism to be created in our country, a working-class, democratic, self-management socialism, the sort of socialism the Polish working class is fighting for.

At first we hoped that we would only be a trade union organisation. Life forced us also to be a social movement which sets its aim as realising the demands of the workers and of the whole society.

Solidarnosc is today the only independent organisation in this totalitarian state.

Starting from the wish to improve the living conditions of the workers, it has moved to demand working class self-management in the whole economy and the holding of free elections in Poland.

We were forced to struggle against the economic crisis in a situation where the authorities did nothing to save the country from poverty and hunger.

And it was not because 'extremist groups' ordered us to do so that we undertook this struggle! It was the workers in the big factories who were most militant, most radical, and most determined.

It was they who said to the Solidarnosc leaders, 'Forward! Forward!'

And that drive was the result of the suffering, the oppression and the exploitation of the working class. It was the result of the oppression of the whole society by a state which had no mandate from the people.

Masseys lead solidarity

By Keith White

solidarity with their Polish brothers and sisters.

The Coventry Polish Solidarity Campaign public meeting will be held on Friday 5 February at 7.30 pm in Room D14, Lancaster Polytechnic. Speakers will be from Massey Ferguson, the London PSC and Piotr Kozlowski, the departmental Solidarnosc convenor at the Ursus tractor plant in Warsaw.

There is quite a bit of disquiet on the left in the city because people don't want to be seen as jumping on the Thatcher-Reagan bandwagon. But this doesn't appear to have been the motive in the minds of the Massey Ferguson workers, who clearly responded to an appeal for help from a brother worker.

Socialist Organiser supporters, speaking in support of resolutions backing Solidarity in Labour Party meetings, have found that reservations about open statements against the Polish crackdown are quite widespread and not confined to the Labour left.

Local supporters of the Polish Solidarity Campaign who helped to arrange Piotr Kozlowski's appeal to Massey Ferguson workers, have called a public meeting to discuss extending the backing to other relevant plants in the city, and developing other forms of solidarity action.

We urge those who fear that by adding their weight to resolutions and actions in support of Solidarity that they cannot avoid joining in with the reactionary arguments of Thatcher and Reagan, to break from their passivity and abstention and join in the struggle for class

WORKERS at Massey Ferguson, Coventry, have voted to black parts from the Ursus Tractor factory in Warsaw. Socialist Organiser spoke to a TGWU steward at Massey Ferguson who gave us this report.

'The company could easily implement our policy but they don't want to. They get the parts in exchange for technological information, so it would cost them to go elsewhere. There again, they don't want any trouble because they have three new tractors coming into production. So I think they will agree to our demand.'

'When we discussed it on the stewards' committee all the arguments for blacking were left wing. But then we've a long record of supporting other workers. We sent money to Massey Ferguson workers in Spain, for example.'

'Before the mass meeting the main argument against taking action was "why should we, we've got enough problems of our own". As it turned out, the response at the mass meeting was fantastic. They almost lifted the rafters with their enthusiasm. I think that the main reason for this was that Kozlowski was there in person.'

GLASGOW SOLIDARITY

ON Saturday last, 700 people marched through the streets of Glasgow to chants of 'Martial law-Out! Solid-

The march ended with a rally in Patrickburgh Hall, where the principal speakers were Marek Garzpecki and Piotr Kozlowski - two members of Solidarity. Marek is a journalist and broadcaster with Radio Warsaw and a shop steward. Piotr is a senior shop steward in the Ursus tractor factory.

The march and rally were the culmination of a success-

ful speaking tour of Scotland organised by the Polish Solidarity Committee in Glasgow and was made possible through collaboration with the Polish Solidarity Campaign nationally and the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group.

Other speakers at the rally included Jimmy Reid, Ellen Monaghan of Lee Jeans, John Maxton MP, Dennis Canavan MP and Ian McAlman, Secretary of the Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee.

Labour rally

THE LABOUR Party International Committee has fin-

Scots tour

LAST FRIDAY, Solidarnosc shop stewards Piotr Kozlowski and Marek Garzpecki visited the east of Scotland as part of the push to set up effective labour movement solidarity with Polish workers.

The visit could hardly have got off to a better start, for as they were driving to Bathgate the BL workforce were voting to occupy their plant.

Piotr, from the giant Ursus tractor plant outside Warsaw, almost felt at home: another tractor plant, another occupation.

He was able to address a meeting of the 200 shop stewards.

By comparison, the rest of the day was less emotional. An official reception by Lothian Labour Council (convenor John Creighton said 'We have always had a warm relationship with trade unions' - was this the same council that cut £30 million last year) was followed by a packed meeting sponsored by Edinburgh and District Trades Council.

DAVE MILLIKEN

ally agreed to act over Poland and accepted a resolution from Eric Heffer condemning the military takeover and urging the British labour movement 'to refrain from any fraternal contact with the PUWP or the official Polish trade unions'.

A rally or meeting is to be held, probably in late February, but details are not yet fixed.

The initiative is a start in redressing the lack of a national labour movement response.

In many respects the Polish Solidarity Campaign has done good work.

However, PSC's consistent policy of having Liberals, SDPs and Tories on its platforms makes it impossible for socialists - fighting in Britain, against the bitter resistance of our ruling class, for many of the demands that Solidarnosc fought for in Poland - to identify fully with the PSC.

The PSC is organising a rally on January 30 (2pm in Friends House, Euston Rd, London), but alongside Jimmy Dunn (Massey Ferguson convenor), Terry Duffy, Peter Hain, Joe Marino and Vladimir Bukovsky, there is a Liberal Party spokesperson invited.

Our job is to continue to work locally for labour movement solidarity, and to build for the national rally planned by the Labour Party.



World News

REAGAN'S CUTS FAIL TO STEM CRISIS



BOB SUTCLIFFE continues his series of articles on Reagan's America.

EVEN A LEADING member of the Heinz family says that tomato ketchup is not a vegetable. And yet this question was debated by the US administration and Congress just recently, seriously and at great length.

The interest was not academic. One of Reagan's agencies wanted to re-define the official status of ketchup as part of a programme of lowering the nutritional standards of publicly provided school lunches — in order, of course, to reduce their cost to the Federal government.

It is an illustration of how the Reagan administration is leaving no stone unturned in its efforts to trim every possible penny from the budget for social and welfare services, while pushing up spending on weapons by trillions of dollars.

New proposals for cuts — both more and less ridiculous than the ketchup question — emerge every day from some section or other of the government. But the most important cutbacks so far put into operation were embodied in the reduced Federal budget for 1981-2 which Congress passed earlier in the summer of '81 and which came into operation on October 1.

Eligibility

Overall this budget was six per cent down on the original Carter budget estimates for this year. Every programme, except the military and Federal police and surveillance forces, was cut. But the largest and most painful slice of flesh was carved off programmes of Health, Education and Welfare, which were reduced by nearly eight billion dollars — and Reagan is still trying to reduce that some more.

Most of the cuts were achieved by reducing eligibility for various kinds of Fed-



No shortages for Reagan and his rich man's cabinet: the burdens fall on to the poorest Americans.

eral benefits. The programme of Aid to Families with Dependent Children was cut back sharply so that from October 1 about 400,000 families (out of the 4 million who benefit from this programme) had all their aid cut off and another, 280,000 got reduced amounts.

Most of the people who lose these welfare benefits will also have their rights to Federal assistance in medical expenses (Medicaid) terminated or reduced. The Federal Food Stamp programme which started at the beginning of the 1970s and now helps 22 million poor Americans buy food at an annual cost of the budget of well over \$10 billion a year, was sharply slashed. One million people have lost their right to Food Stamps altogether, and millions of others have reduced allocations.

The programme of Medi-

care for the elderly has been cut back by requiring patients to put up more of the money themselves; and it will become more difficult to get disability insurance benefits.

In many states the duration of unemployment benefits will be reduced from 39 weeks to 26 weeks and a number of Federally aided jobs under a very limited public works programme will end.

Rents in subsidised housing have been increased: it will be more difficult for college students to get loans to finance their studies.

Millions of working class and middle class Americans will be hit in one way or another by these measures. But their impact is very concentrated on the very poor and those just above the official poverty line, in particular those in low-paid jobs. Survivors of the impact of the wel-

fare cutbacks have reached the not very surprising conclusion that they disproportionately hit blacks and other minorities in the large cities — those, in other words, who are often least in a position to defend themselves.

The consequences of this first major dose of Reaganomics, as of Thatcherism, is that those in society who were disadvantaged to begin with are relatively the worst hit.

The National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity, which is one of the Federal agencies which Reagan has completely abolished, was able to issue a statement just before its closure in which it warned, with a dying breath, that the consequences of Reagan's cutbacks would be 'social chaos'.

Usually it is not the Federal government itself

which directly administers the programmes which it is cutting but the States and local authorities. And part of the Reagan programme has been to reduce the grants to the local authorities designed to cover welfare and other programmes, while at the same time allowing the states more freedom as to how exactly they spend the money.

In principle the states can supplement federal programmes or make up the cuts by programmes of their own — as long as they raise the taxes locally. But this means that many of the direct political problems arising from the cutbacks will fall at the feet not of Reagan in the White House but of State Governors and City Mayors: one of the reasons why they — Republicans and Democrats alike — have been almost unanimous and fairly vocal in condemning the cutbacks.

But they are nonetheless going ahead with the implementation of the Reagan cuts, though in some cases with a delay as State legislatures have to pass new laws reducing entitlements to welfare benefits.

The fiscal crisis of the States and city authorities is also getting worse, and in many places they are therefore implementing extra cutbacks of their own.

Worst hit are fire protection, education and public transport.

Rescinded

So despite the sharpening contradictions of Reaganomics and the abandonment of just about all of its original stated objectives, the Reagan administration has not been paralysed. As well as cuts, it has pushed through another item on which all the elements of the Reaganomics coalition are in agreement: that is, dismantling as many

as possible of the numerous Federal government regulations on the private sector of the economy — what is known in Reaganese as 'deregulation'.

One advantage of deregulation, from Reagan's point of view, is that much of it can be done without Congressional approval, simply by executive action.

Reagan has, for example, rescinded a whole number of measures which enforce product quality and safety standards. To the pleasure of motor industry, for example, he has relieved them of the requirement to install air crash bags and safety belts in cars; he has abolished federal standards on fuel economy; he has ended controls on minimum visibility.

Of course consumers might choose not to buy these expensive death traps, but the Reagan administration has an answer to that as well. It is in the process of dismantling regulations on content in advertising.

It will come as a surprise to the cynical that Federal regulations at the moment dictate that American manufacturers may not make untrue statements in their advertising; but, for all the difference it will make, that stipulation is about to end.

Much more serious is Reagan's attempt to dismantle health and safety regulation. Reagan rescinded the requirement (due to have come into effect last May) of guaranteed full pay for workers engaged in helping an inspector from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). He also ended a regulation due to take effect soon which would have enforced the labelling of all containers of dangerous substances with their full generic names.

This is replaced with a colour code which means

that workers have no way of checking the company's decisions on whether to classify a substance as toxic or not.

Reagan has placed under review a Carter measure which permitted workers access to all written records on dangerous and toxic substances. And there are a host of other charges now being considered which if they were implemented would, in the words of an AFL-CIO spokesperson, 'disembowel OSHA'.

The administration is also quietly ripping the insides out of another agency, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, which investigates violations of environment protection laws and reports confirmed cases to the Justice Department for action.

But a polluted land is, at least in the short term, a more profitable one, and that is what dominates the thinking of the Reagan administration.

Despite the obsession and energy which is going into cutbacks and deregulations, there remains a Grand Canyon in Reagan's America between effort and results.

In this respect the results of Reaganomics so far confirm one of the experiences of the Thatcher disaster in Britain: that no matter how hard governments of modern advanced capitalist economies try to cut government spending, it is very hard to achieve.

State spending, which has now in all such countries reached a very proportion of national incomes, is like an addictive drug. Attempts to reduce it only seem to make economies crave for more.

What are the contradictions that lead to this situation? One of them is that the reduction of programmes and employment on the one side leads to necessary increases in spending on unemployment and related benefits on the other.

Second, the cuts in government programmes mean cuts in the power and jobs of government bureaucrats, who therefore have a tendency to sabotage them. It is said, for example, that all proposals to cut back spending on the US Federal Government Geological Survey are closely followed by a sudden rise in predictions of earthquakes!

It is what is known as the Washington Monument Syndrome: when the Federal Parks Administration is asked to make cutbacks, it always starts by proposing the nation's most hallowed shrine.

The third problem is that, in the absence of the promised economic renaissance, in the US as in Britain, the attempt to implement programmes from which masses of people materially suffer naturally becomes unpopular. That is why Reagan's political coalition of Republicans and right wing Democrats which has so far passed his demands for spending cuts through the Congress is beginning to disappear.

WHAT'S ON

February 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

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.

Socialist Organiser student caucus: Saturday February 13 in Nottingham. Phone 01-609 3071 for details. Accommodation available on Friday and Saturday.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

LONDON: 'Stop the Tories in their tracks'. Speakers — Steve Good (Asst. Sec. Kings X ASLEF, in personal capacity), Martin Thomas (Socialist Organiser). Friday January 29, 7.30 at the General Picton, Wharfedale Rd, London N11.

STOCKPORT: The way forward for the Labour Left. Thursday February 11 7.30 at the Manchester Arms, Wellington Rd.

LAMBETH: Sundays at 7pm. For venue phone 609 3071. Jan.31: Stalinism. Feb.28: The origins of the Labour Party.

LEIGH: Every other Sunday 7.30 at the White Lion (opposite the market). Feb.7: Women's liberation. Feb.21: Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion.

ISLINGTON: Every other Thursday, 7.30 at the Florence, Florence St. Feb.4: What is Trotskyism?

Socialist Organiser Delegate Meeting: Saturday Jan.30, 11am to 5pm in Birmingham. For details phone 021-471 1964.

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism: alternate Fridays, next class February 5 on 'Sectarian socialism and Working Class Socialism'. For details of registration and venue, write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

IRELAND

Labour Committee on Ireland: AGM, Saturday February 6, from 10am at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Voting restricted to LCI members paid up for 1981 by January 6, 1982: conference fee £1.50.

Labour Movement conference on Ireland: Saturday February 27, from 11am at The Theatre, 309 Regent St, London W1. Sponsored by LCI and Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. Credentials £2 from 1 North End Road, London W14.

TRADE UNIONS

Media Freedom and the Right of Reply: conference organised by the Campaign for Press Freedom, 10 to 5, Saturday March 6, at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road, London E1.

London Region CND Trade Union Committee conference: February 6, at Collegiate Theatre, Gordon St, WC1. Trade union bodies in Greater London are invited to send up to three delegates: fee £2 per delegate to 11 Goodwin St, London N4

WOMEN

Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work organising conference: Feb.20, University of

London Union, Malet St, London WC1. Registration £3 (or £1.50 unwaged) from WRTW, 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.

Oxford Women's Fightback meetings. RAPE: Wednesday January 27, 8pm Cowley Community Centre. A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO A JOB: Monday February 8, 8pm, East Oxford Community Centre, room 2. PORNOGRAPHY: Monday February 22, 8pm, same venue.

STUDENTS

National Union of Students national day of action: Fight racism in the NHS, defend overseas students. 1pm: picket of DHSS office at Elephant and Castle, called by London Student Organisation. January 29.

POLAND

Support Solidarnosc: picket of Polish Embassy, 47 Portland Place, London W1, called by London Student Organisation. 3.30pm, Wednesday February 3.

EL SALVADOR

El Salvador solidarity meeting and film show: 50th anniversary of 1932 massacre. Speakers include Salvador Moncada and Jon Snow. Friday February 5, 7pm at the Old Theatre, London School of Economics, Houghton St, WC2.

DEMONSTRATION: US Hands off Central America! Called by Oxford Latin America Committee.

Assemble 3pm Lamb and Flag, St Giles; Rally 4.30pm, Coop Hall Cowley Rd; Benefit Disco 8pm, West Oxford Community Centre.

Women in struggle



Defend abortion rights!

RAPE: WOMEN WILL FIGHT BACK

By Jo Thwaites

THE NEW Tory offensive against abortion rights must be met by an immediate campaign in the labour movement.

While the Director of Public Prosecutions calls

for police investigations into two gynaecologists, health service and other trade unionists should be preparing for firm action to defend the doctors against legal action.

The gynaecologists have been refusing to comply with a revised form which the DHSS issued last March for completion by the doctors who perform abortions.

This leaves no room for the granting of an abortion on social grounds, insisting that a 'medical condition' be specified.

Rebelling against this demand — which is a back-door attempt to eliminate important provisions of the 1967 Abortion Act — doctors have been putting 'none', or even 'pregnancy', in the space allocated for 'medical condition'.

The new forms were issued by top DHSS bureaucrats through a Statutory Instrument, which requires no new legislation. It did however go before a special committee of MPs — nine out of 17 of whom are anti-abortionists!

Health minister Gerard Vaughan was himself a supporter of John Corrie's unsuccessful Bill drastically to restrict abortion rights, which fell in 1980.

Since then he, together with an increasingly influential anti-abortion grouping within the DHSS, have sought ways to curtail rights provided under the 1967 Act.

Foreseeable

The Act itself states clearly that abortion is legal if two doctors certify that the continuation of the pregnancy would involve either risk to the life or risk of injury to 'the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman'.

A special note emphasises that this 'does not require a substantial risk'.

And the Act also specifies that 'In determining whether the continuance of a pregnancy would involve such risk of injury to health... account may be taken of the pregnant woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment'.

A further note on this makes clear that, 'It would seem that 'may' must here be construed as 'shall'.

This provision — the so-called 'social' clause — has been the one accounting for up to 85% of legal abortions in recent years.

Stipulation

Yet last July a DHSS official by the name of Sir Henry Yellowlees decided to announce a unilateral change in the law. He sent a letter to doctors which proclaimed:

'Let there be any misunderstanding, I should point out that non-medical factors alone do not provide legal justification for termination on the grounds you have entered on the form...'

'There has to be a current medical condition which puts at risk the life, or physical or mental health of the patient, or the doctor must believe such a condition is a foreseeable consequence of the pregnancy'.

The Act itself makes no such stipulation: it allows

the doctor to decide whether the 'environment' of the woman would cause a 'risk' to her mental health under conditions of an unwanted pregnancy.

Unanswered

As one doctor told the National Abortion Campaign:

'In my opinion the risk to a woman's health from an unwanted pregnancy is immense... She does not have to be depressed, mad, suicidal or any other such at the time of seeking an abortion for there to be a risk to her future health and well-being'.

But many doctors have adopted an approach which is nowhere near so enlightened. Many have refused abortions or vigorously insisted upon fulfilling the same interpretation of the Act as the one now offered up by the DHSS — and women going to them have found it much harder to obtain an abortion.

It is of course an outrage that abortion is treated differently from other forms of medical treatment, and women find themselves left totally dependent upon the goodwill of the reactionary, male-dominated medical hierarchy.

But in this instance Vaughan's moves appear to be running into opposition not only from the women's movement but also from top men in the profession.

Sir Anthony Alment, president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, has made it plain that he disagrees with Vaughan's reading of the law — and it seems likely that the BMA too could be forced to speak out against prosecutions.

But women should not sit back and wait for such conservative bodies to rally to their defence.

The demand must be raised now in every union branch and Labour Party for resolutions of protest.

Socialists should demand:

- Letters to the DHSS and to Vaughan opposing the Statutory Instrument and demanding the withdrawal of the new form.

- Letters to their own union Executives, to Trades Councils, to the TUC and to the Labour Party NEC, demanding united labour movement opposition to the prosecutions.

- A pledge from leaders of the health unions — MPU, CoHSE, NUPE and others — to fight for strike action in defence of the victimised doctors if the prosecutions go ahead.

- Affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign and fight to take forward the demand for an end to all restrictive legislation on abortion, to give every woman in reality the 'right to choose' which many believed was won in 1967.



THERE HAS been no sudden increase in rape. There has been a sudden increase in media interest. The so-called 'copycat' rapes do not reflect more rapes, but more reporting.

Judge Richards' remarks about 'contributory negligence' are however nothing new. On the contrary, his attitude, that women can bring rape on themselves, is the same attitude that the papers bring to reporting rape cases.

Rape stories are supposed to sell newspapers. So, in the interests of good journalism, the Fleet Street bloodhounds rush off in search of as much gory details as they can get their paws on.

The 'interesting' stories are when the women are young, newly-married or about to be married, and hitch-hiking or walking alone at night.

They are written from a male point of view, almost always by men. (Women writers get a look in on the women's page if they're lucky, like Margery Proops in the Mirror).

The reality is more sordid and grubby than the newspaper stories. Age has very little to do with it. Women can be raped at any age.

Rape in marriage is not regarded as a crime. It doesn't occur to most men that husbands can rape their wives. The good newspaper rape is generally committed by a stranger, but in reality most rapes are committed by a man whom the woman knows — quite often her husband.

Violence in the family is common, though, barely recognised, as the police rarely intervene in domestic violence cases.

So Judge Richards' comments are not out of the ordinary. The picture presented by the TV documentary on Reading police was not out of the ordinary, either.

Any Rape Crisis Centre can produce mounds of cases of women scared of going to the police because they know what kind of brutal, insensitive treatment they'll get there.

The police justify it by saying that if the woman can't put up with that treatment in the police station, then she will not make it through the courts.

Vicious treatment of raped women in court at the hands of defence lawyers is notorious. On the grounds of the likely treatment of the victim of a particularly foul rape in Glasgow, the prosecution was called off by the Crown, since (they said) they were afraid for her mental stability.

If any of the male journalists so dedicated to truth-seeking bothered to think about it, their attitude is a major part of the reason why women who have been attacked and raped do not, for the most part, report it or go through with it to a court case.

The press, the TV and the courts have no explanation for rapes other than that these are crimes same as any other — crimes committed by bad people.

Reasonable

Thanks to the women's movement and the discussions raised and provoked by it, the question of rape is now taken more seriously than in the past. It is less easy to deny that rape is a crime, or imply that it is a wicked but pardonable excess which women really like.

Whitelaw is proposing that all rapists be sent to jail as a matter of course. Public opinion, according to a survey done by the Sunday Times, is for harsher punishment for rapists.

But what does that solve? It is reasonable that women want the men who rape off

the streets, but putting them in prison for longer terms won't stop them raping again. In fact they're likely to be brutalised, bitter, and even more violent when they come out. There is no evidence to show that a harsher and more brutal penal system creates a less brutal society.

Rehabilitation centres (described by Charlie Sarell in a letter to last week's SO) might be more useful.

Compulsory jail sentences are also likely to mean that fewer rapists are convicted; juries are reluctant to find someone guilty if they know there is an automatic jail sentence.

Castration is often cited as a fitting penalty, but surely socialists would not favour that any more than we would condone Islamic fundamentalist type punishments like cutting off the hands of a thief or the ears of a spy.

When Women Against Violence Against Women demonstrated against the Richards judgment on Monday 18th, a spokesperson told the press, 'We are not mainly concerned with long prison sentences for convicted rapists — prison is no solution'.

But she opposed unequal sentences for rapists compared to other violent criminals: 'We want to see the courts mark the gravity of the offence'. A £2000 fine hardly marks a grave crime.

Feminists and socialists explain rape as a product not of a few evil individuals but of the overall oppression of women under capitalism. So we would argue that to stop rape, the society that treats women as inferior and second-rate to men has to be overthrown.

The idea that women are passive beings just waiting to be swept up and conquered by men leads ultimately to rape, with men

asserting themselves as active domineering beings.

Some sections of the women's movement would reply: 'Does that mean nothing can be done about rape until after the revolution?' And it's true there are left groups who have that type of attitude to rape, notably the Militant tendency.

But there is a lot that can be done now.

Court procedures could be changed to make women feel that they are not on trial and considered guilty of provoking the rapist until proven otherwise.

Demands for more female judges and court officials are not likely to make a great deal of difference, but the involvement of other women in a rape trial does make it easier for the raped woman.

Changes in the law have been made before: since 1976 the press can no longer name the woman.

Changes could also be made in reporting of rape cases: the journalists' union could enforce a code of practice which would make sure that rape reports are not trivialised and sensationalised.

The Reading police documentary cannot be dismissed as an isolated incident. So measures could be taken to make sure that policemen like that are kept well away from women who have been raped.

In New York there was a special unit set up to deal with sexual assault cases, with the police men and women trained to deal sensitively with women who had been assaulted and raped. And the woman can ask to be seen only by other women.

Rape crisis centres have been set up in all major cities in Britain now, but get minimal amounts of money for running costs. We should demand that

local councils find premises and set aside money for these centres.

Greater recognition of rape crisis centres by the police, the courts and the law could help raped women to avoid the worst excesses of policemen and lawyers. The centre could take the statements from the woman and act as her representative wherever possible.

And a legally established right for rape crisis centre women to monitor and oversee how police deal with rape cases would force them to show more respect to victims.

Councils should be forced to make sure that there is adequate street lighting, so that women can walk about at night. The prevailing attitude that women who walk around at night alone deserve everything they get must be stamped out.

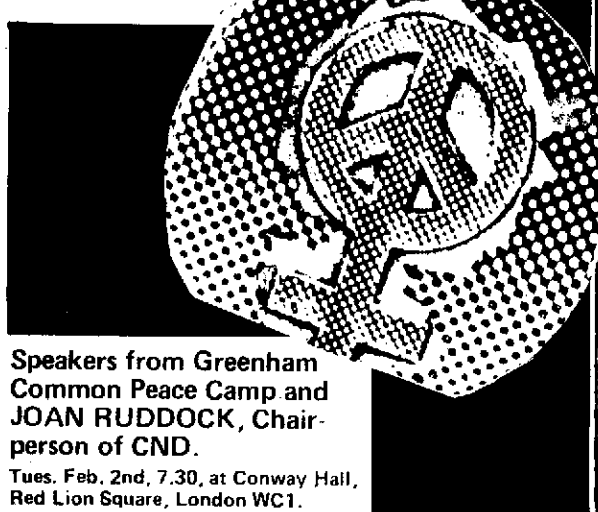
The more bus services are cut, the less money women have, the more need there will be to walk home at night or hitch.

Free self-defence classes could be set up as a normal part of a local authority's recreation department, run by and for women. And schools could make self-defence for girls a compulsory part of the curriculum.

While all these things seem puny against the enormity of the physical and mental assault of rape, the way to fight it must be to assert women's strength, and not to cower behind closed doors under the protection of our men, or call for greater punishments for rapists.

Every measure for women's equality, asserting a woman's right to be free to lead her life as she wants, is a blow against the system that produces such an appalling manifestation of the way men relate to women.

Women's Fightback Meeting WOMEN AGAINST THE BOMB



Speakers from Greenham Common Peace Camp and JOAN RUDDOCK, Chairperson of CND.

Tues. Feb. 2nd, 7.30, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.



BL truck workers dig in

by Gerry Hoffa

EDWARDES' SAC

STOP HER

ON THURSDAY January 21, five thousand hands were raised in support of a strike call by shop stewards at the giant Leyland Vehicles plant near Preston, in opposition to Edwardes' proposed 4,100 sackings in the Leyland Vehicles Trucks Division.

The next day the 3,600 workers at the Bathgate assembly factory followed suit, and struck. The only support Edwardes has obtained for his 'corporate plan' in the Truck Division has been from 740 workers at the Guy Motors heavy truck site at Wolverhampton.

As far as the Truck stewards are concerned, a threshold has been reached. The period of retreating before Edwardes' stratagems has finished.

Jimmy Swann, AUEW convenor at Bathgate, put it well: 'Nothing goes out. Nothing comes in! If we stand firm and fight back we can stop it'.

BL Fighting back

This policy was ratified at a meeting of 200 stewards from BL plants last December, when an embargo was imposed on the transfer of work and machinery between factories.

The planned job loss in the Truck Division (for 1982) is:

Albion: 180 jobs to go. End of gear box production.

Bathgate: 1365 jobs to go. Tractor production to be sold off.

Guy: 740 jobs to go. Total closure of plant.

Leyland [Bus]: 450 jobs to go. 'Rationalisation'.

Leyland [truck]: 1405 jobs to go. Cutback in engine production.

Initially the strike was triggered off at the Leyland Technical Centre after a fitter was suspended for refusing to work on the new MT207 truck. This product is a new model launched under the rationalisation plan.

The major reason for such a colossal vote in favour of all-out strike action, however, lies much deeper.



A BL carworker spells out the message on closures

A dawning recognition by the mass of workers of what Edwardes' 'corporate plan' really means, is behind this dispute.

Between 1978 and 1982 Edwardes plans to cut the Leyland Vehicles workforce by half, from 30,000 to around 14,000. Management's objective is to turn Leyland Vehicles into an assembly operation that simply puts together components produced by smaller private companies.

The argument goes something like this: 'by outsourcing the production

of components, we can drastically cut costs, and bring our productivity of labour in line with our competitors'.

But even by capitalist logic this argument is insane. For if you farm out the engine and gear box production to smaller enterprises while your international competitors are pouring massive funds into research and development, you will fall behind technologically, and — in capitalist terms — you dig your own grave.

Indeed, this is precisely

what American management consultants have said of BL's plans. The only explanation for this ritual is an ideological obsession with 'privatisation' and short-sighted incompetence.

It is not the job of socialists to make capitalism work more efficiently. But it is quite apparent that the UK motor industry is currently headed for ex-

inction.

On November 20 Edwardes informed all Leyland Vehicles workers that 'The redundancy package for those affected will only be available subject to full cooperation with the run-down of the areas concerned and all that that entails'.

In short, resistance to redundancy will lead to you losing your redundancy pay. On January 14, Sir

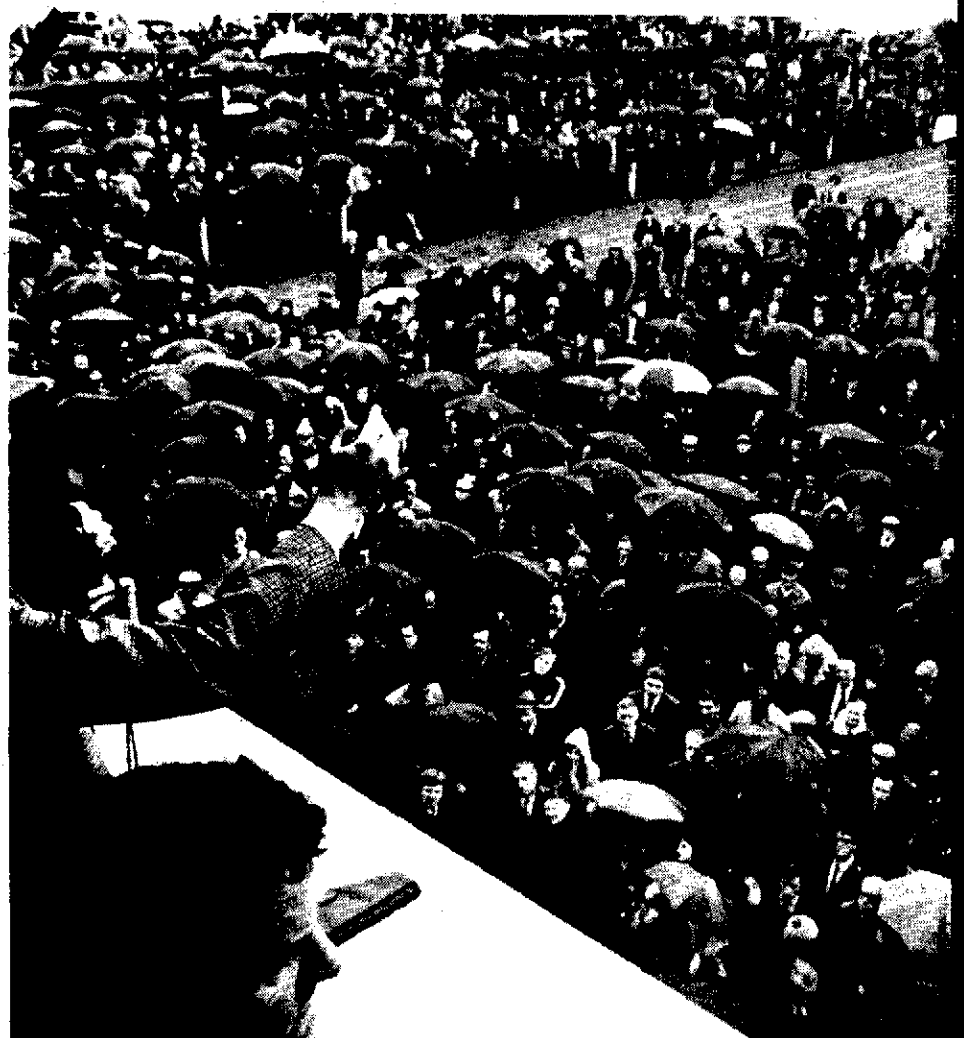
John Boyd, after meeting with Edwardes, stated, 'We all have to collaborate in supporting Sir Michael's attempts to make BL profitable'.

It is clear then that if the present strike is to be successful, then a two-front war will have to be waged against Edwardes and Boyd and Co. by the rank and file leadership in the factories.

In 1975 BL was bank-

rupt and was bailed out by the NEB. The Ryder report was commissioned and stated that BL's only chance of survival was through a massive injection of funds and more 'workers' control'. This was later shelved.

By 1978, after an unprecedented media campaign in support of Edwardes' plan, a referendum of the workforce



Mass meeting of bus & truck workers in 1977

Building a new leader

THE LEYLAND Action Committee conference, held in Birmingham last Saturday, was a step forward in the struggle for principled leadership in BL. It attracted delegations, individual trade unionists, or stewards from Longbridge, Cowley Assembly Plant, Cowley Body Plant, Jaguar Browns Lane, and Rover 4x4 and SD1. A fraternal delegate was invited from the Ford Workers' Group.

The conference opened with a comprehensive report on BL management strategy since the formation of the corporation in 1968, with an assessment of the role of the trade union leaders in recent sell-outs and the effects this has had on the battle at shop floor level today.

BL Fighting back

The report concluded that BL workers are far from beaten, despite the massive resources the gov-

ernment is prepared to put in to finance strikes as management move to smash conditions and organisation.

BL Fighting back

Reports from the individual plants showed a consistent management offensive. The report from Castle Bromwich highlighted the effects of the compromises made by sections of the stewards in collaborating with the plant management to keep a part of the plant open. From Jags moves were reported to bring in teams of super Industrial Engineers to restudy the plant for 'Audited Status' under the November sell-out terms.

The reports from Longbridge and Cowley showed how the sell-outs of the Acclaim strike in October, followed by the two-day national strike and then the Longbridge Relaxation Allowance strike, have been used by management to

press home repeated new attacks. But management is being repeatedly pushed back by a militant response from the workforce.

The conference received a full report on the Joint Negotiating Committee meeting last week which began discussing the new procedure document which under the settlement terms of the wage review was to be negotiated by January 1, 1982.

BL Fighting back

The conference decided to launch a campaign to warn the workforce against the document, which gives management the right of summary dismissal, creates a Joint Negotiating Committee almost entirely comprised of full-time officials, abolishes all full-time facilities for convenors and deputies, and makes the grievance procedure part of each individual worker's contract of employment.

The conference resolved to raise the document at plant shop stewards' committees and to call for an emergency meeting of the combine committee. Though normally it meets every six weeks, the combine committee has not met since September 1981.

A very comprehensive report on the strikes and occupations in Leyland Vehicles was given by a LAC representative who had just returned from the picket line at Chorley. He stressed the importance of the action — one of the most significant fightbacks against redundancies since Thatcher came to power.

BL Fighting back

It is important to spread knowledge of the strike into BL Cars and develop solidarity, either through direct action or financial support. A LAC bulletin will be produced for distribution to the strikers.

The delegate from the



BL workers must unite against Edwardes' Tory attack

KINGS

RE!



bosses are lining up a sell-off of publicly financed factories to private enterprise.

Leyland Vehicles has traditionally been the most profitable sector of BL making £20 million a year in the 1970s. But while Leyland Vehicles' international competitors like Ford, Daf and Volvo underwent a process of continual modernisation in the '70s, the profits from Leyland Vehicles were siphoned off elsewhere.

BL Fighting back

The consequence was a drop in Leyland Vehicles' market share from 27 per cent in 1976 to 19.5% in 1980, dated plant and machinery, outmoded products, poor after-sales service, and an incompetent management.

Management's argument that 'excessive cost factors necessitate wholesale redundancies' is contradicted by the Financial Times, hardly a friend of the workers, which reported (17.9.81) that: 'Our truck purchaser review demonstrates that Leyland Vehicles' main selling point was its low costs, and that vehicle price was only the fourth most important factor in deciding which truck to buy (after efficient back-up services and the vehicle reliability)'.

Furthermore, the capitalist journal 'Truck' had this to say: 'Leyland Vehicles has suffered from decades of neglect and under-investment', but 'in terms of product, Leyland Vehicles has never been in such a competitive position'. It then predicts that 'in 1982 the UK market for trucks above 3.5 tonnes will be up by 20 per cent' (Truck, Nov. 1981).

The woeful inadequacy of investment is highlighted by the fact that while Leyland Vehicles received £70 million over the last four years, Cummins (a US competitor) was investing £40 million per year.

A pathetic £2.5 million

ship in BL

ord Workers' Group gave a very interesting account of the Ford sell-out. He stressed the unity of the struggle in the car industry, the parallels between the two sell-outs, and the effect the BL sell-out had on the Ford workforce.

He tentatively proposed a joint conference later in the year between the Ford Workers' Group and the LAC.

The final session con-

centrated on building the LAC. The report stressed that the organisers do not see the LAC as an alternative to the Combine Committee, but as a group fighting for principled leadership within it.

Decisions were taken to formalise LAC membership with a weekly contribution of 20p. This, along with other fund-raising activities, will help finance the Bulletin, which is playing an important role in BL.

Leyland ACTION

The Leyland Action Committee is fighting to build a principled leadership throughout the Corporation. If you would like more details, contact the LAC at 194, Dawlish Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham 29.

Leyland's truck range bang on target.

Five years ago Leyland Vehicles carried out one of the most exhaustive studies ever into the needs of commercial transport. It showed that the most important requirement for a transport operator is a vehicle that is precisely tailored to his needs. With this in mind Leyland have designed and built a giant assembly

plant to produce highly individual trucks tailor-made to specific operator requirements, but using high-technology automated equipment. The new plant is now on stream. Giving the truck operator exactly what he needs. But at a cost-effective price.

BL Fighting back

An ironic advert boasts of speed-up yet to be achieved

has been spent on machine tools, the life-blood of any engineering company.

The mindless monetarists are dismembering not just BL, but whole parts of British industry. At the present rate of decline the UK will end up as a backwater warehouse for the major multinationals.

The UK market for trucks over the last couple of years has also been affected by the international recession. The UK demand for trucks in 1981 was half the 1979 level. In the north west alone, the following firms have been hit:

- Seddon Atkinsons (owned by the US company International Harvester). Preston plant closed in February 1981: 428 jobs gone.

- Seddon Atkinsons, Oldham: 300 jobs lost, and ominous signs of more to go.

- Fodens (renamed Sandbach Engineering): bankrupt 1980, bought by US company Paccar International. 1600 workers down the road!

- ERF: 1981 - 450 jobs lost. 1982 - closure announced, another 800 jobs to be chopped?

- Leyland Vehicles: 1980 -81: 2000 jobs lost. 1982: 1855 jobs to be axed?

Dave Hewitt, chairperson of the North Lancs CSEU, says: 'The latest announcement spells the end of Leyland as a manufacturer of major units. It is difficult not to believe that this has been a deliberate plan by the BL Board right from the start, and that we have been told a pack of lies for three years.'

'The reorganisation and proposed redundancies presented by management in November must be thrown out. We must refuse to allow implementation, and fight for the future of the industry'.

And the 'streamlining operation' is being financed through public funds (i.e. workers' taxes), so that private monopolies can make a rich killing on the market.

Stan Thorne, Labour MP for Preston, comments: 'The events of recent years have amply illustrated that reliance on market forces as an economic mechanism is to invite disaster. Planning the use of resources is the only way to avoid major recessions, but planning raises a host of political questions such as ownership, control, interests, people's needs and so on.'

'We have to ask why are local authorities unable to replace existing buses and extend their fleets. Because

of cuts in public expenditure made by the Tory Government. So people's needs are not met.

'We need a planned programme of investment and production for use'.

The current legally-imposed increases in fares and cuts in public transport underline the point: drastic fare cuts, increased services, and corresponding increases in bus production should be part of a socialist transport policy.

The Leyland Works Committee at Preston are drawing up their own 'alternative workers' plan' for the industry, with the aid of the Manchester Engineering Research Group. Both the Works Committee and Les Huckfield have called for a moratorium on redundancies until the Manchester Engineering Research Group publishes its report - thus gaining time.

More importantly, however, the struggle to defend jobs in the present strike must break down the traditional parochialism that has isolated the truck plants from the more battle hardened BL car factories.

One stark fact has to be faced from the start - Edwardes' corporate plan was for BL as a whole and he can only be defeated with the support of all BL plants.

The experience of industrial struggle has been very uneven between BL factories over the past ten years, with Leyland Trucks leading a comparatively sheltered life. For this reason a major initiative should be taken by the Leyland Works Committee, and a National Conference of stewards from all BL plants called to set up a national strike committee that can coordinate and centralise the struggle. The experience of the leadership of the Cowley Assembly plant could play an important role in helping the stewards in the Truck Division.

In their opposition to job loss, the strikers have the support of the Trades Councils in Preston, Chorley and Leyland, as well as the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils. But resolutions of support and donations would be welcomed.

The Leyland Bus and Truck plants have thrown down the gauntlet to Edwardes and Thatcher. As Bathgate convenor Jimmy Swann says:

'It is now obvious that Leyland Vehicles is faced with the final carve-up. If we stand firm and win support from the rest of the labour movement, we can fight back and stop it'.

The spread of the sit-ins

THE WAVE of sit-in strikes against closures and redundancies which began in the New Year continued to grow this week with an occupation at a second Bathgate factory.

Following the sit-in at BL's truck plants, Plessey workers have taken up the same tactic.

At 6am on Monday morning, the 330 strong workforce embarked on militant action, locking management out of the plant, which is due to close in February.

Like so many of the most tenacious struggles on jobs in the recent period, its mainstay is women - who comprise 90 per cent of the workforce.

The battles in Bathgate, together with the ongoing occupations of the 'Loveable Bra' factory in Cumbria and the British Aluminium smelter in Invergordon, make Scotland the focal point of the struggle against redundancies and closures.

Last week saw a firm rejection by the 890 workers at Invergordon of improved redundancy payments, and a vote to continue the sit-in strike at the plant which began on January 6.

Escalated

The improved offer was presented to a mass meeting by officials of all four unions involved (AUEW, EETPU, ASTMS, and GMWU), who argued that it was a 16% improvement.

But workers at Invergordon know that they stand no chance of finding alternative jobs in the area once they let the smelter close, and threw out this attempt to buy them off and (literally!) sell them out.

Elsewhere two other sit-in strikes remained solid in the face of closure.

In the Dunlop Semtex plant in Brynmawr, South Wales, 600 occupiers



Invergordon campaigners

have been holding the plant since December. Their struggle against redundancies escalated into an all-out fight when Dunlop suddenly announced the closure of the plant.

And in the occupied Sealink ferry, Senlac, strategically moored in Newhaven, the 240 crew maintain their struggle against the sale of the ferry, which threatens a total of nearly 500 sea and shore jobs.

The rapid growth of struggles against closure in 1982, after a number of setbacks in 1981, may well have its most immediate roots in the ending of Earnings Related unemployment benefit on January 1: but the wave of militant action offers new hope for other workers seeking a way to resist closures, redundancies, speed-up and public spending cuts.

The fight must be taken up throughout the unions on a national level for supporting strikes and blacking action to strengthen and spread the existing struggles.

The demand must be raised far and wide for the opening of the books of

employers who threaten redundancies to the inspection of elected trade union committees, to expose the real financial wheelings and dealings that lie behind the jobs massacre.

And throughout the labour movement socialists should raise the fighting slogan of 'no redundancies, work-sharing on full pay', as a demand to unify those fighting closure with those working elsewhere in the same industry.

The inactivity or downright treachery of the national and local officials of the trade union movement must be exposed and challenged: only the fight to mobilise working class action can halt the Tory offensive, and create conditions for the defeat of the Thatcher government.

New jobs for the unemployed and the protection of existing jobs can only come in the context of a socialist programme of nationalisation and public works.

The fight for this must not be left for the indefinite future: it must begin now, on the firm footing of the struggles now under way.

NATIONAL ORGANISING CONFERENCE

on a WOMENS RIGHT TO WORK DEMONSTRATION

FEB 20 '82

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON UNION MALET STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

A Conference is being held in London to organise nationally and locally around the fight for A Woman's Right to Work. Workshops focus on Training and Education, Women in the Home, Women in Finance, Women's Rights at Work and Women's

Unemployment, as well as how to organise locally for a demonstration planned for June 5.

More details and credentials (£3.00 waged, £1.50 unwaged) from 181, Richmond Road, London E8.

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

CONTINUING his discussion of socialism and democracy, JOHN O'MAHONY replies to Michael Foot's second Observer article against the Labour Left, which uses the horrors of Stalinism to 'justify' total parliamentary legalism as the alternative



IN PART 2 of his written peroration on parliamentary democracy and those whom he denounces as its enemies (Observer, January 17), Michael Foot attempts to answer the challenge he had posed to himself in part 1.

There, he ended by promising to undertake the difficult task of replying to those whose attitude to a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism in Britain was expressed in R.H.Tawney's brilliant image which Foot quoted thus:

"Onions can be eaten leaf by leaf, but you cannot skin a live tiger paw by paw... If the Labour Party is to tackle its job with some hope of success, it must mobilise behind it a body of conviction as resolute and informed as the opposition in front of it".

Exorcism

Foot commented: "In other words Tawney recognised the existence of the class struggle and the mighty convulsions required to secure its exorcism".

But nobody with even a slight awareness of the facts of history or of present-day Britain would now deny the existence of the class struggle.

Even Ramsey McDonald, the right-wing Labour prime minister and the renegade who went over to the Tories and became their captive figurehead prime minister in the anti working class 'National Government' in 1931, recognised the class struggle. He used to boast that while of course he recognised the class struggle, he deplored it and regarded it as something to be moved away from, abandoned, outgrown, patched up.

Serious socialists, of course, regard the class struggle as something to be fought in a spirit that takes account of the realities of class society and the facts of history. It will only be exorcised after it has been won by the working class, after the spectre of socialism has become solid social fact.

A thousand terrible victories by the ruling classes will not exorcise it, because they cannot abolish class society: only the working class can.

Ordinance

And the idea that the class struggle can be 'exorcised' by the agreement of the labour movement to limit itself, by a historic self-denying ordinance, to certain methods of struggle, is an idea that directly serves the ruling-class side in the struggle, which in fact is ineradicable and will last as long as class society. It is an ideological weapon of the ruling class to help tie the hands of its working class opponents.

What is distinctive about



Lenin speaks to workers in Red Square: the later Stalinist counter-revolution was the negation of the 1917 Revolution, not its direct continuation

Tawney's image is not the bare recognition of the fact of the class struggle, but the rejection of the possibility that it can be resolved peacefully or that the ruling class will peacefully allow itself to be divested of its wealth or of the power to defend that wealth. The ruling class does indeed have tiger's claws, and will use them when it needs to. The ruling class is 'armed to the teeth', and, as Foot in passing recognises in part 1, it does dispose of storm troopers.

Misreads

It is the measure of Michael Foot's politics now that he finds Tawney's comment noteworthy for its mere recognition of the fact of class struggle, and that, astonishingly, he so misreads Tawney as to think that is the point he is making. (It is central to Foot's conception of parliamentary democracy, as we shall see, that for practical purposes he does not himself even 'recognise the class struggle').

In fact, Foot never actually gets round to directly discussing, still less refuting, the point that makes Tawney's image arresting and central to the dispute between reformists and revolutionaries: the ruling class will not let us win socialism peacefully, and we can only get our heads clawed off if we approach the matter with naive trust in the myths of parliamentary democracy.

As an advertisement for part 2, Foot in part 1 had said: "After all we should

have learned something from half a century [since Tawney] of such tumult and terror in human affairs. And part of what we have learnt, or should have learnt, adds up to a direct refutation of apocalyptic Marxism, or, if you wish, a justification, in quite a different sense from the old one, of [the Fabian slogan of] the inevitability of gradualness.

"Throughout those years, several different rivers of experience merge into the same torrent" - which he promises to 'explore'.

In fact the gist of his reply in part 2 is to reject socialism in the guise of rejecting 'apocalyptic Marxism'. For Foot now, there is to be no socialist transformation, no socialism as something distinct from capitalism - only civilised, decent Labour government, concerned with amelioration and reforms. And the goal of returning and then sustaining such a Labour government displaces all other goals.

Academic

Like the early Christians who abandoned the expectation of the imminent second coming of Christ to set up his kingdom on earth, and thereafter instead regarded the Church itself as the existing kingdom of God on earth, Foot substitutes a Labour government like the last one for the 'apocalyptic' goal of socialism.

His discussion of peaceful or non-peaceful roads to socialism is thus purely academ-

ic, because, essentially, he resolves the dilemma he has posed for himself by way of the quotation from Tawney by abandoning the goal of socialist transformation.

In fact there is only one stream to Michael Foot's 'torrent', and that is the experience of Stalinist totalitarianism.

Tiger

His way of 'replying' to what Tawney said about the tiger is to quote Tawney 20 years later, in the 1950s, writing thus:

"The fact remains that the prizes, however glittering, won by way of totalitarianism, are rarely those which they sought. The means destroy the end..."

"The truth is that a conception of Socialism which views it as power, on which all else depends, is not, to speak with moderation, according to light."

"The question is not merely whether the State owns and controls the means of production. It is also who owns and controls the State."

"It is not certain, though it is probable, that Socialism can in England be achieved by the methods proper to democracy. It is certain that it cannot be achieved by any other."

Foot adds emphasis to the last sentence.

Tawney and his politics is a subject in itself. The use Foot makes of him is astonishing!

According to Foot, when Tawney invoked the tiger

would will not voluntarily be skinned, he was writing "before he and most others had examined the full nature of Soviet totalitarianism". And somehow the fact of Stalinist totalitarianism qualifies that - essentially irrefutable - image of the tiger who will not be skinned peacefully, and renders it obsolete.

Only if the goal of skinning the capitalist tiger is abandoned does Tawney's image become obsolete.

Tawney uses the general term 'by the methods of democracy', where Foot gives it the most narrow reading to mean 'exclusively by the methods of parliamentary legality'.

Foot presumes Tawney meant 'peaceful methods' (though whether only peaceful methods are democratic is in fact open to argument). But in any case Tawney (as quoted) argued only that such methods would probably be sufficient, not that they would certainly be so.

He left the alternative open - where Foot closes it completely, thereby disavowing in advance the right of the labour movement to self-defence against the organs of state repression, which in Foot's best of all possible democracies remain in the hands exclusively of the ruling class.

Foot does two impermissible things here.

First he equates Stalinism with a form of socialism, accepting the preposterous self-justification of the Stalinist ruling caste as a force embodying and struggling for a form of socialism.

Unfortunately its methods are bad (Foot argues) and destroy a (presumably) acceptable end.

Foot links and identifies the totalitarian system that has now existed in the USSR for over 50 years (and has been replicated in many other countries) with the workers' revolution of 1917, and locates the root of totalitarianism in the original sin committed in 1917 by the Russian workers in using violence to take power.

Then he equates any violence by the labour movement - implicitly even defensive violence with the germ of totalitarianism. Thus only 'the methods of democracy', by sleight of hand identified as those of the decrepit British parliamentary system (even including its blatantly undemocratic secondary rules) are permissible.

Proper

The second unforgivable step in Foot's argument is to pretend that his references to Stalinism have anything to do with what he is in dispute with the serious Labour Party left about.

"By the methods proper to democracy" or by totalitarian means: that is Foot's way of posing the alternatives. It is a historical, illogical, and for the immediate issue beside the point. The issue which remains to be argued is whether the 'methods proper to democracy' should or can exclude violent self-defence against ruling-class violence, or violent revolutionary action by a working class majority to deprive the ruling class and its state of the means of threatening or using violence against the labour movement.

Having made the ridiculous and false identification of the workers' revolution of 1917 with the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy over the working class which was established in a bloody civil war against the workers and peasants of the USSR after 1928 (a civil war in which only one side, the bureaucracy, was armed and organised), Foot cites a weird and wonderful crop of quotations to back him up. In fact, as we will see, all of them are beside the point of his argument, and indeed on almost every issue testify against him, as Tawney does above.

Orwell

The argument about ends and means, says Foot rightly, "did mount to a new point of intensity, once the world began to recognise the nature and accompaniments of the Soviet dictatorship".

Those overthrown in the Russian Revolution had denounced the force used to overthrow them. "Much more serious and persistent and devastating were the socialist criticisms directed to the same end" - George Orwell, Arthur Koestler, and Ignazio Silone.

With this self-chosen pol-

itical genealogy, Foot firmly places himself in the ranks of those who in the '30s or '40s abandoned socialism for, at best, liberal reformism, in response to the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

"Every means tends to become an end", he quotes the one-time pre-Stalinist communist Silone.

"Machines which ought to be man's instrument, to enslave him, the state enslaves society, the bureaucracy enslaves the state, the church enslaves religion, parliament enslaves democracy, institutions enslave justice, academies enslave art, the army enslaves the nation, the party enslaves the cause, the dictatorship of the proletariat enslaves Socialism".

"Parliament enslaves democracy" would serve well as a reply to Foot. For the rest, Silone is talking about Stalinism. As a communist of the heroic period who broke with the Communist International in 1929, as it was becoming something qualitatively different from the revolutionary organisation set up by Lenin and Trotsky, Silone knew something about the differences between Stalinism and Bolshevism.

What is centrally wrong with all Foot's argument here is indeed the identification of Stalinism and Bolshevism. Bolshevism was a political tradition in the Russian labour movement which concentrated in itself the self-liberating energy of the revolutionary workers, and led them to take and consolidate state power in most of the former Tsar's empire.

Network

The Russian workers armed themselves, and used force to disarm or destroy those who were in arms against them. They were organised in a democratic network of workers' councils, elected in factories and districts, and linked together across Russia. Elections were frequent and delegates were easily recallable.

It was a far more flexible representative, responsive system, controllable by the masses, than any parliament such as the existing British one ever can be.

This system aimed (and initially partly succeeded) to do without permanent state bureaucrats. The armed forces which made the revolution were the Red Guard - a workers' militia, which was essentially more or less identical with formations like the flying picket squads of miners, builders or steelworkers which we have known in Britain over the last decade, except that they were armed, that they disarmed the bourgeoisie and its agents and supporters, and that they themselves became the state power.

That was the revolution 65 years later, it is a proper subject for critical study by socialists whether or not everything done by the



A 19th century Socialist woodcut shows Marx, carrying 'Capital', pointing out the class-struggle road to winning the ideals set forward even by bourgeois democracy - Liberty, Fraternity, Equality

armed workers and by the workers' party led by Lenin and Trotsky was well done, and whether anything they did contributed to the rise of Stalin later on. But to identify the revolution with Stalinism is preposterous.

Armed

It was the opposite of totalitarianism: mass, armed, working class (and initially peasant) democracy.

They would rightly have replied in Trotsky's words to the notion that 'methods proper to democracy' meant excluding armed self-defence or armed self-assertion against the armed forces of the ruling class: 'The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed'.

Not only were they the opposite of totalitarianism, they were in the actual conditions of Russia in 1917 the only alternative to bloody ruling-class dictatorship. If

the vacillating middle-of-the-road government of Kerensky had not given way to the workers' power, it would have given way to the armed reaction, based on sections of the army. The pioneering fascist-style counter-revolutionary movement would have emerged in Russia, not, as happened (when the Italian workers failed in 1919-20 to take power) in Italy.

Where did Stalinism come from? Stalinism was a counter-revolution (on the basis of maintaining the state-owned property forms established by the revolution and later developed and extended) by a distinct social formation which emerged in the '20s - a bureaucracy rooted in the state that had to be created for self-defence in the civil war and the wars against the 14 capitalist states which intervened in Russia.

In the course of the struggle in the three years after the revolution, the working class itself as a social formation was dispersed and partly destroyed, so great was the disruption

caused by counter-revolutionary violence and invasion.

Russia in 1917 was too backward for socialism. The Russian labour movement expected that the workers of Germany and France would soon follow where they had led, and that a European socialist federation would emerge, at the heart of which would be the advanced and developed countries whose material development and culture were on a level to make an advanced post-capitalist socialist system possible.

Shoot

Instead of joining the Russian working class in a push for socialism, the main leaders of the labour movement sustained capitalism. In Germany they did not scruple to shoot down the revolutionary workers to make Germany safe for capitalism (any more than government minister Michael Foot scrupled to use the armed power of the British state to keep Des Warren in

jail for three of the last Labour government's five years in office).

Totalitarianism, with its terror and savage violence, its lies and its wiping out of many of the fruits of the entire epoch of capitalist civilisation, was the system that emerged when the bureaucracy that grew up in isolated and backward Russia threw off the constraints which survived from the revolutionary period and made itself master of society.

It used the most terrible and savage violence to destroy the power of the workers and to wipe out the Russian labour movement and the revolutionaries. It used the power thus established and consolidated to exercise an unparalleled totalitarian dominance in society - partly because it lived the lie that it had something to do with socialism. In turn that arose because it continued to base itself on - and in its own way to defend - the property system initially set up by the workers' revolution.



British troops land in Archangel, to fight alongside the troops of 13 other invading powers against the Russian workers' revolution

The facts about that bloody Stalinist counter-revolution, which included the public trial - in person or in absentia (Trotsky) - of the leaders of the revolution are very well known by now. The river of blood that marks off Stalinism from Bolshevism is by now so well charted that even Tribune, which fellow-travelled with the Stalinists until 1939, long ago became aware of it.

What sense therefore can there be in pretending that murderer and victim, Cain and Abel, Bolshevik workers' revolution and Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution, are identical? In terms of historical fact, what sense is there in pretending that the workers' revolution of 1917, one of the greatest liberating events in history, directly liberating the workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities of the vast Tsarist empire, is the self-same thing as the vile counter-revolutionary system that was erected on the political grave of that revolution, and on the graves of countless Russian workers.

There is no sense to it, nor logic, nor rational evaluation of the facts and of the course of development by way of which and out of which the Stalinist totalitarian system emerged and displaced the workers' democracy of 1917.

Foot's notion that the violence of the workers' militia in 1917 is the root of the Stalinist totalitarian system is at root a religious notion (appropriate to his fetishism of the existing form of parliamentary democracy in Britain).

Taboo

The taboo is violated and everything thereafter is contaminated, cursed, doomed. The Russian workers - not to speak of the Poles and others - today are still paying for the sins of their revolutionary mothers and fathers and grandparents 65 years ago! And Foot says he is an atheist, believe it or not!

The search for the original sin of Bolshevism has ex-

ercised tired and demoralised socialists for at least 50 years. Like characters in an ancient Greek drama, they seek the explanation for the Stalinist plague in some violated taboo.

Was the sin the way the Bolshevik party organised itself? That has always been a popular explanation, and shows signs of life now among sections of tired radicals in the Labour Party, in the Chartists for example.

For Foot, the sin was violence.

The diagnosis of what exactly was Bolshevism's original sin may vary, but the very notion that there was an original sin, a single flaw which contaminated everything else, has led most of its devotees away from rational socialist politics and effectively to the conclusion that the great sin of the Russian workers was to dare to take power at all.

This is Foot's conclusion, as it must be the conclusion of anyone who accepts bourgeois democracy as the culmination of historical progress. Things are safer and better when power remains in the hands of the ruling class. Otherwise, you immediately risk that power being turned against you (Foot himself talks of the storm troopers of the ruling class). And even if you destroy the power of the ruling class, things may still go wrong.

To be continued



Michael Foot

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

John Cunningham [Dinnington NUM] introduces two novels based on the struggles of the miners' union: 'Cwmardy' and 'We Live', by Lewis Jones (published by Lawrence and Wishart).

FIRST published in 1937 and 1939 respectively, 'Cwmardy' and 'We Live' are literary monuments to the struggle of the Welsh miners and their communities.

Lewis Jones, the author, was a Communist Party militant. The youngest ever chairman of the Cambrian Lodge, he attended the Central Labour College between 1923 and 1925 and joined the CP there.

During the 1926 lock-out he was sent on a speaking tour of the (then as now) moderate Nottinghamshire coalfield - for which he was given a three month prison sentence on charges of sedition.

Tirelessly

After the defeat of 1926, Jones tried hard to hang on to his job as checkweighman (often the only job a prominent union man could get in those times), but he was kicked out in 1929.

From that time until his death in 1939, he was a tireless agitator and organiser for the unemployed.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, he volunteered to go, but the CP wouldn't let him, saying that he was too valuable in Wales. So he worked tirelessly, despite bad health, for the Republican cause.

Driving himself on, he died of a heart attack after a series of street meetings in the same week that Barcelona fell to the fascists.

Lewis Jones represented all that was good in that generation of militants who joined the Communist Party in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, but never broke from it after its degeneration at the hands of Stalin.

The two books are really one whole, set in Jones' native Rhondda. 'Cwmardy' is in effect the mining village of Maerdy - 'Little Moscow', where according

Life in 'Little Moscow'



to one contemporary observer the writings of Karl Marx had become household words.

'Lord Cwmardy' was in real life the tyrannical Lord Rhondda, and Ezra, the miners' agent, is modelled on Noah Rees, whom Jones knew personally.

Rees was one of the authors of 'The Miners' Next Step', a widely read pamphlet published in 1912 by the Unofficial Reform Committee. It advocated reorganisation for the South Wales Miners' Federation along industrial union lines which paralleled the work of the American socialist Daniel De Leon.

Jones himself comes through partly, at least in the main character of Len Roberts. Len is born into

the mining family of 'Big Jim' and Shane. At an early age Big Jim fixes up for Len to start at the pit, and under his guidance Len is initiated into the gruelling world of the underground and, using the words of the Welsh miners' poet Idris Davies, into 'those bitter battles the sun has never seen'.

Contingent

Through this harsh school Len starts to learn the realities of existence. His political consciousness develops, or rather it is forced on him, as troops are sent to break a strike in Cwmardy, some of the strikers are shot down in cold blood, and then war

breaks out.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Ezra stands on a recruiting platform with the hated Lord Cwmardy urging the miners to join the very army that only a few years previous shot them down in the streets. In a wave of patriotic fervour hundreds join up, including Big Jim.

Shane, however, although not portrayed as a 'political' person in any sense, sees things more clearly, and the comments of his mother have a profound effect on Len.

He begins to work out his half-felt doubts about the war. Eventually the strands come together, and in 1924 Len joins the fledgling Communist Party.

The Welsh miners form-

ed the backbone of the early Communist Party. The South Wales Miners' Federation (the 'Fed') in 1921 voted to affiliate to the Red International of Labour Unions (the trade union wing of the Communist International).

Even so it must have been hard for many of the strict chapel-going parents to hear their sons and daughters say, 'I've joined the Party'.

'We Live' follows Len through the 1926 lockout, after which he is victimised and remains unemployed for some time. Mary - whom he marries - joins the Party later than Len, but her commitment is no less.

She becomes a leading figure in the party, although she still makes the tea after meetings and marches. One of the things she does is organise a women's contingent on an unemployed march through Cwmardy.

Storm

Led by Mary, the women, against the orders of some of the march's organisers, storm the unemployment board's offices. This action helps to get unemployment relief restored to its old level.

The Party's prestige now stands higher than ever in Cwmardy, but no sooner is one fight over than another starts. The mine-owners cut wages drastically in an attempt to break the Fed. As Big Jim says when con-

fronting the manager on pay day, 'I have pissed more than this against the back wall of the Boar's Head on a Saturday night before now'.

This was a fight to the death. The Fed wasn't just a union. It was a way of life in the valleys. The Fed looked after you from cradle to grave. If the Fed was broken, so also was the community.

In response to this attack new tactics developed, like the 'stay down' strike. Len stays on top to represent the men, and the bravery of their action takes everyone by storm.

Tempestuous

The management send down a team of officials and scabs to take the men by surprise, but the men fight back despite their weak condition. The scabs are forced back up the pit, and the strikers take a prisoner - Mr Hicks, the colliery manager. This clinches it, and the management sign an agreement to recognise the Fed.

'Cwmardy' and 'We Live' are not brilliant novels. The style is too hurried and hectic, as is only to be expected from books written in the rare moments of free time which Lewis Jones could find. But the style of the book is both a reflection of the tempestuous events of the period and the author's total commitment to the people he was writing about.

Writeback SWPers should read Lenin



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.

I FOUND it very difficult to take the letter by two disgruntled SWPers (SO no. 68) at all seriously. They claim that Martin Thomas's statement that 'Marxists are for parliamentary democracy' shows that Socialist Organiser is a left reformist paper.

Did they really not read the rest of Martin's article? Or even the rest of the sentence? Did they not read the other articles expressing the position of Cannon,

Lenin and Trotsky?

They invoke the name of Lenin, even if the distorted version provided in Tony Cliff's book. Surprising then that they have not understood Chapter 7 of Lenin's 'Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder', entitled, 'Should we Participate in Bourgeois Parliaments?'

Lenin, arguing against the German Left Communists who answered the question in the negative, says 'Parliamentarianism has become obsolete in the propaganda sense, but everyone knows that this is

a far cry from overcoming it in practice. Capitalism could have been declared obsolete many decades ago, he continues, but this does not obviate the need for a persistent struggle on the basis of the continuing existence of capitalism.

The SWP's position on Parliament is like that of the Left Communists whom Lenin was arguing against. They adopt the same attitude to the Labour Party by declaring that it is dead (for the last ten years, that I can remember), ignoring its very real existence and

abstaining from the fight to remove the right wing and reformist leadership of the party, which has such a detrimental effect on the class consciousness of the working class.

Bluster

But even here the SWP is not consistent. In by-elections between 1976 and 1979 the SWP ran candidates. Having come up against the real existence of the Labour Party, expressed in the fact that the great majority of class-conscious workers continued to vote

Labour and ignore the SWP (indeed, the SWP could not even beat Socialist Unity candidates!), the SWP has withdrawn from this basic test of strength with the Labour reformists — covering up with bluster about elections not being important enough for them to bother with.

And we have the spectacle of Paul Foot and Socialist Worker changing from Dr Jekyll into Mr Hyde at election time and calling uncritically for a vote for Labour.

Contempt

The healthy contempt for the union bureaucrats and support for the rank and file militants which the comrades have spilled over into ignoring the role of leadership. This is true both in terms of their attitude to the Labour Party and the unions.

The example they take of Laurence Scott is a good one. The fact is that, had the AUEW been led by revolutionaries instead of Duffy and Boyd, the Laurence Scott workers would not have been left fighting in isolation, without strike pay etc. Making the strike official alone would have opened up the possibility of blacking by the NUM and brought Snipe to his knees long ago.

Criteria

Having failed to make reality fit their illusions in elections, having isolated themselves from the battle for socialist ideas in the Labour Party, having failed to turn any sizeable number of ANL supporters into stable SWP members, and having isolated themselves from the growing women's movement by closing down the Women's Voice organisation, the only criteria the SWP has of its importance now seems to be how many copies of Socialist Worker they can sell.

And from the comrades' letter, even in this they are not performing too well. ARTHUR BOUGH, Stoke

Call for creative Marxism

TERRY SMITH's letter in Socialist Organiser 69 shows total ignorance of the feminist movement.

If he had actually read any feminist literature, he would know that they owe a great deal to Marxism, acknowledge this debt, and in many cases use a Marxist, materialist method. This is true of socialist feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Juliet Mitchell, and also of radical feminists such as Shulamith Firestone.

Complacent

Patronising remarks about the need for feminists to learn from Marxists are therefore quite out of place.

On the record of the Marxist movement, comrade Smith is unbelievably complacent. No one in the socialist movement can be uninspired by the Russian revolution, and its practical if short-lived

achievements. But nothing is gained by being uncritical.

We should recognise that the communist movement has been very weak in its programme for women. The Comintern Theses on women (1921) summarise this approach: they are based entirely on an exhortation to women to join the communist movement because their liberation will only be achieved with the triumph of socialism.

Comrade Smith follows this method, which completely misses out the whole question of fighting women's specific oppression, and of organising women now to fight for their own demands. It's the modern women's liberation movement that has highlighted this weakness and forced the organised left to rethink.

What we need now is a creative Marxism that does more than cling to the past ideas and methods.

ANN EVANS, South London.

ON BEHALF of the Executive Committee of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT), this letter is submitted for publication in the columns of Socialist Organiser in order to correct distortions about this Committee which appeared in your interview with Dogan Tarkan (issue no. 67, January 7 1982).

Dogan Tarkan is reported by you as saying, 'At first I and my comrades from Kurtulus went both to the TSC and to the CDDRT. Both promised to help'.

This is untrue. At no time has Dogan Tarkan or anyone else from Kurtulus had discussions with any officer or Executive Committee member of CDDRT, nor were any requests of any kind received from them.

Then Mr Tarkan says, 'But when we called a picket on Downing Street a few days later the CDDRT refused to attend'. Since CDDRT was not told about this event, it is not surprising that we did not participate. The question of refusal is therefore a nonsense.

Again, Mr Tarkan says, 'Then on September 12 they would not let me speak at their meeting'.

CDDRT organised a pick-

et of the Turkish Embassy on 12 September 1981. On 13 September a Rally and a Solidarity Concert in the Camden Centre were organised jointly by CDDRT, El Salvador Solidarity Campaign and the Chilean Anti-Fascist Committee. Presumably it is this Rally to which Dogan Tarkan refers.

Quite apart from any difficulties in rearranging a platform of speakers in such a jointly-organised action, there was certainly no request of any kind made by, or on behalf of, Dogan Tarkan to any of the organisers, including officers or Executive Committee members of CDDRT.

Later, Dogan Tarkan declares, 'At their Conference in December we even won the vote to unite the two campaigns — but they failed even to report this in their conference statement'.

As Socialist Organiser should know, since a delegate of the Socialist Organiser Alliance attended the whole of CDDRT's National Conference on Turkey on 12 December 1981, there was free and open discussion of the Conference Statement: after extensive amendments had been incorporated, the finalised statement was read several times and

adopted unanimously.

This Statement was issued within a week to all organisations who sent delegates to Conference. Perhaps Socialist Organiser would care to publish the Statement for the information of its readers. We should like to point out that Dogan Tarkan did not attend Conference.

Towards the end of his remarks about CDDRT Dogan Tarkan talks of 'Isinin Sesi, who dominate the CDDRT'. They will not unite with others'.

Another absurdity. Of course there are supporters of Isinin Sesi (Workers' Voice) — a paper of the Communist Party of Turkey — amongst CDDRT's supporters. But then other supporters of CDDRT include the CPGB, NOLS, NUM, various CLPs and labour movement organisations at all levels: indeed, the NEC of the Labour Party was represented at our December 1981 Conference by Eric Heffer MP, who spoke from the platform.

We also have the support of the Turkish Students' Federation of the UK and the Union of Turkish Workers, as well as many individuals such as E.P. Thompson and Mgr Bruce Kent, and others who have taken

out individual affiliations.

In fact, any organisation or individual accepting the aims and constitution decided at the June 1981 Congress of CDDRT is eligible for affiliation.

CDDRT is sure that Socialist Organiser will wish to put the record straight, as several important cases of inaccuracy are contained within the interview as printed. We welcome the widest debate of the issues surrounding Turkey on the principled basis of fact, and will always encourage this whilst ensuring that priority is given to the foremost question of how to maximise solidarity with the working people of Turkey, particularly in the labour, democratic and student movements.

JIM MOODY, General Secretary, CDDRT

★ We stand by our story. We note that Dogan Tarkan, even while criticising the CDDRT, called clearly in the interview for support to the CDDRT's week of action [March 6-13]. He also lamented the problems in uniting the CDDRT with the Turkey Solidarity Campaign which ran the successful struggle in his defence. The above letter appears to bear out his argument.

Milk of inhuman avarice

By Davy Jones



IN HIS recent article in Workers' Socialist Review ('Capitalist Crisis and Socialist Alternative'), Bob Sutcliffe drew attention to the fact that while much of the world starves, the US government spends billions to encourage farmers not to plant food crops and the European Economic Community spends seven billion dollars a year to accumulate unsold food for the Common Agricultural Policy.

The point Bob was making is that the only reason for famine is the anarchic system of production solely for profit. Malnutrition exists because it is not profitable to sell food.

Last year, the World Health Organisation illustrated the corollary of this point — malnutrition as a result of the profit to be made from selling the wrong sort of food.

In some parts of the world, the classical devel-

opment of malnutrition is related to weaning. By breast-feeding their babies for as long as two years, mothers are able to provide them with a reasonable intake of proteins and calories, despite their own marginal food supply. Under these conditions of food shortage, breast feeding also acts as an imperfect, but useful, contraceptive.

Malnutrition

After about two years, the next baby comes along and the two year old is weaned onto a diet often catastrophically low in calories and protein, and prepared under insanitary conditions. The result is kwashiorkor, the major form of malnutrition. In Swahili the word means disease associate with the new baby.

In the last ten to fifteen years, there has been an

alarming chance in the age at which kwashiorkor occurs, towards younger and younger children. As long ago as 1970, two American nutritionists called Jelliffe pointed out that this was due to earlier weaning, itself reflecting the difficulties in continuing to breast-feed in urban employment.

More important, though, was the influence of 'socio-cultural pressures generated by imitation of 'economic superiors', as well as local unethical and inappropriate advertising by milk firms.

Translated into English, this says that poorly nourished mothers are impressed by the claims of the baby milk manufacturers that their milk formulas give healthy, smiling babies, especially when they compare their own marginally nourished children with bottle-fed babies from well-to-do (often white) families.

Under advertising press-

ure, and encouraged by free samples, they scrape together sufficient cash to buy a bottle and an initial supply of powdered milk. But not enough.

One study estimated that in Singapore alone, the decline in breast feeding between 1960 and 1970 would have needed the purchase of \$1.8 million of powdered milk each year to make up for the nutritional

loss. And another researcher found that the purchase of sufficient baby milk to give growth comparable to that of breast-fed babies would take as much as 50% of the total family earnings in some countries.

War on Want describes families spending their entire weekly income to buy a bottle for the baby, without having anything to

SCIENCE



put in it. The consequences are predictable and horrible.

After the initial purchase (typically of the most widely advertised, and hence the most expensive, milk) the mother cannot afford more. The supply soon runs out, but not before her own breast milk has dried up through lack of stimulation.

Even while the powdered milk lasts, lack of understanding of its preparation and inadequate supplies of clean water result in the feeding of contaminated milk. First the baby gets a heavy dose of bacteria, then it starves.

In response to pressures from the famine-relief charities, who boycotted those firms they considered to be acting unethically, the milk manufacturers agreed in October 1979 to stop promoting their products aggressively in countries where lack of education and

facilities prevent the proper use.

By August 1981, thirteen of them had been caught breaking their promise by distributing free samples of their milks in ten different Third World countries.

The lesson from this is that brewers do not make good prohibitionists, and in May last year, the World Health Organisation adopted a stricter code of practice (though still with considerable loopholes). In confirmation of the humanitarian intention the milk manufacturers fought WHO all the way. Their main worry, it seems, was that the WHO would undermine freedom of speech by banning advertising.

It must be considerable relief to malnourished babies and their families to know that they are dying in pursuit of such a lofty ideal.

CP seeks to improve police image

'Black and Blue: Racism and the Police'. A Communist Party pamphlet, 50p. Reviewed by A. A. Mir.

IN THIS pamphlet, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) appeals for a benevolent attitude from the state in the form of 'community policing', or 'democratisation of the police'.

In doing so, the CPGB has failed to challenge the bourgeoisie's attempts to rebuild the credibility of the police, which experienced so many challenges this last year with the riots and the black protests against police indifference to racist attacks.

Behind this lies the CP's view of the state. Marxists argue that the state is not a neutral arbiter able to reconcile class differences by acting in the interests of everyone. In 'The State and Revolution' Lenin summed it up: 'The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms.'

'The state arises where, when and insofar as class

antagonisms objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable'.

The army, the courts, the civil service hierarchy, and the police — the permanent machine set up to regulate and rule society — is connected by its structure and by a thousand personal ties to the ruling class. It may be weakened or restrained by working class pressure, but it can no more change class colour than the CBI can be gradually won over to socialism.

Yet the CP is aiming 'to make the police the real servant of the community and that includes the black community'.

This misunderstanding of the state causes the CP to support the attempt of Scarman to re-establish police credibility and to prepare for the next state attack on black people and

the working class. The CP's view that the agencies of the state can be used for everyone's benefit leads them to be critical of the particular internal structure, practices and methods of the police, but not hostile to the state as a class-based institution directed, in a capitalist system, against the working class and specifically oppressed groups, of which blacks are the obvious example.

The CP wants 'an end to the abuse of power by the police and an end to racism in the police', and requests the police to undertake 'a real pledge to abandon and abolish every taint of racism in their practice'.

The 'Charter of Demands' proposed by the CP's national race relations committee suggests 'regular in-service training should contain an anti-racist syllabus, including racism awareness training,



to be worked out with black community organisations'.

This is too much for some of the contributors to the pamphlet. A. Juhl, for example, declares that his organisation 'The Indian Workers' Association (GB) is not in favour of working class organisations entering into consultation with

the police or active involvement of national black people's organisations in police training; of community policing; or of sitting on joint bodies with the police.

'To enter into consultation with the police implies that they can be servants of the community. To believe

this is to delude ourselves that in capitalist society the police can be converted to serve the people'.

Having cleansed the police of racism and having 'decriminalised immigration control' through ending 'police involvement in immigration control' (but inherently racist immigra-

tion controls remain?), the CP attempts to secure the 'democratisation of the police'. It is suggested that this could be achieved through: 'The local supervision of the police forces and the adjudication of complaints against the police to be placed in the hands of accountable and democratically constituted bodies, independent of the police and with a substantial element of black representation'.

The CP's 'Charter of Demands' (more a series of timid requests) suggests 'community policing with democratic accountability and control, not saturation policing', with 'far fewer pandas prowling and far more home beat policing'.

The CP observes with concern the perceived change from 'consent' policing to 'containment'. This evolution in the role of the police is partly explained because: 'policing by consent is not working. In particular, it is not going to work during a recession and high unemployment'.

The CP also sees the decline in numbers of 'decent and relatively unprejudiced policemen' as responsible for this evolution in the role of the police towards 'containment'.

The answer? The CP calls for stronger Public Order laws, 'Help on Arrest' schemes, and criticises the 'law and order brigade' on the grounds that 'their policies have neither prevented the disturbances nor cured them — they have merely aggravated the situation'.

But can society be changed without 'disturbances'? Do we want to 'prevent' and 'cure' disturbances, or rather to give them a clearer form and aim?

The only occasion the labour movement is mentioned is when the Left is criticised for making 'no significant organised intervention within the police'.

And the pamphlet provides only a paltry three quarters of a page on the trade unions. Thus the vital issue of the undermining of working-class solidarity by racism in the trade unions is not taken up.

Yet its significance was pinpointed by the Asian workers' strike committee after the Imperial Typewriters dispute of 1974: 'When the unions fail in their duties to black workers, they must be challenged to stand up for their rights'.

The union is an organisation of all workers, regardless of race, colour or sex. Right now the trade union movement is functioning as a white man's union and must be challenged. In challenging this we believe in the unity of the working class.

'This unity must be solidly established in deed and not only in words. It is the main task of the trade union movement to create this unity'.

The importance of class solidarity in disputes such as Imperial Typewriters and Grunwick, and the practical experience of black and white unity on the picket lines and in the fight against unemployment, must be recognised and linked to the need for labour movement defence against racist attacks and a fight against immigration controls and deportation, not as a favour to blacks but as practical activity in the interest of the working class.

JACK CLEARLY reviews last Friday's "Newsweek"

Trotskyism is no conspiracy!

JOURNALISTIC expeditions to explore the life forms to be found in the neo-Trotskyist archipelago might in certain circumstances result in some positive contribution to science and enlightenment.

It is after all true that most of the inhabitants of the archipelago at any given time know little about the real history of it, especially of their own part of it, or of why the fragmentation occurred. Many have little notion of how their own islet relates to and compares with the others: quite frequently one tribe believes that their cousins on the nearest atoll go around carrying their heads under their arms, pray to the devil, and exist to indulge in the most foul and repugnant political practices.

We should not be resentful at interest shown in our movement and our ideas. We should welcome it if it is honest and political. The Trotskyists — and especially the young Trotskyists — would benefit from the results of accurate scientific study of their own movement and from serious criticism of its ideas and history.

That's not what we get from the media, though!

Most often the well-financed expeditions — especially those mounted by the popular press and TV — are merely in search of sideshow freaks and examples of outlandishness to 'illustrate' their prejudices and convince the readers and viewers that Trotskyists are an alien species — and that they should be treated as such.

Friday's Newsweek programme was no exception, though it tried to assume



Alan Thornett the form and manner of fair reporting. It promised to portray exactly how a small Trotskyist group works, and focused on the Workers' Socialist League in Oxford.

It began with seeming objectivity by presenting Leon Trotsky's ideas, summarising the 1938 Programme, and quoting key bits of it. But it quickly became clear that the point was to present Trotskyists as people whose basic political ideas committed them to the politics of manipulation and deception.

The demands of the programme (sliding scale of hours, etc.) were presented as demands cleverly designed to be unattainable while seemingly being reasonable, and thus for use by secretive groups to manipulate and dupe honest trade unionists and Labour Party members who would not know what was really going on or what was 'behind' it all.

In fact, of course, the text of the Transitional Programme itself insists that it is not a complete programme, and Trotskyists publicly explain what they are about and what their aim is.

The Trotskyists do not manipulate: they spell out their own

full socialist programme while at the same time fighting in as broad a front as possible for limited objectives and demands.

They rely not on manipulation but on the logic of the class struggle to propel the working class forward once it begins to rouse itself into struggle, where it can learn more in a week than propagandists — not to speak of manipulators and conspirators — would teach in decades.

Newsweek, however, needed this view of Trotskyist manipulators to help it present its picture of conspirators in the Labour Party. The Oxford Workers Socialist League was presented as completely secretive and underground. Yet precise figures were cited for WSL members trying to undermine the Oxford Labour Party.

Where did the figures come from? Presumably from the right wing and hysterically anti-Trotskyist faction in the Oxford Labour Party which has been regularly rebuffed by the NEC of the Labour Party and is now forced to reinstate Ted Heslin. The programme may help them whip up a new spate of witch hunting.

The programme's intention was signalled clearly — and its level of journalistic integrity was accurately summed up — by the way it used photos. Dramatically blurred and seemingly blown-up photos were projected to create an impression of intrepid sleuths getting rare mugshots of people described as leading WSLers when they popped their heads out of their burrows.

One was Ted Heslin, alleged to be a member of the National Committee of the WSL. Another was

Alan Thornett, who must by now vie with Tariq Ali for the record of being the most photographed non-film-star Trotskyist in history!

But it helped to concoct the desired image of mystery and conspiracy and molemanship.

Witches

The WSL was presented as a deadly threat to the Oxford Labour Party, which deserved to be purged. The latter point was made for the Oxford Labour Party, and for the Labour Party nationally, none too subtly by one Roger Rosewell, who gave a prize exhibition of rat-manship.

He was asked by the interviewer how Trotskyists would deal with dissent such as the Labour Party is now experiencing. Looking like Lavrenti Beria, Mr Rosewell told of his own experience as an SWP hatchetman, expelling people left right and centre without giving them rights to reply or appeal, under the general guideline, 'You'll get no bourgeois justice here, comrades'.

This, said Rosewell with a little smirk of self-approbation, was typical of Trotskyists... and a good model of how all Trotskyists should be treated.

Who is Roger Rosewell? He is an Oxford SDP councillor, formerly a leading member of the SWP, who is now hiring himself out as an expert on Trotskyist witches, how to recognise them and how to deal with them.

Ten years ago the SWP ceased to be a democratic organisation when it outlawed serious internal

dissent, expelled the then Trotskyist Tendency opposition, and destroyed the possibility of an alternative political line to the incumbent leadership emerging.

Rosewell had himself been a dissident, but had let himself be bludgeoned into line by the faction around Tony Cliff. Thereafter he acquired a well-deserved reputation as a cynically vicious hatchetman as the organisation degenerated and became increasingly undemocratic.

In 1974 he broke with the SWP (IS) and tried to get a well-paying job as an un-elected full-time union official. (He had previously held such a job with ASTMS). Failing in this, he gravitated towards Frank Chapple, was reported to be writing the official history of the EETPU, and has followed Chapple's political logic into the SDP.

SDPer Rosewell's message to the viewers was that the Labour Party encouraged and gave cover to sinister Trotskyist conspirators who gained by presenting themselves innocuously as Labour Party members.

That was plainly the

message of the programme and the point of the exercise. It was more pressure on the Labour Party for a witch-hunt, and was itself a freelance SDP/media private effort in Oxford.

The programme — to which no possibility of reply in the same media exists — was one more proof that the labour movement needs to mount its own expedition, to explore the subterranean archipelago of wealth and privilege and direct self-interest that is in monopoly control of the mass media in capitalist Britain today.

We need to take the media into public ownership under conditions that will guarantee free access.

It is the Oxford SDP that will benefit if the rank and file labour Right responds to the cue given it by Roger Rosewell, courtesy of Newsweek. And not the least interesting of the information that remains to be brought to light when the labour movement opens the books and accounts of the media is the facts of its links with the SDP — which it has fostered, boosted, and promoted.

THE
TRANSITIONAL
PROGRAM FOR
SOCIALIST
REVOLUTION
LEON TROTSKY

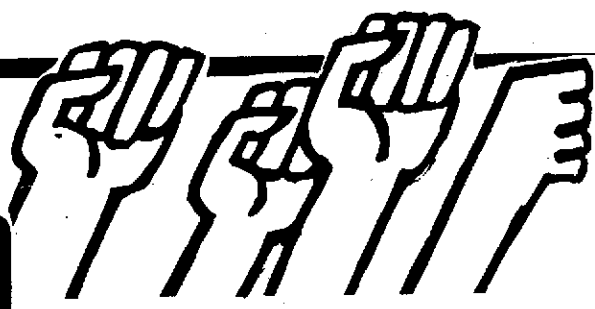
30p from Socialist Organiser,
28 Middle Lane, London N8



Fighting for union democracy

No democracy in

Britain's biggest union



THE retirement of TGWU General Secretary Jack Jones brought an end to a long line of totally dominant General Secretaries who had exercised rigid political control over the country's biggest union.

But the election — and then the prolonged illness — of Moss Evans, and the present confusion among national officials has by no means ended the undemocratic practices and structures upon which the previous five General Secretaries — Ernest Bevin, Arthur Deakin, Arthur Tiffin, Frank Cousins, and Jones — based themselves.

Though the union lurched under Evans for a while towards a more leftist stance — support for Labour Party Democracy; support for unilateral disarmament; and even a flurry of official strike action by Ford workers and lorry drivers — the power of decision-making remained in the hands of a small group of unelected full-time officials. And when these officials recognised that their show of leftism was creating real dangers of mass action against the Thatcher government, and their calls for Labour democracy were finding an echo in calls for democracy in the TGWU, they immediately began to back-pedal.

Abuse

Indeed it is ironic that the union which cast 1.4 million votes in favour of the Labour Party's democratic reforms maintains an army of full-time officials who are neither elected nor accountable nor recallable by the members they are supposed to represent.

So far is the TGWU from democracy within its own ranks that it is even incapable of conducting a simple democratic procedure of deciding how to cast the block vote — while its own internal ballot arrangements stand wide open to abuse.

The TGWU has never



Pondering how to cast 1.75 million votes — TGWU chairman Stan Pemberton and (unelected) National Organiser Ron Todd

had a democratic structure. It is a vast union with nearly 2 million members in 16 different trade groups and 11 Regions, making it more like the TUC than an individual union. Some of the Regions are like large unions in themselves. The London Region has half a million members, and the Midlands Region 5 has 350,000.

But the union's strength is kept divided by a rule book designed to perpetuate the power and influence of a vast network of officials, thus cutting off any real way through which the members can express themselves or change things.

Ask a TGWU official about this and he (it is 99.5% certain it will be a he!) will tell you that the General Secretary — elected for life — and the platoons of national officers, regional secretaries, regional officers and district officials are responsible to and controlled by the lay members on their respective constitutional committees.

In reality it is plain to see that the full-time officials effectively run the union with little regard to

the wishes or demands of the rank and file. Most committees meet only once a quarter. Their agendas are drawn up by the officials. Control of information, the apparatus, finance and the ability to draw in gullible or opportunist lay members through patronage gives each layer of officials plenty of scope to maintain control.

This machinery is available for use against rank and file members who seriously challenge the existing leadership.

In Cowley in 1977 nine stewards from the newly elected left-wing leadership at BL's Assembly Plant — including Convenor Bob Fryer and Deputy Convenor Alan Thornett — were hauled up on fictitious charges before kangaroo court 'hearings' at District and Regional level with officials calling for their expulsion — with the consequent loss of their jobs — or banning from office.

The 'jury' consisted at each stage entirely of right-wing opponents of the accused. Only the readiness of the membership in the Assembly Plant to defend their own stewards and the widespread support for the

'Cowley 9' among TGWU activists around the country halted this bureaucratic purge.

Lest any militant believe that to change this state of affairs it is sufficient to elect a left wing General Executive Council or Regional Committee, it is important to note the way the TGWU rules also provide for ballot rigging.

There are two methods of election in the union. One is the so-called 'secret ballot', the other is an electoral conference where a handful of people decide on Committee members without reference to the membership.

650 or so delegates are elected this way onto lay committees in the union.

Barred

The 'secret ballot' means, in numerous instances that ballot papers — unmarked and unnumbered — are sent in bundles to

Branch Secretaries. It is then up to the Secretary concerned how — or whether — to carry through the ballot. All that has to be returned to head office is a return sheet with the totals of votes cast! There is no counting at Region of either used or unused ballot papers.

'Block voting'

The obvious looseness of the system is often taken within the TGWU as effective sanctioning of what is euphemistically called 'block voting' — a practice specifically barred under rule. Even the coy use of the term 'block voting', instead of the more obvious term 'ballot rigging' conceals the fact that it means a branch secretary perpetrating fraud, by casting the votes of his members.

In one scandal four years ago, Midlands Regional officer Alan Law was shown

Harry Sloan looks at the problems in the struggle for new leadership in the Transport and General Workers' Union

to have personally cast all 13,000 votes allocated to the giant 5/35 branch, of which he was secretary, for the candidates of his own choice.

To excuse himself, he argued that he 'had not had time' to organise a ballot — and would do the same again.

On another occasion in Cowley members of a large car industry branch were able to prove that while only 255 members had voted, the branch secretary had returned about 6,000 votes in favour of the candidates he supported.

The only penalty for 'block voting' when it is discovered is the disqualification of the branch vote!

In any event, such ballots are a farce, since election addresses are not allowed, leaving members ignorant of who most of the candidates are or what they represent.

The continued rightward evolution of even the public statements and actions of the TGWU leadership, and the 'consultation' fiasco over the voting in last year's Labour Party Deputy Leadership election, underline the need to press home the fight for democracy in the union.

This means a fight on all fronts: for the regular election of all union officials; for union delegations to conferences to be controlled by elected lay members; for the establishment of tamper-proof democratic ballot procedures in elections; for the regular functioning of branches and the election of branch officers; and in the course of this fight to expose the corruption and manipulation which provide the foundation of bureaucratic control.

Such a fight will only be consistently carried through by a new leadership committed to the fight for a consistent political alternative to the class collaboration of the present leadership and the elimination of its perks and privileges.

POEU officers victimised

TWO BRANCH officials of the Potteries POEU (Post Office Engineering Union) have been suspended for two years.

Their crime was to carry out the national executive council's recommendation to the 1981 annual conference that ballot papers for the Labour Party deputy leadership election be made available at a branch meeting. They believed, quite rightly, that if any member was interested enough, then they would turn out to vote.

The recommendation (SOC42) did not reach the conference floor, due to lack of time, so arrangements for the ballot were left in the hands of the NEC.

In a letter to branches dated August 6, 1981,

general secretary Bryan Stanley stated that the NEC had enlisted the advice of the Electoral Reform Society, and that under the rules it would not be adequate to advertise that ballot papers were available from a certain point, e.g. a branch meeting.

This totally contradicted SOC42. Instead, branch officers were charged with the responsibility of distributing ballot papers along with reply-paid envelopes to all branch members.

The Potteries branch officials have been suspended under Rule 16 paragraph 1 subsections (i) and (ii) on the grounds that they failed to carry out the instructions of the NEC by not distributing the ballot papers and deciding on a branch ballot as recommended in SOC42.

However, Rule 7 paragraph 23 states, 'Every Branch shall adopt byelaws to make provisions as to the manner in which elections are to be held or ballots taken'.

As there would appear to be a doubt as to whether the NEC had any right to issue instructions as to how the ballot should be conducted, these suspensions should be withdrawn at least until conference decides the issue.

Two other branches have had their officers suspended on the same basis — the Black Country and Kidderminster branches. Motions should be sent to the NEC demanding that these suspensions be withdrawn.

REG HOLDCROFT
[POEU branch representative, in personal capacity]

Drivers offer accepted

A LATE improvement in the pay offer to 15,000 haulage drivers in the South East brought the lifting of a strike call for January 2.

The drivers — in the South East region — had threatened an all-out strike if employers did not raise their 4.9 per cent offer.

In the event the Road Haulage Association negotiators came forward Thursday with an offer of £87 for 40 hours — 7.1 increase — which was accepted.

Welsh drivers have rejected their £85 regional offer and are threatening strike action unless they get £87. But even the South East deal falls well below inflation and represents a cut in living standards, yet another powerful sign of workers.

Society ballot was rigged

LAST WEEK, in an out court settlement of the Boilermakers' ballot rigging case, general secretary John Murray and the union executive agreed to declare the 1980 ballot for general secretary invalid.

A new election will place in April this year a statement is to be issued by the Boilermakers' union saying that neither Murray nor the defeated candidate Barry Williams, was aware of the irregularities at time.

Strange to say that of the issues raised by previous general secretaries John Chalmers, was only the general secretaries could have ballot papers printed. And sure enough over 100 ballot papers printed one year after original election, with Murray's and Williams' names. Who was not aware?

Appealing to the courts in such matters is always satisfactory because it is against the principle that labour movement should sort out its own internal affairs without intervention by the state. In this case rigged ballot has been turned, but a union inc is still needed to find who rigged it and to ensure they are not in a position to do the same again.

The broader question of electoral reform, and of elections by lay committees rather than full-time officials, also needs to be taken up by the left in the union.

CONFERENCE

Democratise the labour movement!

WHERE: Lanchester Poly, Priory St, Coventry.

WHEN: Saturday March 6, 11 to 4.30

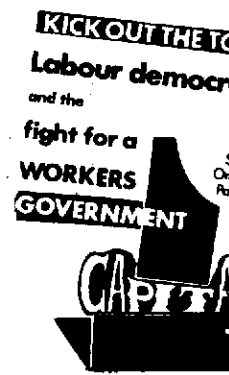
INITIAL SPONSORS: Socialist Organiser Alliance, London Labour Briefing, Oxford Trades Council, Nottingham Labour Briefing, Manchester Labour Left, CPSA British Library Branch, Kings Cross ASLEF, Oxford CATC.

DELEGATES: and observers invited from all labour movement organisations. Individuals also welcome. Credentials £2.

CRECHE: Available.

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

Coventry March 6



40p plus postage from Socialist Organiser 28 Middle Lane, London



Industrial News

Benefit office staff walk out

MORE THAN 200 staff at Benefit offices in North-west London staged a walk-out last week to protest at hefty staff cuts, abysmal working conditions and a heavier workload arising from the increase in the unemployment register.

The strike succeeded in closing down more than half the unemployment benefit offices in North-west London and was also supported by several job centres.

This action comes at a time when the Tories are also planning to introduce ethnic monitoring, availability testing and taxation of benefits—all of which is being opposed by the main

civil service unions, the CPSA and the SCPS.

Ethnic monitoring would involve claimants being asked about their country of origin, immigration status and their race.

The Department of Employment insists that it is all nothing to worry about, that they have been doing the same thing for years at Job Centres and it is merely a way of compiling statistics on black employment.

However, the scope of the new questionnaire has been expanded and will include all black/foreign claimants, including people born here and would also allow the monitoring process to be directly tied in with signing on, giving potential

leverage to racist arguments.

The availability testing would also involve claimants being asked to fill detailed questionnaires and basically make it harder to claim benefit.

This would particularly affect part time workers and those with dependents or children—mainly women.

The move to voluntary registration is also expected to cause job losses in the Manpower Services Commission. Staff are now preparing to stage another all-London strike on Tuesday January 26 to protest about the worsening conditions and possibility of further cuts.

It is essential now to spread this type of action to other UBOs and Job

LAST Saturday, 23rd, in Manchester, 60 young people from around the country attended a conference organised by the YOP

Trade Union Rights campaign.

The conference discussed the problems of unionising the cheap labour

schemes. How do we keep the union active when the leadership has to leave? (YOP schemes only last for three months to one year).

How do we find where the YOP schemes are, so that we can get them organised?

It was suggested that each of the local groups tries to make links with their local NALGO and CPSA branches, whose members often have access to the whereabouts of the schemes in the area.

Solidarity

The question of the trade union and Labour Party leadership was taken up, and the conference decided to apply more pressure on the union leadership in order to get real solidarity—rather than the unqualified support that the TUC gives the government to keep the YOP schemes going.

It was suggested that local Trades Councils should refuse to cooperate with YOP schemes and refuse to approve cheap labour.

The question of YOP rights, it was pointed out, is as political as the fight against the Employment Act. By law YOP workers do not have any rights. They are not covered by the Employment Protection Act. When the managers and supervisors sack and suspend YOP workers, they are within their legal rights.

The second half of the conference discussed the importance of highlighting Tebbitt's new £15 a week scheme and building for a one-day strike of YOP workers with a youth lobby of Parliament on February 25. This is realistic. There is certainly a feeling among YOP workers for militant action.

Coaches

The aim is to get over three thousand youth from around the country to the lobby. Already coaches are booked in Scotland, Bristol, Liverpool and other places.

NUPE have been helpful in providing the coaches and all areas should take the initiative to organise a coach and fight to get their local YOP workers out on the 25th to make a real impact.

The lobby will be demanding:

- Full trade union rates of pay,
- A guaranteed job for all trainees at the end of the scheme,
- Free travel to work for YOPs,
- Five weeks' paid holiday a year.

MICK LIGGINS



"The future of this country will be in the hands of those very teenagers Y.O.P.s helping today. The T.U.C.s behind it all the way."

Centres, most of which present a similar picture. It is important for militants in the CPSA and SCPS to start working towards non-implementation of the proposed schemes like ethnic monitoring and initiate action similar to that undertaken by staff in London offices.

Given the response of the unions' national leaderships—leaflet the doles and do nothing—the building of a movement capable of fighting these measures is of the utmost importance.

STUDENTS OCCUPY TO FIGHT CUTS

LAST Wednesday, Manchester students occupied the University's main administration

block in protest against proposed education cuts.

As messages of support arrived from students unions around the country the morale of the occupation grew. The Laurence Scott strikers also sent a message of support expressing solidarity.

Dennis Barry, convenor of Laurence Scotts told us: "Not enough people in the working class movement are showing the example required to win these battles. It is no use waiting for the right wing leadership to do this. It must come from us once again. Carry on the fight and good luck."

The occupation sent a delegation to Laurence Scotts to support their strike

Picket

The occupation ended on Friday from a position of strength to picket the Senate—the supreme academic body of the university—who were meeting to approve the implementation of 16% cuts.

The students' new found militancy ensured that not one member of Senate was able to cross the picket line which covered the five entrances and the meeting had to be abandoned. But as one picket said: "A short term success has been achieved, but the struggle goes on."



Bradford ASTMS strike

24 members of ASTMS at Rank Wharfedale, Bradford, are in their third week of strike action.

The dispute follows the management substituting for the annual review an arbitrary increase of 3½% plus £1. ASTMS members, in response to this, banned overtime, worked to rule, and adopted a no-flexibility rule, i.e. not covering duties done by colleagues made recently redundant.

Management then instructed the branch secretary, Harry Waring, to do a job he had not previously done, thus breaking the no-flexibil-

ity rule. Harry refused, and was suspended. The ASTMS members immediately stopped work.

Harry Waring told Socialist Organiser, "The management have deliberately driven us into this dispute. We have no other option but to strike, or the union would have been effectively smashed."

This is the first official dispute in 50 years at the factory, and the workforce of about 300 has been split. Members of STAP and EETPU have crossed the picket lines and are working alongside management who

are attempting to do the work normally done by the ASTMS members.

Harry Waring said, "We can't understand these people. This strike has really sorted out where they stand. How are we going to be able to work with them?"

Despite this, morale is good among the strikers, who say they are determined to win back the right to negotiate their pay and conditions.

Messages/money: Harry Waring, 17 Greenacre Drive, Shelf, near Halifax. MATTHEW KIRKPATRICK

Cowley BL militant sacked

A PARTICULARLY vicious victimisation has taken place in BL's Cowley Assembly Plant. A worker on the Honda Acclaim track has been sacked for handing out copies of a Leyland Action Committee leaflet to fellow workers on the track.

The worker, Dennis Kilgariff, who has been two years in the plant, took some copies of the leaflet, which advertised a local meeting of the LAC, when he went in on the night shift. He gave them to several of his mates well before the shift started at eight o'clock.

At ten past six the following morning he was summoned to the superintendent's office and sacked. Since then, four more stages of BL's disciplinary procedure have been operated. Each time management's line has been harder than before.

It has been a clear political victimisation from the start, showing the thinking

of those running BL.

The night shift manager opened the interview with the statement: "I find it very distasteful to have to operate this procedure. If I had my way, I would have you frogmarched out of the gate."

'Political views'

"We want Mr Average in this factory", he went on. "If people like you crop up, we are here to crush them".

Kilgariff was told that management 'don't like his political views', and that they had noticed that he had

recently acquired 'some very unsavoury friends'.

He was accused of being a ringleader in successive disputes, of being on TV during the Acclaim strike in October, and of going to Birmingham to lobby the convenors during the BL dispute in November.

At higher levels of procedure management said they regarded his 'crime' as more serious than that committed by Derek Robinson. The personnel manager drew the comparison even

further.

He said it was not so much that the leaflet was unauthorised as what it said. In other words, Kilgariff was not being sacked for breaching company regulations, but for the ideas on the leaflet. This also explains why the right wing can distribute leaflets inside the plant with impunity.

A final meeting with the area personnel manager is to be held on Wednesday of this week, but there appears to be no serious possibility

SHARP FIGHT AT JEWELS

37 AUEW and TGWU members are on strike at Jewel Razor, Sheffield, demanding the reinstatement of con-

venor John Cunningham. Last October, the workers put in a claim for a wage increase based on productivity.

To back the claim, when it became obvious they were getting nowhere in negotiations, they took action, going onto day work and banning overtime.

In November management announced two 'redundancies', one of which was John Cunningham, who was told that he was last in on his section (in fact he wasn't) and therefore first out.

There are now 26 people working in the factory, because the employers have recruited part-time labour from the Job Centre on the understanding that they will cross picket lines.

But the strike is now official.

The dispute took a new turn when a local councillor urged council lorry drivers to drop scrap wood off for the pickets. When a driver took this advice, he was suspended. This sparked off a strike by the 80 drivers at his depot.

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

Socialist Organiser Alliance

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Socialist Organiser

Remember Bloody Sunday

by Keith White



THE ANNUAL Bloody Sunday commemoration march planned for January 31 in Coventry has been threatened by an announcement by the National Front and the New National Front that they intend to march on the same day.

It is the tenth commemoration of the shooting dead of 13 unarmed demonstrators in Derry on January 30 1972 by British troops.

The Coventry Evening Telegraph called for a ban in November, just after the march was announced, and

after a few weeks' silence repeated its demand after the fascists' announcements.

In a strongly-worded editorial, the paper hit out at both marches, and ended its comment with the following revealing statement: 'A ban would not be an infringement of basic democratic rights. Marches are not the real way to put across points of view or to influence people. They are no more than a show of strength, even of intimidation.'

'As instruments of education and persuasion,

they are only slightly less subtle than a bludgeon. Those who wish to state political or religious views in a reasoned and peaceful manner will still be able to do so'.

The ideas contained in this comment are increasingly being pushed by the ruling class in Britain. In the last ten months, there have been 29 bans on marches in England and Wales, ranging from 2½ days to a 43-day ban in Liverpool.

In London there have been bans on all marches throughout the city for 116 days of those ten months, i.e. nearly half the time.

Those in the labour movement who mistakenly see state bans as an answer to fascist violence will possibly to see the error of their ways, but they are falling into a trap laid for them by those who wish to see marches outlawed altogether.

At the time of writing it is still not certain whether the police will ask the council to apply for a ban, but this is considered highly likely.

25,000 join— S. Yorks strike

by Rob Dawber

SOUTH Yorkshire gave a lead this week in the fight against the Tories. A 24 hour general strike call put out by the South Yorks Steel and Engineering Committee was answered by 25,000 workers coming out and a march of more than 3,000 through Sheffield.

Ambrose-Shardlows, Firth Brown and British Steel craft unions made up the core of the demonstration, supported by local branches of UCATT, AUEW, ASTMS, TGWU, GMAU, NALGO, NUPE, COHSE, EETPU, NATFHE, several shop stewards committees and a contingent from the occupation at Sheffield Poly.

The key group were the Sheffield bus drivers who decided on an all-out strike for the day, meaning no public transport within Sheffield boundaries.

A glaring absence from the demonstration and the strike, however were repres-

entatives of Yorkshire NUM and the ISTC. The steel industry has been decimated in South Yorkshire (20,000 jobs in 20 months), and steel workers are most obviously in need of action to stop the Tories. NUM support was denied on grounds that the Barnsley HQ was too busy dealing with the pay claim and ballot and with replacing Scargill. No approach was made at individual pit level.

Support by the NUM could have transformed the impact of the day.

The rally had a resolution put to it by George Caborn, District Secretary of the CSEU, calling on the TUC to organise a national lobby of Parliament on 26 April. This was passed unanimously.

The South Yorks Engineering and Steel Committee is a rank and file body supported by the CSEU, and several shop stewards committees. Militants should be supporting it and pushing it to call for April 26 to be a national strike.



ASLEF leader Ray Buckton

What's needed now is for local liaison committees to be formed to link up the different depots in an area so that there is effective organisation to coordinate action, and to put pressure on the leadership to call an all-out stoppage.

This is the policy of the ASLEF branch at Kings Cross, and a London liaison committee is being set up.

These liaison committees will be of particular importance in view of British Rail's decision to lay off workers rostered for work on Sunday. 45,000 NUR and TSSA members will be locked out — a mere foretaste of the kind of treatment they will receive if ASLEF is defeated.

So in order to draw all railworkers into the fight against longer working hours and job losses, liaison committees should be formed in all areas.

NUR guards could be drawn into these liaison committees straight away so that militants are not left isolated and there is a focus for them to fight against the NUR leadership's capitulation to flexi-rosters.

Blow

The British Steel bosses' complaints that the rail strike is hitting steel production, and thus 'forcing' them to make more job cuts, gives added fuel to the argument that the Triple Alliance between railworkers, steelworkers and miners should act now to defend ASLEF, as a first blow to defending jobs in the three industries.

ASLEF STOPS THE SUN:

by Jo Thwaites

TRAIN DRIVERS go into a further week of industrial action having notched up a significant victory against the Fleet Street union-busters.

A wave of strike action, followed by determined blacking of the Sun and other newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch, stood firm in the face of legal threats and forced the Sun to carry a reply to the smears and slanders it published last week.

Far from undermining the action, the Sun and its two darling railwaymen succeeded only in raising still further the level of militancy.

Injunction

When Murdoch's lawyers sought an injunction on ASLEF leaders at Kings Cross, the legal case was resolved by the two members, unfortunately, agreeing to put the proposal to a mass meeting at Kings Cross that the blacking be stopped. (The branch secretary did so without consultation with the Socialist Workers' Party, of which he is a member).

But the proposal to lift the blacking was defeated massively at a meeting of over 300, with five votes again.

Resolve

This has strengthened the resolve of the train-drivers and their assistants.

But it has proved once more that the ASLEF Executive is determined not to escalate the dispute. They refused to give the Kings Cross men legal facilities when the Sun struck. And even after three weeks of getting nowhere in the

now for all-out strike!

ACAS talks, there is still no call to step up the action to an all-out strike — a demand made from the outset by many drivers, including the Scottish region.

A number of depots are operating a policy of non-cooperation, which amounts to a work to rule, and trying to escalate the dispute that way.

Two Kings Cross drivers have already been disciplined for this, yet instead of focusing on their defence and developing the action, the ASLEF Exec is trying to persuade members to call off the non-cooperation.

In the case of Kings Cross, the Assistant General Secretary, Don Pallen, has failed in a bid to get the members to stop the non-cooperation, and there will be a strike on Friday 29th in support of the two disciplined members.

The feeling among ASLEF members for an all-out strike is very strong, but the Executive has to be forced to recognise and act on the mood of the rank and file.

There is support from many NUR members too, particularly the guards,

who have taken unofficial action against the 'flexi-rosters' accepted on their behalf by Sid Weighell. At Kings Cross the NUR guards have called off their unofficial stoppage after reaching an 'agreement' with NUR officials and BR.

But this local agreement is not signed: it is not worth the paper it is written on if the NUR nationally agrees to flexi-rosters.

Odds

Elsewhere, however, more and more guards are taking a stand against Weighell's sell-out, with unofficial strikes expected in the Southern Region and the Midlands. Weighell's stance of refusing to support the ASLEF action and sticking by his own treacherous deal appears increasingly at odds with the NUR Executive.

On Monday Weighell resorted to the device of an 'informal' Executive meeting to avoid the danger of a vote to back the train drivers, while he continues to use the press and ACAS to pressurise Buckton towards a capitulation.

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