

Workers Power

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★ INSIDE ★

The law vs Unions
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what went
wrong?

General Strike to Smash Tory Attack

LORD DENNING and his Court of Appeal have once more ripped the mask off 'impartial justice'. This bewigged militant of the bosses has shown that, for all his eighty one years, his class reflexes are as quick as ever. Jumping even Thatcher and Joseph's gun, he has demonstrated what the unions can expect from the courts.

On the other hand the crisis situation has shown Bill Sirs' mettle — base through and through. On Monday, January 28th, speaking to marchers during the Welsh general strike, he could tearfully promise to, 'fight to the death'. He had, 'No intention of letting down my executive, my union or the working class in general.'

He offered to go to gaol if his executive ordered it. The next morning The Guardian carried the information that Sirs had, 'said last night that the executive would abide by the ruling.' A 400 strong picket of the executive was not enough to change his mind.

Other leaders, the Lefts like Arthur Scargill, Emlyn Williams and Mick McGahey, have been more outspoken on the law. Indeed, they have either promised to defy it or encouraged the steel workers to do so. Scargill thus advises the steelworkers to, 'accept the advice of their trade union, come out on strike, and win their dispute.' in defiance of Lord Denning.

So far so good! But what when their executive advises them to surrender to Denning? To go back to work, to lose their dispute? Emlyn Williams

could go as far as to declare himself, 'a little apprehensive' about the Wales TUC's postponement of an all out strike until March 10th — which effectively means abandoning the steelworkers' struggle.

Scargill has been promising action from the Yorkshire miners to delirious audiences over cuts, the reinstatement of Derek Robinson and the steel strike. Always he is careful to slip in the proviso, 'When requested' or 'When the call from your executive comes'. The largely right wing executives have so far obliged Arthur by not presenting these cheques for payment.

What Scargill, Williams, Gill and McGahey will not do is take action off their own bats and urge the rank and file in the other unions to resist the sell-outs and betrayals of their own leaders.

That is why, despite many actions and more words that we could agree with these 'Lefts' over, they are not a trustworthy alternative to the Murrays, Duffy's Sirs and Chapples.

In the last analysis they will give in to the right. They will keep silent and leave the rank and file to fight these traitors on their own. However, at the



Steelworkers' demonstration in Birmingham Jan 11th.

Photo: J.Sturrock (Report)

Against closures, cuts and anti-union laws

moment, even the most militant workers have enormous faith in Scargill and co. His role as the general of the flying pickets from 1972 to 1980 has assured him of this. Such workers should demand that Scargill does what he says — that he support arrested pickets with strike action — that he break with the bureaucrats' etiquette and support militants against Sirs and co.

Another key battle is the battle of ideas. The millionaire press and TV, the 'official' BBC, all pump out an endless barrage of propaganda about the impartiality of the law, against 'political' strikes, the Tories' democratic mandate. The right wing leaders have no argument with this, they agree with it. The Lefts plead exceptional circumstances or 'unjust laws'. We must be clear, the Law, Denning's judgements, the new anti-union Bill, all existing law is CLASS law. The judges are as much agents of the bosses as the Tories. They can, and will, rule any effective means of struggle by workers illegal. The question of the 'rule of Law' is a question of strength. Existing law presents a balance of forces between our class and theirs. In the last analysis, under capitalism, might is right. Thus to obey anti-union judgements when we are strong enough to break them is an act of treachery.

As for the, 'It's political' bogey — what the bosses are saying is, 'We can use all means, the law, the police and the army to enforce our political will on you, (provided that once in five years we fool 10% of the electorate into voting the way the TV and press tell them).

When the police and the court attack unions, pickets, social services etc, you cannot react politically. (except by voting differently in five years' time.)

Our answer must be — a class offensive against us is political. We will use our strongest weapon, the mobilisation of the whole working class in a general strike.

An immediate general strike is imperative. It must be prepared for at two levels. The bureaucrats must not be allowed to lead the strike to defeat. In every area democratic rank and file strike committees from all industries must be coordinated into Councils of Action.

As soon as possible these councils of action must be co-ordinated on a national basis — they must elect delegates to a national strike committee to take control of the strike

The picket lines which will face intensified police harassment in the weeks ahead, must form themselves into organised defence groups capable of meeting the inevitable repression of the state SPG, police and army that we will face in a general strike situation.

The general strike must have clear political goals that reverse the major prongs of the present offensive. We must demand
***Reverse the Cuts — Restore in full (at 1980 values) Healey and Heseltine's cuts.**
***No closures - No Redund-**

ancies in steel, cars, mines, railways, etc.

*** Meet the claims of the steel workers, BL workers, water workers and others in full. Abandon the 'cash limits' wage cutting policy.**

*** Kill the Anti-union Employment Bill — defend the right to picket and organise.**

The call from militant workers for, 'Thatcher Out!' and 'Kick out the Tories' represent a healthy, combative class instinct. Revolutionaries, however, should not propagandise this slogan as the central object of a general strike. Why not? Surely we are in favour of getting rid of them?

Yes, but this slogan is completely ambiguous about what 'getting rid of the Tories' means. An early general election? An insurrection?

It will play into the hands of the TUC platform orators. Faced with the possibility of a general election they will use this slogan to liquidate the strike and its demands. It is totally wrong to limit a general strike in advance to an electoral outcome. Councils of Action, defence groups, once they are built lay the basis of going beyond an electoral mock battle. They can become the fighting bodies for direct working class power and the democratic organs of that power once it is established.

TUC and anti-union laws:

In a newspaper article soft-soaping Prior's anti-trade union Employment Bill, which went before Parliament on December 17th 1979, Tory MP Richard Needham commented: "Plant bargaining has become more and more common as the power of a few to disrupt whole industries has increased". This remark reveals the thinking and central strategic goal of the ruling class. The bosses need to tackle and shackle the main obstacle to their plans of making the working class pay, through low wages, poor services and high unemployment, for the mounting economic crisis.

To do this they need to break the power of the trade unions, and, crucially, the organisations of the shop floor. These are the bodies that the capitalists realise could thwart their best laid plans for cutting wages and slashing jobs.

The current Tory Employment Bill is designed to break union power. Unlike its predecessor, the Industrial Relations Act of the Heath Government, it is directing its attack at fundamental aspects of trade union activity rather than at the whole trade union apparatus. But, should the situation require it the Tories are well prepared to go further. Prior has declared: "If we can show to the country that we are on the right lines and getting industrial peace then perhaps we can go further".

The Bill centres on negating the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act (1974) and amendment (1976). These acts merely reaffirmed the right, established in 1906, for workers to picket anywhere in pursuance of their dispute. The Employment Bill also seeks to remove the protective legislation of the Employment Protection Act by repealing for example the 'Fair Wages' Schedule 11 clause.

The existing laws were not particularly far-reaching but they did theoretically allow workers extended picketing rights. In fact the police have never had any problems in finding pretexts to attack and arrest pickets. The bevy of arrests in the steel strike where strikers are charged with Obstruction illustrates this.

The present Bill aims to go further and lay workers open to criminal charges merely for picketing. The resurgence of flying pickets in the strikes during the last months of the Labour government, notably in the lorry drivers' strike, once again raised the spectre of determined rank and file resistance to the bosses' plan.

The bosses needed to challenge the picket weapon, particularly the solidarity of flying picket, which had become the bogey of the Tories, the employers and their press. It was not surprising that Prior, when introducing the Bill, said that one of its main intentions was to prevent: "Picketing excesses that so distressed the nation last winter".

On picketting

The Bill restricts the right of picketting to workers at their own place of work. This means that solidarity and flying pickets will be illegal - lorry drivers would not be able to picket depots or factories which they normally deliver to. Workers within a combine would only only be able to picket their own plant, so workers at Longbridge could not picket Canley, for example. Fellow trade unionists would join picket lines at the risk of being taken to court. Significantly the only exception to this rule is trade union officials to "control" pickets. The Codes of Practice, unspecified at the moment, that the Bill allows Parliament to pass at its discretion, are a carte blanche for the Government to launch a legal onslaught on every dispute it finds difficult to handle. Furthermore, the action of workers who block goods, in solidarity with a dispute (what the Tories call 'secondary blacking') could well become illegal. When the House of Lords ruled

in favour of the NUJ on this issue Prior remarked: "we shall take whatever action seems necessary in the light of that judgement and bring it before the House in due course". The Employment Bill is clearly seen as the first installment!

The ruling in favour of the NUJ should not lead us to think that the capitalist Law Lords have any love for the Unions. It was more probably a nudge to the Tories to show them the weakness of the Law. The very same Law Lords had previously ordered the NGA to pay £84,000 damages because it blacked the anti-union publishers of the Nottingham Evening Post. These measures demonstrate that the central prong in the Tory attack on the unions is the restriction of picketting, blacking, solidarity - in short effective rank and file trade unionism.

On the closed shop

To effectively shackle union activity the Tories need to combine it with an attack on union organisation. The closed shop, 100% trade unionism is essential for the working class. It ensures unity in action, can prevent scabbing and can put paid to divisions in the work force. Of course to fulfil these aims completely it needs to be a closed shop imposed and controlled by the rank and file - many current agreements are for the convenience of bureaucrats and bosses alike.

Despite this the closed shop is a potentially crucial weapon for our class against the bosses and bureaucrats. Prior aims to attack it in two ways. First he wants to extend the scope for people opting out of unions to anyone who "objects on grounds of conscience or other deeply held personal convictions to being a member of any trade union or of a particular trade union". This is a veritable scabs charter. The Employment Appeals Tribunals who will arbitrate will be backed up by the courts who will have the right to interfere in union affairs. In case any potential scabs were in doubt as to how to use this 'right' a Tory MP spelt it out for them:

"A person may object to a highly politicised style of leadership of a particular trade union. A person may object because a trade union has not represented him or her properly in the past, in that it has either been inefficient or slack in a matter or a dispute taken to an industrial tribunal. Secondly Prior is saying that future agreements will have to be ratified by a majority of 80% of all those entitled to vote in a secret ballot. Who runs and finances these ballots? Who decides who is entitled to vote? Again it will be the state via Tribunals and the courts. If the unions resist Prior is suggesting compensation payments, from union funds, of over £16,000 to scabs who insist on breaking the closed shop.

Ballots

The government hopes to guarantee state interference in the unions by providing money for secret ballots on - the calling and ending of strikes - amalgamations - elections of officials - rule amendments

What strings will be attached to these funds? In effect they will make unions



BSC Steelworkers picketing Hadfields private company: this type of action is the Tories target. John Sturrock (Report)

Too little and too late

financially dependent on the government, and as the old adage says: 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. This move is one step away from the imposition of compulsory secret ballots which will, in fact, undermine active, workplace-based trade unionism.

Protective legislation

For good measure the Bill proposes to extend the period before a worker can appeal against unfair dismissal from 6 to 12 months and to allow bosses to exact costs from dismissed workers who are deemed (by the state tribunals) to be, 'frivolous or vexatious'.

This will strengthen the hands of the bosses who already enjoy a 72% success rate in the tribunals for unfair dismissal hearings. In addition, pregnant women will have to inform their employers of when they intend to return to work, in writing, before they leave. After that there are various bureaucratic procedures that mothers have to go through. Even then the employer will not be bound to give a woman her original job back but can instead offer, 'suitable alternative employment'. Should a woman refuse to accept this offer she will lose her right to any compensation.

Redundancy notice times have been reduced to 30 days (for 30 to 99 redundancies) and 90 for over 100. This will obviously undermine the development of resistance to closures or sackings.

The TUC response

The Employment Bill is a full scale political attack on the Labour Movement, its rights and activities. It is vital that the Bill is defeated outright - but how have the official leaders of the movement responded to this assault?

When Vauxhall workers struck for higher pay last year, TGWU National Officer Grenville Hawley wrote to the strikers, 'I have to advise you that the present picketing of the ports and elsewhere must cease forthwith, that is immediately, bearing in mind that this is not an official dispute. You will, of course, be aware of the difficulties that can be created for the trade union movement with the thinking of the present government with relation to picketing.'

This 'support' came at a time when the truncheon-wielding thugs of the SPG were savagely beating up Vauxhall strikers.

The Concordat, hatched last year between Callaghan and the TUC, anticipated many of the Tory proposals on picketing. The bureaucrats would like to be the ones to implement any limits, if this is done by the law it will impinge on their power and ability to control their members. They want the same end but have a different means of reaching it. This is why their campaign against the Employment Bill is so feeble. Although the Bill went before Parliament in December, the TUC's first major protest is not to be held until March 9th, its first day of action not until May 14th. This gives the Tories all the leeway they need to get the Bill through. The TUC still hope to keep the peace through protests aimed at appealing to the reasonableness of Prior. Len Murray has summed this up when he said, 'We shall try to persuade the Government to change course.'

The only thing that the TUC special conference on the Bill, on January 22nd, could come up with was support for the General Council's proposed day of action (which is not to include strikes according to the TUC!). Murray is not concerned at mobilising the 11.7 million workers represented at the conference. He prefers to rest his hopes on the enlightened elements of the ruling class, 'Some employers have already expressed their opposition to the Bill. All employers with doubts should warn the government

and the CBI.' A call to action, yes - but aimed at the bosses, not the working class. The TUC campaign will not succeed in defeating the Bill. Instead it will lead the working class straight into the arms of its enemies via the tribunals, the police thugs and the courts.

The way forward

Against this feebleness we argue for determined action NOW to stop the Employment Bill from ever reaching the statute book. The TUC must be forced to call an indefinite General Strike now to force the withdrawal of the Bill from Parliament.

The TUC should break off all talks with the Tories. Thatcher has nothing but contempt for the Labour Movement. As she put it herself, 'We will legislate whether or not.'



Thatcher Instead of hobnobbing with the enemy class the TUC must mobilise its forces for a General Strike, bring forward its days of action to link up with the striking steel workers.

If the Bill reaches the statute book the General Strike must continue and the laws be defied. Mass organised resistance to the Army and the police must be prepared.

This Bill must be defeated and when it is the Government and all its other anti-working class policies will be left in tatters. This will be a major victory for the working class and a major defeat for the bosses. We must build on it and not let them recover!

Mark Hoskisson

"Capitalism... has to mimic socialisation"

Nationalisation - in

whose interest?

By DAVE STOCKING

AS THE TORIES launch their onslaught on the public sector the lack of positive enthusiasm for 'public ownership' or 'nationalisation' is striking. Within private industry only mass redundancy or total closure really provoke calls for state intervention and then it usually stops short of demands for full or permanent 'nationalisation'.

Never has there been so much cynicism and apathy within the ranks of the organised labour movement on this question.

The 'New Left Wing' in the Labour Party, Tony Benn, Stuart Holland, Michael Meacher etc, have more or less abandoned the old, 'nationalisation of the commanding heights' ideology in favour of the programme which the 'Revisionists' of the late '50's and early '60's - Crossland, Gaitskell - advocated.

They argue for the National Enterprise Board to secure a 'controlling public holding' in a number of the largest companies, for, 'tripartite planning agreements' involving the government, unions and management. The proliferation of 'Workers' Plans' framed within a context of continued partial or total private ownership is another testimony to the decline in support for nationalisation.

Why has the centrepiece of Labourism's 'socialist programme' fallen into such disrepute and so lost its attraction for workers, even in a period of deep capitalist crisis.

Part of the explanation lies in the relentless pressure of anti-nationalisation propaganda on the working class - via the press, TV etc. The Labour Party and the trade unions have neither sought to combat this, nor, had they wished to, do they have the organs to do it - no daily paper for example.

However, propaganda alone would not suffice unless the direct experience of working people did not appear to confirm the Tory claims. Workers in the mines, on the railways and in steel have seen jobs slashed and real wages fall on a scale worse on average than in privately owned industry. Thus, the British Steel Corporation had some 270,000 workers in 1967. By 1975 this was down to 215,000. The workforce now stands at only 182,000 with a projected level of 100,000 by August 1981.

The same experience has faced the miners (1960 - 600,000 jobs, 1974 - 250,000) and the railway-workers (1960 - 515,000, 1974 - 190,000).

As the Tories turn off the taps to nationalised and municipalised industries and services they can, with increasing apparent justification, claim that nationalisation, 'does not work', and that profit alone ensures 'efficiency' and a 'good service'. The nationalised sector becomes associated with bad service, astronomical losses, poor wages and conditions and no job security.

NATIONALISATION UNDER CAPITALISM - A SOCIALIST MEASURE?

The real danger of all this is that the socialist programme itself becomes discredited. Yet revolutionary socialists have always argued that this was the acute danger and the inevitable end product of the reformist approach to nationalisation.

Nationalisation has always been seen as the keystone of the 'Socialist policies' beloved of the Labour Left. To them and to millions of workers it seems almost self-evident that state ownership equals socialism. Moreover, the Tories agree.

Revolutionary Marxists, on the contrary, have dissented sharply from this. For them the transfer of an isolated industry, or even several industries, into state ownership does not, in substance, alter their capitalist nature. Nor have these measures been taken solely by governments claiming to be Socialist. The Prussian Government in the 19th century nationalised the railways - a phenomenon repeated in every major European country. In fact, only the United States (hitherto the most prosperous and powerful imperialist power - able to exploit the whole world) has been able to avoid major nationalisations. Important sectors of transport, coal-mining, gas and steel production are in state ownership in countries like France, Italy, Belgium, Germany etc. Why? - not because Socialist governments have done it in furtherance of 'expropriating the expropriators' but because these essential parts of the base, the infrastructure of capitalist economy have ceased to be profitable enough in their own right to maintain themselves. The profit rates are not high enough to attract capital sufficient to re-structuring, re-equipping or sustaining against foreign competition these industries.

Yet they are, nevertheless, indispensable links in the chain of the profit system in its totality. Thus, when the automatic law of capitalist economy - profitability - fails to sustain an essential component of the system as a whole, the state has to step in. In a sense this is one of the, 'tributes that capitalism pays to socialism' it has to mimic socialisation to maintain itself.

STATE CAPITALIST NATIONALISATION

Yet this measure is, fundamentally, one of *state capitalism*. Why? Firstly, the state that does it is a capitalist state - that is its army, police, judiciary and bureaucracy exist to defend private property in the means of production - quite independent of who forms the government. The Chilean experience demonstrated this beyond a shadow of a doubt. Secondly, the fundamental levers of the economy, the largest and most profitable enterprises, the banks etc., remain in capitalist hands. Thirdly, production for profit - the law of value not planning - is the mainspring of the economy. The market, nationally and internationally, determines, in the last instance, what is produced, where and in what quantities. Fourthly, the workers



Corby Steelworkers: BSC nationalisation was not in their interests

remain exploited, having no decisive say in the use or allocation of the surplus their labour produces.

Nationalisation is the passage of ownership from a section of capitalists into the hands of the capitalist class as a whole, represented by the state.

The nationalised sectors are run entirely within the framework of the 'needs' of private industry - i.e. to maximise the profit rates in the private sector. Thus, the 'losses' of the public corporations are often in large measure, the 'gains' of the private capitalists who buy its products or loan it capital. Even the measure of nationalisation is, in effect, an act of indemnification for bankrupts - allowing them to get out without losses and pursue their calling elsewhere, or to live on the proceeds (with no risks) for a long time to come.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE STEEL INDUSTRY

Of course capitalists do not like nationalisation. Concentrating private property in the hands of the nominally 'democratic' state, runs the danger of suggesting to the working class the total statification of the economy, a situation that would make compensation to the former owners appear for what it was - massive unearned income, systematic exploitation. Statification is a necessary evil, to be dispensed with whenever and wherever possible.

All this is plainly demonstrable from the experience of the steel industry. When the industry was re-nationalised, under the second Wilson government (1967) the indemnification of the former owners was generous. In April 1965 Colville's shares were 28/- but they were compensated at the 1959-64 boom years' price of 47/6. Between 1967 and 1970, the BSC paid out £220 million to the old owners. About £45 million a year is still being paid to former owners.

Further the bankers and financiers have reaped a golden harvest from BSC. Interest payments account for over half the BSC's losses in the past four years (£680 million out of a total loss of £1,215 m.).

Moreover, BSC's losses indicate its total integration in and dependence on, the anarchic market - a market determined not by human

need but by competitive profitability. The attempts of both Labour and Tory governments to plan the economy, and of BSC to plan steel production in the long term, have met shipwreck time and time again. Thatcher and Joseph's *laissez faire* their reliance on market forces, will be no more successful in helping British capitalism to escape from its impasse. Steel's crisis is due, in the final analysis, neither to 'greedy workers' not to, 'incompetent management' but to the stagnation and deepening crises of the world capitalist system. In the years 1973-8, motor vehicle manufacture fell by 39%, industrial plant and steelwork by 38%, wire manufacture by 37%, shipbuilding and maritime engineering by 58% and construction 59%. The 1980 cyclical crisis (like the 1974-5 one) will see the UK's Gross Domestic Product fall by some 2%.

Capitalism will attempt to off-load the burden onto the working class. The question is whether the working class is willing to pay. The Tories' attack on the steelworkers, picking on what they believed was a section bled white by redundancies, led by an inept and collaborationist bureaucracy, is aimed at pioneering the way for the rest of the working class.

NATIONALISATION - A REVOLUTIONARY DEMAND

What then should be the approach of revolutionaries to the question of nationalisation?

Firstly, we must argue clearly that the existing state corporations are *capitalist*. They do not represent the 'nation'. Indeed, any supposed 'national interest' linking Britain's bosses and Britain's workers, is a fiction aimed at perpetuating the exploitation and oppression of the working class.

The support given to the steelworkers by their German, French and Scandinavian equivalents, from dockers and transport workers in Europe and beyond, demonstrates the real allies that must be sought. French and German steelworkers have fought hard battles against their employers. A united struggle is vital Davignon Plan, aimed at all the steelworkers in the EEC. This is why the economic

nationalism of calling for import controls is disastrous, since it makes this unity impossible.

The BSC management represents a capitalist boss, albeit the capitalist class as a whole. When we demand nationalisation we should be clear that this is not the end of the struggle, not a 'socialist measure' after which we can place a few ISTC or TGWU bureaucrats on the board. It is only the beginning of the struggle.

In the steel industry the most profitable sector was left unnationalised. We should demand its immediate and uncompensated nationalisation. We should demand the cancellation of the debts. Not a penny of the product of our labour to these parasites. Remembering that we have only cleared the decks of the steel bosses to face the boss class as a whole, we must fight for no job losses, for work-sharing and the right of inspection of the books, the right to observe management's committees. Not a token bureaucrat or two on the board but workers' control - a veto over the bosses' prerogatives.

Associated with this must be the fight for nationalisation of the banks and finance houses - again with workers' control to prevent the managers and bankers continuing, and indeed intensifying their sabotage and their operations against the interest of the working class. Such measures will prove to be the only effective means to combat the bosses' onslaught. They will also test to the limit the deceptive rhetoric of a Bennite government should it step into the breach left by a Thatcher collapse.

Taken together with the other struggles, against massive redundancies and closures in private industry the fight for *nationalisation with no compensation and workers control* can lead the forces of the working class to face the inescapable task of taking the state power out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and expropriating the whole capitalist class.

Then, and only then, will it be possible to create an economy planned for social need, one that will use to the full the skills of workers like those in the steel industry, to begin the process of wiping hunger, poverty and exploitation from the face of the earth.

workers power

Leyland sackings: Start the fightback now!



PHOTO: John Sturrock (Report)

LONBRIDGE Convenor Derek Robinson was sacked last November for expressing opposition to BL management's job cutting plan. His Union AUEW responded by calling off the strike movement that developed and ordering a union enquiry. This was a blatant attempt to take the steam out of the campaign — the report of the enquiry has been repeatedly postponed and is now not to be given until February. Duffy had hinted that it should be delayed when he declared, 'We want a deep analysis rather than a speedy decision'.

Sabotage

The enquiry was a sabotage exercise by the AUEW Executive who are quite willing to let Robinson get sacked. Salvation Army officer and AUEW General Secretary John Boyd (in that order it would seem) said as much in the union's journal. He commented that it was, 'Shallow, hypocritical and, indeed, dangerous for any trade union or small nucleus of people to continue to oppose the British Leyland plan when the people involved voted for it by a seven to one majority.'

In the wake of this betrayal moves have been made to call the executive to order. The SWP supported Charter campaign has got around 200 motions passed calling for a ballot to re-elect the Executive under Rule 15 para 5 on bringing the union into disrepute. They need 280 branches, 10% all AUEW branches, to pass the motion for it to take effect. The CP dominated Broad Left, of which Robinson is a member have been confining themselves to protests and censure motion and, in

Derek Robinson the Morning Star running a campaign to "Reinstate Robbo" but never specifying just how.

In all 400 branches had opposed the Executive handling of the affair. Workers Power supporters inside the AUEW are supporting all moves to fight the bankrupt and treacherous Duffy/Boyd leadership. We do not think that the SWP campaign is adequate — the call for a ballot still leaves things at the moment, in the hands of the executive.

Robinson is sacked and the Executive are playing a waiting game. The best way to challenge this is through a fight to re-call the lay National Committee, the union's policy making body. That immediately challenges the inactivity of the Executive by overturning the recommendations of the enquiry and proposing a campaign of action to secure reinstatement.

Alternative

Further we would argue, a nationally co-ordinated AUEW shop stewards movement needs to be built — a rank and file alternative to today's rotten leaders. Conferences need to be organised to organise this — but not of the sort that took place on January 13th. That conference, of 1,000 delegates representing 38 unions was full of rhetoric with Arthur Scargill declaring, 'In my view this is a fight to the finish.'

Yet not a single call to action was issued from this communist Party-dominated gathering. The conferences of stewards committees that we argue for may not be sprinkled with spectacular speakers but they would be geared towards mobilising the AUEW for action to force the reinstatement of Robinson and to root out the traitors Duffy and Boyd, and their sidekicks on the executive.

ON JANUARY 26th at the Friends' Meeting House, London, Kevin Halpin and his cohorts vividly showed the two faces of Stalinism — cringing servility to the official TUC leaders and a cynical contempt for both workers democracy, real unity in action against the class enemy.

The CP's dwindling hold on the rank and file was also demonstrated — they could not muster a voting majority in a meeting of some 1000 delegates. The hold it does have will not be strengthened by the display of platform dictatorship and tuggery that even the Boyd's and Chapples' of the world would find hard to beat.

The morning session of vacuous platform rhetoric that made it perfectly clear that the LCDTU intended to take no initiatives not previously agreed by the Congress House bureaucrats and the regional TUCs. They were eager to assist these gentlemen (from the left of course) in keeping fragmented the steel strike, the cuts and anti-union law battles.

Most speakers referred to the Bill as if it was already passed and concentrated on promises of 'big things' when the Tories actually used it!

Delaying

Unity was the theme — but unity behind the disastrous delaying tactics that the 'official movement' has set out to defocus and demobilise the anti-Tory fury with. Halpin had nothing to offer beyond "full support for the TUC day of action on May 14th", though he added that it "must be real action of general strike proportions".

He soon demonstrated that unity came a poor second to unanimity. Alan Thornett, making a point of order requested the chair to clarify whether speakers critical of the CP/LCDTU resolution would be allowed to speak.

'No!' was Halpin's reply. This candid revelation of what the Morning Star (28.1.79) reported as, 'The splendid atmosphere of unity which marked the morning session', was, understandably not received with unanimous approval — splendid or otherwise.

Here Halpin made his only mistake, he called for a vote to shut Alan Thornett up. Halpin's proposal was clearly defeated yet, not to be outdone, he declared it carried and refused to take a count.

Having extricated himself from the vocal wrath of the majority of delegates by calling another steelworker, he again faced another point of order from John Deason of the SWP's 'Defend Our Unions Committee. Deason brandished a petition signed by over 400 of the delegates demanding to right to put to Conference a resolution on unity between the DOUC and the LCDTU.

This request had been submitted and re-iterated months before the conference to the liaison committee. The resolution itself was

LCDTU Conference ends in uproar



Stalinists foul their own nest

totally inadequate. It limited itself to a call "on the two organisations to jointly campaign for the TUC to call a one day "general stoppage (sic! WP) against the anti-union laws". It added to this a call for a joint LCDTU/DOUC conference "as soon after the Employment Bill becomes law as it is practicable".

Thus there was no political difference between the LCDTU's "real action of general strike proportions" and the DOUC's "one day general stoppage". Both were inadequate protest actions which accepted the Employment Bill's passage as an accomplished fact.

Nevertheless the mere proposal for organisational unity was too much for Halpin and the CP. Through this crack might creep in the possibility of a democratic conference. One with perhaps such features (though the SWP didn't mention them) as the right for delegating bodies to submit resolutions or amend them; the existence of an elected conference

arrangements committee to ensure impartiality in the choice and order of speakers slips; the sovereignty of the conference floor with the right to elect (and when necessary remove/replace the chair); and last but not least the right to elect the directing committee between conferences.

The brawls which erupted as Halpin put the resolution to a protesting conference and announced it 'carried' with less than a third voting, mark the total collapse and bankruptcy of the LCDTU as a mobilising centre for rank and file resistance.

Snipe

A body that has less formal democratic rights and whose functionaries have no greater democratic instincts than the Right-Wing union bureaucrats they occasionally snipe at cannot and will not prove a force capable of either fighting the Tories or the Murrays and Duffys. Deason and the SWP announced that they would be convening an open conference. Let us hope that it observes the above elementary norms of working class democracy.

If it does it could play an important role as a base for mobilising action to stop the TUC sabotage of the pre-general strike situation opened up by the steel strike. What is clear, however, is that the SWP's apolitical rank and fileism, when is forced to go beyond the individual sectional strike, is totally disarmed before the official leaders and their Stalinist allies.

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