

Socialist Organiser

No.8. MAY 1979. 10p.

FIVE YEARS THAT PAVED THE WAY FOR THATCHER



WHO LET THE TORIES IN?

BY ANDREW HORNING

UP AND UP WENT share prices throughout the election campaign. The bosses were bullish with excitement at the prospect of a Tory victory. On election day shares hit an all-time high.

Then the Tory press whooped with delight at Thatcher's success. 'The Conservatives have an overwhelming mandate for their policies', crowed the cock-a-hoop columnists.

But that's forgetting the class struggle. And it's for-

getting the record of the last Tory government. Heath received his 'mandate' to bring in anti-union laws, keep wages down without using an incomes policy, and let lame ducks hobble off into the fenlands of bankruptcy.

What happened? The anti-union laws were largely a dead letter because of mass-ive trade union opposition, in particular the fight to free the dockers jailed in Pentonville in July 1972. Despite promising not to introduce an



Architects of defeat: Foot, Callaghan, Healey, Rees [on left, top to bottom]; Owen, Ennals, Benn [above, left to right].

incomes policy, Heath did just that in October 1972.

And, faced with lame ducks like Rolls-Royce, Heath had to nationalise and subsidise.

Having scraped in by virtue of widespread disillusion in Labour, Heath was free to break promises and make policies irrespective of the 'mandate' he was given. In their practice the Tories understood well enough the nature of parliamentary democracy: the vote every five years decides almost nothing about policy. It only gives a mandate to manage the system, that is, a state and an economy which continue regardless of elections, and whose crises pay no attention to polling days.

Under Heath, it did not take trade unionists long to start the fightback. With their leaders shorn of the excuse that workers should 'give Labour a chance', trade unionists buffeted and battered the Heath government until in 1974, they brought it down.

Today many unions are under resolutely right wing leadership. Even the supposedly left-wing union leaders have joined in producing a 'Concordat' which denounces the working class forms of struggle that were central in defeating Heath's Tories: flying pickets, mass pickets, solidarity strikes.

Rank and file movements to challenge those leaderships have declined since 1974. Often the convenors

and senior stewards who led struggles in the '60s and early '70s are now cynical, despondent, or simply in the bosses' clutches.

The trade union movement must be revitalised for struggle. The old tradition of stewards and officials who try to get a good deal for the membership and over the heads of the membership must be broken once and for all.

The coming battles must be conducted on the political and ideological front too. In 1974 the leaders of the labour movement managed to transmute the victory of the great struggles against the Tories into the misery of the social contract.

Between 1970 and '74, trade union leaders like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon spoke out for militancy and socialism. But there was never any real connection between the militancy and the socialism. And so after 1974 they were able to turn sharply against militancy, claiming that it represented irresponsible beating against the bounds of what was politically possible.

That must not happen again. It must not be possible for the next Labour government to pursue right wing policies with minimal political opposition as the 1974-9 government did.

It is crucial that socialists not only take the lead in the direct action battles, but step up the fight within the trade union movement and the

Labour Party against the right wing and against the fake lefts who give them cover.

Three conditions must be fulfilled for anti-Tory feeling not to lead into the blind alleys of 1970-74.

Firstly, an unrelenting criticism of the record of the Labour and trade union leaders during this last term of office.

Secondly, the organisation of a war against the right wing and fake left in the unions and the Labour Party linked with a drive to bring new militants into the wards and union branches.

Thirdly, vigorous agitation for policies which link up immediate struggles with overall socialist aims.

That struggle has to be conducted as a combined struggle. Those who turn their backs on the fight inside the Labour Party not only fail to combat the right wing there, but they strengthen it within the unions. It is absurd to see the unions as being separate from the politics of Labour.

Socialist Organiser will try to take the lead in this struggle. It will fight to make the labour movement more democratic, more responsive to the rank and file. It will fight against those who discourage direct action and encourage passive reliance on the leaders. It will fight those who try to reconcile the working class to the exploitation and the injustice of capitalism.

Our work is just beginning

SOCIALIST ORGANISER was launched last October as the paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory to assist the fight for a Labour victory by providing an alternative to the class collaborationist policies of the Labour leadership.

While the Labour victory has eluded us, we have succeeded in providing a voice for left wing activists in the constituencies. In five issues of Socialist

Organiser and two election specials, in a widely distributed broadsheet and in the SCLV election leaflets, we have shown that the Labour left does not have to shut up and put up with whatever Transport House sends it in an election campaign.

But as well as showing how a Labour election campaign should be run, we have raised in the columns of SO many issues which will not go away now the

election is over.

We have opened up the discussion about the role of socialists in local government, in the anti-racist struggle, in the unions, in relation to Ireland, the EEC and devolution.

Not one of these issues will disappear now the election is over. Public spending cuts, for instance, will place many Labour councils in the front line against the Tories. Black people too will come under

attack as immigration procedures are tightened and the police given free rein.

In the Labour Party the leaders, the architects of this defeat, will try to place the blame on our shoulders while polishing up their own tarnished reputation in an orgy of Tory-bashing. The blame must be thrown back to Callaghan and Co., who for five years paved the way for Tory victory.

But more than this: now they are off the hook

of governmental office, the party leadership must not be left off the hook in the party itself.

We must organise to do this. We believe the work done by the SCLV and Socialist Organiser shows this can be done.

Focused on the election as it was, the SCLV's work has drawn to a close. The work of Socialist Organiser, though, is just beginning. We hope all those who have written for it, who have

taken and sold it, will continue to do so and encourage others to. We hope, too, that supporters of the paper will continue to meet together to discuss and to organise.

Socialist Organiser groups are being formed in many areas, and in our next issue [June] we will publish a register of local groups. If you want to set up or join a local SO group, write to: Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

Organising against the Tories



"I favour a complete change of leadership and direction"

ERNIE ROBERTS

Elected MP for Hackney North

WE lost the election because the Labour government failed to operate the policies as decided by annual conference of the Labour Party and TUC — against wage controls, cuts, unemployment, and so on. Even if the government had implemented these policies and lost the election at least we would have been defeated fighting for the right things.

The way to prevent another government like Callaghan's is for the members of the LP and trade unions to take control of those we elect — we've got to have the right to elect, remove and control. Otherwise we'll have a continuation of the same old authoritarianism and bureaucracy in the labour movement. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has got an important role here.

Every attempt must be made to unite left forces in the LP — whether Tribune, the Labour Coordinating Committee, the SCLV or whatever. We should arrange joint meetings of these groups locally and nationally in order to work out the largest measure of agreement for unity. This must be extended to the trade union movement in order to gain support for socialist policies.

My job is to link up with the Tribune group and trade union group in Parliament, but also promote extra-parliamentary struggle. I'm chairman of the Labour Parliamentary Association: this has got to be a forum for discussion of ways to socialism, not where aspiring MPs come to see if any good seats are going. We've got to stop the Labour Party being used as an avenue for professional advance.

I think there'll be ground pressure for a change of leadership. I favour a complete change of leadership and direction.

There is no way we can afford to have another government like the one that has been responsible for this defeat for the movement and has let the Tories in.

IN June 1977, when the British press from *Tribune* to the *Financial Times* was trumpeting Paisley's defeat in the Loyalist strike, the gains made by his Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in the local elections were difficult to explain. The DUP won nearly a third of the pro-Union seats and gained control of Ballymena council.

Since then Roy Mason, ever eager to be the hard man in the North, tried to undermine Paisley's support by stealing his clothes — a step-up in repression that included expansion of the overwhelmingly Protestant UDR and RUC 'security' forces, an increased role for the SAS, and stronger 'anti-terrorist' laws.

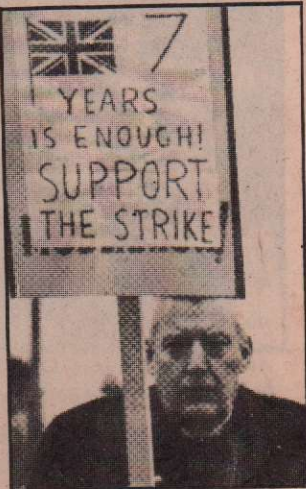
But the ease with which the Labour Government adopted the traditional sectarian politics of hard-line Ulster Unionism, consummated in the parliamentary pact with the Official Unionists, effectively legitimised the appeal of bigots like Paisley and his ilk.

And on May 3rd this year, Loyalist voters trebled the DUP's representation at Westminster: two more loyalists — John Dunlop (of 1977 strike leader Ernest Baird's party) and James Kilfedder — were elected; and two Official Unionists — William Ross and the Rev. Bradford (ex-Vanguard) — were returned, unopposed by the DUP because, as the *Guardian* put it, 'their views were extreme enough to coincide with Mr. Paisley's'. The so-called moderate Official Unionist voice in Parliament was effectively reduced to three — Enoch Powell, James Molyneux and Harold McCusker.

Northern Ireland, the election, and the Tories

WILL INTERNMENT BE BROUGHT BACK?

A similar process occurred on the nationalist side. The Irish Independence Party (IIP) emerged as a credible electoral force, many of whose members worked for the independent nationalist



MP Frank Maguire in the last election. Although the IIP won no seats, they got 22% of the vote in Bernadette McAliskey's old seat Mid-Ulster compared to the SDLP's 35% and polled only 1000 less in North Antrim.

Frank Maguire, who stood clearly in favour of British withdrawal and for special

status for Republican prisoners in H-Block, successfully defeated the SDLP challenge in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. (The SDLP candidate, Austin Currie, is famous for his turnout act during the rent and rate strike against internment. Originally one of the strike leaders, on entering the Sunningdale Assembly he announced, as Housing Minister, that there would be no amnesty for the strikers, coupled with increased reductions from their welfare and a new 'collection charge' for arrears.)

The various labour movement candidates (largely the N.I. Labour Party, the Republican Clubs [Official Sinn Fein] and the 'Labour and Trade Union Coordinating Group') got a derisory 3% of the vote. While the resolution of the national question is central to working class interests — because Protestant workers wish to preserve 'privileges' guaranteed by successive British governments, and Catholic workers face daily British and Loyalist repression — appeals to some abstract workers' unity fall on deaf ears. Bill Webster of Derry Trades Council, a prominent campaigner for a new Labour Party, got just

639 votes in Derry while the IIP picked up five and a half thousand largely working class votes.

Provisional Sinn Fein, calling for an 'H-vote' in solidarity with the prisoners in the



H-blocks of Long Kesh, boycotted the elections: the turnout in West Belfast, predominantly nationalist, was 25% down on October 1974.

In these ghettos the struggle continued — while the army and RUC stepped up their harassment of Republicans (24 were arrested a week before the elections,

including 3 of those working for Frank Maguire), making the election look more like that in Rhodesia. The Ulster Defence Regiment (one of whose members was recently imprisoned for the Shankill Butchers killings) attacked an SDLP agent Pat Bradley, beating him up. SDLP candidate Paddy Duffy described the actions of the UDR as 'clearly an attempt to intimidate' his supporters.

Although parliamentary elections and formal democracy remain largely irrelevant in the artificially defined six-county Northern Ireland statelet, it is clear that five years of Labour government have done nothing to alleviate conditions there and have, if anything, bolstered Loyalist hopes of continued British support.

Certainly, the increased extreme Loyalist voice at Westminster will be encouraging the Tories to step up repression. Recent demands have included the death penalty for convicted 'terrorist murders', selective internment of Republican organisers and a return to Protestant supremacy in the form of local government. Any moves in this direction should be vigorously resisted by the labour movement in Britain.

But the fact remains that it was the Labour government that paved the way for increased repression, and a prime objective must be to force the Labour opposition to end bipartisanship with the Tories on Ireland and for this year's Labour Party conference to re-affirm Labour's commitment to a united Ireland.

PETER CHALK
Islington Central CLP

The first woman Prime Minister? Yes, but what does Margaret Thatcher's victory mean for working class women?

In its May editorial, *Spare Rib*, the most widely circulated journal of the women's liberation movement, explained why the women's movement opposes Thatcher

IN the run-up to the election, several newspapers asked *Spare Rib* whether we would regard a Thatcher victory as a victory for women's liberation, proof or what the modern woman can achieve. For us as Feminists, the issue is not the success or failure of one individual woman, but whether the actual politics of Thatcher, and of the party which she leads, can promote the interests of women generally.

The whole Tory ethos, however, is based on the denial of oppression: if you do well in life, it's because you've got brains and determination and you deserve success. If you 'fail', it has nothing to do with your sex or colour or class, and everything to do with your own deficiencies as a person. Within this system, which depends on the mass of people remaining at the bottom, those few who do escape 'the station in which it has pleased God to place them' — the cockney Freddie Laker, or the women like Margaret Thatcher — can only ever be exceptions. Thatcher is committed to

Thatcher against women, women against Thatcher

two main policies: the defeat of the trade union movement, and the running down of the welfare state, state industries, and public spending, so that the capitalist presently invested in them may be 'freed' for the needs of private enterprise. From the higher profits which ensue, we will all, supposedly, benefit.

The flaw in this argument is that, in a free-market economy, the only people guaranteed to benefit are the owners and shareholders of private industry. The pursuit of profit, far from meaning higher employment, usually means the opposite. Increasingly, industrialists are investing in areas of work which are capital rather than labour intensive — for the simple reason that machines cost less than people.

The Conservatives are also committed to abolishing price controls and to cutting government subsidies on basic foods. Lower prices, we are told, can only be achieved by free competition. In these days of giant monopolies, that's a rather meaningless phrase. While the housewife spends time and effort comparing the prices of Daz, Ariel, Tide, Bold, Fairy Snow and Dreft, it's Proctor and Gamble who get the last laugh — they produce all six. In 1977 their turn-

over, just for the UK, was £163,015 million.

Another Tory promise — to lower income tax — will partly be achieved through increasing 'indirect taxation', ie government tariffs on items we all have to buy, such as food. Only those earning good money (or 'living on savings' as Mrs Thatcher euphemistically puts it) will benefit from the

by strikes is negligible compared to the burden this will place on women, as caring for the young, the sick, the disabled and the elderly — and with minimum state aid — becomes even more our responsibility.

Another of the Tories' stated intentions — curbing the right to strike — would weaken one of the few



Same sex as Thatcher, but not the same class

kind of income tax cuts she proposes, yet prices will rise for everyone.

The Tories' attempt to appeal to women across class lines, via the common factor of being housewives, is calculated and very skillful. Providing praise for the housewife, however, comes cheap: providing nurseries, housing, social security benefits and adequate health care does not. Labour has already massively reduced public spending, but the Tories plan heavier cuts. The temporary inconvenience caused

weapons most ordinary people have. And it is women workers who most need that power. On average, we still earn only £50 a week, compared with an average male wage of £80 a week. What gains women have made, in achieving higher pay, have mostly come about through industrial action, or the threat of it — not through the voluntary 'generosity' of employers. For all the Tory press to play off women against strikers, and create an image of militancy as male, the most disruptive strike

this winter has been by the 'dirty jobs' workers of NUPE who are, in fact, 65% female.

One winner for the Tories has been their emphasis on 'law and order'. Thatcher's vision of a vastly increased police force, with added powers, may seem very appealing to those many people — particularly women — who do now live in fear, owing to the rise in crime; but for whom, and against whom, will those powers really be used?

The bulk of police labour goes into investigating crimes against property rather than those against people; and, increasingly, police investment is not in improving methods of crime detection but in improving the technology of political control. The Women's Liberation Movement — which has led the fight on crimes against women — is already suffering police harassment and surveillance (Special Branch at conferences, raids on women's centres and benefits, beatings and arrests on the November Reclaim the Night demonstration) and, under a Conservative government, we can doubtless expect worse.

It says a great deal about how far we have to go, in clarifying the real issues of women's liberation, that thousands of votes — both for and against — will nonetheless be determined by the mere fact of a woman running for Prime Minister. While we at *Spare Rib* have no illusions in Labour, those of us who are voting intend to vote for them — for the simple reason that we want to keep the Tories out.

Organising against the Tories

Teachers: anger is rising

THE first group of workers to confront the new Tory government are the teachers. Support for NUT sanctions on voluntary duties has widened and the NUT now says that all local authorities are affected. In addition, the NAS/UWT 5-hour day action has forced schools to close early and many more schools to close at lunchtime.

All the major teachers' unions are committed to the 36.5% increase required to restore the external (and internal) relativities outlined in the Houghton Report, of 1974. What has really angered many teachers is that an apparent climb-down by the government a week before the election (when the negotiating Burnham committee agreed to a comparability commission like the other public sector disputes) was followed by Shirley Williams' refusal to agree to the terms of reference including mention of Houghton. (Last year, Williams said the government was not opposed to the restoration of the Houghton relativities.)

This line was justified by saying that a deal that restored teachers' earlier position might have the effect of encouraging higher settlements elsewhere in the public sector. One of the smaller teachers' unions, the AMMA

(which has never struck in its 100-year history) ordered a half-day strike in response.

After this treatment from Labour's Shirley Williams, what can teachers expect from the Conservatives?

Mark Carlisle, the new Education minister, told a meeting at NUT conference a few weeks ago that the Conservatives wanted a well paid teaching profession. But already the Tory government has said that any settlement by the commission will be subject to cash limits — a concept introduced by Denis Healey for keeping overall expenditure in any department within a straitjacket.

This would mean that any increase in the present offer of 9% now and a 2-year staged restoration of Houghton would be followed later by attempted cuts in the number of schools and/or teaching posts and cuts in spending on resources.

Already the Tories have said they intend to lop off £400 million from education. Contingency plans to fight these, and cash limit cuts motivated by the pay award, should be part of the teaching unions' action for the claim.

The mood among teachers is increasingly in favour of putting up a fight for this claim. Most teachers are

aware that if it is not won we will fall even further behind comparable civil service pay levels (which were upped 20% this year). Already, the further education teachers' union NATFHE have called a half-day strike and a no-cover action.

A sizeable minority (300 out of 2000) at NUT conference supported a *Rank and File* demand for increased action similar to NATFHE's and against arbitration in the form of the Comparability Commission. NUT branches must pour in resolutions of support for more effective action. We must stand in the way of attempts by the Executive to contain the action and refer the claim to yet another comparability study.

The fight to defend education should be extended across the whole public sector. Let our experience be a warning. If this government is backing down from the teachers' independent comparability agreement — the Houghton report — what chances have similar agreements in other sectors? And the spectre of cash limit cuts looms on the horizon: agreement by union executives to phasing merely puts off the struggle — teachers want the increase now.

PC

POST OFFICE: IT'S NO DEAL

by a
U.P.W. MEMBER

Post Office workers throughout the country have told their union executive in no uncertain terms what they think of the sell-out wage deal that was offered to them.

Only a few of the smaller branches voted for acceptance. Eight hundred members at a London Overseas Telephones No.2 branch meeting voted unanimously to reject the offer. In Northampton, only four people voted in favour, in Birmingham about eighty out of nearly a thousand, and in Manchester only forty voted to accept.

In fact, at the Manchester meeting such was the feeling against the deal that no-one actually dared to speak in favour — although there are two members of the executive in the branch and the branch central committee voted, with only four against, to recommend acceptance.

The Executive have clearly been taken by surprise at the opposition to the deal, and there has even been talk of Tom Jackson resigning as General Secretary.

To try and retrieve the situation they have now come up with a new scheme —

they will drop the productivity bargaining and go for a 9% pay increase with further discussions on consolidation to come.

They will hope to get this through Annual Conference at the end of the month and so take the steam out of the situation.

Pressure must be put on delegates now to reject the deal at conference and to reaffirm the fight for the full claim. Conference must give the go-ahead to start industrial action. Branches should also send in emergency resolutions censuring the executive for their role in trying to engineer the sell-out.

The existing leadership have shown themselves to be completely out of touch with the views of the rank and file, and should be removed. Delegates should only vote for those candidates for the new executive who are prepared to lead a fight for the full claim.

For the first time since the strike in 1971, the possibility now exists for building a rank and file movement amongst post office workers which can take up socialist policies and offer a challenge to the present weakened right wing leadership. Militants in the UPW must make sure that this opportunity is not missed.



'Callaghan should resign as Labour Party leader'

ARTHUR SCARGILL

Yorkshire miners' president

IT is not the last five weeks of campaigning that lost the election, but the last five years' failure to carry out policies of the Labour Party conference. Callaghan should resign as Labour Party leader and the leadership should start listening to the grass roots of our movement.

STUART HOLLAND

Elected MP for Vauxhall, South London

THE RESULT was too predictable. Several in the movement have argued since 1975 that the policies pursued could lead to such results. Monetarism and cuts in public spending had already threatened the fabric of the welfare state in housing, health and education.

Not only were the Government not socialists, they were not even good state capitalists. They hedged at things that even right-wing parties on the continent would not have batted an eyelid at.

Faced with a choice between degrees of conservative economic management, it is hardly surprising if the electorate chose the authentic Tories.

The issues now will not just be posed in Parliament but also in the labour movement... not only how to blunt the edge of Thatcher's axe, but also the crucial questions of the accountability of power inside the Labour Party.

RON LEIGHTON

Elected MP for Newham North East

I got more votes in Newham than Reg Prentice did in 1974: someone who the press described as an 'extremist' got more votes than a 'moderate'.

Labour lost because of incomes policy. And the unions bent over backwards to cooperate.

We've got to learn the lessons of the last few years and fight for what we believe in, not what the IMF believes in.

JOBS FIGHT New ideas needed

by
RHODRI EVANS

LAST WEEK the workers at Vickers Scotswood works, on Tyneside, occupied their factory, locked out the bosses, and began a work-in.

By Friday 4th, however, the work-in had ended. It was called off in return for the bosses offering further talks on their plans to close the factory. But the bosses offered no climb-down on the principle of closure.

The outlook for the Vickers job battle is grey, if not black; and the lessons to be learnt are vital for the coming years of Tory government.

The Tories are set on encouraging cut-throat competition, and that means more unemployment. Doubly so, since a serious world recession — maybe as deep as or deeper than 1974-5 — is clearly on the horizon.

Vickers' Tyneside plants epitomise the decline of traditional industries within British capitalism. In the 1940s Scotswood and the neighbouring Elswick plant employed 20,000. Now there are only 550 in Scotswood.

Vickers are pulling out of heavy engineering and putting their money into foreign investment and fast-buck sectors like office equipment. They are deliberately refusing orders for Scotswood: one repair job from British Leyland was turned back when it was already on the motorway coming to Tyneside.

200 workers have already gone through the gate at Scotswood. Notice for another 100 expires at the end of May. The bosses want to sack nearly all the work-

ers by the end of June, just keeping on a 'skeleton staff' to work on the rundown of the plant until September.

The workers are blocking the movement of any finished work from the factory. Yet the bosses seem unmoved. The Vickers combine committee has pledged support for the fight to save the jobs, but the committee's call for national action is still making its way through union channels.

If Vickers Scotswood goes under, it will not just be because the workers have been sold out by cynical right-wing union officials. The union leadership in the factory is strongly organised, experienced, and left wing.

They have set up a Save Scotswood Campaign Committee, with wide support from the whole area. They have organised demonstrations. They have published campaign bulletins, hammering home the point that the issue is profits versus workers' interests.

But their demands have been geared to pressuring the bosses and the Government, rather than mobilising the rank and file. They call for:

- Opening the books to make possible a feasibility study on alternative production at Scotswood;

- an investigation into Vickers' marketing and planning policies;

- negotiations involving Vickers bosses, the Labour Government, and the stewards;

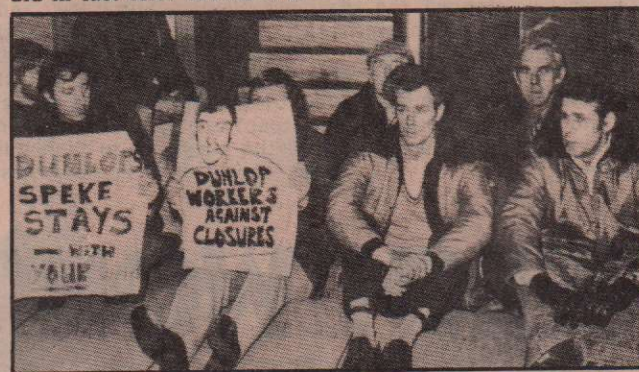
- government aid to be backed by guarantees of continued production.

The leading Scotswood stewards are socialists. Yet in their demands they are very much bound by the lim-

its of what is 'realistic' in capitalist politics. Thus the basic aim of their demands was to get the Labour Government to help pressure Vickers to keep Scotswood open, and to provide funds.

The Labour Government did in fact offer subsidies to

Scotswood looks like repeating the experience of Dunlop Speke. There too the plant leadership is left wing. They published a broadsheet, organised pickets, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and an occupation of the local radio station.



Dunlop... against the odds

Vickers. Vickers simply said: No. The closure goes ahead.

To counter Vickers' hard stand, what is really needed is an indefinite occupation of the works, backed up by strike action throughout the combine, with the demand for workers' control in the combine so as to share the work out with a shorter work week, no loss of jobs, and no loss of pay. Under the Labour Government this demand should have been coupled with a call for nationalisation without compensation.

That strategy would mean a head-on collision with the logic of capitalism. It would mean the stewards having to go ahead against the horrified insistence of the union officials that they should do nothing so extreme. (Though 'extreme' actions once underway can gather enough momentum to compel official support).

They called for a blacking on all Dunlop tyres, as a way of hitting the company without putting the workers formally into dispute and thus losing rights under the Employment Protection Act. They sent flying pickets out, and got support from dockers, lorry drivers, and car-workers.

But as the closure date approached, the stewards proposed a 'viability plan' which would mean 1,000 jobs being cut. Dunlop still said no. The closure date came — and Speke closed.

The stewards are continuing the battle: but with the workers now outside the factory, each individually facing the choice of whether to take the redundancy pay or to stick it out, the odds against them are huge.

The Dunlop and Scotswood stewards are well able to lead militant battles. But the usual run of militant batt-

Organising against the Tories

Fighting back



'Trade unions are the key'

KEN LIVINGSTONE

Candidate in Tory-held Hampstead, North London

Blame for the defeat lies solidly on the Labour government's policies. The left has got to make sure that people don't forget the record of the Labour government. We've got to ensure the blame for defeat is pinned on the leaders and policies responsible. People will flood into the party as they did in 1970-74 — they must be reminded of the disastrous record of Callaghan.

We must revive the question of reselection at this year's Labour Party conference. As long as the PLP elect the leaders they're going to be pretty rubbish. And each MP must be accountable for his or her record of voting and activity.

Local councils will constitute one focus of the fightback. But another, more important will be the trade unions. The Labour Party and Labour councils will have an irritant effect on the Tories, but only with the trade unions can the fightback be more effective.

The trade unions are the key. Right wing leaders like Duffy will find it much more difficult to scab under the Tories. Thatcher will look for a union to have a showdown with. It's better for the movement if it's a key industrial union, not like NUPE. The effect of the defeat of the UPW strike in 1970 was a setback for everyone for a couple of years.

In my campaign, we had an uphill struggle to convince the Irish community that my statement on troops out of Ireland was genuine. But we won that fight. Some group was advocating abstention and urging Irish voters to write H (for H-block) on their ballot papers. Only four papers were spoilt in this way.

If they had abstained, we'd have had a massive swing against us. At least a tenth of our 40,000 voters are Irish. But the Labour vote actually went up. We put out 8,000 leaflets calling for 'troops out now' and an end of the Orange statelet.

We had two party workers arrested when knocking up. This was typical of the constant police harassment of the Irish in areas like Kilburn. It's the same with blacks in Brixton. In some pubs Irish people just don't talk politics because of special Branch spies.

These helpers were taken to cells, stripped, body searched, held incommunicado. No point in just complaining to the new Home Secretary — the whole of the Labour Party should come out against this harassment.

THE ELECTION has been lost, but the fight goes on. The working class movement, black communities, and women will face attacks on many fronts.

The Tories' first attacks will be directed at the most vulnerable. The aim will be to whip up a climate of social and political reaction — what Tories call the reassertion of traditional values — so that the central task of taking on the unions is easier.

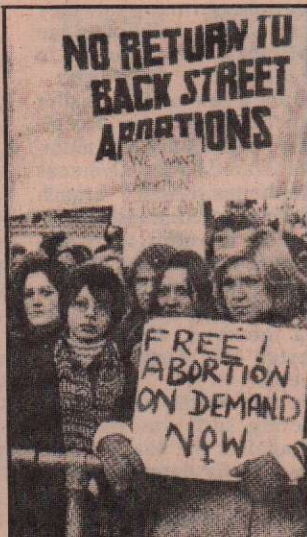
We must start organising now to deny the Tories any easy victories.



Defend the black communities

The Tories have proposed a tightening-up of immigration control, a register of dependents, and internal controls. Civil service workers should declare now that they will not cooperate with any of these policies. If the Tories try to introduce pass laws in Britain, the trade union movement can defy them and make those laws unworkable by mass non-cooperation.

Socialist Organiser fights for no immigration controls, and for labour movement for black self-defence. After Southall, no black community can trust its safety to the police. And Tory policy will give a boost to racist attacks.



Defend women's rights

Thatcher has already denounced 'strident women', i.e. women who stand up for their rights. With public spending cuts and rising unemployment, women will be forced back to an unbroken round of child-care and the kitchen sink.

In the 'new moral climate' the Tories are after, a new attack on abortion rights is certain. Labour Party policy is clear: for free abortion and contraception on demand. The fight for this means resisting attacks on the 1967 law, fighting for its extension, and opposing all attacks on the already grossly inadequate facilities available on the NHS.

Health workers who fight to defend and extend facilities at the hospitals where they work can play a crucial role here.

The fight for equal pay and conditions must go on. And the rundown in nursery provision must be stopped and reversed. (We must make sure that there are full creche facilities at all labour movement conferences, too, to draw into the fight those in most danger from the Tories' offensive.

Get the troops out of Ireland

The most extreme Protestant bigots are stronger in the new Parliament, and the Tories are intent on proving their 'hard line against terrorism'. So Army and RUC brutality will be stepped up in Northern Ireland.

Labour must junk the disastrous bi-partisan policy and replace it with a clear commitment to the withdrawal of troops and a united Ireland.



Housing for need, not for profit

Individual property ownership and big profits for the building industry bosses are two of the Tories' guiding principles. Moves will be made to force Labour councils to increase rents and put council houses on the market.

The Labour councils will have to fight back — or become tools of Toryism. The small steps forward made in places like Lambeth (with a rent freeze, an enquiry into the police, and the positive discrimination in housing) and Camden (with the £60 settlement for the council workers) will make these councils targets for the Tories.

The SCLV-sponsored conference next month (initiated by the Haringey Labour Group) can begin to organise the resistance to the Tories. Local Labour Parties,

Trades Councils, and union branches must in any case take up the defence of tenants in their areas against the Tories. Start making sure now that tenants' associations are well organised, with strong links to the labour movement.

Stop the jobs axe

The attack on the unions may not start immediately, but it will come. While Prior may use kid gloves at the Department of Employment, Keith Joseph will exercise no such reserve at the Department of Industry.

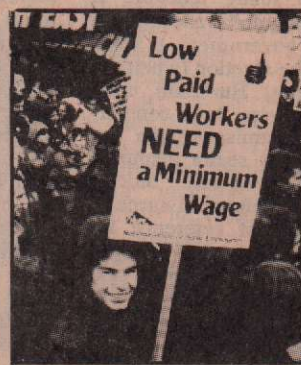
Slashing of grants, subsidies, job creation schemes and public spending will send unemployment soaring. Calling for Labour's palliatives to be brought back will be no use. Radical solutions will be needed: cut hours, share work with no loss of pay, bring in a 35 hour week.



Disband the SPG

Mass and so-called secondary picketing will come under attack. After Grunwick, the bakers' strike, and Southall, defence of the picket line against a police-scab alliance will be a major task. The police are agitating for more powers: and the Tories have promised to make boosting the police a first priority.

We must defend every civil right and fight for the disbanding of the murderous Special Patrol Group. Tactics such as solidarity action, the spreading of struggles through flying pickets, and the collective strength of real mass picketing, are our greatest defence against Tory attacks. We will defend them jealously.



Defend living standards

While avoiding statutory controls (at least to begin with), the Tories will use unemployment, inflation and cash limits to keep wages down. We will support wage struggles, fighting for wages to be guaranteed against rising prices. We must nail the myth that wage rises are the cause of inflation.

Make sure the next Labour Government is not like the last one

Socialist Organiser fought for the return of a Labour government because it would provide the best conditions for a fight for our policies and against the right wing Labour leaders. Today, we must continue the fight for socialist policies — as the best way of defeating the Tories and securing the return of a Labour government which will not be able to get away with what Callaghan's did.

ONE SPEECH WON'T WIPE AWAY FIVE YEARS' POLICIES

REDUNDANT Energy Minister Tony Benn thinks Labour should defend working class people. We agree. That's why we launched the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. He thinks we should analyse the successes and failures of the last five years. Again, we agree, though we see precious few successes to analyse.

He thinks we should build a party based on a mass membership, to adopt as policy conference decisions, and to make a more democratic Labour party "responsive and accountable to its rank and file supporters".

This was Benn's recipe for rebuilding the Labour Party out of the present defeat. So far, so good.

Yet why was he so retic-

ent during the election campaign when the left wing candidates, the SCLV and others in the Party were coming under attack from the Tory press and the Social Democratic Alliance?

If he thinks Labour should defend working class interests, where was he when Callaghan attempted to hold the line at 5% against the low paid? If he believes in democratising the party, why was he so silent over the imposition of Sandelson after his party had refused to adopt him?

The truth is that for the entire length of this government Benn has held high office under Wilson and Callaghan. He has defended some of the most reactionary decisions taken by his colleagues. He even

went so far as to defend David Owen's grovelling before the Shah of Iran last year. He has never given a lead against pay restraint, nor come out in support of militants inside the unions.

He has accepted the reactionary doctrine of Cabinet responsibility, dodging key votes at the NEC and failing to use his influence to appeal to the party for support for the NEC writing the Manifesto rather than the Cabinet.

Tony Benn will undoubtedly become a very significant figure on Labour's left. When he makes pronouncements about defending working class interests, turning Labour into a mass party, making conference sovereign and leaders accountable, we will take

up the fight to turn these pronouncements into reality.

But for rank and file party members who have been looking for a lead for the last four years as the Right have ridden roughshod over conference decisions and made a mockery of party democracy, Benn's speech comes much, much too late. Working-class militancy can't be switched off and on at the convenience of parliamentarians.

When Labour leaders start speaking out in left-wing terms after years of servility to right-wing policies, we should note it carefully. For as easily as that left-wing talk is switched on, it can be switched off again when the struggle heats up.



'Left wing resolutions are useless without accounts'

DENNIS SKINNER

Re-elected Bolsover, Derbyshire.

THERE HAS been the right for the years. It didn't j in the election ca

In 1975 the ca system was on it Burma Oil had t up by a Labour g and there were p firms in the sam establishment to Labour governm its job was to sal capitalist system is what it did.

It brought in v rols and said the solve inflation. I cuts in public sp

It was not just wing leaders. 'L ers supported th There were only in Parliament wh back wage contr year.

Now I'll be ov the rush by all th supported the 5% prove how left w are.

More accounts needed in the La Party. You can p many clever left- tions as you like conferences but useless without a ability. That mea uine re-selection election of the l leader, electing t and a turn away resenting the 'na interest' — that means sacrifices workers.

Len Murray w to meet Jim Pri expect to be drag gallows, but that making an appoi with the hangma

The Industrial Act was beaten b few unions refus anything to do w There can't be a ensus in the ind struggle. It can't without secondar ing. The union le should be told n No.10 and not to quango jobs.

In the Labour we've got to ens not overtaken by wing. There will out attack on par and the NEC at t conference. We any more referer new incomes pol those that were s into the manifest meetings. That's disaster since 19

WHAT THE VOTING FIGURES SHOWED

by
COLIN FOSTER

LABOUR'S worst results were in four safe seats in East London: Barking, Dagenham, Bethnal Green, and Stepney & Poplar. In all these constituencies the Tories doubled, or almost doubled, their score, and the Labour vote fell by at least 15%. In Bethnal Green the Labour vote was down 28%.

In Tower Hamlets — the borough covering the Bethnal Green and Stepney constituencies — the council workers' strike was particularly hard-fought. And the Dagenham and Barking constituencies are near the biggest British Ford plant, at

up by no less than 31%, and Labour's share of the total poll, at 36.9%, was the lowest since 1931 (though February 1974's share was only marginally higher).

There were three apparent offsetting factors to this trend. In Wales, and more spectacularly in Scotland, the Nationalist vote slumped — by 20% in Wales, and by 40% in Scotland. As a result, Labour had markedly better results than in England. The devolution referendums, and their results, evidently succeeded in undercutting the Nationalists.

In northern England, too, the anti-Labour swing was significantly lower than in the south. It seems that voters feared that a Tory victory would mean jobs disappearing even faster. Thus

pro-Labour swings.

The widely-predicted collapse of the Irish vote for Labour was not shown by the figures. The two Luton seats went Tory, but not through specially large swings, and Brian Sedgemore actually increased the Labour vote by 3% despite losing Luton West. In London constituencies with large Irish communities, the swing was rather lower than average: Brent East, 3.4%; Hampstead, 2.1%; Islington North, 5.7%; St. Pancras North, 5.4%. (London's average swing was 6.4%).

Some surveys before the election suggested that Labour's working class vote was being eroded, while middle class support was remaining relatively solid. Going on impressions at elect-

constituencies where well-known left-wingers were standing was almost exactly the same as the overall average. Tony Benn suffered a marginally bigger than average swing in Bristol South East — 7.1% as against an average in southern England of 6.9% — but there was a much bigger deviation from the average trend in Leeds North East, where Keith Joseph, the figurehead of right wing Toryism, is the MP: the constituency showed a 0.8% pro-Labour swing.

The five candidates backing the *Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory*, who did to varying degrees campaign for left-wing policies, suffered an average 5.3% pro-Tory swing — slightly less in most cases than the average swing in their areas.

ically proclaimed by the labour movement. And that's no surprise, when official 'socialism' has proved so irrelevant in the great capitalist crisis of the 1970s.

The cynicism has a positive side, insofar as it expresses working class self-reliance and impatience with the gradualist, bureaucratic methods of the Labour leadership. The SCLV campaign was a small step towards linking up that impatience with socialist politics and freeing socialist politics from the straitjacket of drab Fabian welfare-statism.

The left-of-Labour campaigns had little success. The Communist Party's 38 candidates scored an average of 420 votes, as against 745 for their 44 candidates in February 1974. And it wasn't really a left-of-Labour vote: the CP manifesto was flabby and gradualist, and in Hackney North CP candidate Monty Goldman was well to the right of Labour candidate Ernie Roberts.

The Workers' Revolutionary Party got an average of 227 for its 60 candidates, well down on the 466 average it got in February 1974 for 9 candidates. Again, it is doubtful how much that represents a real left-wing vote: wherever the WRP's crackpot mixture of Islamic socialism, catastrophism and vile slander campaigns stands on the political spectrum, it is certainly nowhere near rational working class politics.

Socialist Unity got an average of 283 votes for its ten candidates, only marginally more than the International Marxist Group (the main backers of Socialist Unity) got for their candidates in February 1974. Their best score was Tariq Ali's 477 in Southall, and mostly they got only the sort of fringe-vote totals that the WRP's zany campaign also managed to pick up.

The best vote for a radical fringe candidate was Brendan Gallagher's 638 in Barnsley. Gallagher stood against Roy Mason in order to campaign for British withdrawal from Ireland and to publicise the case of his son, jailed in Long Kesh on the basis of a written confession extracted from him by police.

The most gratifying feature of the election results was the drop in the National Front's vote. Although their total poll was up to 191,267 (as against 114,415 in October 1974) that was spread out between many more candidates. Their average score was only about 750.

In Leicester East, the NF had 3662 votes in February 1974; in October 1974 they were down to 1385. In the two West Bromwich constituencies, they got 6014 votes in February 1974, 3714 in October 1974, and only 2526 this time.

The East London seats where John Tyndall and Martin Webster were standing also showed a drop in the Nazi vote.



TED KNIGHT

Candidate in Tory-held Hornsey, North London

Labour lost the election because for the last four months the government's policy brought them into conflict with workers in most of the important industries. This was a continuation of the Labour government's policy over the last four years.

The election was fought on Callaghan's record and his manifesto. The left can't accept any responsibility for the defeat of a platform that had no credibility — a platform that was against workers' interests.

Now we've got to pin the responsibility for the election defeat on the right wing in the Labour Party and work to replace them. The left has to make new recruits to the Labour Party and remove the right wing MPs and leaders.

We've got to link up with union branches to strengthen the industrial base of the Labour Party. We must play our part in the industrial conflict that will soon come with the Tory government.

If we get down to work over the next three years we won't have a repeat of the last Labour government. But right wingers can't be allowed to become 'good left wingers' as they often do under a Tory government. The struggle is on for different policies in the labour movement and to organise people to fight for them.

EDDIE LOYDEN

Defeated MP for Liverpool Garston

People often said 'you've closed factories', blaming me for the government's record. Those closures and redundancies cut the Labour vote. The difficult thing to explain is that there is a difference between the policies of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the policies a growing body of the labour movement wants to see.

There is no chance of defeating the Tories under the leadership Labour has at present. There is a real need to take the political struggle into the factories. During the election campaign 40 to 50 new members joined our Labour Party, some of them leading trade unionists who used to be in the CP.

It is likely that there will be far more struggles against unemployment and there is a growing movement in the unions which saw the need to fight on this even if Labour was returned.



Top: John Maxton won Glasgow Cathcart for Labour. Right: Tariq Ali got a tiny vote for Socialist Unity despite the tense political situation in Southall and the miserable record of Labour MP Syd Bidwell. Left: Communist Party candidate Alex Maxwell

Dagenham.

Clearly the Labour government's efforts to beat down the Ford strike and the council workers' strike disgusted many Labour voters — while the anti-strike agitation also stirred up Tory voters to come out in force.

And what the election results showed overall is that the attempt by a Labour Government to manage capitalism at the expense of the working class over five years of economic slump and stagnation has driven general opinion to the right. Numerically, the Labour vote was slightly up on October 1974, but the total turnout was also larger. The Tory vote went

Newcastle, Sunderland, South Shields, and many Liverpool constituencies showed small swings, though Liverpool Edge Hill stayed Liberal by a large majority.



A big and well-organised turnout of the black vote for Labour also helped to limit the Tory advance in many areas. Southall showed only a 0.3% swing to the Tories; Brent South, 0.4%; Birmingham Sparkbrook, 0.3%; Leicester East, 1.3%; Leicester West, 2.1%; Bradford North, 1.6%. Manchester Moss Side, Leicester South, and Bradford West all showed

ion time, some people have suggested the opposite: that Labour's losses were mainly among the middle class and skilled workers.

The election results — the crude constituency totals, at least — give no support to either of these theories. Constituencies with very large majorities — which are almost always the most heavily working class areas — showed almost exactly the average swing and almost exactly the average increase in the Labour vote.

The Tory press suggested that there was a specially large swing against left-wing Labour candidates. In fact, the average swing in

A series of polls and surveys have shown a steady right wing shift in the average answers given by Labour voters to questions about their attitude to nationalisation, strikes, expanding social services, and similar issues. No significance can be attached to the absolute figures produced by these surveys: opinion polls always tend to get the sort of answers the pollsters want. But the shift probably represents something: not that workers more readily accept capitalism (for the shift continued during the great class struggles of 1970-74), but that they are more cynical about the socialist ideals off-

NATIONALISATION: SOCIALIST CAUSE OR A PROP FOR PROFITEERS

TO MANY people, and not all of them Tories, nationalisation is a dirty word. But it was not always this way. Before the takeover of rail, coal, steel and shipbuilding, most workers had fought hard for nationalisation, with the confidence that it would benefit them.

Nationalisation is an old aspiration of the labour movement. It is written into the Labour Party's constitution — Clause 4, dating back to 1918. Nationalisation was a byword for socialism.

What has gone wrong?

State-run

Today the Tories try to make hay from the problems of the state-run industries. They are doing all in their power to further discredit the idea of nationalisation and their big business friends are spending millions of pounds to stop any more of it. Building industry bosses alone spent £500,000 on a big advertising campaign.

The Tories say they will hive off to private industry the profitable sectors of nationalised industry like telecommunications and shipbuilding.

But they had plenty of opportunity to de-nationalise the whole of the coal industry and the railways, steel and post and telephone services long ago. Why didn't they do it?

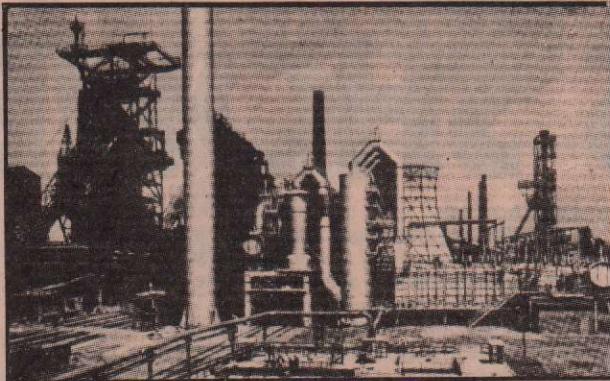
And why have right-wing, Tory-minded governments in France, Italy and other countries carried through just as many nationalisations as Labour has in Britain?

Many sectors of industry — especially the most basic

sectors, which supply and service others — have simply outgrown competitive capitalism. They must be operated on a vast scale and with huge doses of investment, and they cannot be allowed to go bust for fear of wrecking the whole national capitalist economy. So the state steps in.

Private capitalists had bled dry the railways, the coal industry, steel and numerous other industries in their search for a quick profit. But the rest of capitalism needed steel, coal and rail transport.

Nationalisation has become a prop for private profiteers. Through price fixing and direct and indirect government subsidies, through compensation

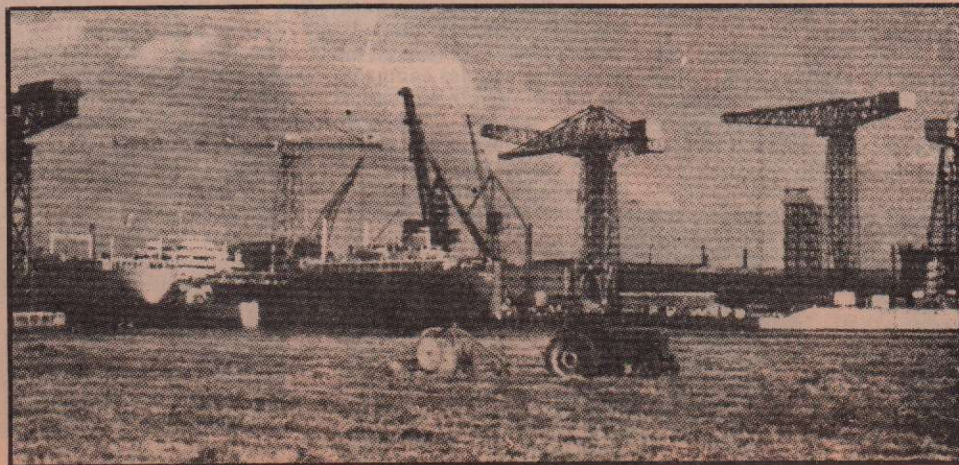


Steel: nationalisation did not stop redundancies

an industry they had left in virtual ruin. And they've gone on taking their cut ever since. In 1963, for instance, they took £50 million in interest on compensation, out of the NCB's operating profit of

coal. Four years ago while individual consumers were paying 90p for a hundred-weight of coal, private firms and power stations got it for 50p a ton.

Meanwhile, tens of thous-



Shipbuilding: a failure of private enterprise

and interest payments, the rich make a bonanza out of it.

Just look at the National Coal Board. When the mines were taken over in 1947 the pit owners got an initial handout of £3,000 million for

£72 million. The NUM estimates that well over £2,000 million has been squeezed out of the industry in this way alone since 1947.

Meanwhile private industry was subsidised with cheap

ands of jobs were axed, to try to make coal mining more efficient and ... profitable.

Between them, British Rail and the NCB shed 700,000 jobs over the past 15 years.

The Post Office in 1974-

75 mysteriously made a deficit of £307 million. But then it was revealed that it had actually made a record profit of £800 million — before interest payments, depreciation and tax. It was all a matter of ... accounting.

Price fixing through government subsidies on contracts to major companies means another profit spree for the suppliers to the coal, steel, PO and power industries. In 1975 alone this cost British Gas £180 million.

Handouts to private enterprise and the old owners are not the only problem. The total absence of workers' control in the state industries further seals their capitalist function — though workers are constantly exhorted to greater efforts for 'their' industries.

Workers' participation schemes have simply twisted the aspirations to control into traps designed to make workers share in their own exploitation and take responsibility for speed-up and rationalisation. This is happening at British Leyland and the Post Office.

Profit

The basic problem is the existence of a hostile capitalist state and system of production which demands profit. Profit is the real problem, not nationalisation. State takeovers while the system operates for profit can only mean a form of state capitalism.

For socialists, nationalisation should mean a shorter working week, better pay, and modernisation for social benefit. But even as it is, we

must support nationalisation. It deprives the capitalist class of direct control over important areas of industry, and is an advance in the direction of at least the forms of a future planned non-capitalist economy. But we must work to remove its present capitalist content and the dead weight of a diseased system which can no longer provide for workers' basic needs.



Coalmining: owners are still getting compensation

In the first election issue of Socialist Organiser, we wrote: under the Labour Government, "Socialism has not been discredited — it was never tried".

But official Socialism has been discredited. And long debates and political battles are needed to revive genuine working class Socialism.

MIKE DAVIS argues above that nationalisation is still a central Socialist demand — but it must be coupled with a fight for workers' control and a fight to break up the existing capitalist State, replacing it with a workers' state.

And CHRISTOPHER HIRD [deputy editor of the New Statesman] argues [below] that the 'Bennite' Labour Coordinating Committee's scheme of 'planning agreements' — a sort of half-hearted substitute for nationalisation — represents an unworkable and naive attempt to tinker with capitalism, failing to face up to the need for radical answers.

rol of the financial and business community would have even less chance of success than the policies of the LCC.

As things stand at the moment this is undoubtedly true and at the heart of the LCC approach is their obsessive belief that problems of society which it has taken years to construct can be solved quickly and simply by the left taking over the government. Yet it seems quite unrealistic that any complex economy can be successfully supervised by national government planning agreements which are opposed by most of those charged with implementing them.

This is not, however, the counsel of despair. British industry is generating plenty of surplus at the moment; it is just that it wants freedom to invest it where it thinks fit. There is a pressing need to develop ideas about how rank and file workers can, in a socialist society, control the means of production in their own interests. The size and difficulty of that task should not encourage us to fall for the fantasies of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

Fantasies of the LCC

TWO THINGS characterise the Bennites in the Labour Party: their undying optimism and their unwillingness to go along with the CBI. The snag is that they are optimistic about the behaviour of businessmen and city money managers, and they are unwilling to recognise what is correct in the CBI's analysis of the problems of British capitalism for fear of having to support their solutions.

The Bennites' alternative manifesto for the election has recently been published in *Labour Activist* — the paper

of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Briefly, they want an increase in public spending of £3,000 million a year to reduce unemployment; and the introduction of import controls, coupled with compulsory planning agreements and a beefed-up National Enterprise Board to halt Britain's industrial decline.

The problem with this is that it springs from an incorrect analysis of what is wrong with British capitalism and a fanciful view of the ease with which institutions hostile to the idea of state control can be persuaded to cooperate with such a policy.

There is a view pedalled in the Bennite literature that British industry is enormously profitable but is refusing to invest and is instead shipping its money overseas. Certain parts of this picture are correct: many British companies have concentrated their efforts on building up their overseas operations so that now investment in overseas subsidiaries by British firms is almost two fifths of investment in Britain — twice the level of the early seventies.

It is also true that British companies manufacture much more in their overseas offshoots — at the expense of British exports — than German and Japanese companies do. However, much of this overseas expansion is financed by local borrowing, and direct investment overseas by British companies is more than offset by the in-

flow of repatriated profits.

There is a simple reason why British companies have concentrated on building up their overseas business: Britain has been an unattractive place to invest. Profits in Britain have been under severe pressure. Despite the recovery in profits over the last four years, they still only account for about 6 per cent

expense of wages, so as to encourage investment and create jobs.

The Bennites — who dare not agree with the analysis for fear of agreeing with the cure — say planning agreements will force companies to invest and, if they refuse, the NEB can act. The question simply is: how credible is it that British business will

But there is no evidence that the investment managers in the City would provide it: last year they showed that they had considerable power to force policy changes on the government.

An economic policy completely out of line with thinking in the financial community would almost certainly precipitate a monetary and



Can NEB chairman Leslie Murphy [above] impose socialism on the Stock Exchange currency crisis.

It is revealing that when very similar arguments were rehearsed in the *New Statesman* recently, the LCC replied saying that the analysis was pessimistic and that policies for taking cont-

of company output — half the level at the end of the sixties.

There is some evidence that the profits of the largest companies have recovered much more sharply than those of the economy as a whole but this is largely due to the North Sea oil bonanza, and the growth of companies' overseas profits as a result of the fall in the value of the pound.

Thus far the CBI probably agree: the solution, they say, is to increase profits at the

do something which it believes is not in its own interest?

A similar problem arises with the LCC's plan to increase public spending. Although part of this will be self financing, as money will be saved on unemployment and social security benefits, some will have to be found elsewhere. Assuming that the ten per cent increase in income tax necessary would not be the chosen option, the Bennite government would have to borrow the money.

Workers' Action

Revolutionary socialist weekly. From May 19th, *Workers' Action* will be going from 8 pages to 12 pages, with four extra pages of background analysis, in-depth discussion, debate and polemic. The price will go up from 10p to 15p to meet the increased costs.

Special offer: until the end of May, subscriptions at the old rate, £4 for 25 issues, £7.50 for 50 (in Britain and Ireland).

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In magazine format. 32 pages for 35p plus 15p p&p from 60 Loughborough Rd, London SW9.

Non-racist immigration controls, are they possible?

Comrades,

Bernard Misrahi wrote a generous but challenging review of my booklet for the Runnymede Trust on A New Immigration Policy, for your February issue. I should like to respond to it, largely because the review took my suggestions seriously, even though not agreeing with them. And this sort of exchange is, I believe, the only way we can start moving towards a reversal of the direction that immigration policy under both Tory and Labour governments has taken continuously since 1962.

The reason why I attempted to suggest what a non-racist immigration policy might be like was this: if we want to reverse immigration policy we must have a strategy. So far, each new measure of restriction has been greeted with very small-scale opposition from the Left and from anti-racist and ethnic minority groups; the opposition has never had any alternative to offer except either a completely open door (the Left) or freedom of entry from the Commonwealth (anti-racist and immigrant groups).

The Labour Party took up the latter demand in 1962, but no MP in any party, so far as I know, has made it since, and no MP has demanded a completely open door. By now, we have a snowball's chance in Hell of getting any MP, or even many prospective candidates in the main parties, to adopt either. Thus there has been no real debate at all.



The restrictionists have had it all their own way. And the chance of really changing things seems to recede all the time. Yet no change in immigration control can happen except through Parliament. MPs are the people who have got to initiate any effective change. So how can we get them moving?

I think the answer lies partly in my second reason for writing the booklet: we shall get no change until we can get MPs and the public at large to distinguish between 'race' and 'immigration' as issues. So long as they think immigration is all about race, they are scared of thinking about it like reasonable people at all.

I do not think we shall get an effective turn-around in the racial situation as a whole until

ing the booklet: we shall get no change until we can get

versal, we have no realistic hope at all of a sudden switch here to an open door policy. To go on demanding an open door and ignore the possibilities of amending our law, while people suffer unnecessarily and appallingly under its provisions every day is, I think, to fail those people.

We need a system that does not imprison 'settled' residents against unskilled workers, but not against particular racial groups, and this is a big change. The change has taken three decades, and results from two very different factors: a continuing need for labour during the first fifteen years after the war, and strong, continuing pressure from voluntary agencies within Canada, particularly the churches.

Trade unionism in Canada is very weak, compared to the UK; politics is differently aligned, and there are many other factors of which I do not have adequate knowledge to judge their importance in the debate one way or the other. But the important lesson is that change from a racist to a non-racist policy is possible at all.



Bernard Misrahi's assumption that the racist nature of the state makes racist immigration control inevitable is only true as long as you have a racist state. But if you think everything a racist state does must be racist, there are only two possibilities open: either you despair and do nothing, or you try to change the racist nature of the state.

And the latter course means changing some of the things the state does. (Unless of course you have a revolution and a new state. That is not the easiest thing to arrange at the moment.) In short, you have to assume something can be done and try to do it. That was the point of my report.

I know not everyone will agree with this strategy, but the demand for an open door has not been a very successful strategy yet. Anyone interested in the Canadian law can consult a Green Paper on immigration, published in four volumes and obtainable through the High Commission for Canada. It does not have all the answers. But it sets one asking some new questions.

ANN DUMMETT

Arrivals



Now for the hurdles of official and unofficial racism

we get a turn-around in thinking about immigration. So I described in my report, in some detail, the immigration control systems in four other countries: Norway, Sweden, Australia and Canada. The idea was to show how many different bases it is possible to have for an immigration policy: I mentioned a lot of other countries in passing, such as Singapore, Swaziland, the United States and Israel.

I could have mentioned any country, because all states now control immigration. Cuba, China, Tanzania, India, the Soviet Union all do so. In a world where immigration control has, sadly, become uni-

ents without charge or trial before removing them from the country; that does not keep families forcibly apart. And we can find examples in other countries to help drive home the need for reform. Once we get the ball rolling, we can work for the next move, and the next, till we reach goal. But it has to roll first.



I stressed the Canadian example not because I think it perfect but because Canada used to have very racist immigration laws indeed and now it has not. The policy discrim-

BEGGARING THE REGIONS

Comrades,

'Blame the bosses, not the English' was the title of the Socialist Organiser's Election Special article on Scotland and Wales. It is a pity that the article was not attributed to any individual. I hope it does not reflect agreed SCLV policy.

The writer gives the impression of belonging to that know-nothing school of politicians who think that if unemployment is as bad in Liverpool or Sunderland as Glasgow then you shouldn't be concerned with specifically Scottish or Welsh questions at all.

The article argues that since they get lots of investment subsidies, Scotland and Wales are not discriminated against by Westminster. I tend to agree that there is no secret plot against Scotland and Wales in the corridors of Whitehall. But there is a consensus which restricts regional policies of all kinds to mitigating the least acceptable effects of the problems experienced by the less favoured parts of an unplanned economy, including Liverpool and Sunderland as well as Glasgow.

It is this minimal role which Westminster's regional policies have played, which has contributed to the growing appreciation in Scotland and Wales especially that policies originating within and applied to Scotland and to Wales might at least do more than Westminster has done.

The writer of the article suggests that the nationalists' desire to bring government closer to the people 'just ignores the existence of classes in society'. It is true that the Scottish National Party and the leadership of Plaid Cymru do this, but remember that the labour movement majority is, correctly in my view, committed to similar objectives and has had modest success in keeping this issue alive at least in Scotland.

The article concludes with a convoluted argument which is illogical in my opinion. It

blames the Labour Government for playing into the hands of the SNP by messing about on devolution — which is fair comment, although at the time of writing the SNP don't appear to be reaping any advantage. We are then told that 'Devolution is irrelevant to the needs of the working class'.

Now, I have argued the socialist case for devolution in an earlier Socialist Organiser at some length and I won't go over that complex argument again here, but I suggest that bald assertions such as that



just quoted compound the follies of this Labour government and render hollow the subsequent claim to support a Scottish assembly just because the Scottish people voted narrowly in favour of one.

To sum up, I am in complete disagreement with most of the main points made in your anonymous Election Special coverage of Scotland and Wales.

Comradely,
Brynley Heaven
Hull

NOTE: the article referred to by Comrade Heaven was not in fact an editorial statement. It should have been by-lined but this was omitted during production.

IRISH CANVASSERS ARRESTED

THE police, very much in evidence throughout the election campaign and on polling day, paid especial attention to those campaigning against Labour's record in Ireland.

Up and down the country, hecklers from the United Troops Out Movement, from 'Hands off Ireland' and from the SCLV were denounced by Callaghan for their 'effrontery' and even, on one occasion, for being 'paid agents'.

The police had a green light for widespread arrests. Labour Party stewards in some areas ejected hecklers straight into their hands.

Troops Out campaigner Pat Arrowsmith, standing in

Callaghan's Cardiff constituency, was arrested twice. She is accused of using 'insulting words' — such as 'Britain should get the troops out of Ireland'.

In Hampstead, two constituency workers for Labour candidate Ken Livingstone were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They apparently fell into a trap set for Irish supporters of the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland and the Irish Republican Socialist Party while they were out canvassing.

Ken Livingstone's call for an official Labour Party protest should be taken up widely.



'TROOPS OUT' HECKLERS FACE PARTY PURGE

Callaghan didn't reply to questions on Ireland in his election meetings. But in Edinburgh on April 28th there was an answer. It didn't come from the platform, but from the meeting's stewards.

They set about a lone 'troops out' heckler and threw him out of the hall, hitting and punching all the way despite being offered no resistance.

Protests at this thug behaviour of the Labour Party stewards was met with more violence. Some stewards seemed overjoyed at the prospect of dealing with party members in a way not normally permitted by standing orders. More violent evictions followed.

Callaghan then got his punch in. He accused the United Troops Out Move-

ment supporters of being 'paid agitators'.

Callaghan, a veteran and very well paid agitator for 'Socialism Out' in the Labour Party, was furious. He demanded, after the meeting, that 'infiltrators' be cleared out of the party.

Already the events at the meeting are being used as a pretext for a witchhunt against SCLV supporters active in 'troops out' campaigning in Edinburgh Central CLP.

But the responsibility for the violence lies with the people who used violence and smears to try and stop socialists raising an issue Callaghan found objectionable. The protests should be against those who infiltrate police state methods into the Labour Party.

Rents, rates and the war against the Tories

WITH Thatcher firmly in government, local councils are likely to be in the front line of fire for the public spending cuts she has promised.

Ironically, at a time when Labour was losing the central government it was sweeping the board in dozens of town halls. It may even gain control of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities — the most influential body in negotiating for rate support grant.

Just as a government committed to private education took office, Tory authorities like the one in Tameside that have opposed comprehensive education were evicted. The battle positions are reversed. With the spotlight on local

government as the first battleground for resisting cuts in education, in housing subsidies, in direct labour, in health and social services, and for fighting Tory plans to sell off council housing and raise rents, the SCLV-sponsored conference on local government is well timed.

The conference, called by Haringey Labour Group and Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight, is now sponsored by 35 Labour councillors from around London.

Conference organisers have already mailed London CLPs and Trades Councils and are inviting delegates and visitors from tenants' associations, trade unions, and community groups with

an interest in fighting through local government.

There will be workshops on: councils and the law; the lessons of Clay Cross and Poplar; rates, finance and where the money goes; democracy, Labour groups and the working class; direct labour, councils and trade unions; and 'the GLC — what kind of manifesto?'

The organisers invite papers on these themes, and next month's Socialist Organiser will feature material for the conference.

We hope the conference can provide a forum for thrashing out a common policy for socialist councillors and workers, creating in turn a more organised united front against the Tories and

bankers who exercise a stranglehold over local authorities.

Priority issues for discussion must be rates and locally raised finance, how to build an organised fightback against the government, local wage settlements, improving conditions and employment, turning local councils out into the community to break away from bureaucracy and isolation.

Get your union or CLP to sponsor the conference and send representatives.

'Labour and the crisis of Local Government finance and services', Saturday June 16th, 10am to 5.30pm, at Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, London NW3. (Belsize Park tube)

FEES: £1 per delegate or visitor (cheques payable to SCLV).

Further details available from 'Local Government Conference', c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16

Organisation.....

Delegate(s)/visitor.....

.....

We wish to submit/enclose a resolution: ☐

We wish to submit/enclose a background paper ☐

Creche facilities required: YES/NO

Socialist Organiser

NF vote - Down to the hard core

IN THE two general elections in 1974, the National Front got votes of over 2000 in many constituencies. On 3rd May this year, they only achieved this in one seat, Blaby.

The Front's best known leader, John Tyndall, could only scrape together 1958 votes in Hackney South and Shoreditch, a constituency which includes the fascist stronghold of Hoxton and where the NF has its headquarters. In 1974 a local unknown picked up 2500 votes here.

In Blackburn, another stronghold before the NF split with Kingsley Read's National Party, and where two fascists were elected to the council a couple of years ago, the NF could only pull in a derisory 525.

DROP

Why this drop in the fascists' fortunes, when they were contesting over 250 seats, had TV and radio time and seemed to have no shortage of funds?

Martin Webster proclaimed that the NF would be fighting a 'very heavy, racialist campaign'. It would be good to report that the result was a clear rejection of racism.

Unfortunately, given the success of the Tories with their immigrant-bashing plans, this just isn't so.

The NF almost certainly lost out to the Tories on both the race and the law and order issues. Canvassers' notes in marginal Putney

advised Tory activists to tell potential NF voters that these were 'Tory issues', not National Front ones.

In general, protest votes and smaller parties were squeezed out in this election. Disillusioned Tories voting for the Front in February 1974 had already by October '74 largely returned to the Tory fold, and this year were undoubtedly enthused by the right-wing crusading campaign of Thatcher.

FIERCE

But comparison with other squeezed-out parties like Liberals and Scottish Nationalists would be misleading, and useless in assessing where the Front will be heading after this election. They are not just another party. They are a fascist outfit who have to win the battle for the streets as well as the battle at the polls.

On this second ground, the NF did even worse during the campaign than they did at the polls.

Everywhere that obliging councils, including Islington's Labour council, allowed them meetings, they were met with fierce opposition. Their one attempted march, in Leicester on April 21st, was turned into a humiliating rout as 5000 police failed to protect them from a shower of bricks and missiles. Within a few yards of starting out, the march had to be diverted from its planned route.

Their public meetings were undisguisedly private

gatherings of the party faithful willing to be bussed in and brave the massed opposition. Those few members of the public not turned away by the police or NF stewards very soon found themselves out on their ear if they had the temerity to heckle. At the Southall meeting, *Daily Mirror* reporter Kevin O'Lone was turned away on the grounds that his paper was a 'Labour rag' and 'nigger-loving'.

Yet the NF were not en-

tirely friendless during their election campaign. Everywhere that counter demonstrations and pickets were organised by anti-fascists, thousands of police were deployed to ensure the fascists continued to meet. Only after the Southall events did one police chief, Devon's Chief Constable, fulfil the provisions of the Representation of the People Act by allowing the public to enter the meeting hall where Tyndall was billed to speak.



The NF's thugs are still ready for violence

At the sight of an audience not made up of party faithfuls, the intrepid leader turned tail and walked out in a huff.

If the police emerged as the fascists' best friends in the course of the campaign, the police's best friends and bane of the anti-fascists were the press. After the bitter backlash they managed to mount against the 'No Plugs for Nazi Thugs' campaign of last year, the NF broadcasts went ahead unmolested.

While the *Sun* shamelessly lied about events in Southall, the *Mail* relied on ticker tape information at Scotland Yard and the *Express* reporter at Southall collected his information from behind the police lines. Whereas police incompetence in containing the Leicester anti-fascists was kept quiet, their Southall revenge hit the headlines, strangely twisted — with tales of red mobs on the rampage.

FIGHT

The press repeated the police lie that the anti-fascists were 'outsiders' — but made no comment on whether the NF and the police were outsiders to Southall's Asian community. In fact all but a handful of those arrested were local Asians, determined to resist the racist provocation the NF were staging, with a cast of thousands of police in a supporting role and the SPG brought on for the fight scenes.

The drop in the NF vote is also a tribute to the anti-racist work which the movement has carried out in earnest in the past five years.

The work of *Searchlight* magazine and *CARF*, of trade unions, Labour Parties and anti-racist committees, of black, women's and Jewish organisations, and above all the Anti-Nazi League, to pin the Nazi label on the Front has showed up clearly in this election result.

And this would not have happened but for those prepared time and time again to face the violence of the police and the smears of the press to fight to stop the fascists having an orderly and peaceful platform.

TIDE

The effectiveness of the work done so far offers no grounds for complacency.

The demoralisation that may well follow the Tory victory, a rise in unemployment and the tide of social reaction and 'respectable' racism which the new government will invoke, all provide the best conditions for the National Front to grow in.

Increased police powers will make our work harder. The NF vote may have been reduced to a hard core — but that hard core, still up to 1500 strong in many places, could once again provide a rallying point for those who find the Tories too slow, or too soft, on the reds and the blacks.

FINES

MORE THAN 300 anti-fascists were arrested at Southall, nearly 100 at Leicester (including five supporters of the SCLV). Elsewhere, there were other arrests.

The first to be tried at Leicester was fined £250 plus costs. The total fines and legal expenses which comrades will have to find will be colossal. The SCLV and Socialist Organiser ask all comrades who are able to contribute to the defence funds to do so.

'SO' will work together with the existing defence groups to ensure that funds get where they are needed.

Send donations to:

■ Southall Defence Fund c/o Indian Workers Association, Dominion Cinema, Southall, Middlesex.

■ Leicester Defence Campaign, c/o Leicester Polytechnic Students Union Newark Street, Leicester

Hail of bricks for Mersey fascists

NEW Brighton swimming baths in Wallasey, Merseyside, looked like a fortress. 2,000 police and a detachment of police cavalry surrounded it.

They had come to protect a National Front election meeting, the Sunday night before polling day.

Over 1000 anti-fascists marched through New Brighton to the Baths and waited for the NF. One bus, carrying 20 fascists, eventually turned up and was met with a hail of bricks. Some of the coach's windows were smashed but the police managed to rush the fascists safely into the meeting.

The coach driver said afterwards, 'If I'd known who was in the coach, I

wouldn't have come'. Other drivers must have felt the same; the only other group of NF members to get through arrived in the back of a removal van.

The turnout against the Front was closely linked with the local Labour election campaign. Some young Labour supporters on the Leesowe Estate in Wallasey had volunteered to help with canvassing, and met up with activists in the LPYS. They quickly helped spread the word about the anti-fascist demonstration.

About a hundred young people from the estate turned up in New Brighton, swelling the mobilisation well beyond the usual ranks of the left.

TOM CASHMAN

International solidarity beats the Times

by
CLARE RUSSELL

THE TIMES bosses' plans to print a scab weekly edition in Germany have been abruptly halted. German printworkers and Turkish emigré radicals picketed TER Druckerei in Frankfurt to prevent distribution of the paper.

International solidarity was obviously something the Times bosses had not bargained on. Michael Mander, a Times executive, immediately screamed about violence and extremists on the picket lines. A shudder of horror ran through Fleet Street.

The Times bosses had chosen their printer with care. TER Druckerei is a well-known reactionary Turkish-owned printing firm, where the German print union IG Druck is very weak.

The German and British print unions were quick to dissociate themselves from any violence which may have occurred on the picket

line. However, it was that action at TER Druckerei which dented the Times bosses' plans, not the so-called disciplined and completely ineffective NGA picket line outside the Times — a picket line which has been letting journalists and staff reckoned 'essential' walk through day after day.

The Times NUJ chapel voted at first to cooperate with the scab edition, but have now at last decided to have nothing more to do with it. But the bosses hope they will be able to resume publication elsewhere in Germany, probably with the help of scab Ioj journalists in London.

Talks between the NGA and the bosses have resumed over computer typesetting. All the print union leaders are reluctant to take any militant action.

But the German workers have shown the way. Effective mass picketing is the way to win, backed by a similar to close down all Thomson regional papers.



The British unions organised marches — but militant workers in Germany took decisive action

Published by Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16, and printed by Anvil Press (TU).

SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN IN IRAN
Demonstration, Saturday 19th May. Assemble
2pm, Trafalgar Square: march to Iranian
Embassy.

Called by Iranian Women's Solidarity Group,
c/o S London women's centre 45 North St SW4