

SOCIALIST PRESS



'H' Block ruling Page 2

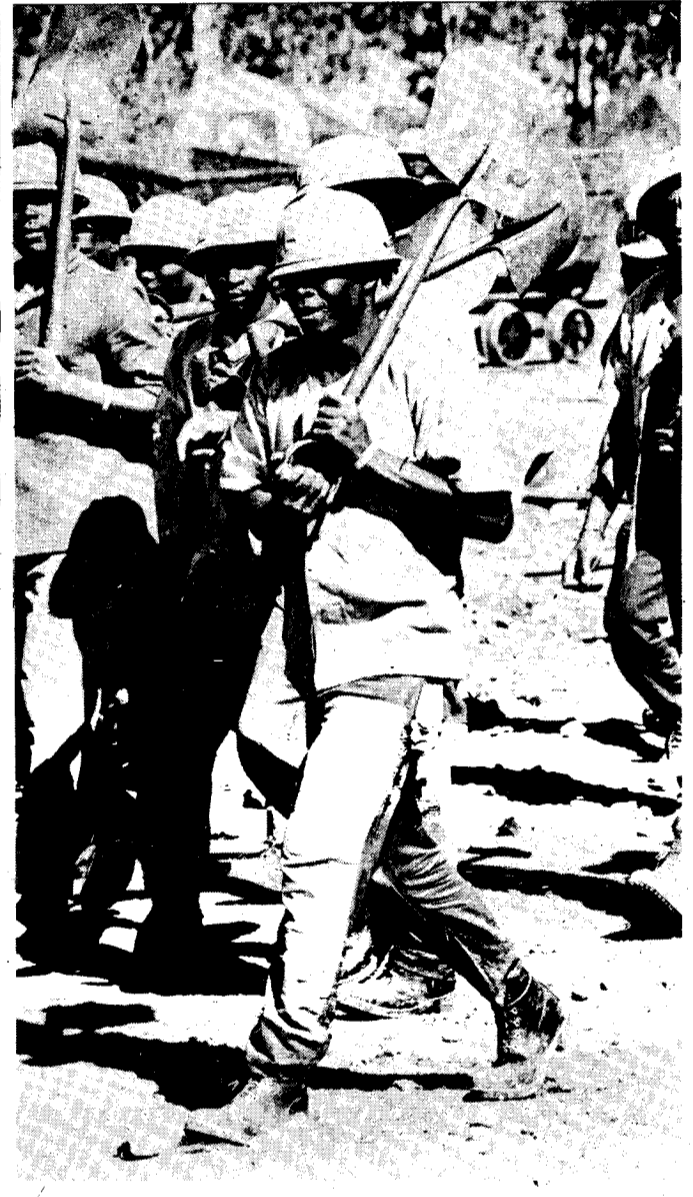
Helen Keller, socialist p.8
Capitalism and reformism p.6-7
Labour inquiry back page

Weekly paper of the Workers Socialist League * No. 204 * 25 June 1980 * 20p

Affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

SOUTH AFRICA

STRIKE WAVE SHOWS WAY FORWARD



In South Africa a major strike wave has developed in the Port Elizabeth area—one of the country's biggest urban industrial centres where much of the motor industry is located.

Beginning at the Volkswagen motor assembly plant last week, the strike action rapidly spread to at least eleven other factories.

Within days around 10,000 workers had come out, paralysing production at the Goodyear, General Motors, Ford Cortina, General Tyre and other factories.

Wages

The central demand being raised is pay—at the Volkswagen plant 3,500 workers are demanding an increase from 65p to £1.20 an hour, while workers at the Goodyear tyre factory are demanding a rise from 63p to £1.70.

The strikes reflect the rising state of militancy and combativity throughout the South African black working class.

Facing daily attacks from bosses desperate to maintain profitability, workers throughout the country are seizing the initiative and developing organisation, action and demands around their economic exploitation and political oppression.

In Cape Town, the focal point of mass struggle recently, the class strength underlying the youth boycott of schools has come to the fore in a whole range of struggles around the day to day issues facing the



South African policeman crouching with drawn gun while his colleague clears rubbish from the roadway in Cape Town

working class which, by mobilising the coloured population alongside the blacks leaves the apartheid capitalist state dangerously exposed.

In the past month alone there have been major strikes in Cape Town's textile and mining industries.

In addition to an ongoing strike by fruitworkers in the West Cape, over 800 Cape Town meat workers have also been on strike over wages, conditions and union recognition—a struggle which has been supported by a widespread solidarity

boycott of meat products.

And in response to increases of up to 100% in transport prices, there have been bus boycotts centred in Cape Town.

Squatters

Meanwhile the continuing struggle to defend the squatters' settlement of Crossroads highlights militant opposition directed at rising rents, the vicious network of influx controls and the absence of adequate housing.

This wave of action has

repeatedly demonstrated the enthusiasm, determination and willingness of the workers to struggle in a way which decisively outflanks the reformist straight-jacket of their misleaders.

It is clear that just as the Soweto events four years ago followed on the defeat of imperialist puppet forces in Angola, so the self confidence of the black masses in the present wave of struggles in South Africa has been enhanced by the recent

Continued page 2

Support strikes through blacking action!



-INTERNATIONAL- European Commission blames 'H' Block prisoners



Root of the problem: British Army

By no stretch of the imagination are Irish republican prisoners treated as common criminals by the British occupying army in the six counties of Northern Ireland.

They are interrogated, beaten and tortured at special RUC/army barracks reserved for political opponents of imperialism.

They are interned for months or years on end by being imprisoned without trial "on remand"—a treatment reserved for political prisoners.

They are hauled before special no-jury Diplock courts, in which the most common "evidence" is a "confession" extracted under torture or the secretive statement of an undisclosed police or army officer. Amnesty International has pointed out that 70-90% of Diplock court convictions are based wholly or mainly on "admissions of guilt"—obtained

in the interrogation centre.

Once sentenced, republican prisoners are dispatched to special jails—Long Kesh and Armagh Jail—at which hand-picked thugs use tactics varying from beatings to the use of drugs in a systematic bid to crush their fighting spirit and cow and humiliate them.

Yet in the view of the European Commission on Human Rights, republican PoWs are not entitled to be regarded as political prisoners!

This ruling, in response to an application by four republican victims of the Long Kesh 'H' Blocks, comes as no surprise.

The Commission is a tool of European imperialism: the "rights" it defends are those of the capitalist class to exploit and oppress.

Nevertheless its criticisms of the role of British imperialism in the 'H' Block will come as a certain embarrassment to Thatcher and is a renewed condemnation of the Callaghan/Mason leadership, which

initiated the moves to "criminalise" republican prisoners in 1976.

The Commission declares it necessary for the prison authorities to "keep under constant review" its reaction to protesting prisoners, and to reconsider a prison regime that had manifestly failed to stem prisoners' protests.

And the Commission accepts that the prisoners are denied any effective means to complain about their treatment under the existing law in the occupied six counties.

But, in the true imperialist tradition, the Commission declares on the one hand that the prisoners are enduring "almost subhuman" conditions—while claiming on the other that it was all their own fault!

The bitter fact is that, once in prison, there are virtually no forms of protest—other than escape—which do not in the short term worsen the plight of

the prisoner.

Republicans in Long Kesh and Armagh—casualties in the ongoing war of liberation against British imperialism—are quite right to press forward their courageous and bitter struggle for the recognition of their political cause, and the rejection of criminal status.

In Britain a new 'Charter 80' is campaigning in the labour movement for the restoration of their political status, and should be supported.

But trade unionists and socialists must also fight to break the labour bureaucracy from their support for imperialist repression and step up the struggle for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

Only when freed from the yoke of imperialism and able to determine their own future can the Irish people begin to establish genuine human rights.

Strikes? Lies! says Tass

The Soviet news agency Tass last week added its voice to the strident official denials that widespread strike action last month halted production at the giant car plants at Gorky and Togliatti, whose combined workforce is 370,000.

The press has carried letters from workers at the plants alleging that the reports of stoppages were lies inspired by US intelligence agents.

At the same time a party of Western businessmen claimed to have actually witnessed a four hour strike at the Kama truck plant, allegedly over food shortages in the Volga River area.

While there is no doubt that these reports appear to be timed for the run-up to the Olympics, it is not unlikely that the Russian proletariat is in fact showing itself ready to fight the attacks on their living standards brought about by the bureaucratic deformations of the nationalised economy.

South Africa—from page 1

landslide electoral victory of Mugabe's so-called "extremist" ZANU-PF guerrilla leadership in the Zimbabwe elections.

And this determined mass movement now challenges an apartheid regime that is more than ever isolated and encircled and forced to sustain a massive military occupation of Namibia at increasing cost in men and materials.

A significant feature of the current wave of strikes has been the developed level of working class solidarity.

This was clearly shown in Port Elizabeth by the independent response of workers to the tentative suggestion by union leaders of limited blacking in support of the initial VW strike. Thousands of workers came out on strike alongside the VW workers, not only effectively blacking, but adding the strength of mobilisation around their own demands.

At a time when annual wage negotiations are being conducted between bosses and union officials, the strike action adds an effective working class voice to the negotiations.

By their independent action strikers are making clear that they will not accept an employer/union compromise which does not meet their demands.

Trapped between the upward pressure from workers and their acceptance of the employers' right to profits, reformist trade unionists are increasingly caught up in a web of negotiated "compromises" which go no way towards meeting workers' demands.

No reformist, however

militant appears his rhetoric or even actions, can produce the impossible—a compromise which simultaneously leaves intact the profits of the apartheid capitalist rulers and promotes workers' interests.

Drawing on the lessons of Soweto, workers moving into struggle are spontaneously turning to their fellow workers for strength and support.

In the unfolding struggles in the factories, communities and schools, the widespread mood of solidarity must be developed, into a generalised movement of joint struggle.

This means fighting to:

*Build workers committees at each work-place to spearhead the struggles on wages, conditions and jobs.

*Build independent trade unions.

*Link and develop growing struggle through Councils of Action.

As events have shown, the working class moving forward in struggle will be faced by a state increasingly forced to rely on vicious physical repression.

The moving of army tanks and armoured cars into the Port Elizabeth strike area is one example of a more and more immediately central role for the army in defence of the capitalist state.

The open police order of 'shoot to kill'—a daily threat facing young workers in South Africa—points to the increased state terror which faces workers in struggle.

The growth of right wing terror squads directed at militants and workers is inevitable.

In facing these threats—the frantic responses of a capitalist state in developing political and economic crisis—a crucial issue facing workers is that of organised self defence.

This has been tragically illustrated in the last week by a wave of brutal police murders of mobilised militants.

The attempts by the state to conceal the deaths, and the level of mobilisation indicate that the number of murders is likely to be far higher than the reported 60.

But militants are also being attacked by thugs mobilised by black bourgeois leader Buthelezi.

And youth are being attacked by capital-backed vigilante gangs.

Collaborators and tribalists in Soweto have organised private armed gangs.

Terror and brutality from the army and police are ever-present threats.

Yet after 20 years in which they have officially espoused a policy of "armed struggle", the present period of mass class action throughout vast areas of South Africa finds the traditional nationalist and Stalinist leaders of the ANC unable to offer the working class any way forward.

The individual courage of the ANC's recent raid on synthetic oil plants offered neither direction nor leadership to the masses in struggle in the strikes and boycotts then under way.

The revolutionary enthusiasm of the thousands of ANC militants who have received training in the use of arms arises from the movement of the

working class.

They must be freed from the grip of the Stalinists and reformists, and directed into the workers' struggle from which they draw their strength.

*Build united working class action against every state attack.

*The first task of armed struggle is defence of the working class.

*Cadres with military training to build workers defence squads.

*Build a workers militia.

In Britain it is the urgent task of the labour movement to fight for a programme of independent working class action in solidarity with the struggle of black workers in South Africa.

1) For open-the-books committees to uncover the part played by each company in exploitation in South Africa, and to prepare effective action in support of the struggles of black workers.

2) For the immediate blacking of all supplies to and from the strike-hit Goodyear, General Motors, Volkswagen, Ford Cortina, General Tyre and other plants.

For the immediate blacking of all arms to the South African state.

3) Nationalise under workers control all companies trading with South Africa.

4) For workers control of trade.

MARCH in solidarity with South African and Namibian political prisoners and detainees. Saturday June 28. Assemble at 2.00 p.m. at Temple Place, Embankment, London.

Ecevit escapes gunmen

While Mr Suat Karatasli, Mayor of Siverek, Turkey and a member of Bulent Ecevit's Republican People's Party was being assassinated by right wing thugs, Ecevit himself was under attack in the town of Nevsehir.

The former Prime Minister was attending a funeral service of the local RPP chairman Mr Zeki Tekinel who had been shot on Tuesday evening.

Ecevit himself was not hurt but Mr Hayri Mumcuoglu, a Turkish Senator and a Deputy in the Grand National Assembly were amongst those wounded after fascists attacked the funeral procession.

Political killings are running at a steadily increasing rate in

Turkey today and in particular it is clear that the fascists are aiming to wipe out the RPP, which poses as the main voice of the working class.

The killing of a leading fascist some weeks ago has intensified the political clashes, and what is increasingly clear is that Turkey's political future is more and more being fought out on the streets.

It is all the more criminal, therefore, for Ecevit to seek to bring down the Demirel government through a parliamentary motion of censure which it was hoped would get the support of the religious right wing National Salvation Party.

While Ecevit plays parliamentary games it is only a matter of time before he himself falls victim to a fascist bullet.

As it turned out, the censure motion proved to be a complete damp squib when less than 226 of the 450 deputies in the Lower House needed for a quorum failed to turn up to debate the motion.

Break from Ecevit

The Turkish workers must break from the bourgeois parliamentary politics of Ecevit and form workers defence squads to fight the fascist menace.

At a point where reformist and Stalinist trade union leaders remain locked in a lethal alliance with Ecevit and the RPP, the fight for such a policy highlights the necessity for a revolutionary party to be built in Turkey.



Ecevit

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL LIAISON COMMITTEE

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

TROTSKYISM AND THE MASS MOVEMENT

July 20-27

Eight days of lectures and discussion on basic questions of Marxism and the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

*TROTSKYISM AND THE TRADE UNIONS: USA in the 1930s. France in the 1930s. The postwar struggle to build Trotskyist parties in the working class.

*TROTSKYISM, STALINISM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY. The struggle for the FI against Stalinism in the 1930s. Lessons for the period of entry into social democracy in France and the USA.

*TROTSKYISM AND THE FIGHT AGAINST WOMEN'S OPPRESSION.

*TROTSKYISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

*TROTSKYISM AND PETTY BOURGEOIS NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

*THE FIGHT FOR A TROTSKYIST YOUTH MOVEMENT

*RECONSTRUCT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Evening meetings include Eagleton on Ideology and Sutcliffe on Economics.

Films and socials also planned.

The school will be attended by delegations from the organisations affiliated to the TILC and members of the WSL. A special invitation is being extended to supporters of the WSL to take part in the discussion and learn more about the WSL and the TILC.

Details are available from any WSL branch or from: WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

Cost: £12 including accommodation for the eight days. A cheap meal will be provided at lunch time and there will be a pooled fare arrangement. Crèche facilities.



INTERNATIONAL

EVERYBODY 'WINS' ITALIAN ELECTIONS

Last week Flaminio Piccoli allowed himself a public sigh of relief.

'Stability is preserved', said the Secretary General of the Italian Christian Democratic Party.

In reality Italian parliamentary and electoral politics are stable in about the same sense as the San Andreas fault.

What Piccoli meant is that in spite of the tremors before the regional and municipal elections of June 8, the earthquake didn't happen this time.

And that is because the Italian electors continued to obey the unwritten and very special rules of Italian electoral politics.

The first of these is that no election result is allowed to be very different from the previous one.

This is so that no obvious conclusions are ever possible about the shifting balance of power between the main parliamentary parties.

Everyone can then interpret barely perceptible changes in

their percentages of the vote as clear confirmations of the correctness of their policies.

This is very closely connected therefore, with the second rule. This states that, as with children's party games, and prizes hidden in the Christmas pudding, *everybody has to win*.

The corollary of this, of course, is that by a slightly different but equally plausible interpretation of the results everybody loses.

Increased share

So on June 8 the Christian Democrats "won". They increased their share of the poll by 1.5% since the previous regional elections in 1975.

They also won because the Socialist Party, which had just entered a new centre left coalition in the central government with the Christian Democrats, increased its share of the vote by 3% since last year's parliamentary elections. (Italian voters very nearly broke the rules here by producing too large a change from the previous

election.

The Christian Democrats' explanation of the Socialist Party's success is that the extra votes were the SP's reward for being sensible enough to join Francesco Cossiga's coalition government.

But, of course, according to the rules, the Christian Democrats also lost.

The main argument for this is that virtually none of the so-called "red administrations" in the regions and municipalities (coalitions of the Communist and Socialist Parties) were unseated in the elections—therefore, so the argument goes, there was no move towards restoring to office the local Christian Democratic administrations unseated in 1975.

Combined vote

Indeed the combined Communist-Socialist vote rose as a share of the total since the legislative elections of last year.

But the CP finds it easier to argue that the Christian Demo-

crats lost than that they themselves won. This is because the CP's own share of the poll was the lowest they have achieved in the last three nation-wide elections—despite a relatively fiery oppositional campaign.

Contradictions

What the results do highlight is the way in which the contradictions and delicate balance of Italian electoral politics have become concentrated in the Socialist Party.

Both Christian Democrats and Communists now have to base arguments for their own victory not on their own success but on that of the Socialists.

Far from boosting the Socialist Party as a whole this simply accentuates the already deep and increasingly virulent split between its right and left factions.

The right says they did well because of their central government alliance with the Christian Democrats. The left says it was because of their municipal

alliance with the Communists.

Both the CP and the Christian Democrats seem quite content at the moment to let this situation continue.

By watching the surrogate battle within the Socialist Party they keep their own armies out of the fight and so stave off for a little longer the earthquake of class battles which have threatened for so long to break out in Italy.

Abstentions

But for all the parties there was an ominous sign in these election results. The percentage to rise most was that of abstentions and spoiled papers.

The electors seem to be beginning to tell the political leaders that they are unwilling to go on playing parliamentary charades for ever.

USA
week
by
week

**How
deep a
slump?**

It is no longer a case of when the US economy will go into recession but how deep and how prolonged that recession will be. For the recession is here and as figures published this week show it is a major one.

In the last 3 months the American economy actually shrank at an annual rate of 8% making the relevant comparisons less and less with the 1974/5 recession and more and more with the slump of the 1930s.

In this situation there is tremendous pressure on the Carter government to reduce taxes in order to stimulate the economy.

Working class

This pressure comes from the mass of ordinary working class people who traditionally give their support to the Democratic Party and who are being hit directly by the steady increase in unemployment (800,000 extra last month).

The most badly hit industry has been cars which this year show a decline in sales of over 30% with several hundred thousand car workers laid off and car plants shutting down.

The threat to the Chrysler Corporation has been temporarily averted by a government backed rescue operation which will involve handouts of \$1.5 billion.

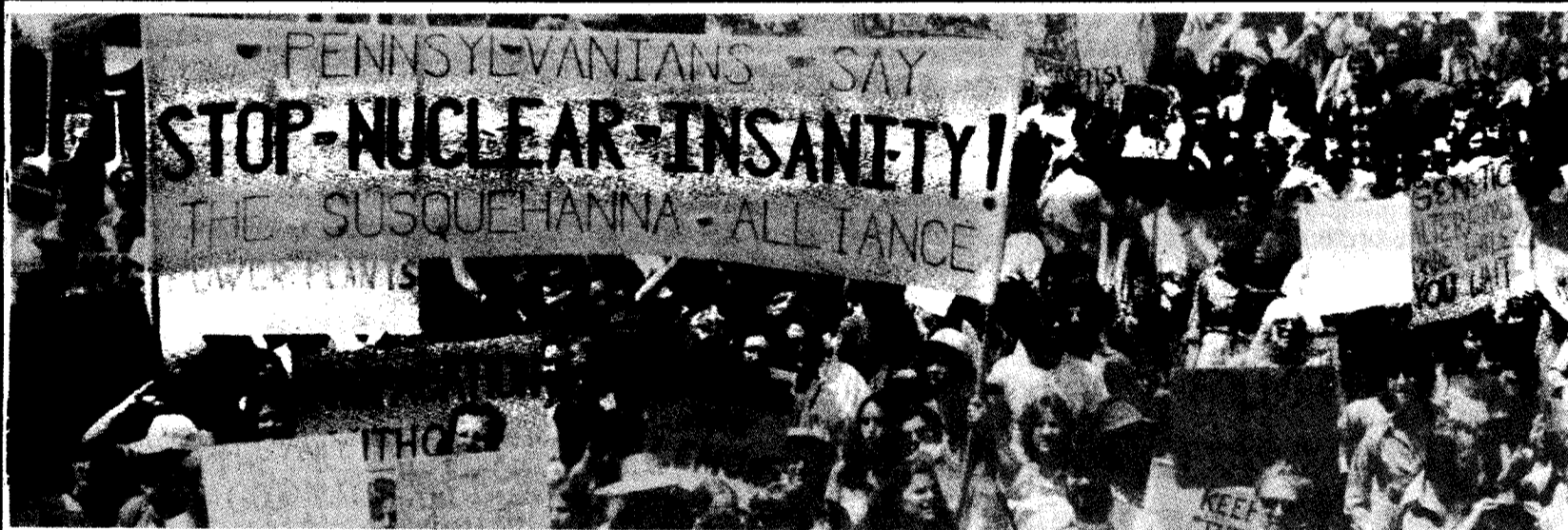
Over the last few weeks there have been arguments raging among Chrysler's creditors as to whether they would give their blessing to the recovery deal.

One problem which has meant that agreement could not be reached straight away is that part of the deal has been agreement by the creditors not to demand payment of debts.

At present the debts, which amount to \$4 billion, are owned to some 400 banks and 2,000 suppliers.

It was finally announced over the weekend that two major banks which had been holding out had decided to fall in with the deal.

However, while this will now release some \$500 million, losses for this year are already forecast in the region of \$750 million plus.



Glowing future under Carter

The recommendations of a recent report on nuclear waste storage in the USA have been included in a plan President Carter has sent to Congress. It calls for burying radioactive materials in underground rock formations by the mid-1990s.

A small number of potential sites would be evaluated over the next five years and by 1985 one of them would be selected as the first facility for long-term storage of nuclear waste.

In March 1978 President Carter established an Interagency Review Group on Nuclear Waste Management, which consisted of representatives from 14 federal agencies, to report to him on the viability of underground nuclear waste disposal.

Adequate

This review group completed its work recently and its findings have strongly influenced Carter's proposed legislation in this field.

The review group recommended that:

1) Scientific knowledge is adequate to begin looking for a permanent repository for nuclear waste.

2) More basic research is needed into suitable containers and geologic formations, because unless the solution to nuclear waste appears to be plausible, then local resistance may prove a great obstacle to the implementation of waste isolation schemes.

Not allowed

3) No state should be allowed to bar all nuclear disposal within its borders, but should be consulted at each stage of a waste isolation plan.

4) States should participate

more fully in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's licensing procedures.

5) The President should establish an 18-member State Planning Council consisting of some state governors, representatives of Indian tribes and the public. Its responsibilities would encompass a wide range of nuclear waste disposal problems, such as siting and timetables.

Significantly, in Carter's plan the federal government do not propose to give the states the power of veto on waste disposal sites.

But he has set up a planning council consisting of 13 state governors, and others, under Governor Richard W. Riley of South Carolina to give them a voice in policy.

Objections

Many states have voiced strong objections to having nuclear waste on their territory; notably Utah—whose residents are already exposed to abnormally high levels of radiation from the Nevada test site.

Residents of high-rise buildings in Utah are advised not to look out of their windows during nuclear testing in Nevada for fear of eye-damage.

Governor Riley's state is the home of the Savannah River waste storage facility that is already one of three that is being used for low-level and military wastes.

Other states that are threat-

ened are Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Utah, Nevada, Washington (site of the Mount St. Helens volcano) and New Mexico.

A waste plant at Carlsbad in New Mexico is at present restricted to use by the military nuclear programme.

Arsenal

But this site, together with Savannah River, the Nevada test site and the Hanford nuclear arsenal in Washington are all likely to be strong contenders for a high-level nuclear waste isolation project.

They are already heavily involved in nuclear waste programmes and local opposition is therefore likely to be weaker here than in the case of a new site.

There is no doubt that some means of disposing safely of the existing high-level nuclear waste must be found.

But until that time no further wastes should be produced. This means a halt to the nuclear power programme.

The gutless State Planning Council is a token to assuage criticism of Carter's proposals.

Labour movement

It is essential that an organisation is built by the labour movement to oppose the right of the US government and energy monopolies to dump lethal wastes where only they see fit.

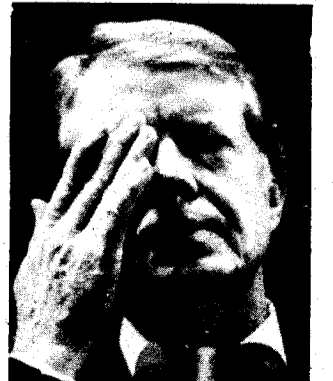


Nuclear fuel store

In Britain, too, potential nuclear waste disposal sites have been proposed for investigation by Thatcher's government.

But will we have even the token gesture of a planning council?

The debate on nuclear waste disposal must be forced into the open so that proposals can be criticised, exposed and fought by the workers' movement—which alone can take the necessary steps to safeguard the future of the human race from the anarchy and vandalism of the capitalist exploiters.



Carter

TROTSKYIST
INTERNATIONAL
LIAISON
COMMITTEE



DISCUSSION
BULLETIN
No. 2

Articles on Nicaragua,
Parity Commission, and
TILC Declaration

Price 40p plus 15p p&p
from WSL, BM Box
5277, London WC1V
6XX

TORY round-up

For all the brave noises of the Tories on the supposed decline of working class militancy, all is not well in the employers' camp.

Not only are Tory interest rates and the high pound producing a rising list of bankruptcies, but the growing militancy of the working class has

shattered two major attempts at employer solidarity.

The British Printing Industries Federation is at this moment engaged in a gloomy post-mortem examination to discover why its concerted attempt to confront the power of the National Graphical Association with recent national lock-out wound up such an abysmal failure.

In the event the 'united

front' splintered asunder as each BPIF employer scrambled for a settlement that would give him an advantage over his BPIF competitors.

As the print bosses lick their wounds, the CBI last week scrapped its much-heralded plans for a strike insurance fund.

Out of 4,000 CBI member firms only 400 replied to a questionnaire on the scheme: 30

said "no way"; 170 said "no"; and only 200, under considerable pressure, agreed to take part.

Larger firms in particular were reluctant to get involved in an open-ended gamble which, in a year of widespread strikes, could have involved them in repeated payments of "premiums" running into tens of thousands of pounds.

The CBI estimated that some £50 million a year would have been needed to run the insurance scheme. Now, just like the earlier CBI plan for firms to band together when hit by strikes, the plans have wound up in the waste bin.

But this would be much more encouraging for workers if their trade union and Labour leaders were half as energetic in fighting for joint action against the Tories as the bosses are keen to mobilise joint action against the unions.

CBI throws in the towel

THORNEYCROFT URGES TACT

"Softly, softly catchee flunky" is the motto being impressed upon Tory ministers by Party chairman Lord Thorneycroft.

He is worried at the increasingly irate response by even right wing union leaders to persistent Tory speeches insisting that wage increases must be held back because of the runaway rate of inflation.

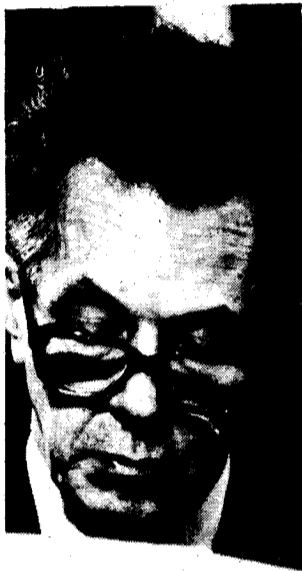
As the Thatcher government moves tentatively towards imposing a 10% ceiling on pay rises in the public sector, the crucial question is for them to secure the compliance of TUC leaders.

Failing

And with even TUC General Secretary Len Murray calling last week for pay rises to match inflation, they are manifestly failing to achieve this objective.

Thorneycroft's proposal is for Tory ministers to play much more on the union leaders' fundamental weaknesses—their unshakable respect for the employers' "right" to make profits and their nationalist devotion to "British" capitalism against "foreign" competition.

Rather than argue that workers should forego wage increases in order to attempt to bail British capitalism out of its evidently hopeless economic crisis, Thorneycroft suggests



can be more effectively press-ganged by both bosses and union officials into further job-slashing productivity deals and speeding-up in the "national interest".

Thorneycroft's cage appears to have been particularly rattled by the recent blundering speech by Sir Keith Joseph to US electronics employers, in which he glibly boasted that the combination of their know-how and the rock bottom wages now being paid to British workers offered unparalleled opportunities for profitable investment in the British industrial wasteland.

Eggs and tomatoes

Meanwhile Joseph—whose public popularity was indicated during the steel strike by the donations of eggs and tomatoes thrown to him by adoring crowds of South Wales workers—has been shooting his mouth off again.

He has called for an end to the expansion of universities and polytechnics.

After all, why bother to educate people simply to stand on the dole queues which, under Joseph's beady eye, are growing rapidly to new record levels?

And anyway the best people teaching in these educational institutions or working in local government and the civil service

should be out on the factory floor making profits.

"The past expansion of these institutions has not only exceeded our capacity to pay for them, but has taken up much of the scarcest resource of all—human initiative," pronounced Joseph.

The most obvious task to be tackled by human initiative in the next period is to rid the Thatcher/working class of the Thatcher/Joseph government that is laying waste the most hard-won rights and living standards.

Bell calls for repatriation

As the Tory government forges ahead with its racist White Paper on immigration, leading Tory racist Sir Ronald Bell has attempted to whip up a renewed frenzy of race hate.

Bell, MP for the secluded stockbroker belt constituency of Beaconsfield, called for even more vicious moves to halt immigration and increase repatriation.

Making clear that his attack was aimed exclusively at black immigrants from "the tropical areas" Bell aimed his main

attack at those black workers and youth who join militant protests against mass unemployment and police harassment:

"Is it not reasonable to ask why someone of tropical origin who does not like our arrangements here should not return to his own country rather than cause riots in ours?"

Bell went on astoundingly to accuse the media—always the main vehicle of racist propaganda—of "pampering and protecting" what he termed the "alien injected element".

It is necessary to restore a clear meaning to being British, he argued:

"One third of all the births in Greater London are to foreign mothers: does this make sense? Who can be proud of being British if that is all that being British means?"

Rabble rousing

Bell's speech—stopping little short of the undisguised fascist rabble rousing of the National Front and British Movement—is a reflection of the tensions which were only with difficulty suppressed in the debate on immigration policy at last year's Tory conference.

As Tory-created unemployment and cuts spur on frustration within the working class, there will be many other Tories in coming months who will seek to play the racist card in the hopes of dividing and weakening the workers' movement and rallying the most backward and degenerate elements of the petty bourgeoisie behind the union jack of capitalist "national unity".



Tory conference delegates

Prior looks to officials

Another Tory leader sounding off last week was so-called Employment Secretary James Prior, supervisor of the new anti-union laws.

Speaking to a gang of American businessmen in South Carolina, he boasted that militant shop stewards are losing their influence in Britain.

This, in Prior's view, had two advantages: it gave management "a new authority" and it meant that power was "moving back to full-time union officials".

This was particularly welcome to the vast majority of full-time officials, particularly at regional level, declared a rosy checked Prior.

"The officials won't ever say it, but they know that a resurgence of management that clearly knows what it is about is the best support they can have against the militants".

On that point, if little else, Prior certainly hit the nail on the head. As workers in BL, BSC and elsewhere count the cost of betrayals by their officials, the officials are counting the blessings of sheltering behind a ruthless management.

Such a situation can only be confronted by the construction of a revolutionary leadership in the labour movement.

Fightback against any political demands

The Fightback for Women's Rights Campaign initiated by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory fell into the now usual swamp of disorganised 'unity' at its 2nd conference in Digbeth on Saturday 21 June.

The initial attendance of 500 at its inaugural conference in March had plunged to 200 at the recall conference supposedly convened to adopt a programme.

But following the tradition of the Working Women's Charter Campaign (which foundered when the TUC realised it could adopt a stronger charter for women's rights without being forced to actively do anything) and the International Marxist Group's ill-fated "Women Inaction"—sorry, Women in Action—newspaper stunt, the Fightback for Women's Rights opted once again for the usual vague promises of aims and objectives:

"To build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks against women by this government".

Fine—but how and on what policies?

"The Campaign must be part of the labour movement response to the Tory attacks".

Good—but how do women confront the present bureaucratic leadership of the labour movement—which is such a powerful and insidious block to building that labour movement response to Thatcher and Co?

"We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women in the labour movement and fight to change sexism . . . and ally with all those fighting for democracy in the Labour Party".

Even this mild, implicit criticism of the Callaghan-Healey axis is mingled with complete faith in all those 'lefts' who line up with the accountability moves in the Labour Party democracy struggle.



Left MP Joan Richardson: uncritically supported

"We are for direct action against capitalism". Again, a worthy sentiment but what course of action are the campaigners proposing?

The conscious political elements that organised and ran the conference must accept responsibility for the bankruptcy of policy and perspective.

In the leadership of the campaign, and bearing main responsibility for the nebulous "aims and objectives" passed as well as the stambolic, not to say bureaucratic churning of the day's sessions were supporters of Workers Action.

To the right of these comrades and arguing strongly even for the deletion of the final point (because it commits women to fighting capitalism) were members of the International Marxist Group, arguing for a 'softly softly' approach to women.

The IMG strategy, as ever, is apparently to unite women now on any old basis and maybe raise a few points of programme and policy in a couple of years time when they have built up some confidence and consciousness about themselves.

Alone in fighting for the method and policies of Trotsky's Transitional Programme were members of Workers Power, WSL comrades and Socialist Press supporters.

Correctly arguing that women will be brought into action against the attacks of the Tory government and that in such struggles they need an action programme to fight on, Workers Power proposals included no to all cuts and a call for public works, for a woman's right to work, smash the Employment Bill, no restrictions on abortion rights, opposition to Immigration Acts and called for the defence of wages, benefits and social services from inflation.

WSL members and Socialist Press supporters pressed for a development of this programme by urging Labour councils to fight the cuts by mobilising campaigns around no rent and rate increases and instead refusing to pay bank interest charges and opening up council books to working class investigation.

They raised through concrete examples the question of the right wing leadership in the Labour Party and trade unions, and emphasised that as soon as women begin to struggle to defend their jobs, wages and social services they must be armed with an understanding of how and why their struggles will be knifed by these bureaucrats.

The conference however voted not to discuss these proposals and proceeded to endorse the initial "aims and objectives" package. That decision seems likely to complete the unusually rapid demise of the Women's Fightback grouping as any form of serious pole of attraction for women in struggle.

RODGERS BLOWS THE GAFF ON DEFENCE POLICY

By John Lister



Callaghan other imperialist blocs; and unconditional defence of the USSR and the deformed workers states of East Europe, Asia and Cuba against imperialist attack.

As Labour Party officials made last minute adjustments to their creaking and rusty machinery in preparation for the Party's first anti-war demonstration in 24 years, Callaghan's shadow spokesman on Defence, William Rodgers did his level best to throw a spanner in the works.

The Party's Special Conference on May 31 had adopted an evasively worded resolution "Peace, Jobs and Freedom", which deliberately avoided any statement of position on Britain's membership of the warmongering NATO alliance.

And while demanding that the British (Tory!) government: "enter immediately into East-West negotiations, with a view to reaching new agreements that would ensure that Cruise missiles and Soviet SS20s are both withdrawn" the resolution did explicitly state that:

"The Labour Party opposes the manufacture and deployment of Cruise missiles and the neutron bomb and refuses to permit their deployment in Britain by the United States or any other country".

Elbow room

Thus the resolution was carefully designed to leave elbow room both for the "unilateralists" of the lefts and for the Callaghan/Owen right wing who have argued that it is necessary to build and buy new nuclear weapons in order to "negotiate" their abolition!

But this deft manoeuvre has not satisfied Rodgers and Labour's ultra-right MPs. They

want nothing less than a full-blown reaffirmation of the Party's traditional commitment to British imperialism and the expansion of its barbaric military machine.

They actually want Party leaders to clamber onto the "Peace" platform on Sunday and thump the tub for NATO!

Rodgers spelled this out last Thursday in a virulent Cold War speech to the right wing rump of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Bitterly complaining that the "Peace" march would find Labourites aligned with socialists, and forces genuinely

opposed to British imperialism, Rodgers declared:

"It should be plainly said that the Labour Party supports Britain's membership of NATO and rejects withdrawal... and we are in favour of multilateral disarmament, in both the nuclear and conventional fields, and reject unilateral nuclear disarmament".

Labour's objection to Tory "defence" policies was based not on principle but on their vast expense, he insisted.

It is speeches like this which spell out the crisis of leadership that confronts Labour's right wing as Callaghan moves inex-

orably towards retirement.

For while these or similar views are shared by the whole of the crypto-Tory right, the more shrewd operators have sensed that the prevailing climate in the Party and the labour movement as a whole is far from conducive to such brazen statements.

Instead, like Callaghan himself, they have become closet imperialists, lurking behind devious speeches and evasive resolutions, and hoping against hope that the Tory press helps them cover their own murky past.

Rodgers is therefore waging

a war without an army. It was no accident that he was excluded from the recent Labour Party political broadcast on defence.

It is high time Labour Party members gave him and his ilk their marching orders, and dispatched them to the as yet empty barracks of Roy Jenkins' would-be "Centre" Party.

At the same time the fight must be stepped up to commit CLPs and the Party nationally to the policies Rodgers so abhors: the unilateral nuclear disarmament of British imperialism; withdrawal from the reactionary NATO alliance and

Pay battle transforming Scots teachers' union

Whatever the eventual outcome of this year's salary negotiations, the current wages campaign of Scottish teachers will leave its mark upon the character of the EIS.

The emergence of strike committees in many areas linking together the representatives of different schools, the militant actions taken by unofficial groups such as the Teachers Action Committees in Glasgow and Lanarkshire and the breaking down in practice of the isolation of teachers from other groups of workers all augur well for the future.

The wave of discontent and frustration of the membership with the delays and finally inadequacy of the Clegg Report forced a reluctant leadership into mobilising a campaign around the demand for 18.6%.

Yet, from the beginning of the official action, there was clearly a section of the leadership, such as McLeod, Bell, Ackland and Black, who were determined to call off the action as soon as possible and accept the management offer of 14%.

Others on the Executive have gone along with the impetus to strike action but have latched upon every excuse, such as the problems of raising levies from some sections of the

membership, to restrict, de-escalate and finally call off the campaign as soon as possible.

Compromising and prevaricating, they have prayed for an early result from the English arbitration process, to impose the same settlement upon their own membership.

The determination of the majority on the Executive to frustrate the militant mood of the membership springs from their fear not only of tackling the local authorities and the Tory government but also of permitting the emergence of a more democratic and militant union.

The struggle for democracy in the union must be carried forward through a campaign to change the constitution by abolishing the Council and creating a directly elected Executive, more responsive to the wishes of the membership.

Democratisation

At a local level this means the democratisation of the union structure in each area, especially in Glasgow, where the unwieldy Glasgow Local Association of 8,000 members is manipulated to prevent the growth of liaison between the representatives in different schools.

The process of democratisation, at local and national level, is inseparable from the growth of new leadership, through both official and unofficial channels.

This growth in militancy and trade union consciousness was not reflected in the decisions of last week's AGM at Stirling.

There, crucial resolutions on wages and conditions, such as that for a single salary scale with a common maximum and that for making a reduction in class

sizes a priority in negotiations, were defeated.

Time and again the majority of delegates supported the pro-management arguments of Keir Bloomer, the union's chief negotiator, who argued that nothing could be done because of government imposed financial restrictions.

Special interests

One important reason for the unrepresentative nature of the AGM is the presence at Conference of delegates from special interest groups, the education sections, who are permitted separate representation at Council and Conference.

Yet, when a motion for the abolition of these "rotten boroughs" was debated, many members of the SWP-dominated "Rank and File" voted against it, thus ensuring perpetuation of the present system.

Their arguments that the motion was instigated by the right wing and that "as long as the rotten boroughs exist we should use them to get more militant delegates to the Conference" should cut no ice.

It was an unprincipled vote which did nothing to advance the process of democratisation and politicisation of the union.

Undoubtedly the "Rank and File" group has over the years contributed to the development of a more militant union with closer links with the trade union movement generally.

Debates

They have initiated significant debates on corporal punishment and sexism and racism in education.

They constitute an impor-

tant vehicle for the transformation of the EIS which no militant can neglect. Yet the opportunism revealed in that vote at Conference exposes the limitations imposed upon the movement by the politics of the Socialist Workers Party, the dominant tendency in the "Rank and File".

This opportunism and confusion on crucial political questions is again revealed in their most recent publication, "What is Rank and File?"

There the fight against the education cuts is restricted to the demand, albeit correct, of a public sector alliance. There is no mention of the pernicious role of social democracy in the shape of the Labour Regional Councillors who refuse to halt the education cuts or pay the teachers their salary claim.

Tory coat-tails

Hiding behind the coat-tails of the Tory government, these elected representatives of the working class try to cover up the fact that they are renegeing upon their promises, when elected, to defend the social services against Tory attack.

Only through mobilising the membership alongside the trade union and labour movement against these traitors will a new leadership be built in the EIS based on the principles of revolutionary socialism.

The avoidance of this central issue—the political struggle against the Labour and trade union leadership—and the total immersion instead in a generalised militancy is the hallmark of the politics of the SWP, whose individual members, however well intentioned, are entrapped within the opportunist confines of that organisation.

PRESS GANG



Jeff Rooker may be right or wrong about his claim in Parliament that Frank Turner of Rolls Royce was bribed by Morando.

Running capitalism without bribery would be like trying to run an engine without oil, although it would be ridiculous to assume that every deal has been bought.

Rooker is in no danger of having his claim brought to court. For 300 years Parliamentary privilege has protected members from action over words spoken in the chamber.

This privilege predates the rise of industrial capitalism and was originally designed to protect the emerging

bourgeoisie from the King and the old aristocracy.

It is therefore one of those rights sternly defended by the bourgeoisie throughout the last 300 years.

The press has no formal rights at all in respect of reporting parliament—but again in practice is privileged in a fair, accurate and contemporaneous account of speeches made in the Commons.

When Rooker spoke, the press repeated the allegations immediately. When Rolls Royce, the management of Webster and Bennet and Mr Turner all denied the allegation the press began to have doubts.

When it became clear that

the allegations came from Rolls Royce stewards then the editors were thrown into blind panic.

Immediately, radio, TV and the press began debating with great earnestness whether parliamentary privilege should be abolished.

This may sound familiar. In April 1978 left wing Labour MPs used parliamentary privilege to publish the name of Colonel H.A. Johnstone (Colonel B), broadcast live by radio.

Early news TV spots and first editions of the papers published the name. The Director of Public Prosecutions immediately threatened to prosecute the press, claiming that Parliamentary privilege did not extend to any reports except Hansard.

What both cases have in common is that a privilege at first designed to protect the bourgeoisie has been used against it.

Whether or not Turner has been maligned without redress, the press has once again shown that its verbal commitment to increased power to publish and freedom of the press is a sham.

While an overt muzzle on the press would be dangerously tactless, there is no doubt that the press barons would prefer it to be reined in on a tight lead that would prevent it biting its owners and their allies and hirelings in the class war.

GAY PRIDE WEEK
Gay Pride March
Saturday 28 June
Assemble 11 a.m.
Bressenden Place, SW1

GAY ACTIVISTS ALLIANCE
Special meeting,
Solidarity with the
national struggle and gays
in Ireland
Waterloo Action Centre
Sunday 29 June at 11 a.m.



EIS demonstrators in Glasgow

Social democracy: reformism without reforms

Social Democracy (in Britain the Labour Party) bases itself on the idea of winning reforms for the working class by working within the capitalist system.

In this way, it is argued, through a gradual process of social advancement, we will move in the indefinite future to the creation of 'socialism' through parliament.

In many countries, particularly in Europe, this reformist perspective has been and remains the main political trend within the workers' movement.

Each election millions of workers return to the ballot boxes to tie their fates to "their" party, the party which supposedly represents the basic interests of the working class.

Each new social democratic government leaves them disappointed, their hopes unsatisfied.

Concessions

In periods of boom or expansion social democracy—or even self-confident "moderate" bourgeois parties—may be able to offer concessions to the working class based on the desire of the capitalists to ideologically bind workers to the present system and secure the most favourable conditions for the continued extraction of profit.

But in periods of slump or recession, instead of 'progressive' social reforms, workers find themselves confronted—by bourgeois parties and social democrats alike—with wage controls, attacks on trade union rights and the axing of jobs and services.

reforms

Why is this?

For Marxists, reformism has always represented the reflection in the workers movement of ideas which in reality represent the interests of hostile class forces; ideas which though widely shared by layers of workers, are rooted not in the needs of the working class but in those of the ruling capitalist class which seeks to preserve its system.

Faced with the material reality of the capitalist system, workers have for centuries spontaneously turned towards means of struggle to lessen their own oppression through the fight for reforms—whether at the level of the workplace (trade union struggles), or on a broader level through the formation of mass parliamentary parties.

As Lenin pointed out in his definitive political break from the reformists, the consciousness that it is insufficient to seek to reform the system piecemeal—and that the whole bourgeois order must be overthrown by revolutionary struggle—does not develop spontaneously on a mass level in the working class.

Revolutionary party

Sections of workers can of course make great strides forward in political development in the course of their struggles:

but to consolidate and extend these developments and carry them into broad layers of the class a conscious *revolutionary party* is needed.

Only the revolutionary party is capable of utilising the scientific theory of Marxism to analyse and consciously respond to the complex processes of the class struggle, and to offer on this basis a consistent defence of the independent interests of the working class against the material and ideological attacks of the bourgeoisie.

Science

As a developed *science*, and not simply a reflex response to capitalist exploitation, Marxism must be brought into the trade unions, the Labour Party and the working class as a whole in *conflict* with existing methods of thinking and trade union consciousness.

It is not simply a question of bombarding workers with revolutionary ideas: revolutionaries seek to concretise such ideas in tangible *demands*, which connect to today's problems, and to today's level of consciousness of the working class and, insofar as they are taken up and fought for in practice, lead workers in struggle to grasp the need for revolutionary action.

The fight for such demands

therefore brings Marxists into conflict not only with those workers who are reluctant to break from mere trade unionism, but also with the Labour and trade union bureaucracy who consciously strive to maintain the existing balance of forces between the working class and the employers—on which their power and privileges

depend.

The consequence of such leadership is that, while the Labour Party may well be a "workers' party" in terms of its social base and support, it produces not workers' governments dedicated to the independent interests of the working class, but *bourgeois* governments, which see their role as adminis-

tering capitalism.

In the eyes of reformist leaders, the crisis of capitalism represents not the historical bankruptcy of a social system based on the accumulation of capital through the exploitation



Left and right alike, reformism offers workers only a blind alley

How the bosses view Labour leaders

How does the ruling class view the reformist leaders and the role of social democracy?

Occasionally, in the pages of the *Sunday Telegraph* we get a glimpse in the column written by Peregrine Worsthorpe.

But the clearest exposition of a worked out capitalist assessment of social democracy is to be found in the pages of "Letters to Leaders" (Deutsche Führerbriefe), the confidential bulletin of the Federation of German Industry circulated in 1931 and 1932 to the financial leaders of German capitalism.

It is worthwhile quoting at some length these documents, issued in the run-up to Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, to give a clear picture of the views of big capital.

In issue number 72 the writer comments:

"The problem of consolidating the bourgeois regime in post-war Germany is generally determined by the fact that the leading bourgeoisie, who have control over the economy, have become too small in order to uphold this rule alone.

They require for this rule, if they do not wish to rely on the extremely dangerous weapon of purely military force, an alliance with strata which do not belong to them socially, but which render them indispensable service of anchoring their rule in the people, and thereby being the actual final bearers of this rule.

This last, or outermost, bearer of bourgeois rule was, in

the first period of post war consolidation, *Social Democracy*".

We might bear this in mind when considering the "achievements" of the 1945-51 Labour government, but let us continue and see how the bourgeoisie see this process working.

"In the first reconstruction era of the bourgeois post-war regime, in the era from 1923-4 to 1929-30, the split in the working class was founded on the achievements in regards to wages and social policy into which Social Democracy capitalised the revolutionary upsurge".

Thus social democracy is seen not as a serious opponent, but as a means of splitting and diverting the working class away from the struggle for power.

Special character

It could do this because of its special character as a supposed workers' party.

"Thanks to its social character as being originally a workers' party, Social Democracy brought into the system of reconstruction at that time, in addition to its purely political force, something more valuable

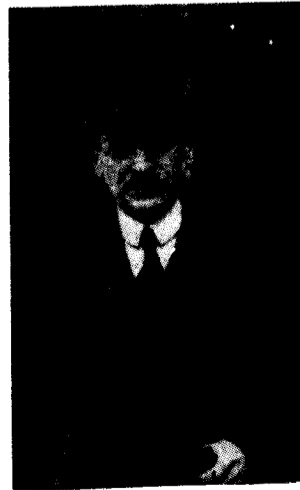
and enduring, namely the organised working class, and while paralysing their revolutionary energy chained them fast to the bourgeois state".

Social democracy therefore acts for capitalism as the equivalent of a sluice gate, stemming the tide of revolutionary working class struggles by obtaining periodic minor concessions on wages and social policy—none of which ever actually challenge bourgeois rule.

Threatened

The German bourgeois leaders recognised however that because reformism rests on the ability to win reforms its political hold is threatened in a period of economic crisis:

"The process of the transition which we are undergoing at present, because the economic crisis necessarily destroys these achievements, passes through the stage of acute danger that, with the disappearance of these achievements, the mechanism for disrupting the working class which is based on these achievements will cease to operate, with the result that the



Attlee

working class will begin to turn in the direction of communism and the bourgeois rule will be faced with the necessity of setting up a military dictatorship. This stage would mask the beginning of the phase of the incurable sickness of bourgeois rule."

Thus, while the social democrats cling desperately to the eternal virtues of parliamentary

democracy, for the bourgeoisie this form of rule is no more than one of the possible options.

"A bourgeois regime based on a liberal bourgeois constitution must not only be parliamentary; it must rely for support on Social Democracy and allow Social Democracy adequate achievements. A bourgeois regime which destroys these achievements must sacrifice Social Democracy and parliamentarism".

The parliamentary fetishists of the Militant group would do well to remember this.

For the bourgeois reformism is a useful tool which is ultimately dispensable.

For the working class reformism represents an historical barrier, which must be totally broken down.

The struggle between opposed class interests in the period of capitalist crisis therefore become centrally the struggle to smash the grip of reformism before it lines up to smash and dissipate the strength and fighting capacity of the organised working class.

We urge readers to join us in that struggle.





of the working class, but rather a social and economic problem for "the nation" which has to be solved by 'mutual' sacrifice.

Their emphasis throughout is on the maintenance of the capitalist system and class society.

Here, of course, the Labourites and their co-thinkers abroad face a problem. Capitalism in crisis is unable to offer any reforms.

The reformist is therefore obliged to approach the working class with empty hands. What we get, as in the present period, is reformism without any prospect of reform!

Even past gains are stripped away in the frenzied drive to protect the accumulated private capital and restore profitability.

But the reformist leaders, committed as they are to the maintenance of the system, are obliged to go along with this every step of the way.

Only the construction of a revolutionary party, which starts *not* from what capitalism permits or can afford but from the basic requirements of the working class in defence of jobs and living standards, can now offer workers a serious alternative to the destruction of what once seemed the most basic rights and working conditions.

Leadership is vital in fight to mobilise class action

By John Lister



SWP leader Tony Cliff

"The bosses are on the offensive and the mood amongst many workers has also shifted to the right.

"Whereas ten years ago picket lines were respected, now trade unionists break them; instead of blacking and support to help fellow trade unionists they are left out in the cold".



Evans

The sentiments expressed above are far from rare amongst sections of workers.

With a ruthless Tory government actively forcing the pace of an employers' offensive against trade union rights, jobs, living standards and working conditions, many workers feel confused—and some, having witnessed betrayals from their leaders, have become demoralised.

But the quote does not come from a confused and demoralised worker. It comes from a leaflet distributed on the gates of British Leyland's Cowley Plant by the Socialist Workers Party!

And, as such it sums up in a nutshell the reason why the SWP cannot offer workers a revolutionary lead in the present period.

Incapable

It shows that the SWP are *incapable* of recognising the nature of the present period; *incapable* of correctly assessing the recent past; and *incapable* of pointing out the central political tasks to be confronted now.

Because while it is of course true that the bosses are on the offensive, it is *not* true that "the mood of many workers has also shifted to the right".

The fact is that the Thatcher government has—according to its own statistics—been presiding over a wave of strikes in excess of anything since the 1926 General Strike.

Steel workers—after 50 years near dormancy in a right-wing dominated union—responded instantly to an official strike call, and stayed out solidly without strike pay for 14 weeks.

When BL Convenor Derek Robinson was sacked a staggering 32,000 carworkers in various Midlands plants walked out in an almost unprecedented show of solidarity—only to be manoeuvred back to work through the sabotage of union officials.

Sell-out

Moss Evans' subsequent sell-out of the BL pay struggle took place with 18,000 workers already on strike and others ready to join the mass walk out.

The solidarity of NGA print workers last month confronted and largely defeated a determined attempt at a bosses' offensive.

Even Len Murray has admitted that the 1979-80 pay round has brought an unprecedented number of membership rejections of officially-endorsed pay offers.

Everywhere there is evidence that the militancy on the shop floor far outpaces the mealy-mouthed 'left' statements and anti-Tory conference speeches, trotted out by union bureaucrats and Labour leaders.

But the SWP's political analysis is incapable of recognising such contradictions.

For them, the fact that the union bureaucracy has succeeded in controlling and blocking actual struggles is not a sign of the necessity to expose and combat the bureaucracy and mobilise workers to force their removal, but a sign that "the mood amongst many workers has shifted to the right"!

SWP tail-ends reformism

In one fell swoop the SWP lets the bureaucracy off the hook, and heaps the blame for the present situation on the heads of its prime *victims*—the working class!

Defeatist

This defeatist and one-sided analysis is backed up by a double-barrelled historical falsification.

It is simply *not true* that "ten years ago picket lines were respected".

There was *no* such 'golden age' of trade union solidarity in which workers obeyed picket lines without a struggle—or there would have been no need to picket!

The history of trade union organisation is the history of bitter—often violent—struggles for such basic discipline against the individualism and backwardness of blacklegs.

What *is* true is that it was in one sense much easier to mobilise struggles at a trade union level ten or more years ago, before the full impact of the capitalist crisis made itself felt in industry.

At a point where capitalism still appeared to be in a period of 'boom' and healthy expansion, strikes over wage increases or improvements in working conditions could be carried through with most workers confident of eventual success—or

that at very worst they would face a temporary loss of earnings.

Yet in today's crisis, the slightest move towards strike action is met by a barrage of employers' and government propaganda about the threat to "viability", the prospect of closure, or, in the public sector, incessant talk of cash limits.

To strike today over wages or working conditions means for many workers to gamble on possibly losing their jobs altogether at a time of mass unemployment.

Where they are denied a clear political perspective and policies to oppose such threats and to fight factory closures and redundancies, workers are therefore understandably more hesitant before embarking on all-out action.

Leftward

Indeed the fact that they *continue to do so*, under far harsher conditions confirms the *leftward* movement of the class as a whole!

In failing to understand the material basis for workers' confusion in the present period, the would-be 'revolutionaries' of the SWP wind up simply tail-ending the most demoralised trade unionists, offering not a shred of political direction in the fight against the sabotage of the trade union bureaucracy.

Instead they turn workers back on *themselves*, to seek answers at an individual and 'rank and file' level:

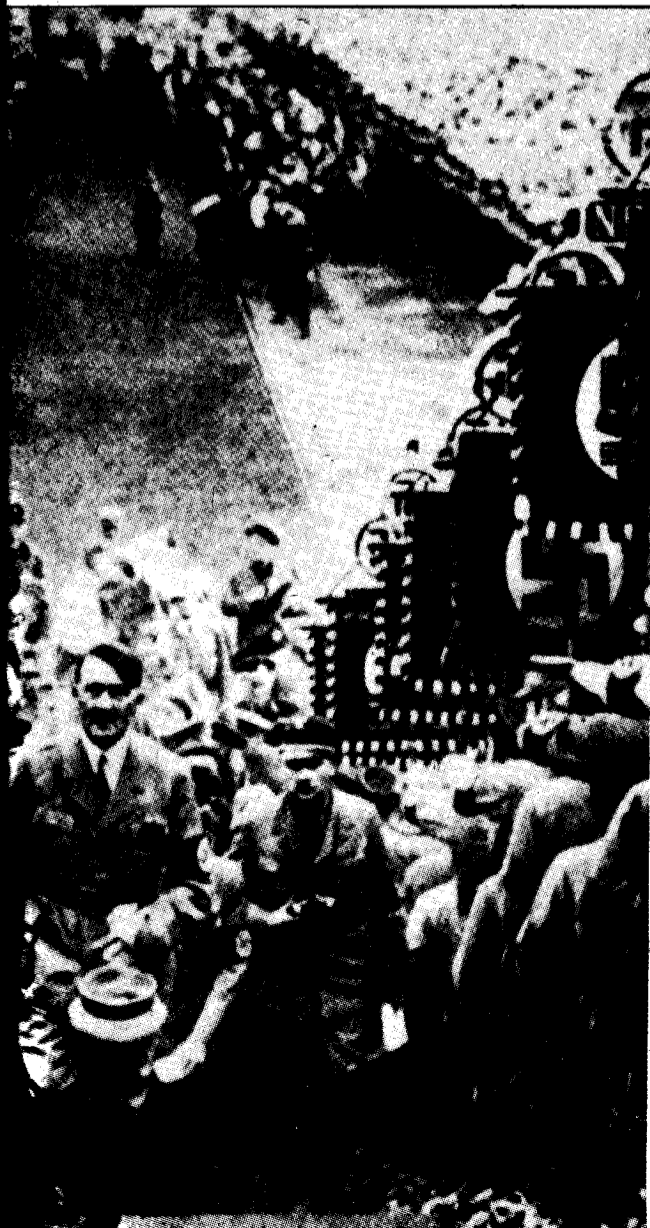
"We must rely only on ourselves, our rank and file organisations and strength... Even if you don't care about your fellow workers, pure self interest should make you an active trade unionist."

The harsh fact is that without a *political* grasp of the role of the trade union and Labour bureaucracy, and without an understanding of the material impact the economic crisis and bosses' offensive are having on workers' thinking, "rank and file" organisations must wind up simply reflecting the very confusion that the SWP claims to be combatting!

We in the Workers Socialist League do not blame workers for the sabotage and scabbing of their officials; we do not accommodate to the weakest and most pessimistic layers of former militants.

In our view, the task of revolutionaries is to mobilise the growing militancy on the shop floor around transitional demands that lead workers beyond simple trade union militancy.

In this way we struggle to expose and defeat the reformist bureaucracy and thus politically prepare the working class wage the struggle to bring down the Tories and establish a workers' government.



Nazi rally



Rally in support of victimised Derek Robinson: rank and file militancy sabotaged by trade union bureaucrats

Helen Keller: symbol of courage -and socialism

"I am no worshipper of cloth of any colour but I love the red flag and what it symbolises to me and other Socialists. I have a red flag hanging in my study".

Many people know that Helen Keller overcame the terrible experience of being both blind and deaf (and therefore dumb) and in doing so became a symbol of human courage and determination.

What most do not know, however, is that for an important part of her life she was an active socialist. We are taking advantage of the 100th anniversary of her birth, June 27 1880, to redress this balance and at the same time to pay tribute to a life which has been an inspiration to many millions of people—whether handicapped or not.

After only 19 months of normal life Helen Keller fell ill and never heard or saw anything again.

Cut off

For the next five years she grew totally cut off from people around her, unable to make any intelligent contact.

Luckily for Helen her family was not poor and acting on the advice of Alexander Graham Bell—the inventor of the telephone—her parents wrote to the Perkins Institute, the famous training school for the blind in Boston, asking about the possibility of a teacher for their daughter.

The story of how Anne Sullivan turned Helen from little more than a savage into a highly educated, cultured woman has been shown brilliantly in the film 'The Miracle Worker'.

The most memorable scene shows Anne Sullivan pouring water over Helen's hands and then using the manual alphabet spelling out the word water into her palm. This process carried out over and over again made the initial breakthrough.

Graduated

From there Helen went on to learn to read and write and then after further special education to speak.

All this was accomplished by the age of 10 and this remarkable woman went on to learn German, Latin, Greek and French becoming a world celebrity in the process and at the age of 24 graduated with honours



Helen Keller

from Radcliffe College. It was in 1908 that Helen read H.G. Wells' 'New Worlds for Old' and turned her attention towards socialism. She joined the Socialist Party in 1909.

Her struggle against personal blindness and deafness had brought her endless flattering remarks and tributes in the capitalist press. Here, after all, was a good example of how the spirit of the individual could conquer all, how the ethic of individualism so beloved of the capitalists could be shown to be the dynamic, vital force in life.

When, however, Helen

attacked what she called 'industrial blindness and social deafness' the capitalist press howled in dismay. They accused Anne Sullivan's husband John Macy of manipulating Helen and the socialist movement of cynically using her for its own ends. Helen herself was, of course, 'confused' and 'easily led'.

Devastating

She was able to reply in a devastating manner:

"I like newspapermen. I have known many, and two or three editors have been among my

most intimate friends. "... newspapers have been of great assistance in the work which we have been trying to do for the blind. It costs them nothing to give their aid to work



Keller welcomed the Russian Revolution

for the blind and to other superficial charities. But socialism, ah, that is a different matter. That goes to the root of all poverty and all charity. The money power behind the newspapers is against socialism and the editors, obedient to the hand that feeds them will go to any length to put down socialism and undermine the influence of socialists.

"... The *Brooklyn Eagle* says ... that Helen Keller's 'mistakes spring out of the manifest limitations of her development'. Some years ago I met ... (the) editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle* ... At that time the compliments he paid me were so generous that I blush to remember them. But now I have come out for socialism he reminds me and the public that I am blind and deaf and especially liable to error. I must have shrunk in intelligence ... Surely it is his turn to blush".

(Why I Became a Socialist)

Because of her own handicaps she was able to bring out more sharply the social causes of blindness and deafness. In articles and speeches she denounced the profit hungry system which condemned millions to lives of poverty and disease.

Wobblies

Helen Keller was no milk and water socialist. She opposed the First World War and in the battles between the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World and the reformist wing of the Socialist Party she sided with the former, saying, in 1916, that

"I became an IWW because I found that the Socialist Party was too slow. It is sinking in the political bog".

Russian Revolution

She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Russian Revolution and involved herself in the battles against the blockade of the young workers' state.

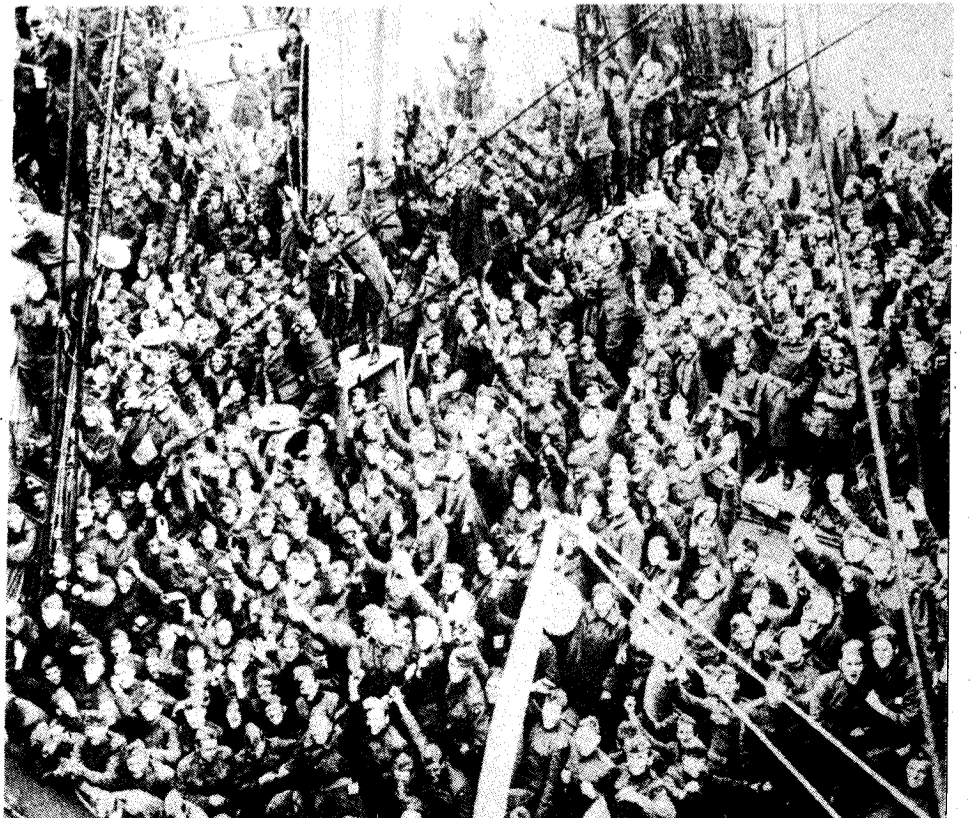
With the decline of the IWW in the early 1920s Helen Keller's socialist writing becomes much less sharp and increasingly mixed in with religion. She was, of course, well into her forties by that time.

A recent radio programme about her life managed to spend only 30 to 60 seconds of its 50 minutes referring to her socialist views which, it simply said, she retained for the rest of her life.

Indeed she was one of those who did not collapse before McCarthyism and in 1957 sent a message of encouragement to veteran CP member Elizabeth Gurley Flynn who was in jail for her political views.

Helen Keller died in 1968 aged 88. Readers of *Socialist Press* who wish to look further into this side of her life should read "Helen Keller: Her Socialist Years"—writings and speeches edited by Philip S. Foner and published by International Publishers, New York from which the material for this article has been drawn.

By Keith White



World War I: American troops leave for Europe

**Trotskyist International
Liaison Committee**

Public meeting

Wednesday 23 July at 7. 30

*For a full discussion on the crisis of the world Trotskyist movement.
*Reconstruct the Fourth International!

Speakers from the WSL and TILC sections
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1

Tickets £1

Gay Movement—a history of gains and setbacks

By Henry Phillips

Like all important social reform movements based around a single issue, the gay movement has a tendency towards a narrowing of its view of history and an exaggeration of its own successes.

Today it would be hard to find a London underground platform without at least one person wearing a gay liberation badge; and that person is in little danger of arrest or being pushed under a train.

Except in rare cases the odd contemptuous glance and a bit of ribald abuse is the worst thing likely to happen.

Gay News

At the same time *Gay News* sells 25,000 copies and its contents show a continuing expansion of gay theatre, art, films, pubs, discos, as well as details of gay socialists, gay stamp collectors, gay opera goers and so on.

The fact that all this still takes the form of a ghettoised social milieu—and within that very often sub-ghettoes of men and women—does not alter the fact that eleven years of struggle on gay rights have produced, especially in North America and Western Europe, very big changes in the position of gay people in society.

The gay movement today is infected with a strong proclivity to view this undoubted progress as part of a linear and irreversible process beginning in 1969 when the gay clients of the Stonewall bar first physically resisted a police bust, and continuing into an indefinite, rosy, future.

This is the perspective for instance of a film which has been widely shown in London in recent months called *'Army of Lovers or Revolt of the Perverts'*.

The director, a rather arrogant German gay liberationist named Rosa von Praunheim, has now also produced a book of the film just published by Gay Mens Press (another symptom of the gay movement's internal ghettoisation).

It is a wide-ranging and often vivid documentary film of gay life—demonstrations, social life, political and personal interviews designed to demonstrate the upsurge of the gay movement in the United States.

Ironic

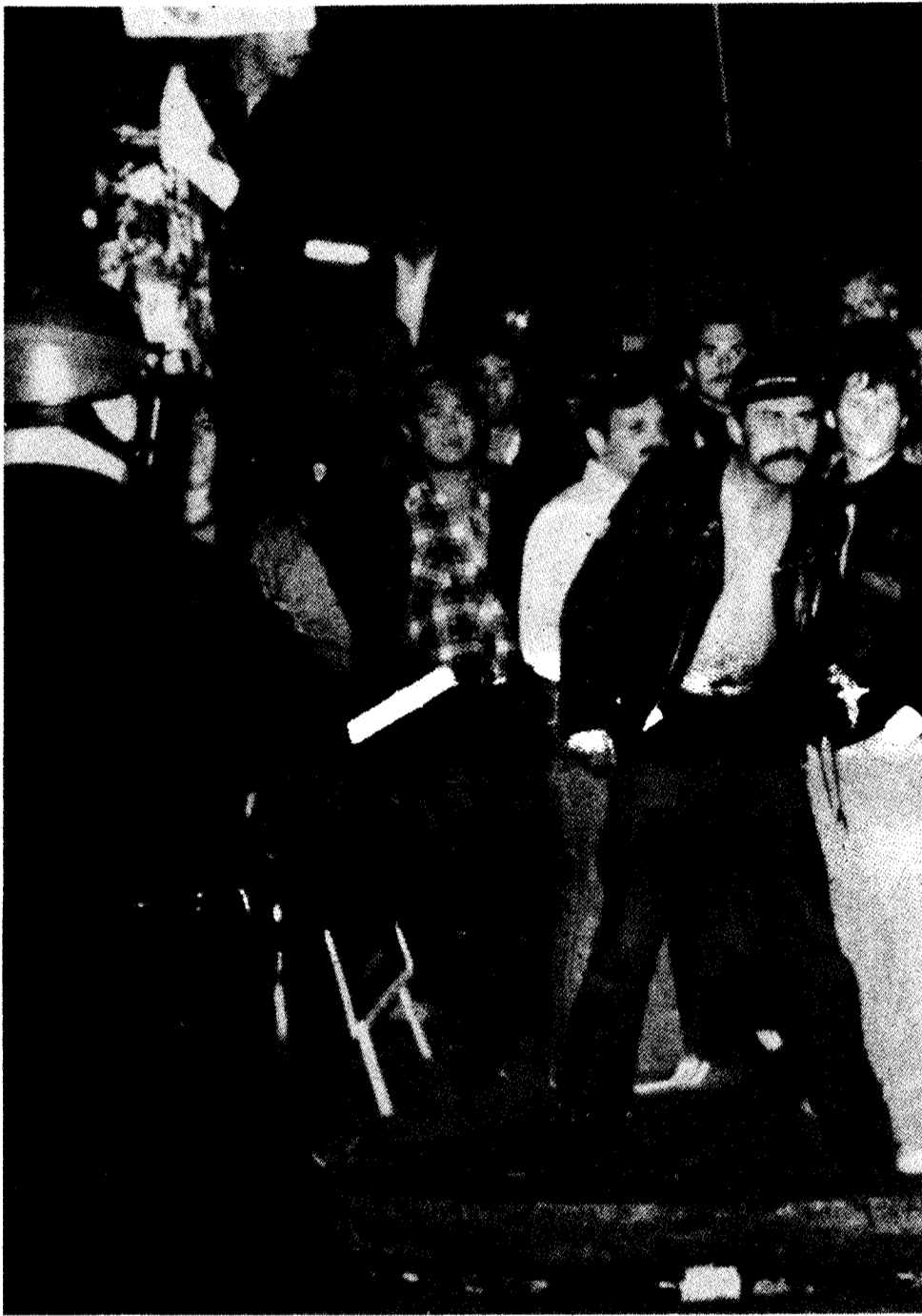
As a political 'progressive', von Praunheim adopts a relatively ironic tone towards such things as gay churches, and gay fascists.

But basically his perspective is that anything that is openly gay is good even if some things are better than others. It all seems to represent an expansion in the tolerance of capitalist society.

The final peroration of the film's commentary is a plea for tolerance and liberty seen entirely in a bourgeois context and in vocabulary which in the United States might be described as Jeffersonian.

In fact, the bourgeois liberalism of Jefferson the slave-owner on the question of homosexuality consisted in thinking that it should not be punished by death (as it was in the state of Virginia up to 1777) but rather 'if a man, by castration, if a woman, by cutting thro' the cartilage of her nose a hole of one half inch diameter at the least'.

This is one of the numerous interesting documents collected



San Francisco gays riot against right wing violence

together by Jonathan Katz in a large and scholarly book called *Gay American History* (Avon Books, USA).

The book outlines a long history of legal and medical repression of homosexuality as well as many instances of homosexual love among the great (Alexander Hamilton, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson) as well as the common people of American history.

One section of the book is called "Resistance 1859-72". The political importance of the material in this section is not only that it shows that the gay movement began long before Stonewall; but that the very long struggle for gay rights has in the United States, as elsewhere been through cycles of partial gains followed by new waves of repression.

Seen as separate

It would be wrong to draw simplistic conclusions from this experience; a good analytical history of the political fight for gay liberation has yet to be written.

But it is hard to escape the conclusion that part of the reason why so many historical gains have been wiped out—a fact conveniently ignored by the view of history represented by

von Praunheim—is that the gay question has so frequently been regarded (both by bourgeois reformers and by socialists) as something quite separate from the transformation of society as a whole.

Of course, gay oppression has sometimes been the result of historical reversions towards barbarism in which all freedoms were crushed—for example fascism and Stalinism.

Reversals

But even within bourgeois democratic society there have been very sharp reversals of the struggle.

A particularly interesting case to understand in this context is that of the Mattachine Society founded in California at the end of the 1940s.

Its main founders were members of the American Communist Party and it is not coincidental that the founding of the Mattachine marks their break with the party. But the break occurred in an extraordinary way.

The Mattachine's main founder was Harry Hay, an intellectual who gave classes in political and music history in the CP and the California Labor School.

Hay gives lengthy interviews both in *Army of Lovers* and in a

moving and humorous documentary consisting of 26 interviews with gay people called *Word is Out* (made by the Mariposa Film Group in 1977).

But his most revealing if still very incomplete—interview is printed in *Gay American History*.

Hay was a victim of McCarthyite repression and was forced to testify before the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952.

Hay expected (wrongly as it turned out) that he would be questioned on his gay as well as his Communist Party activities.

Because of this he decided that it was best for him to be represented by a different lawyer from his fellow CP members to avoid their being tarred with the brush of homosexuality (and he had a major struggle to find any lawyer willing to take his case).

Then, when he decided to devote his whole activity to the question of gay rights through the Mattachine:

"I went to the Communist Party and discussed this 'total call' upon me, recommending to them my expulsion. They rejected 'expulsion' and, in honour of my eighteen years as a member and ten years as a teacher and cultural innovator dropped me as 'a security risk but as a life-long friend of the

people".

(*Gay American History*, p.622)

The Stalinists thus adopted the same position on its gay members as the security services of the US capitalist state, which were at the same time conducting one of its periodic anti-gay witch-hunts.

From his statements the position of Hay himself remains unclear. He does not seem to be prepared to criticise the CP's position, though he does say that:

"not one single political or pressure group among the liberals, let alone the left wing, lifted either voice or finger to protest the monstrous social and civil injustice" of the US government's anti-gay witch-hunts.

Nor do any of the published interviews with Hay explain how he reconciled his personal position on the gay question with the fact that at about the time he joined the CP Stalin was enacting new anti-gay laws in the Soviet Union and dispatching hundreds of homosexuals to Siberia.

This is a fact which is drawn attention to in another useful book of source material on the history of the gay movement—*The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* by John Lauritsen and David Thorstad (Times Change Press).

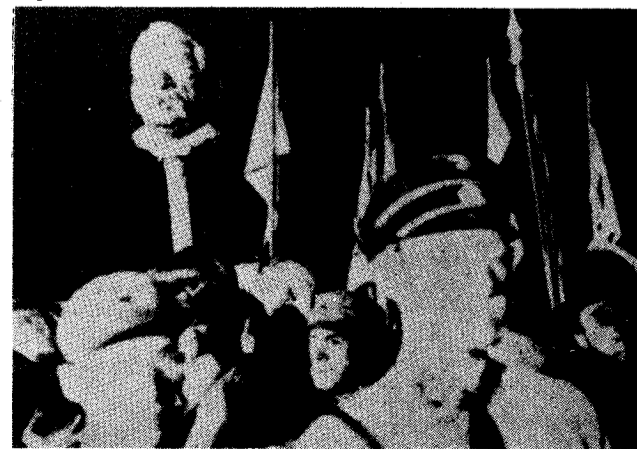
This book covers informatively if very briefly many aspects of the history of the struggle for gay liberation in the USA and Britain along with political/biographical sketches of Sir Richard Burton, Walt Whitman, Edward Carpenter and the great pioneer of scientific research on sex Dr. Magnus Hirschfield of the German Institute for Sexual Science (which was suppressed by Hitler in the 1930s).

The authors are especially interested in the relations between the gay movement and socialism. And in this context they concentrate on the German Social Democratic Party's advocacy of gay rights before the First World War and on the situation in Russia after 1917.

(The writings of the revisionist Social Democratic leader Edward Bernstein *On Homosexuality* have just been published in English by the British and Irish Communist Organisation—a Stalinist group who have added a grotesquely reactionary introduction).

One of the first acts of the revolutionary government of the Bolsheviks was the abolition of all anti-homosexual laws as part of a general policy of "the absolute non-intervention of the state and society into sexual matters so long as no-one is injured, and no-one's interests are encroached upon."

They saw this as the belated implementation of the gains of the bourgeois democratic revolution and their approach was partly guided by the Code Napoleon.



Nazis carry bust of Magnus Hirschfield before setting it on fire

Repressive laws were reinstated by Stalin in 1934 and remain in force until now.

At the same time a reactionary ideological campaign was unleashed by the Stalinist regime. It is reflected in the startling change in the treatment of homosexuality in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia quoted by Lauritsen and Thorstad.

The entry in the first edition of 1930 (and presumably written earlier) is based on the work of Magnus Hirschfield and of Freud, who both regarded homosexuality as a natural expression of human sexual feeling.

When Stalin's henchmen had purged the Encyclopedia the entry was reduced to the following (1971 edition):

"Homosexuality, a sexual perversion consisting in unnatural attraction to persons of the same sex. It occurs in persons of both sexes. The penal statutes of the USSR, the socialist countries and even some bourgeois states provide for the punishment of homosexuality."

Neither the book by Katz nor that by Lauritsen and Thorstad go very far towards the writing of a critical history of the gay movement.

But they have both begun to uncover some of the great wealth of material which will need to be examined in such a history.

And they both represent an important corrective to the all-too-common view that 1969 was the day when the gay movement began and was the beginning of the end of millennia of gay oppression.

Of course, the other corrective to any tendency towards that view today is that in Gay Pride Week 1980 the British law has recently upheld as "reasonable" the dismissal of John Saunders from his job in Scotland; in Iran last week the Islamic regime put to death a new group of "drug addicts, homosexuals and prostitutes"; and in Greece the government has launched a new anti-gay witch-hunt.

These examples could be all too easily multiplied. They show how extremely brittle are the gains so far made by today's gay movement and so they point to the grave dangers of its growing political demobilisation.

And they underline the need for a serious commitment by the mass organisations of the working class against sexual oppression.

Revolutionary socialists must be in the forefront of the fight for that commitment.

For many that will involve throwing off a legacy not of the Bolsheviks but of Stalin—the still common view that in the warmth of socialist society homosexuality would melt away and problems of sexual oppression would resolve themselves.



NALGO RIGHT WING PUT ON DEFENSIVE



NALGO leaders in conference

This year's NALGO Annual Conference failed to reflect the changes in the union created by the successful action over pay comparability undertaken earlier in the year.

The main reason for this is that the majority of conference delegates were elected at Branch AGMs or Executive meetings that will have taken place before the industrial action, and the majority of resolutions will have been formulated at about the same time.

Nevertheless it was possible to discern a certain leftward development albeit hampered by a lack of national organisation.

In the year since the last conference, the Communist Party's "NALGO Progressive Alliance" has collapsed completely, and failed to even produce a bulletin for this year.

The NPA was based on two groups of lower bureaucrats and

their supporters, one in the Scottish District Council and the other in the Metropolitan District Council.

Relations between these two seem to have deteriorated seriously over the last year as a result of the electoral successes of the Scottish group on the NEC while their former partners in London have been left behind.

Orators

The left orators and organisers of previous years from Scotland-Steele, White and MacFadden—were this year able to sit on the rostrum in comfort to watch the desperate antics of their erstwhile London colleagues in 'Progress'.

The SWP-led NALGO Action Group were present in about the same numbers as in the last two or three years and had no distinctive impact beyond that made by their handful of experienced speakers—notably Will Fancy (Lewisham) and Barry

White (Hertsmere).

NAG has hung so much of their experience on flat rate pay claims that when the pay issue is removed from the agenda to a special meeting later in the year they find themselves with no clear reason for being there at all.

The fact that the members are not satisfied with this disorganisation of the left in NALGO was reflected in the large attendance at most of the fringe meetings held by the various left groups.

Notable among these was the first appearance of 'NALGO Left', a grouping based on the North West-North Wales District, and also an unofficial meeting on the pay question called by the Islington Branch.

Failures

Both meetings were characterised by a search for tactical agreement that had been the reason for the failure of earlier attempts of the same kind.

But in the absence of a struggle for a clear programme, as opposed to short term organisational manoeuvres, no group or combination of groups will be able to build a force capable of replacing the existing rotten leadership and inspiring a fighting spirit among the membership.

Despite all these problems in the left wing of the conference there were a few important advances made.

The first day of conference is always devoted to separate meetings of the various service groups, and the highest point of militancy this year came in the Health Group meeting which backed calls for industrial action in support of pay claims by

nurses and midwives.

Few speakers were prepared at this stage to argue for open strike action but the whole tone of the discussion focussed on the need for action now to ensure the future existence of services for patients.

The other service groups did not achieve this same height of militancy, but pay remained the key debate in each of them, with new technology a close second.

Local Government is the largest of the groups, and it was warned that the employers had clearly indicated that they were unwilling to meet the NALGO claim.

The debate was diffused to a large degree by the decision to recall the Group to discuss progress in the pay negotiations which were due to open on 20 June.

The National Local Government Committee had to promise that it would not pull back from organising industrial action if and when it proved necessary, but would not be tied down to preparing a specific programme of action at this stage.

It will require quite a lot more experience of industrial action before resolutions of that kind are likely to succeed in NALGO.

After all, this year's action on comparability was the first national industrial action in the history of the union and few members have much experience of fighting the bureaucrats on terrain of this kind.

The first day of full conference even heard some token militancy from President John Meek, who called on the whole union to support their colleagues in the Health Services and their former colleagues

whose pensions were under threat.

He defended the refusal of NALGO to cooperate with Heseltine's new demands for manpower statistics in preparation for further cuts.

Two rule change motions—opposed by the NEC—ensured that any person accepting a blacked post would be kicked out of the union or not allowed to join.

Backing

But a further left wing move to ensure that NEC candidates had the backing of their own branches failed to be carried.

This was based around the case of Sheila Smith, a long serving NEC member who is not even a steward in her own (GLC) Branch.

A second left wing move to give NALGO the right under rule to affiliate to any organisation having aims and objectives consistent with the NALGO constitution was also defeated when the NEC argued that it was a backdoor method of affiliating to the Labour Party.

The third day began with the now regular economic policy debate, which led once again to the passing of NALGO's own variant of the alternative economic strategy complete with import controls and wage policy.

Action against cuts

A significant gain by the left was made with the victory of a resolution backing industrial action against any cuts, whereas previously policy had restricted industrial action to situations where NALGO members jobs

were at risk.

This leaves the way open for joint actions with tenants and clients against reductions in services.

SWP/NAG opposed this motion and counterposed to it their own menu of forms of industrial action. They were heavily defeated and missed an opportunity to put teeth into a conference position by presenting their line as a helpful amendment instead of as a dialectical alternative.

Thursday afternoon centred upon the new technology question, and showed one of the major weaknesses of the left wing.

There was widespread agreement on the need to generate and support a British micro-technology industry, a view supported by the CP both in debate and in their fringe meeting with guest speaker Derek Robinson.

In effect this motion means that NALGO jobs will be destroyed by British micro-technology as opposed to the nasty foreign variety!

Weakness of left

The overall impression is of great possibilities for action from NALGO, but of a crippling weakness among the present left elements in mounting a challenge to the leadership through a clear alternative programme, which must now include open trade union defiance of the Tory government and its plans to destroy the public services.

JOIN THE WSL!

Returned to office after five years of Labour betrayals, the Tory government has immediately begun wielding a sharpened axe on jobs, conditions and social services. Trade union rights face imminent legal attack. Prices are already rocketing upwards.

Plum sectors of state industry will be handed to the Tories' profiteering big business backers; and the pay rises to police and armed forces mark only the prelude to increased state violence against pickets and anti-fascists and an intensified army crackdown in the occupied North of Ireland.

The Callaghan-Healey leadership has made it clear that it will oppose any perspective other than settling down and meekly accepting five years of Tory devastation.

And, though they have once more dusted off their near-forgotten "socialist" speeches, Labour's 'left wing' MPs have continued to duck away from any fight to remove Callaghan.

TUC leaders, too, have set out to establish a basis for collaboration with Thatcher and the Tory cabinet, paralleling their anti-working class alliance with Wilson and then Callaghan.

But the working class has experienced and overcome such betrayals before—to topple Heath's union-bashing government in 1974, and smash through Callaghan's reactionary Phase 4 of wage controls in a series of monumental pay battles in the winter of 1978.

These experiences are not dead. They point to the way that jobs, social services and hard-won union rights can be defended against renewed Tory attacks.

But a principled, revolutionary leadership is needed if the Labour traitors, the TUC collaborators and their hangers-on in the Communist Party are to be exposed and pushed aside, and the mass struggles mobilised that can defeat and remove the Tory government.

Such a leadership must fight day in and day out for a programme of *transitional demands* which, starting from today's conditions and today's consciousness within the working class, lead workers to grasp the necessity for socialist revolution.

And in taking up democratic demands—such as an end to racial and sexual discrimination, it must show the crucial role that must be played by the working class as the only consistently revolutionary class capable of leading the struggle for the emancipation of mankind.

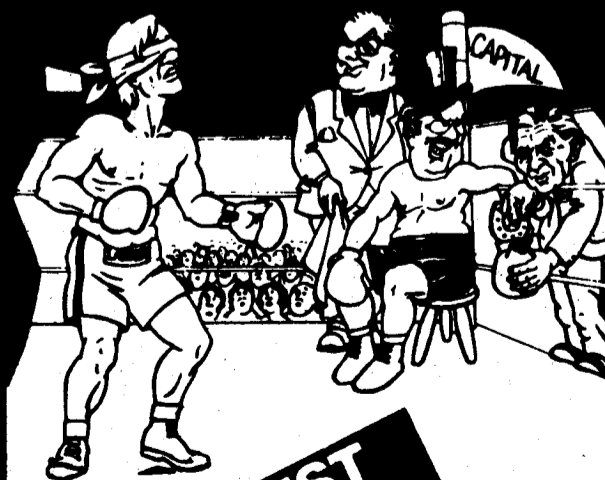
And it must fight on an *international* basis—mobilising solidarity for anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles—whether in Ireland, South Africa or elsewhere throughout the world, and drawing strength and political lessons from revolutionary upheavals such as that which ousted the hated Shah in Iran. This means fighting for the reconstruction of the Trotskyist Fourth International.

To this end, the Workers Socialist League is affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee which fights to reaffirm and develop the method and principles of the 1938 Transitional Programme, and for full discussion in the world Trotskyist movement.

The next period will see major class struggles in Britain. A principled Marxist leadership is essential. Our movement though strong in programme is small in numbers.

JOIN US and take forward the struggle for socialism!

DON'T GO INTO THE FIGHT BLINDFOLD!



GET SOCIALIST PRESS ★ For a clear lead in the struggle against wage control, cuts and redundancies

SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Press

RATES:

Trial sub (UK):
Six issues £2

Six months £8.00
One year £14.00

Europe:
Six months £9.00

Rest of the World:
Six months £10.00

Please send me trial sub/six months/one year of Socialist Press. I enclose

Name.....
Address.....

Send to: WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

COHSE conference: no call to break from RCN

In this year's conference of the health service union COHSE, David Williams, Assistant General Secretary, spelt out the betrayal facing nurses over their pay claim.

Banging the table to rapturous applause, Williams recommended branches to vote against the government's 13-14% pay offer declaring:

"Let no-one be mistaken. This means business. If we go down this road we must be careful to ensure we win."

Apart from this call for caution Williams made no attempt to explain what action

was proposed after rejecting the offer and no attempt was made to unite other health service workers alongside the nurses.

However the clearest indication of where Williams and the NEC stand came when they opposed a resolution calling for the banning of dual membership with the RCN.

It is hard to see how a COHSE rejection of the pay offer can mean any type of "business" except business as usual if the union allows into its ranks members of an organisation whose constitution bans any form of industrial action.

Albert Spanswick was even more militant in his verbal

condemnation of the NHS cuts. He declared the whole labour movement must be mobilised to denounce government policies and save the welfare state.

He then went on to oppose a motion from Essex Hall branch calling for joint action alongside industrial workers!

Mass action

It must be spelt out clearly that denunciation will not reverse government policies. Only mass action is capable of winning anything.

Pay and cuts cannot be seen as separate issues.

They are both part and parcel of the same attack and

once it is accepted that profit is the central criterion and not social need, then the same logic requiring the closure of car firms and steel mills requires also the closure of schools and hospitals.

A clear call must go out now to all nurses to unite alongside NALGO and seek the support of industrial sections of workers.

No government-Labour or Tory-has ever been given a mandate to attack the NHS, and the whole labour movement must be mobilised not in denunciation but in action in a general strike to bring this government down.



Spanswick

Vospers fight on wages

With over 2000 engineering workers at Vosper Thornycroft's (Woolston) shipyard still out on unofficial strike and another 333 facing a management lock-out at Vosper Ship Repair (Eastern Docks), shipbuilding and ship repair in Southampton is being hit very hard.

Electricians and fitters at VSR have responded by carrying out an occupation of key buildings and the strike at Woolston remains extremely solid with all EETPU and TGWU members outside, although some workers (AUEW, UCATT) continue to cross picket lines... under orders from union officials!

As this report is filed these bureaucrats have failed to lead a return to work but it was to be at Friday's mass meeting where the crucial decisions will be taken.

Meanwhile production of warships for NATO is virtually halted.

The dispute at Woolston, which erupted last week, reflects workers' deep hostility to the 1980 wage deal imposed throughout British Shipbuilders in collaboration with Confed. union officials.

Speed-up

As in other nationalised industries, the drive for speed-up and productivity are the central features of this far-reaching sellout which leaves workers facing even greater attacks: on jobs (new technology), in job demarcation (flexibility of labour) and wage cuts (Confed's 13%).

In addition, by transferring twelve EETPU members from Vickers BS (Harrow) and paying them £10 over the local weekly rate the employer has sought to confront the workforce and ram through its 'rationalisation' programme.

Significant elements of this programme can be found in a document titled 'Vospers National Agreement' part C, clause 8.

Here we see that 'flexibility' is the order of the day:

*Steelworkers (ASB): Total interchange between all sections of ASB.

*Electricians (EETPU): Flexibility on installation work with ASB members.

*Engineering (AUEW): Flexibility in fitting work with EETPU and CSMWU members.

*General repair (TGWU): Flexibility in repair with ASB and CSMWU members.

Transfer of labour to be effected between any section of British Shipbuilders. Contracted labour to be brought in where and when necessary. Union officers to confine their activities to 'essential' tasks.

Stone age

As one picket quickly pointed out the 'essential' task of union bureaucrats "... is to help the bosses reduce our living standards back to the stone age ..."

In voting with their feet, however, workers at Vospers have rejected the Confed-inspired betrayal. Now they should seek to extend their unofficial strike into every section of British Shipbuilders.

*Reject the Confed National Agreement!

*For wage levels including automatic 'cost-of-living' index to be assessed by elected workers' committees!

*For work sharing throughout British Shipbuilders to defend all jobs without loss of pay!

*For an alternative to armaments production under workers' control!

College workers fight back

While NUPE sponsored MP Reg Race was bemoaning the low-pay of University workers in Parliament last week, a group of that union's members in Oxford's Pembroke College were organising strike action for improvements in pay and conditions.

And when, last Friday, the college authorities failed to respond to their ultimatum, all 47 NUPE staff walked out.

Since they joined the union at the end of last year, though some minor improvements were made, deplorably low wages and shocking working conditions have remained unchanged.

Promises were made and broken and the workers' frustration increased.

Then last month contact was made with the local Student

Trade Union Liaison Committee and the stewards and members decided to force the issue as repeated delays were causing demoralisation.

Six months of union subscriptions paid for nothing was not due to the college authorities alone, since responsibility for the union's affairs has rested throughout with full-time NUPE official Alf Collier, whose endless patience with the employers' delays and double dealing was clearly more to the liking of management than the union members.

The demand for recognition is now central to the workers' terms for a return to work, along with a minimum rate of

£1.38 an hour, as recommended by the Clegg Commission.

Though there are clear divisions within the College management, all the indications are that they intend to take the union on and break the strike.

Behind their decision lies the cartel-like relationship between the dozens of different colleges which make up Oxford University's bastion of bourgeois learning.

An indication of the College's determination to fight came at Monday's abortive management-union negotiations where present at the meeting were 'representatives' of the non-union staff still working.

The fact that Collier allowed the meeting to proceed under those conditions and his withholding so far of official support, means that the necessary campaign into NUPE will need to tackle the union leadership to prove successful.

St Mary's gets fresh reprieve

The Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Area Health Authority continues to run into difficulties in its attempts to live within cash limits by cutting back the local health service.

Having modified their proposals and extended the time scale several times to defuse opposition to their plans, they have found that the opposition has grown.

At first they planned to close six wards and the casualty department at St. Mary's, Harrow Road, by April 1980.

Then they agreed to a consultative period with closure by

October 1980.

Then they decided that the casualty department could be kept open five days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Their latest scheme, only made public on June 18, would mean casualty staying open 24 hours every day, but for much of the time only "walking wounded"—not ambulance cases—would be accepted and arrangements would be made for ambulance cases to be diverted to another local hospital.

The cuts at St. Mary's outlined in the consultative document drew many dozens of letters of opposition from all parts of the community and hospital staff.

Two lobbies and pavement meetings were held on May 14 and June 18. Such was the opposition that at the AHA meeting on June 18 a motion to refer back the whole document to the officers was only narrowly defeated.

Instead the decision was to refer it to the CHC. It now seems likely that further lengthy delays will result.

Inside St Mary's on Friday 12

June the stewards and hospital workers successfully prevented medical equipment being moved from St. Mary's in Harrow Road to the other St. Mary's in Praed Street.

Weirs sackings

780 jobs are under the axe at the Cathcart and Alloa plants of Weirs Pumps, in a redundancy plan which management blame on reduced demand for their products.

The firm had been regarded as one of the few stable elements in the devastated Scottish engineering industry, though the sackings follow on redundancies in Weirs British plants this year, and run alongside a proposed 120 redundancies at Weir Westgarth.

Stewards of unions at Cathcart—where 590 jobs are to go—have met and imposed a total ban on overtime and called for supporting action to prevent work being sub-contracted from the factory.

But the stewards' statement focusses heavily on seeking means of propping up the company, and shows that they have not yet taken the decisive step which is the prerequisite to a serious fight against the sackings: declare an unequivocal commitment to occupy the plant and begin the fight for concrete supporting action from the local and national labour movement.

Adwest day of action

The first day of action in support of the 60 sacked workers at Adwest Engineering in Reading was highly successful.

The 150 pickets, including a coach load from Oxford, succeeded in stopping many of the scabs going in. Only a handful of the 300 defying the strike went in.

Scabs protected by heavy police tactics ran a gauntlet of militant pickets as they arrived at the site.

The strike is in support of the sacked TGWU convenor, deputy convenor, and all TGWU stewards who have been sacked along with 60 workers after defending a victimised worker.

After initial support in the form of letters from both the TGWU and the AUEW, both unions are now playing a scandalous role.

The TGWU is refusing to declare the strike official and the AUEW has concluded a deal giving them sole negotiating rights inside the plant whilst all the TGWU remain sacked!

Monday's picket strengthened the strike, which is to continue. Mass pickets will be called every Monday and a further mass day of action on a date to be announced.

The strike committee is to lobby the TGWU Rules Revision Conference this week.

All TGWU branches and committees should demand that the strike is made official and the full resources of the union thrown into the fight to defeat this vicious attack by management.

Messages of support and donations to the strike fund should be sent to Danny Broderick, 46 Berkley Avenue, Reading.



SOCIALIST PRESS



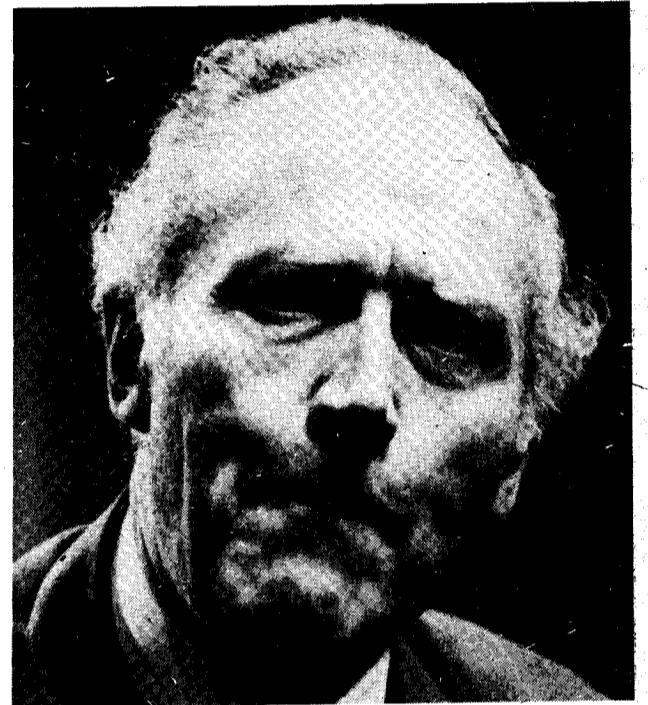
Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement

AFTER THE STEEL AND BL STRIKES—NEW LEADERS NEEDED!

Saturday 5 July at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham
11.00 a.m.—5.00 p.m. Credentials £1

Write to: G. Webster, 169, Barclay Rd., Warley, West Midlands

Basnett's bright idea turns out CALLAGHAN'S INQUIRY NIGHTMARE



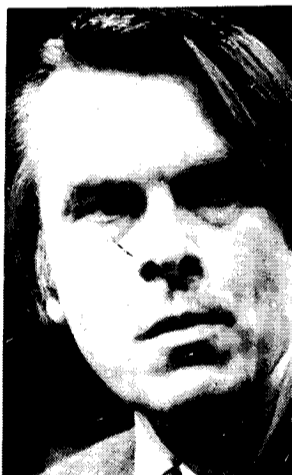
Basnett

It all must have seemed such a good idea at first.

At a point when Labour's left wing, encouraged by the 1978 victory over Callaghan's 5% pay policy, seemed all set to force in a package of democratic reforms to the Party constitution, David Basnett of the GMWU came forward with what appeared the ideal diversion—an inquiry.

After all, an inquiry takes the matter off the floor of the conference—where members are watching—into closed offices; it takes decisions out of the hands of elected delegates and places them in the hands of full-time bureaucrats; and by imposing a year's delay it must surely offer the right wing leeway to regroup and time for the left wing campaign to run out of steam.

But things have worked out very differently for Basnett's inquiry. Far from taking place against a background of leisurely manoeuvre and an apathetic membership, it has become a focus for heated debate in both the Labour Party and the trade unions as workers have moved forward with militant demands for action against the Tories and for socialist policies.



Owen, Callaghan, Williams: "another fine mess..."

Far from the left losing steam, it has been the right wing that—for all its bureaucratic positions of power and its monopoly control of the Parliamentary party—has found itself left high and dry.

Matters were brought to a head by the standing ovation for Benn at the Party's Special Conference last month.

Both Callaghan and his chief union backers recognised that they could not hope to manoeuvre out all of the demo-



cratic reforms so insistently demanded by the mass of the Party's active membership.

Some concessions would have to be made if control was to be kept in the hands of the right wing.

A two-pronged move was therefore launched to bottle things up:

*on the one hand, union leaders from Terry Duffy through to Communist Party member Ken Gill (TASS) were wheeled out to declare their confidence in Callaghan as Party leader.

*on the other hand, the Commission of Inquiry, meeting in the ASTMS country hide-away, began to formulate a "compromise" deal designed to pacify all concerned.

The outcome fell far short of the initial hopes of Callaghan and the right wing.

They were forced to concede the proposal for reselection of all sitting MPs—a major setback for extreme right wing Labourites. Indeed it had been partly to avert the implementation of this policy—carried at last October's conference—that the Inquiry had been established.

Vote in favour

Callaghan was also forced to vote in favour of taking the election of the party leader out of the exclusive grip of the right wing dominated PLP and instead establishing an "electoral college" consisting of 50% PLP, 25% unions, 20% constituencies and 5% affiliated bodies.



The percentages have of course been arranged to favour the retention of a right wing leadership: and the very "electoral college" notion is designed to divert from the necessary demand of regular election of the leader from the Party conference.

But the ending of the PLP's stranglehold on the Party leadership has enraged the right wing beyond belief.

For the same reason they are even angry at the Inquiry's proposal to submit the Party manifesto for "endorsement" not to the elected NEC, but to the new electoral college.

Denounced

Labour 'lefts' have—for different reasons—also denounced these last two proposals, which fall far short of the demands voiced by a growing campaign for democratisation of the Party.

But there seems little doubt that in fighting to oppose the Inquiry's proposed "compromise" formulae left wingers will find themselves up against the block votes of union bureaucrats who have no intention of permitting more than token democracy in the Labour Party.

The cause of the left will however be made easier by the growing moves towards a split in the party by the most pig-headed sections of the right wing in the Parliamentary Labour Party.
Hayes and Harlington MP

Neville Sandelson has once again set the pace, declaring that the whole country "would breathe a sigh of relief" if the Labour Party were to split.

Sandelson is one of a group of 20 diehard reactionaries who have already declared themselves not willing to be bound by Labour's conference decisions this year, and who have raised the tattered Tory flag of *opposition to withdrawal from the EEC.

*opposition to unilateral disarmament.

*opposition to renationalisation of "hived off" industries without compensation.

Though many of these 20 are back bench "wild men", their views at least on the EEC and military policy are shared by shadow ministers David Owen and William Rodgers as well as lurking former minister Shirley Williams.

And they would expect to secure the backing of the numbers of right wing MPs who will be dumped by their local parties as soon as reselection comes into operation.

It is on this basis that Sandelson calls for a split by the right from "those who seek to destroy Parliamentary democracy and undermine national security".

An only slightly less pugnacious meeting of the right wing Manifesto group of MPs

last week drew an attendance of 70, including shadow minister Roy Hattersley.

It is only the near certainty that they would embark on a course to a lifetime in political limbo that holds back these reactionaries from making their often threatened break away from the Labour Party and away from the workers' movement with which they have so little in common.

The task facing Labour activists in the next period is to *step up* the struggle to drive out these alien elements, along with the Callaghan/Healey leadership which has always rested upon their support.

This means fighting not only to carry through the fight for reselection, democratic election of the Party leadership, and NEC control of the manifesto, but combining this with the struggle for precisely the kind of socialist policies so vigorously rejected by the right wing:

*Britain out of NATO! For unilateral nuclear disarmament. Troops out of Ireland now!

*Withdraw from the EEC! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

*Mobilise working class action to bring down the Tories and force the nationalisation of industry and the banks without compensation under workers' management!

FUND

The Oxford WSL Summer Fete has given our Special Fund a big boost this week. Together with other donations it has brought our total to £2668.30, putting us within reach of our target of £3,000 which we must complete by the WSL summer school in July.

However, the news on the Monthly Fund is not at all good. With only a week to go we have raised only £352.18. This leaves us with £400 to raise in seven days—a very tall order indeed.

The situation is serious and time is running short. We appeal to every reader and every supporter of Socialist Press to seriously consider a donation to this fund. This money is not some luxury that we can afford to do without. It is essential for the running of our weekly press.

Please send us a donation. Our address is:

Socialist Press Fund
BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX

Adwest picket—p.11

