

Workers Power

THE MONTHLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

Number 15

June 1980

15p

Mobilise the Rank and File

The May 14th Day of Action largely fulfilled the purpose that the TUC leaders had in mind when they called it. The action was called, originally, to divert the build up of strikes in support of the steel workers, particularly in South Wales. The intention was to create a breathing space for the union leaders in which they could dissipate the militancy that scared both them and the Tories in January and February.

By calling for action but taking no steps to organise it the union leaders were able to ensure that May 14th was nothing more than a protest. They wanted enough action to make the Tories start talking politely to the Trade Union leaders again . . . and no more!

Not surprisingly the bosses and their press were cock-a-hoop when the response to the TUC's call was on a relatively small scale. For weeks they had waged a poisonous campaign against the Day of Action. At every step they were given loyal assistance by Duffy and Chapple, who set out to positively sabotage the Day of Action, and by the stream of 'We didn't want to do it' apologies and promises that the day would be ineffective, that issued daily from Congress House.

★ ★ ★

Now none of this should blind us to the reserves of militancy that exist within the working class. The fact that the action had to be called at all, the militancy shown by the steel workers, and the largely spontaneous wave of strikes that greeted the imposition of Edward's slaves charter at Leyland prove both the potential militancy that exists and the treachery of the official leaders of the working class. However, particularly significant was the inability of militants, in plants throughout the country, to pull their members out behind them on May 14th. True, the TUC leaders either did little to call their members out or simply ordered the members out without explanation and argument. True, the TUC handed on a plate the argument that the right was able to use so effectively, namely that the Day would do nothing to stop the Tory attacks. But none of this can hide the fact that shop stewards and militants in many areas were not able to swing the argument against the press and the right wing.

This was not simply the result of press propaganda and spineless union leaders. The press always vigorously and viciously opposes any action taken by the working class in its own interests. Whenever do the TUC leaders not attempt to del-

Editorial

iberately sabotage any action that could upset their machinery of bargaining and conciliation with the employers and the Tories?

We have to honestly face the fact that the militants and shop stewards in the major and best organised industries had neither the organisational nor political strength and coherence to significantly alter the course of May 14th.

But this crisis of the militant minority in the unions did not suddenly appear in the run up to May 14th. The sacking of Robinson, the ability of the Trade Union leaders to stop strike action alongside the steelworkers, the 5% cave in at Leyland, the loss of steel jobs in South Wales, all indicate that organising the militants to take the unions out of the grip of the bureaucrats is a burning and immediate question of the hour.

★ ★ ★

We know that workers will fight to defend themselves, their pay, their jobs and their living standards—but we also know that even the most widespread action can be diverted by treacherous leaders. We know that victories can be undermined if they are not consolidated, if they are not built upon.

The bosses, and their government are driven on in their attacks by the severity of the deepening capitalist crisis but they do not attack indiscriminately. Their general strategy has been developed over years, they have learnt the lessons of the defeat of the Industrial Relations Act, for example. Even if forced to retreat on some part of their programme they could change their tactics without altering their long term ob-

jective of making the working class pay to solve the crisis.

The main elements of the bosses' strategy are clear enough, cut wages via inflation, increase unemployment, undermine social services, strengthen the state machine, but they know as well as we do that the working class will not accept these attacks without a fight. Central to their tactics, therefore, is their attempt to destroy the fighting ability of the organisations the workers will naturally turn to in order to defend themselves—effective shop floor trade union organisation. The Employment Bill is the lynch pin of the anti-working class programme of the bosses. The battle to enforce it is one that they cannot afford to lose, defeat on that would force them to change their tactics radically, probably to the extent of ditching the present government.

A central element of the programme of the working class must, therefore, be the fight to defeat the Employment Bill. So important is this to the bosses that only a general strike, an all-out general strike, can force them to drop it. But such a general strike, by paralysing the whole functioning of society, opens the possibility for going

★ ★ ★

further than thwarting the class enemy's immediate plans—providing the working class has the leadership and the organisations necessary.

The Trade Union leaders will organise to prevent and sabotage any effective struggle to stop the Tories plans. That is why militants must organise themselves now—in every plant, in every Combine and on a national level in a shop stewards based rank and file movement, battling to win the leadership of the mass organisations of the working class.

But such a new leadership cannot set itself the task of preserving the status quo or hope to fight effectively with the methods and slogans of the 60s and early 70s.

Whilst it is absolutely essential for workers to defend themselves against the current attacks, the capitalist crisis makes it impossible to set the preservation of the status quo as the goal of the working class. The crisis is not just a set of economic statistics, these are only indicators of a crisis of social organisation, the way that society func-

Karmal's support crumbles

By DAVE HUGHES

Serious clashes have taken place in Kabul between college students, previously loyal to the ruling 'Parcham' faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), and the Soviet Army. At least 70 are reported killed as a result of these clashes.

The May demonstrations - far more clearly than February's bazaar-organised demonstrations in Kabul - indicate the mounting crisis that now exists within the small but significant sections of Afghan society who have supported what they considered to be the programme of reforms and modernisation of successive PDPA governments since the Coup of April 1978. They prove that the Soviet bureaucracy, despite its claims to be supporting the 'progressive sections' of Afghan society against imperialist backed reactionary opposition, is in fact a merciless foe of the self-organisation of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia, the only forces capable of defeating reaction in Afghanistan.

The forces of opposition to the regime and its backers remain fragmented and divided. The most significant section, with its leadership based in Peshawar in Pakistan, is under the command of the merchants, the tribal chiefs and landlords of the dominant Pushtun nationality . . . the historically dominant nationality in Afghanistan. They are split into 4 rival parties, and these are themselves internally divided on tribal lines.

These forces have recently been the beneficiaries of large supplies of Egyptian military hardware. A victory

for them would certainly mean savage repression for the minorities in Afghanistan - particularly in Balakshan and Baluchistan. It would mean the re-imposition of the authority of the merchants and landlords. Almost certainly it would plunge Afghanistan further into an international and inter-tribal blood bath.

Other forces, particularly in Balakshan, which borders on China, are led by pro-Chinese elements who receive aid and sanctuary from the Chinese bureaucracy but no aid or assistance from the Pushtuns based in Peshawar.

dismemberment

They have been capable of winning considerable support, not only against the Soviet army, but also against the historic oppression of the area by successive Pushtun-based governments of the Afghan monarchy, of Daoud and the PDPA governments that came after them.

Potentially these opposition forces lay the basis for a reactionary re-partition of Afghanistan - not according to the wishes of its various nationalities, but to the advantage of the major international powers with an interest in the area - the pro-imperialist Pakistani regime, the Chinese bureaucracy and, of course, the Soviet bureaucracy. Such a dismemberment would certainly have as a result the destruction of the already weakened democratic and anti-imperialist forces in Afghanistan.

But the May demonstrations show that there also exists serious and mounting opposition to the regime amongst its erstwhile supporters, who have no intention of handing

(Continued on back page)

tions. The goal of the workers must be to reorganise society, to enforce the utilisation of the virtually limitless powers of production that exist to satisfy need, not the pursuit of profit. This means destroying the power of the capitalists to enforce their system upon humanity. The fundamental means by which they enforce this is the power of the state, the goal of the workers must, therefore, be the destruction of their state and its replacement by a workers state. Where the bourgeoisie base their state on the monopolisation of physical force and use it to enforce the laws which protect their control of production, the workers state will base

★ ★ ★

itself on the mobilisation and arming of the workers organised through democratic workers councils at both local and national level.

The building of such a state, a workers' state, is the goal of communist revolutionaries, but this is no distant goal unconnected to what we fight for today. On the contrary every step taken in the class struggle must lead in its direction. We cannot, for example, defeat the Tory attacks and then turn our attention to a consideration of how best to organise Workers Councils. They will be built in the struggles of the class or will not be built at all.

A new leadership has to be built in the coming struggles it will not develop automatically or by accid-

ent. The action programme printed on page 2 sums up the essential objectives of the fight back against the bosses. It is a strategy to counter that of the class enemy. Because it sums up the major priorities for which the working class must fight if it is to win, the Action Programme is also a yardstick against which to judge the leaders of the working class. A leadership which flinches from the demands and methods of the action programme is a leadership that cannot lead the workers to power. By the same token a leadership that fights for the programme in the face of all the attacks and ploys of the bourgeoisie—be it an attempt to buy off or to threaten with the majesty of the law, or the firepower of the army, can only be a leadership committed to the overthrow of capitalism, a communist leadership.

A rank and file movement will not be built in one blow around a blueprint communist programme. It will be built around limited and partial struggles where militants come together to do battle with the employers and to stop the union bureaucrats selling them down the river. Within the organisation of militants that must be built now, those revolutionaries who agree with our programme must organise themselves as a political party committed to winning the leadership of the rank and file movement and consolidating it as a leadership that can oust the bureaucrats.

INSIDE — Interview with Egyptian Trotskyist

What to fight for



Pay

With inflation at 22% and the bosses openly discussing the possibility of a legally enforced wage policy, the fight to maintain wages will inevitably be a central arena of confrontation between the working class and the state. The generally established methods of fighting for pay are bureaucratic to the core, at every stage they minimise the involvement and mobilisation of the rank and file, they will not be able to throw back the bosses' offensive. The starting point for pay claims must be the needs of the workers, not the profits or viability of the employer and not the mathematical calculations of union bureaucrats and Ruskin College research assistants. The size of the claim, the money required to maintain living standards at the very least, should itself be the subject of a campaign within the workforce. This means holding special meetings in every section months in advance of the date for settlement. It means involving the wives and girlfriends of the men in the work force, it means establishing a 'pay claim committee' charged with drawing up a pay claim and arguing support for it within the plants.

Such an approach not only can produce a claim that the workers understand and believe in (unlike the defeatist, but all too common, 'put in for 30% and hope to get 15%') but it also excludes the bureaucrats and underlines that it is the workers who must control negotiations and decide on the tactics to be used to win the claim. It is itself a part of the vital job of transforming the organisation of the labour movement from the shop floor below.

To counter inflation it is obviously necessary for any agreement to include provision for increases at regular intervals to maintain the buying power of any settlement. The scale of these increases should again be the concern of the whole workforce and of the working class households that depend on them and decisions concerning them should be channelled through the pay claims committee on which should sit not only stewards and other elected rank and file representatives but also, as of right, housewives.

Jobs

Unemployment is another central element of the bosses' strategy, it allows them to divide the working class, to force workers to accept wage cuts, it reduces union membership. Unemployment is so much a part of the automatic functioning of capitalism that a successful defence against it has to challenge the basic rights of the capitalists - the right to control production and employment. Our central demand has to cut across the rights - CUT THE HOURS - NOT THE JOBS. Both the length of the working week and the speed of work must be cut if jobs are to be protected in a period of falling demand. We demand that shop stewards have the right of control both in order to share out the work available to all employees. In order to know what work is available we demand the opening of all company books and committees to workers' inspection.

If those already unemployed are not to be lost to the labour movement then the unions must take steps to organise them. All unions should maintain membership for those unemployed and open unemployed sections with full

rights of membership. On this basis stewards must fight for union control of hiring and firing. Nationalisation- For the nationalisation under workers control with no compensation of all firms declaring redundancy.

Although unemployment is a threat to the whole working class its immediate effects are felt most quickly by the weakest sections of the class. In particular women are hard hit not only because they are often employed in small firms and are less unionised but also, very often, because of the attitude of male workers. The myth of women working only for pin money, that the men are the real breadwinners and consequently that women's jobs should go first must be attacked. We must insist on a woman's rights to work. But for unions to fight effectively for this demand they must first put their own house in order by enabling women to play a full part in union activity.

Cuts

The attacks on welfare spending are an attack on the whole working class, on our services, our hospitals, our schools and, for many, our jobs. In the face of this we must say no to the cuts, no to the bosses' priorities, the welfare of our class must come before the profits of their's.

*For private and public sector unity to beat the cuts with industrial action, no cover, strikes, occupations.

*No cuts in welfare spending, restore all cuts.

*For a sliding scale of public expenditure to protect public spending against inflation.

*Nationalise the banks and finance houses with no compensation for the parasites who owned them.

The Labour Party claims to oppose the cuts. It controls most of the councils that are being told to implement them. We argue that Labour councils should refuse to implement the cuts, refuse to pay the crippling interest rates on debt repayments and refuse to raise either rents or rates. They should overspend on programmes of useful public works such as schools, hospitals and nurseries. In defying Heseltine's threats to use the law against them, councils should base themselves on the mobilisation of the working class in their towns, both those employed by the council and in private industries. Such mobilisation should be organised by local action councils to whose control the councils should submit themselves. Any attempt to remove councils for defending the interests of the working class should be met by immediate all-out strike action. Attempts to implement the cuts by Labour councils should be opposed by strike action and occupations - no holding back to maintain labour control of councils if that control is not used in the interests of the working class.

Unity

A strong working class has to be united within its ranks. We say no to all divisions within the labour movement that the bosses use to weaken us - along lines of sex, race craft etc.

*The Tories (like Callaghan before them) are trying to drive women back into the home, to turn men against women in the fight for jobs. To make a woman's right to work a reality we need also to fight for free abortion on

demand, free contraception and free, state funded, 24 hour nurseries under trade union control. Oppose all attacks on established rights and job opportunities. For real equal pay for women and united industrial action to win it.

*The unions must be opened to the oppressed if they are to become fighters for the oppressed. Meetings in worktime and with childcare facilities must be fought for in order to allow women to participate fully.

For special training programmes for women shop stewards. For democratic women's section in the unions with the right to intervene in all areas of union activity. For the right of women to caucus in the unions.

*Drive racism out of the unions. For the automatic expulsion from membership of any known fascist. For the withdrawal of the right to hold office from all racists. For the right of black workers to caucus in the unions.

*Against all immigration controls. Smash the Tory Nationality Act. We do not blame blacks for the crisis we blame the bosses. Smash the SUS laws. For black self defence against fascist and police attacks. Smash racism and fascism with a united front of workers organisations. For labour movement delegate based committees to smash the immigration laws.

*For the physical defence of the working class - on picket lines and demonstrations and in black communities, for workers self defence squads to be built in every work place.

*For delegate based action councils in all localities.

*Solidarity with all those fighting imperialism. Troops out of Ireland NOW! Abolish the PTA.

Unions

The fight to throw back the Tory offensive cannot be undertaken by the labour movement in its present form, the unions, in particular, must be transformed.

*Factory committees, representing all workers, regardless of craft, must be built. Where possible branches should meet in work time and on full pay. Stewards and convenors should have no privileges beyond those necessary to carry out their jobs. All workers' representatives should be regularly elected and subject to recall.

*Craftism, sectionalism and localism must be fought through the building of Joint Shop Stewards' Committees and industry wide combines, made up of workplace delegates. For industrial unionism on this basis.

All decisions affecting the workforce must be discussed and agreed by the workforce via section meetings and sovren mass meetings.

*In order to keep the membership informed, and to allow the fullest possible airing of differences, stewards' committees should be responsible for the production of democratic factory newspapers and bulletins.

*A determined fight to protect workers interests will be attacked by the state's forces. Therefore all pickets, demonstrations and occupations need to be defended. For organised and disciplined workers defence squads.

*Trades Councils must either be transformed into genuine councils of action open to workplace delegates or be replaced by such bodies built in the course of struggle.

*All union officials to be

annually elected and recallable at all times. All official to be paid the average wage of their members.

*Delegates to the Labour Party at all levels must be democratically controlled by the rank and file. The block vote at LP conferences must be used by and for the rank and file, take them out of the hands of the bureaucrats.

*For annual conferences of lay delegates, open to resolutions from all union bodies. Decision to be binding on all officials.

*No to the postal ballot, for genuine democracy, votes by show of hands at branch or mass meetings.

*No to state interference in union business, no acceptance of the right of the judiciary or the state to intervene in the unions.

*For a TUC annual conference composed of lay delegates, an annually elected general council. TUC conference decisions to be binding on the general council. For the withdrawal of the TUC from all class collaborationist bodies such as NEDC.

*Stop the legal attacks on the unions, for a General Strike to smash the Employment Bill, for councils of action in every area and a national delegate committee to run the strike.

Labour

The Labour Party leaders, Callaghan, Foot and Co are directly responsible for pioneering all the attacks the Tories are now pursuing (monetarist policies, cuts, unemployment, the SPG picket-busters etc). They were responsible for their own electoral debacle and the Tories' 'democratic mandate' for their anti-working-class onslaught. Workers need to hold these open traitors to account. They need also to put the left talkers - Benn, Heffer and Co on the spot too. The 'reforms' mooted at the Brighton '79 conference - reselection of MPs, election of the leader by more than the PLP, the NEC's control over the contents of the Manifesto are elementary democratic rights. The union bureaucrats and the parliamentarians are poised to crush these extremely modest reforms. They must be defeated, first and foremost in the unions whose bloc votes will decide. To prevent the parliamentarians and the TU chiefs using the LP to head off workers' struggles into impotent protests when out of office and to act as a bosses' government when in power the hold of the bureaucrats on the bloc votes of the unions must be broken.

*Replace the unitary bloc vote wielded by the bureaucrats with elected delegations and mandates reflecting the balance of opinion within the affiliated membership. No bans and prescriptions. For political issues to be raised in mass meetings, on stewards committees etc. Make the bloc vote reflect the views of the rank and file.

*Force the labour leaders to launch an all out fight against the Employment Bill. total obstruction of all Government business in Parliament. Commit themselves and the whole apparatus of the LP to support for the mass picket, for solidarity action, es-

pecially when these are declared illegal either by the judges or in the event of the passage of the Employment Bill.

● Total opposition to all cuts in public spending. All Labour Councils to refuse to implement the cuts or raise rents and rates to pay for cuts in Government funding.

● Put all the facilities of the LP nationally and locally at the service of direct action struggles (marches, strikes, sit-ins) against unemployment.

● Total opposition in parliament and mobilisation of the labour movement against the Immigration Bill.

Where the Labour leaders talk about the reforms a future Labour Government will carry out we must organise the Labour movement to demand:

● The nationalisation without compensation and recognising workers' control of the banks and finance houses, the major industries and all firms declaring redundancies with compensation.

● The dissolution of the Special Patrol Group, the SAS and the granting of political and trade union rights for soldiers, the election of officers and elected soldiers committee in every barracks.

● The replacement of the unelected judiciary with elected judges and magistrates.

● The abolition of the House of Lords and the monarchy.

● The right to work, a sliding scale of hours under trade union control.

● The immediate withdrawal of all troops from Ireland and from all overseas bases. The withdrawal from NATO and other imperialist alliances.

● The repeal of all the immigration Acts.

● The granting of immediate free abortion and contraception on demand. Free 24 hour nurseries.

● Restore all cuts and an extension in social spending. For a massive programme of public works, hospitals, nurseries, housing and schools. The abolition of indirect taxation and its replacement by a steeply graduated wealth tax.

Should Labour gain office in the conditions of a General Strike with councils of action and workers' defence squads, we would fight to force its leaders to enter on the road of struggle for a workers government, i.e. one that puts itself under the control of a congress of delegates from the councils of action and which opens the arsenals and arms the workers militia dissolving the police and the armed forces of the bosses' state.

FOR STATE POWER IN THE HANDS OF THE WORKERS
Disband the police and the army: for all policing and military tasks to be taken in the hands of the armed workers' militia.

FOR AN ECONOMY RUN BY AND FOR THE WORKERS
For the complete nationalisation with no compensation and under workers' control of the means of production and distribution. For a planned economy and the state monopoly of foreign trade.

Only by the working class organising through workers' council to seize and hold state power can these gains be achieved, consolidated and extended. For a WORKERS DICTATORSHIP the dictatorship of the proletariat.

... NOW!

Legal war against Blacks intensifies

In the boom period of the 1950s, British capitalists dispatched roving commissions to scour the globe in search of black workers who would come to Britain. Then they were wanted to provide cheap labour, and to do the worst jobs. Now, the bosses are trying to keep further immigrants out of the country, and are using racist laws to divide and rule the working class.

Not satisfied with the racist apparatus they control at present, the Tory government has recently introduced a number of changes to the immigration laws. These changes are designed to finally tighten up on the flow of "dependent" migration, which now forms the bulk of black entry into Britain. They come at a time when the existing rules cut the number of black migrants by 13% between 1978 and 1979, and produced a savage 40% increase in the number of migrants refused entry, during the first four months of Tory rule.

- The changes mean that:
- * A woman who is not a British citizen with one parent born in the UK, will no longer be able to bring in her husband or fiancé.
 - * Sons over 18 will no longer be admitted.
 - * Daughters over 18 but under 21 will only enter if they are completely dependent on the family in Britain.
 - * Visitors will only be able to stay for a maximum of 1 year.
 - * "Au Pairs" will have to be unmarried, between 17 and 25, without dependents, and a national of Western Europe.

In terms of the misery they will cause in the black community, through the further splitting of families, and the direct encouragement they will give to racism and chauvinism, these changes are of great importance. They represent the opening shot in the Tories' new legal war against the blacks.

patrials

The whole point of the first rule change is to stop black women bringing in fiancés and husbands: a direct racist and sexist attack. Although many black women were born in Britain, few qualify for the additional condition of having at least 1 parent born in Britain (the definition of the so-called "Patrial"). This deliberate racist attack went unnoticed in the press. Instead they, and the Tory backbenchers, focussed on the fact that some white women might be affected. Whitelaw, after being hounded by Tory redneck backwoodsmen, stated that such cases would be considered "sympathetically for favourable treatment outside the rules"!!

These changes come on top of a repressive immigration system, constructed partly by the Labour government in 1968, with substantial changes in 1971. The 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act, rushed through in 5 days in the face of the "threat" of the entry of Kenyan Asians, heavily restricted the entry of East African Asians with British passports.

- The 1971 Immigration Act introduced several major changes by:
- * Introducing the distinction between "patrials" and "non-patrials".
 - * Severely limiting the entry of "non-patrials" to those who could prove they were a dependent of a migrant already in Britain.
 - * Refusing entry without a work permit.
 - * Requiring annual reapplication to stay.
 - * Giving the Home Office power to deport any immigrant whom it

considers not to be "of good character", and even to prevent the immigrant from changing their job.

- * Enforcing a 5 year "probation" period before British citizenship can be applied for.

With this 1971 Act, the British state had a mechanism for preventing entry of further black workers, except for the dependents of those already here, and for severely controlling the activity of those migrants who made it to Britain. With the end of the post-war boom, immigrant workers were no longer needed. In order for those migrants in Britain to be fully useful to the capitalists, they had to be kept as docile as possible: hence the introduction of deportation orders: any black militant faces the threat of deportation under the 1971 Act.

The overall effect of the Immigration Act has been to harass, intimidate and oppress blacks. For example:

- * In 1978, Zahira Galiara, heavily pregnant, went into labour while she was being questioned by Entry Clearance Officers at Heathrow. They thought her contractions were "a ruse", and when a doctor was eventually called, the baby was dead.

- * A major effort is made by the state to cast doubt on peoples identity, and thus refuse their application. Extensive interrogation, in Britain and abroad, is used to intimidate and frighten black migrants. If this fails, such "scientific" methods as the disgusting "virginity tests" that used to take place at Heathrow are employed, in a desperate attempt to justify refusal of entry.

- * The grounding in February of the ship "Athina B" off Brighton shows the depth of state racism. The white sailors were taken off the stranded ship, and put up in hostels until their vessel was refloated. Three Asian seamen were put straight into jail, and rapidly deported. The Home Office said the black sailors were "likely to abscond"! These workers had committed no crime, they had given no indication of being about to "abscond". Their crime was that they were black, and they had the misfortune to put their safety into the hands of the British state.

The Labour Party recognised that even this degree of discrimination was not sufficient for the bosses needs. In 1977 they published a "Green Paper on British Nationality Law", where they proposed to create two types of British citizen: "British Citizen" (= white) and "British Overseas Citizen" (= black). The purpose of this change would be to "bring us into line with Europe". Too true.

civil rights

The system in Europe is a repressive one in which immigrant workers ("Gastarbeiters") are 2nd class citizens, with few civil rights - they cannot vote, or get a job in public service, and can be ejected from the country on virtually no pretext whatsoever. This provides the capitalists with a workforce that can be manipulated and isolated as the bosses wish, forced to accept lower wages and discarded when no longer needed.

The Tories have made it quite clear that they, too, wish to "bring us into line", and will undoubtedly produce similar proposals. If they come into effect, it will be the blacks who are whipped into line, or deported.

Pending the introduction of such official intimidation, the police have found a way of repeatedly harassing the black community. They have rediscovered an arcane piece of law, Section IV of the 1824 Vagrancy Act, now infamously known as "Sus". This law allows the police to stop, question and arrest "persons suspected of frequenting a public place with intent to commit an arrest-

able offence" - a licence to harass anybody they "suspect" - usually black youth.

In 1974-5 in the mainly black area of Lewisham, the Special Patrol Group (SPG) stopped and questioned 14,000 people, and arrested 400. In 1976 in the whole of London, a massive 60,098 people were stopped and questioned, and 3773 arrested.

The Tories plan to add to this intolerable level of intimidation through the introduction of a "Criminal Justice Bill". Going through the Commons at the moment is the "Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill", which gives the police in Scotland new powers of search, arrest and detention. A similar bill for England and Wales is likely to follow. If enacted, the threat to the black community from "Sus" will be doubled with the increased powers from these Bills.

The racial oppression that "Sus" represents extends to every aspect of the life of the black community. Black workers have worse jobs (32% of blacks work shifts, compared to 15% of whites), get less wages (in 1974 black workers got paid 10% less than white workers), and feel the bite of unemployment worse (in 1974-9 unemployment rose by 159%; for black workers it increased by 246%). These conditions are the reason black workers were encouraged to come to Britain in the first place: in order to provide higher profits for the bosses, and to take on jobs the white working class were increasingly loath to do.

fightback

The Bristol St. Paul's fightback was the most graphic response to this oppression. More important however have been the series of strikes involving black workers over recent years. The three most well known: Grunwicks, Garners and Chix all show that black workers are prepared to fight, and that increasingly the bosses can no longer use them as super-exploited workers. But these strikes also showed the unwillingness of the official labour movement to support them to the hilt.

Although mass pickets took place at Grunwicks Film Processing Laboratory, the TUC leadership steadfastly refused to black services. Water and electricity, both vital for George Ward's business, were left untouched. Disruption of the postal service was rapidly stopped by the union leaders. Whilst some leaders of the labour movement may have been prepared to march people to Dollis Hill, and get their pictures in the papers the next day, none of them were willing to unleash the forces that would both win the strike and threaten their positions: rank and file solidarity action.

The labour movement responses to the Garners Steak Houses and Chix Sweet Factory strikes, also involving Union recognition, have shown a similar cowardice. The Garners strike finally collapsed after the South East Regional Trades Union Congress had repeatedly refused to call on the TGWU to black deliveries to Garners restaurants.

The Chix dispute has run a similar course. No attempt has been made to cut off water or electricity. The sugar, vital for the scabs to make Chix's sweets, was blacked with some success, but there has been no concerted response from the unions to build widespread effective solidarity action.

These disputes show that in their struggle for basic rights, black workers have to fight a racist state, racist bosses, and an official leadership unwilling to take even the most basic steps. Despite the fact that 61% of employed black male workers are unionised, compared to only 47% of employed white men, the unions have failed to take up issues affecting black workers such as "Sus" and the Immigration Laws. Further, they haven't even been willing to organise



Blacks detained by Immigration control

effective action in support of basic trade union rights for black workers.

The working class body with probably the worst record on racism is the Labour Party, which has been responsible for:

- * Severely restricting immigration, along racist lines, in 1968.
- * Setting up the SPG
- * Rediscovering "Sus".
- * Instituting the "virginity tests".
- * Proposing a new "Nationality Act"
- * Giving loud voice to calls for import and immigration controls.
- * A complete lack of action on Party policy for the abolition of "Sus" and the 1971 Immigration Act.

And yet despite this, the vast majority of black workers still support the Labour Party, knowing all too well the tender mercies they can expect from the Tories. A recent survey of 24 inner-city constituencies found that 78% of Asians and 85% of Afro-Caribbeans supported the Labour Party. This support is a recognition of the working class base of the Labour Party, no matter how bourgeois its politics.

recession

British capitalism as an integral part of world capitalism is entering its second deep recession in 10 years. The Tories are determined to restore profitability and competitiveness by means of 2 million plus unemployment, by wrecking the health and welfare gains of the last 25 years and by drastically lowering real wages.

The only means of resistance is united militant working class action. If workers passively accept the idea of a shrinking "national cake", then they will end up fighting each other to maintain their shrinking share. One of the divisions that will open up first, unless a new stronger unity is forged in struggle, is that between black and white workers. This would spell bloody defeat for the working class as a whole.

How can we prevent this? Firstly, by not giving an inch to the idea of immigration controls which are, by their very nature, chauvinist and foment racism. The limits to the living standards and conditions of the working class are not "natural" or fixed ones, they are limits imposed by the capitalist profit motive. A fight to prevent the erosion of past gains must become a fight to replace production for the bosses profit with production for human need based on the planned economy. Immigrant workers must be rallied to the organisations of the working class. They are an integral part of the army of labour. The white British boss and his hangers-on are our natural enemies in this struggle.

The appalling record of the labour movement leadership on racism is partly due to the history of the British working class. The epoch of Imperialism not only resulted in the massive exploitation of the Colonies (laying the foundation for future migration) but also, through the super-profits it

produced, and the reforms these enabled the capitalists to grant, tended to develop ideas of there being a 'national interest', that somehow the interests of workers and capitalists were the same.

A major expression of this history is the call for "non-racist immigration controls" - often heard from those around the Labour Party and Communist Party. This policy suggests that British jobs/way of life/industry can and should be protected at the expense of workers in other countries. It assumes that the British workers are part of a nation first and foremost, rather than part of an international working class.

We must support black caucuses in the trade unions, so that black workers can ensure that issues affecting them are raised, and that the bureaucrats do not evade this responsibility. Where open racists hold official positions in the labour movement, rank and file campaigns must be launched to drive them from office. Any fascists in the unions should be hounded from the movement completely.

A massive campaign must be launched to Scrap the "Sus" laws and Disband the SPG - a force which is increasingly being used against picket lines as well as the black community. Faced with this physical offensive, the working class must support black self-defence against racist attacks, be they from the state or from roaming racist gangs.

trials

The infamous Southall Trials which followed the police riot that killed Blair Peach showed the attitude of the British courts to black people. Ludicrous police evidence was accepted, the innocence of the black defendants dismissed. The conviction rate was around 85%, compared to 52% nationally for similar offenses. There are still black workers in jail because they dared to fight back. Linked with the struggle against the SPG and "Sus", we must fight to Free Southall Prisoners!

For the capitalist class the whole point of immigration controls is that they are able to move workers where and when they want to.

The struggle against chauvinism and racism must be taken to the heart of the labour movement, through the building of a working class campaign against all immigration controls. Delegate based committees against the Immigration law must be formed in every town and area. We must show the true nature of all such controls, and the vital need for working class internationalism: NO IMMIGRATION CONTROLS! FOR THE FREE MOVEMENT OF ALL WORKERS!

MATTHEW COBB

Imperialism and class struggle in Egypt

For Carter and Thatcher, the Sadat regime in Egypt is key to protecting their interests at the expense of the peoples of the Middle East. That is why their "human rights" speeches never touch on the jails in which Sadat keeps militants and trade unionists. During May, WORKERS POWER organised a series of meetings for a speaker from the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) of Egypt. Militants of the RCL played a leading role in the strikes of 1977, and are standing trial in Sadat's Egypt at the present time. We consider it necessary to organise the maximum solidarity with the masses of Egypt, and with Egyptian revolutionaries as they do battle with the Sadat regime. We print below an interview with a leading member of the RCL. Anyone interested in the materials of the RCL should contact WORKERS POWER.

Could you explain the importance that US imperialists in particular attach to the stability and strengthening of the Sadat regime in Egypt?
Since 1967 the Americans have been concerned to achieve a settlement in the Middle East based on an alliance between the Zionist regime in Israel and the Arab bourgeoisies. Their purpose is to safeguard their interests in the area. Since the fall of the Shah's regime Sadat takes second place to Israel in this strategy. Not only does he allow the Americans to maintain a military presence in Egypt but the Egyptian army, which is armed by the Americans, can play an important role against liberation and anti-imperialist movements. This has been shown in the last years by the operation of the Egyptian army in many countries. . in Zaire, in Somalia, 40,000 Egyptian soldiers in Sudan and the operation of Egyptian troops

in Oman to protect the regime against the liberation movement.

After Afghanistan American imperialism, which is threatened by any radical change in the Arab world, is anxious to strengthen itself militarily within the Arab world and Sadat is particularly important for them here. The situation in Iran has reflected itself throughout the Arab area, the old puppet regimes are very shaky and therefore the US will try to strengthen the Sadat regime until the end. Egypt, along with other pro-American regimes in Syria and Saudi Arabia make up an axis with each party playing a counter revolutionary role in its own particular region. Sadat is allotted to play that role in North East Africa and to assist the US in diffusing the Palestinian question through a peaceful solution brought about through peace between Egypt and Israel.

What particular advantages do the Egyptian bourgeoisie hope for from this alliance?

It meets the felt economic needs of the Egyptian bourgeoisie. After the period of Nasser's Bonapartism (which ended with the death of Nasser in September 1970) they needed to reconnect the Egyptian market with the world capitalist market in order to solve their historical crisis—a lack of finance capital. This tendency opened up after 1967 but it was strengthened particularly by the Sadat regime after the war with Israel in 1973. The opening of the Egyptian market to imperialist capital was intended to allow the Egyptian bourgeoisie to rid itself of its chronic crisis

and develop itself economically. This means that the economic needs of the Egyptian national bourgeoisie laid the basis for this strategy of economic partnership with imperialism which is represented politically by the Sadat regime and its counter revolutionary role as a tool in the hands of the American imperialists.

After the failure of the 5 year plan during Nasser's regime, most sharply in 1965, tendencies inside the bourgeoisie called for an open economy. The finance minister under Nasser, who is still finance minister under Sadat, proclaimed in 1965 that the only solution for Egypt was to invite foreign investment and give them every chance to invest in Egypt. At that time the Bonapartist balance of the Nasser regime would not allow of such a solution. But after the defeat of 1967 the Egyptian bourgeoisie set out to reconnect themselves with the world capitalist market. After 1967 they took into their hands some of the foreign trade and commerce that had been in the hands of the state. At this time many agency shops and offices were opened for the imperialists. The major qualitative change took place during Sadat's time and was established by the law on foreign investment of 1973. No taxes were to be placed on foreign investment or foreign projects. Foreign investors were to be free for 5 years to repatriate all profits made on the Egyptian market without control.

What has this development meant for the living standards and conditions of the Egyptian masses?

It has meant that the economic position of the masses has become worse and worse. At the same time the Egyptian bourgeoisie has freed itself from the extraordinary measures taken by Nasser to control prices on the internal market. This meant that

from 1968-1973 prices rose by 200% and from 1973-1978 by 300%. At the same time wages and salaries have only risen by 25% since 1961. This means that wages are very low and that the Egyptian bourgeoisie cannot afford the luxury of raising wages. This was the cause of major confrontations between the Egyptian bourgeoisie and the working class, manifest in a long period of strikes from 1968-77, which is the longest wave of strikes in the history of the Egyptian working class. The bourgeoisie is so set against wage increases that they have outlawed strikes and fixed a penalty of up to 25 years in jail for striking.

The policies of the Egyptian bourgeoisie have led to a sharp crisis in housing and services. This is a burning issue in Egypt today. Their intention to play a comprador role for imperialism has led to a cessation of much industrial development which has led to huge unemployment. This particularly affects those agrarian workers and landless peasants who come from the countryside to the cities of Egypt in search of work. Massive slums surround Cairo and Alexandria which, with nearly 18 million in their population, make up nearly one half of the whole country.

The domination of the imperialist concerns in the Egyptian economy has meant that the Sadat regime, with its huge foreign debts, has been obliged to accept the conditions laid down by the IMF. In 1977 they demanded an end to support for credit and that economic policies should be

in line with those of the IMF obeyed completely with a neutrality package' (which had as a central plank the removal of all subsidies), which led straight to huge strikes and demonstrations in 1977.

Can you say a little more about the scale and nature of the opposition to the regime?

There were widespread demonstrations and strikes by workers and students in 1972 and 1973, strike workers in Cairo and Alexandria in 1975 and in 1977 demonstrations and strikes in 15 cities lasting

There exists a small tendency towards the bourgeoisie that wants to maintain its historic interests, not to become a dictatorship like that of Sadat but by liberal democratic reform. This tendency was in conflict with Sadat after the demonstration of 1977. But they did not have enough economic base within the bourgeoisie to prevent Sadat from their party. They represent the sections who have been destroyed by the new openings for imperialism particularly those who were connected with the state sector of the economy during Nasser's time. Hence their opposition. They were a loyal opposition and have now completely surrendered. The overwhelming majority of the bourgeoisie sided with Sadat against them.

It is the movement of the masses with its spontaneous character that explodes against the regime politically, that is the only consistent



Sadat

Iran: mullahs' new offensive

By DAVE STOCKING

The vicious attacks on the left and the Kurds in Iran still do not denote a finished character to the Iranian revolution. In fact the major social forces in Iran have still as yet failed to forge society and politics in their own image. Such a situation poses ever more acutely the need for a revolutionary workers party to lead the workers, poorpeasants, minority nationalities and the intelligentsia out of the bloody trap into which the Khomeini regime is dragging the country.

The leading forces of the Iranian state are still in disarray. President Bani Sadr, despite his massive electoral victory has failed to block the clericals in the Islamic Republican Party—who, as a result of the second round of elections to the parliament (with attendant ballot-rigging and coercion) have at least 130 out of the 170 seats. The 'Bani-Sadrists' have only 41. With Admiral Madani, the butcher of Khuzestan refusing to take up a premiership which he claimed was "shrouded in ambiguities", Bani Sadr has to wait the further moves of Khomeini and Beheshti.

The reasons for the curious relationship of forces since the overthrow of the Shah lies in the manner of that very overthrow. The working

class played the decisive role with a general strike which shut off the oil flow, paralyzed the administrative machine and immobilised transport and communications. The left Islamic and quasi marxist guerilla organisations, and to some extent the members of the Tudeh, precipitated and led the armed insurrection that cracked the morale of the Shah's army and led to the arming of the masses. But the leadership of the movement remained in the hands of the mullahs around Khomeini—a leadership that neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat has since been able to dislodge.

Both the liberal and conservative clerical wings of the bourgeoisie have been unable to establish a firm grip on political power. The National Front of Sayjahi and Farouhar has been unable to reconstitute the state machine, restore labour discipline and control over the economy and re-establish stable ties with the Imperialist powers. The army remains disorganised and 'demoralised'. The officer corps has been partially purged (30% of its numbers removed). Unemployment stands at nearly 30% of the active wage earning population. Industrial production is running at only 30% of capacity. Oil output is only one third that of the Shah's period.

Workers have in some sectors forced the concession of the 40 hour week and attempts by the oil minister Ali Akbar Moinefar and Bani Sadr to break the Shoras (workers councils) in the oil fields and elsewhere have failed miserably. In the countryside the seizure of lands belonging to the court circle, the large pro-Shah

landlords and the agribusinesses has partly alleviated rural distress—a process aided by food price rises on the internal market due to the interruption of food imports and the abandonment of price controls. This has fuelled the roaring inflation rate, increased the misery of the urban poor but temporarily raised the income of the peasantry.

The bourgeoisie and the big bazaar merchants looked first to Bazargan and then to Bani Sadr to provide 'strong government'. They have both failed. Why? Basically because they have been forced to share political power with the petit bourgeois bloc dominated by Khomeini and the

Ayatollahs Beheshti, Khalkhali and Co. The mullahs are armed with a reactionary utopian ideology based on Shiite Islam and a demagoguery aimed at the small bazaaris, merchants, artisans and the massive sub-proletariat the moustazzifin. They have been able to dominate the masses and block bourgeois normalisation and economic reconstruction and prevent the proletariat and the popular democratic forces (the nationalities in particular) from seizing power and expropriating the bourgeoisie. But even the immensely influential Imam and the sinister Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammad Beheshti have not had things all their own way.



Ayatollah Beheshti and President Bani Sadr at the opening of the Iranian Parliament

They cannot dispense with the expertise and political economic know-how of the bourgeoisie because they cannot create an 'Islamic economy'. Much as these leaders would like to create a society, dominated by the clergy, based on traditional rural society and small merchants. Such a society is an impossibility in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Neither have they been able to decisively crush the left or the nationalities. This has not been for a long time. In July and August they attempted to crush the Mujahideen and the Mujahideen group turning their papers and meetings into the pasdaran (revolutionary guards) and the lumpen gangs (hezbollahis) loose to murder and intimidate them. This offensive checked and driven back by the elemental resistance of those it aimed at. The Kurdish peshmarga routed the army and pasdars. revolts in the Caspian ports, and the mass demonstrations in Teheran opened up rifts among the Ayatollahs and forced a demand for 'left turn' to anti imperialist politics and the re-legalisation of the groups and papers.

This disarray was evidenced by massive abstentions in the referendum on the constitution and in the collapse of the Islamic Republican Party's candidacy for the Presidency. Yet the mullahs have been able to return to the offensive. By late they felt confident enough to launch a massive attack on the Kurds, drive the left from the universities.

On 20th and 21st April Islamic radicals launched an offensive 'reform' the universities. Perhaps some of the so called Islamic groups were sincere in believing the campus could be put 'at the service of the people'. Their populist-Islamic ideology can never, be no more than a stalking



Sadat's troops attack demonstrators in Cairo, January 1977

force of opposition to Sadat's regime. Although the organisations of the revolutionary left are not numerically strong their effectiveness and potential lies in their ability to relate to and lead the masses during these explosions. 30 revolutionaries were able to lead mass demonstrations of half a million in Alexandria in 1977. Sadat knows this, which is why he tries to cut the links between the organisations of the left and the masses because he knows that it is these links which will lead to his overthrow. **What scale of repression does the regime rely on to maintain the isolation of the left from the Egyptian masses?**

Repression, of course, has developed alongside the development of mass opposition to the regime. Between 1971 and 1977 the normal thing was for militants to be arrested and kept in prison. After 1977 the bourgeoisie was forced to strengthen their state still further. For the first time in 25 years the army was used to suppress the mass demonstrations. New laws were enacted that made strikes and demonstrations illegal, forbade the issuing of papers and even the encouragement of such actions. To know of such activities and not inform the state was to carry up to 25 years imprisonment. Over the last 2 years Sadat has used military courts because the normal courts were too slow. Already comrades of the RCL have been sentenced by these courts. The General Prosecutor has the right to arrest anyone and keep them for up to 5 years without trial. He has the right to cancel any candidate in

horse for the reactionary anti-democratic, anti communist moves of Khomeini and Beheshti. On the pretext that 'marxist' students had prevented the right wing cleric Rafsanjani speaking on the Teheran campus Khomeini denounced the universities as 'colonized and westernised from the beginning and useless', as 'nests of spies and American agents' and encouraged the hezbollahis to clear them out. After two days of fighting—which spread to other cities and which left 27 dead and hundreds wounded—the Fedayeen, the most intransigent of the left groups, were finally forced to withdraw when Bani Sadr ordered the pasdaran to intervene to 'restore order'. Khomeini's 'Islamicisation' means the destruction of the universities as well as the crushing of the left groups rights to hold meetings and conduct propaganda. Simultaneously a murderous offensive against the Kurds was launched. 'Kurdistan must be combed and purged of all the anti-regime elements' thundered Khomeini. This time it meant mass slaughter directed against the unarmed civilian population. In the third week of May, fighting around Sananday left 1,500 Kurds and 500 government troops dead. Indiscriminate strafing by helicopter gunships and phantom jet-strikes turned Saqqez, a city of 40,000 people into a ghost town as the population fled to the mountains. Le Monde (16th May) reports the appeal of a Kurdish fighter in a hospital in Boukan, suffering from horrible napalm burns, "For the love of God, because you are a foreign journalist you must tell the whole world what you have seen and what we are suffering—How can Khomeini, that fascist that dares to speak about God, let such things as these be done. The truth must be known in Iran and outside Iran—everywhere!" The May Day demonstrations of the left were brutally harassed by the hezbollahis using knives and throw-

passed by the RCL at its last conference. We saw them as a kind of fascist organisation used by Sadat against the masses. They collaborated together for a long time and are deeply hostile to any movement of the masses. They have physically attacked militants and leaders of strikes and demonstrations. Sadat gave them every possibility to spread their propaganda and to organise themselves but they were not simply direct spies for the Sadat regime. They are a separate power with their own aim—the creation of what they call the Islamic Empire. They are growing rapidly now in conditions of economic and social stagnation. They have grown amongst the petit bourgeoisie in the towns and students coming from the countryside, with its deep religious traditions. They feel themselves strong enough to assert themselves as a separate force in Egyptian society, and this is what threatened Sadat.

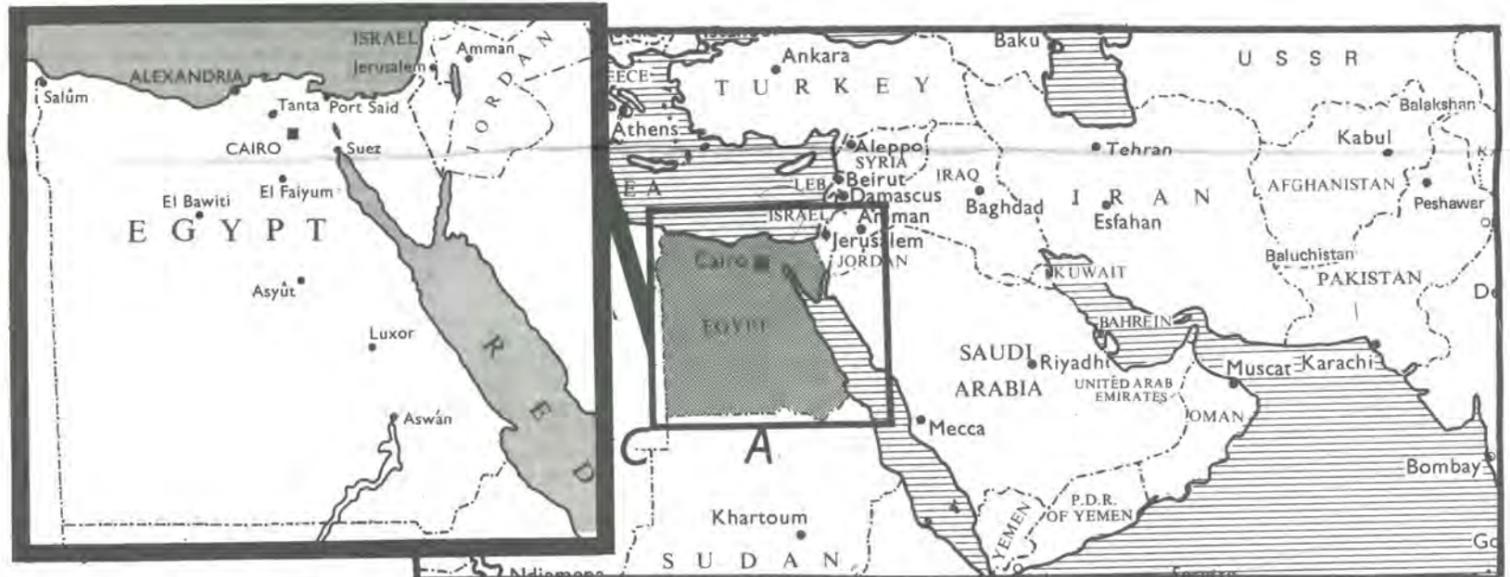
We argued a year ago that there would be a conflict between Sadat and these groups. Sadat is trying to limit their growth and keep them under his control but we think that this Islamic Party is prepared by the bourgeoisie as a reserve to destroy any upsurge by the masses if the traditional or classic methods of the army and the parliamentary decorations of the bourgeoisie fail to hold back the masses. They will use this fascist type army to destroy the organisations of the masses. That is why we fight against these groups, particularly in the working class where, fortunately, they have no significant influence. Either the revolutionaries must root themselves among the masses or the Islamic opposition stands to destroy the working class movement in Egypt.

elections for the state run Trade Unions without giving reasons. All this is now normal in Sadat's Egypt. Troops regularly patrol the workers districts in Cairo and Alexandria, they surround the universities making direct terror against the masses. At this moment the trials of the leaders of the 1977 demonstrations and strikes are taking place. Sentences will be announced on 176 militants later this month.

Sadat has also abolished any independence for Trade Union organisation. At the beginning of 1977 he dissolved the student unions. They were put under the control of professors and heads of faculties. He dissolved the Union of Journalists which was dominated by radical journalists and also the Union of Lawyers. The direct attack on Trade Unions and political organisations reached a new level after 1977 and repression increased considerably after Camp David.

What is the significance of the new measures announced by Sadat to be taken against the so-called Islamic Opposition?

I'll refer to a resolution concerning the development of the Islamic groups



ing stones. What can turn the tide against this brutal offensive? Only the mobilisation of the working class—their winning away from the mesmerising effects of the mullahs. Here the role of a Trotskyist revolutionary party would be crucial. The semi-guevarist, semi Stalinist politics of the Fedayeen—despite the marvellous heroism of their fighters—is of no use. Whilst the Fedayeen have protested against the anti democratic attacks of the clericals, whilst they have stood arms in hand in the front ranks of those defending the Kurds, whilst they have defended the universities against the 'Islamic' thugs they concentrate their political fire on the bourgeoisie and Bani Sadr, passing over Khomeini's role in silence. This is to disarm the working class against its real enemies. Anti-imperialist rhetoric is cheap and indeed confusing when "the main enemy is at home". However the so-called 'Islamic Trotskyists' of the HKE (Iranian Revolutionary Workers Party), sponsored by the US Socialist Workers Party, have adopted a position far to the right of the Fedayeen. They fail to raise the slightest criticism of Khomeini. This rank opportunism has borne bitter fruit in the recent struggles around the universities, showing that the HKE cannot even defend democratic rights. Supporting

the Islamic Student Organisations' criminal muddleheaded project that "the campuses should be closed down and the students sent out to work on revolutionary projects", the HKE played into the hands of the reactionaries. Too late they pleaded that "This action (the hezbollahi and government attacks - WP) which was against freedom and against freedom of speech was not what the ISOs wanted". Indeed - the way to hell is paved with good intentions. But what follows - from so-called Trotskyists - is a terrible confession of bankruptcy. Turning on the courageous Fedayeen, who defended the Universities, they are reported (by Intercontinental Press May 5th) thus: "The HKE also pointed out that by opposing the ISOs occupations, the leaderships of the Tudeh Party, Fedayeen and Mujahedeen not only "showed their bankruptcy" but also played into the hands "of the 500 capitalist families and their underground hit squads". The wretched 'Intercontinental' continues: "Contrary to press accounts, the HKE says, there is no escalating anti-communist campaign or witch-hunt against the Mujahedeen or Fedayeen in Iran today". On the contrary we are faced with 'a deepening of the revolutionary process'. The HKE and its SWP (US mentors cannot tell the difference



How do you assess the strength of the revolutionary left in Egypt? Is there a tradition of Stalinism that stands as an obstacle to the spread of Trotskyist ideas?

The Egyptian working class has no reformist party because the Stalinists surrendered a long time ago and dissolved their party into that of Nasser. In their history they have had no significant influence among the working class. The working class is fresh and ready to fight without any reformist obstacles and this is an ideal field for a Trotskyist organisation which is the only organisation with the method and programme to be able to root itself in the working class. This was shown during the major strikes of 1977 in Alexandria and Cairo where the RCL was able to play a leading role. We now have the possibility of building ourselves inside the working class. This was shown at the beginning of this year in the first strikes after two years of Sadat's anti strike laws. Comrades

were elected by workers in union elections in the iron, steel and other industries. The government arrested them and the workers went on strike in two main factories against this police repression and for their own economic demands. These were important strikes and we are trying to develop ourselves within the struggles of the working class in order to lead it to victory.

What do you see as the major tasks of militants in Britain and other imperialist countries in solidarity with those facing repression at the hands of the Sadat regime?

The working class and its vanguard in Egypt are completely isolated. The imperialist news media consistently ignored the repression Egypt and the struggles of the masses to defeat his regime. It's the duty of the British left to attempt to help revolutionaries in Egypt, to organise campaigns against the Sadat regime and let the Egyptian masses know that they are not alone in their fight.

between revolution and counter-revolution. Tell that to the Kurds, tell that to the families and friends of the 27 killed, tell that to the 17 students expelled from a teacher training college in Avak for being 'Marxists'. The 'Islamic cultural revolution' is the real tool of reaction. The measuring rod for a genuine Trotskyist party in Iran must be its advocacy and defence of working class independence from all brands of Islamic obscurantism. Its key task is the struggle for a militantly secular revolutionary workers party, for soviets, factory committees and trade unions free of the mosque. The mullahs must be discredited and driven out of the workers' ranks. On democratic demands, real Trotskyists must be clear and uncompromising - Down with the reactionary paraphernalia of the Islamic Republic! Down with the bonapartist roles of the Velayat-e-Faqih (Religious Guardian of the State) and the Presidency! Down with the Revolutionary Council! Dissolve the fake Parliament, elected by corruption, coercion and ballot rigging. Dissolve the pasdaran and arm the workers. For soldiers councils in every unit, and for the election of officers. For a united front of workers to smash the hezbollahi black hundreds! Trotskyists must fight for the

right of all the nationalities to self-determination, which is meaningless unless it includes the right to separation. Focussing all these democratic demands - including equal rights for women and an end to censorship and the Islamic Tribunals - is the demand for a sovereign Constituent Assembly elected by universal, equal and secret suffrage. Only the workers, peasants and soldiers councils could convoke, guard and supervise such elections. A Trotskyist party must set as its goal the defeat of clerical reaction, as well as of the Iranian bourgeoisie and its Imperialist backers. No such defeat can be decisive until full power rests in the hands of the workers and peasants Shoras. The alternative, as recent rumours of a military coup in Teheran indicate, is eventually the triumph of black reaction in one form or another. Either the black hundreds of the right wing of the Islamic Republican Party will smash the left and the workers organisations, and consolidate their power with the military and bourgeois support, or a General or Admiral, probably in Islamic guise, will organise a military coup that the Imam or his successor will bless. Time is running out on the two bedrock alternatives - full counter-revolution or working class power.

Fight for a Workers' Government ?

In the aftermath of the Russian revolution the Comintern addressed itself to questions of revolutionary strategy in Europe where the young Communist Parties were a minority in the workers' movement. Large sections of the working class particularly in Germany, were still under the sway of Social Democratic leaders. In this situation it was clearly insufficient for the CP's simply to denounce Social Democratic governments and counterpose to them the dictatorship of the proletariat. As in Russia the burning question was to find the tactics that could tear the masses away from their class collaborationist leaders. Further, the Comintern recognised that political crises that threatened bourgeois order could come about whilst communists were still a minority in the workers' movement. In such a situation the reformists would enter into collaboration with the bourgeoisie to solve the crisis at the expense of the working class. Communists had to find a means of addressing the workers who were engaged in struggle against the bourgeoisie but who still rejected the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is how Trotsky addressed the problem, "At a suitable time, prepared for by events and our propaganda, we shall address ourselves to the working masses who still reject the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat or who have simply not matured enough for these questions and speak as follows, 'You can see how the bourgeoisie is restoring its class unity under the Left Block and is preparing its own 'Left' government. Why should not we, the workers, belonging to different parties and tendencies, create together with non-party workers our own proletarian block in defence of our own interests? And why should we not put forward our own Workers' Government?' Here is a natural, simple and clear statement of the whole issue." (First 5 Years of the Comintern, Vol 2)

In using the term, 'Workers Government' the Leninist Comintern distinguished clearly between Liberal or Social Democratic governments (i.e. those of workers' parties but based on the bourgeois state) and what it called, 'revolutionary workers governments'. The latter would necessarily be under the control of, and directly responsible to, the independent combat organisations of the working class. A revolutionary workers government would be based on a programme which, in its most elementary form, would involve the arming of the workers, the smashing of the bourgeoisie's counter-revolutionary preparations, workers' supervision and control of production, heavy taxation and other economic measures against the rich etc. To the extent that reformists and centrists predominated in such a government, to just that extent, it would be a temporary and highly unstable government. Either the communists would gain the leadership and take further measures that would transform the workers' government into the dictatorship of the proletariat or the bourgeoisie would overthrow it and reconsolidate its state power.

Of course, such a government might have a 'legitimate' electoral or parliamentary majority, but it would not and could not be a parliamentary regime. If it really acted against the bourgeoisie the latter would definitely unleash civil war, a 'slaveowners rebellion', against it. Thus a workers' government would not be a means of avoiding armed conflict. For this reason the arming of the workers would assume decisive and central importance.

When WORKERS POWER uses the term, 'Workers' Government' we mean no more and no less than what the Comintern called a, 'revolutionary workers' government'. That is, a government of workers'

parties based on, and responsible to, the fighting organisations of the working class, one which arms the workers and mobilises them against the state power of the bourgeoisie. In this sense we would define all hitherto existing Labour governments as bourgeois governments. They have all stood squarely on the terrain of bourgeois democracy.

One point that must be stressed is that the call for a workers' government is a tactic to break the masses from reformism. It is not (and the Comintern was insistent on this) an inevitable stage on the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. A workers' government in which communists do not form the majority is something which may occur in the course of the class struggle. Trotsky considered the actual formation of a workers' government to be highly improbable, "Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organisations possible? Past experience shows that this is, to say the least, highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.) the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie." (The Transitional Programme)

That the workers' government is only an unlikely possibility needs to be stressed because Workers' Action posit it as a strategic goal for the working class. Workers' Action do this well in advance of the conditions likely to produce such a government.

WORKERS POWER argues that in the present period revolutionaries should place concrete demands on the reformist leaders to act in the interests of the working class. At the same time we propagandise for the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only solution to the capitalist crisis.

At some time in the future the call for a workers' government may well become the central tactic for revolutionaries. But, at present, the call for a workers government which is not the dictatorship of the proletariat obscures the real issue at stake, the seizure of state power by the working class. As Trotsky argued in the Transitional Programme, 'It is impossible in advance to foresee what will be the concrete stages of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses. The sections of the Fourth International should critically orient themselves at each new stage and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for independent politics, deepen the class character of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions, strengthen the connection of the vanguard with the masses, and prepare the revolutionary conquest of power.'

Workers Action and the workers' government

Having examined how communists understand the use of the workers' government slogan we can look at how Workers' Action reduces it to an evasive, centrist formulation in order to justify its strategic orientation to the transformation of the Labour Party. When we eventually find our way through WA's slippery and evasive formulations we will find that it is little more than a rather shoddy rationale for strategic adherence to the Labour Party, up to, and including, the seizure of power.

The arguments presented by WA in their series, "Fight for a Workers' Government" (WA 173-5) can be summarised as follows: The British working class faces the prospect of a catastrophe in the next decade. So

A series of articles, entitled, 'Fight for a Workers' Government', recently appeared in the newspaper, 'Workers Action'. We are replying to these articles firstly because of the importance of the question of the 'Workers' Government' slogan — a tactic of the revolutionary programme originating in Bolshevik practice in 1917, formulated in the revolutionary period of the Third International (Comintern) in 1922 and embodied in Trotsky's Transitional Programme of 1938. Secondly, because we believe the position advanced by Workers Action to be a false application of this slogan. In part 1 of our reply we deal with the manner in which Workers Action falsify this method. In a concluding article we will look at the situation in the Labour Party today and the tactics that revolutionaries should adopt towards it in the present period.

profound is the capitalist crisis, and so weak is the British economy, that the bourgeoisie has no way out, short of crushing the labour movement and pauperising whole sections of the working class. But, as yet, the British working class is undefeated and combative. However, its industrial muscle is not matched by its political consciousness. The key task for revolutionaries in the next period is, firstly, the political and organisational transformation of the Labour Party and, secondly, the democratisation of the trade unions. Since the working class is faced with catastrophe it is necessary to argue for the, 'full socialist programme' as the immediate answer. The crowning piece of the programme is the call for a workers' government. The socialist programme will be injected into the labour movement via the transformation of its political wing, the Labour Party. It is now possible to raise the full transitional programme, and the workers' government slogan, because the constitution changes passed at the Brighton Labour Party conference make it possible to transform the Labour Party.

It is now possible for revolutionaries to push the Labour Party so far to the left that it will break with the bourgeoisie, 'to a serious degree' and form a workers' government. The only way the working class can avoid catastrophe is to take up the fight for the transformation of the Labour Party. Because of the imminence of the catastrophe there is not enough time left to build a new revolutionary party. Thus, the central task for revolutionaries in the next few years is to flood the Labour Party with militants, democratise it and force it to form a workers' government.

WORKERS POWER argues that the orientation of WA is fundamentally mistaken. It represents a theoretical rationalisation of WA's rightward drift in the Labour Party even though it might seem, at first sight, to be a 'left turn' — especially to the rag bag of centrists and reformists gathered together in the disintegrating Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV).

Despite all the talk of raising the full programme, the main thrust of the argument is the need for revolutionaries to embed themselves in the Labour Party in order to transform it. As such it paves the way for W.A. to form a permanent bloc with the left reformists for the democratisation of the Labour Party. If W.A. really believes its warnings of the imminent catastrophe then such a strategy is criminally irresponsible.

Economics and tactics

In order to deal with this rather convoluted rationalisation for the abandonment of the fight for a revolutionary programme and party we will have to break it down into its various components.

The apparent starting point for W.A.'s decision to raise the workers' government slogan is the imminence of a catastrophic crisis in which, 'The

ruling class can settle for nothing less than a decisive defeat, perhaps a crushing defeat, of the working class.' W.A. does not advance any evidence for this beyond pointing out that, "most commentators" believe a new world slump is imminent.

Now, WORKERS POWER would not disagree that capitalism has entered, since the late Sixties, into a period of increasing crisis and instability, indeed, we argued that very point with leading supporters of W.A. in 1976 — and were accused of being 'catastrophists'! However, two points have to be made about this in the context of W.A.'s sudden raising of the workers' government slogan. The first is that their economic projection is equally sudden. This is what Martin Thomas had to say last October, "... there are real reasons for capitalist crises being less dramatic now than in the 1930's. State spending is in itself a problem for capitalism, and the bosses are trying to cut it, but it still exists on a very large scale and does have some stabilising effect... The crises of the 1970's have coincided with general rise of working class militancy (albeit with ups and downs) since 1968, and a serious though gradual strengthening of revolutionary currents in the labour movement. The more slowly burning crisis gives the working class a chance to rethink, reorient and relearn many things." (WA 156)

So, comrades, is there not a need for some explanation? What has happened to the capitalist system since last October? From, 'slow-burning crisis' to 'catastrophe within the decade' is not just a change of emphasis — it implies a radically different understanding of the dynamics of modern capitalism. We do not believe that W.A. has only just noticed the positions of, 'most commentators', they have all been forecasting the present recession for at least two years. Instead we are forced to believe that this, 'economic analysis' is nothing but an impressionistic rationalisation to justify W.A.'s manoeuvres in the Labour Party. In other words, W.A.'s analysis of the world economy is changed to fit that current's immediate tactical requirements.

Secondly, there is the equally important point that the tactics the W.A. comrades adopt are the same in both the present period of impending catastrophe and in the previous period of 'slow-burning crisis'.

Polemicalising against the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), WA argue that the problem with the SWP is not its failure to develop a revolutionary programme, but its attempt to build an organisation separate from the Labour Party. Given the depth of the crisis, the working class does not have time for such self-indulgence: "(the SWP's) perspective is actually a perspective — at best — for decades ahead. The problem is that we haven't got decades. We face a catastrophic crisis and decline of British society now, and the need for answers now, even if the left isn't ready" (WA 174).

It becomes clear at this stage of the argument that the talk of catastrophe is little more than a cynical means of further embedding WA in the Labour Party. We haven't time

to build a revolutionary party, so we'll have to settle for a centrist Labour Party (why this process should be any quicker than building a new party is not made clear). But then as Trotsky was fond of pointing out, the opportunist is always left thrashing around in the swamp, looking in vain for a short cut back to dry land.

This idea that impending doom leaves insufficient time for the building of an independent revolutionary party is not a new one in the "Trotskyist" movement. One-time secretary of the Fourth International (FI), Michel Pablo, argued that the imminence of World War 3 meant that the FI should bury itself in the Stalinist parties, and assist their evolution to the left under mass pressure. WA may not share Pablo's grand schema for world revolution without a party of world revolution (their analysis is far too parochial and British-centred for that), but what they do have in common with Pablo is the method of strategic entry work as an alternative to building a new party.

This, it needs to be said, differs radically from the Trotskyist entry tactic employed in the 1930s (the most famous example being the "French turn"). In the 1930s, Trotskyists entered the reformist parties on a short-term perspective of splitting them and winning their ranks to the fight to build a new party — the Fourth International. Given that in this period Trotsky did not believe there was much time left before massive, if not final, class confrontations would take place, it is instructive to note that Trotsky stressed again and again the need for a new party — the party of world socialist revolution, the Fourth International — as the only way of resolving the crisis in favour of the working class.

Replying to those Trotskyists who wished to stay in the French Socialist Party (SFIO), for fear of being isolated, Trotsky had this to say: "Are there comrades among you who wish at all costs to remain cooped up in the SFIO? ... If someone among you says 'Outside the SFIO we will be isolated, we will sink into futility etc...' we should answer 'Dear friend, your nerves are shot; take a four week vacation, and then we'll see!'. And at the same time we must engrave on our memory the attitude of these comrades in this moment of crisis: we will know more formidable crises in the future, and the same faint-heartedness can recur on a much vaster scale" (Crisis in the French Section).

We are of the opinion that it would take more than a four week vacation to revitalise WA's nervous system.

Why W.A. raise slogan now

We can now move on to the next stage of the argument and look at why WA believes it is necessary to raise the workers government slogan now. In doing so we will have to sort out exactly what WA under-

stands by the term "workers government".

Here is what WA has to say on the nature of a workers government: "[a workers government] ... is a government based on the organisations of the working class and seriously fighting to at least win some of the measures the working class needed" (WA 173).

WA states correctly that no Labour government to date could be called a workers government. They argue that a real workers government would differ from previous Labour governments by: "really fighting for the demands in the programme above, or at least some of the most essential" "Even if resting on a Parliamentary majority... basing itself on the working class, and relying on its mobilisations in the struggle against bourgeois resistance"

"By breaking to a serious degree with the organs of bourgeois state power, its bureaucracy, police and army"

"By being to some degree directly answerable to, and controllable by the working class, because dependent on it against the bourgeois state"

These formulations are centrist and evasive. They do not state clearly that a workers government would, as the most decisive act, arm the workers. This would necessarily open up the perspective of civil war. A workers government would necessarily be controlled by the working class through its armed organs of self-defence, ie through councils of action and workers militia. Neither does it make clear that the issue of state power, the final settling of the question, could only be resolved by an independent revolutionary party seizing the leadership of the working class from the reformists or centrists.

"So what of significance has changed since 1975? Is the working class more militant? Is workers' consciousness at a higher level? Has the hold of reformism declined? Is there a large revolutionary party?"

Quite apart from W.A.'s position on the nature of the workers' government we need also to look at why they believe it was not possible to raise it before now.

Of the period 1973-4, WA says: "It was not... possible to call for a workers government where there was no revolutionary organisation of sufficient size and weight, where the bourgeois state remained stable and the class struggle remain essentially confined to the channels of bourgeois society, and where the Labour Party dominated working class politics and was itself in the bureaucratic grasp of the right wing, capable of surviving while ignoring the labour movement's demands" (WA174).

So what has changed since 1973-4 - a period let us not forget when the intensity of the class struggle forced labour to the polls on the basis of its most "left" manifesto for years (certainly to the left of the manifesto on which Callaghan stood) a period in which the Heath government fell under the blows of working class militancy. So what of significance has changed since 1975? Is the working class more militant? Is workers consciousness at a higher level? Has the hold of reformism declined? Is there a large revolutionary party?

To all these questions WA would be forced to answer "No!". But in order to make it possible to raise the workers government slogan, it was merely necessary "... for the political wing of the labour movement itself to begin to change - and to begin to change sufficiently for it to be not now fantastic to set as a goal its transformation (at least partially and on condition that further changes are pressed through) into a real instrument of the working class" (WA 174).

And what events have made it no longer "fantastic" to pose the full transitional programme to the labour movement? Of course! We should have guessed! The constitutional reforms accepted by the

Labour Party at the Brighton conference: "Brighton demonstrates that transforming the political wing of the labour movement is a possibility, and thus that it is possible to raise the transitional demand for a workers government in Britain, where in the initial stages such a government would inevitably have the Labour Party as its major or only component." (WA 174).

The implications of the above passage are incredible, but before drawing them out, lets remember what happened at Brighton. As we argued in Workers Power 10, the "winter of discontent" temporarily drove a wedge between the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Trade Union bureaucracy. This provided an opening for the left reformists to push through a few minor democratic reforms. Mandatory

reselection of MPs was the only reform definitely won. The attempt to take the election of Labour Party leader out of the hands of the PLP was defeated, and the decision on NEC control over the manifesto was postponed until the next conference.

It should also be remembered that the conference did not commit the party to a real fight against the Tory offensive (indeed all attempts to do so were defeated). So WA are arguing that these minimal reforms to the Labour Party constitution suddenly make it possible to raise the full programme, to transform the Labour Party and arrive at a situation of dual power in the next few years. We had always assumed that 'revolutionaries' in the Labour Party who did not raise the "full programme" were not in fact revolutionaries. How does the possibility of re-selecting MPs become the decisive factor in whether WA raises its whole programme or not?

It means building a rank and file opposition to the bureaucrats. An important aspect of this is to demand the raising of politics in the unions, including the question of what politics and structure the Labour Party should adopt. But the strategic goal of the transitional programme is not the workers government but the proletarian dictatorship based on workers councils. WA, because its action programme is designed first and foremost for the strategic goal of a workers government, talks about the need "to crown that programme with the call for the creation of a workers government which will at least fight for the immediate interests of the working class, breaking with the bourgeoisie where necessary and to the extent necessary..." (WA 174).

This is a sharp turn away from the positions argued as late as 1977 when WA supported the following position:

"The call for a workers government is a bold tactical compromise which revolutionaries may use in struggle. We do not write that compromise into our programme as a necessary aim" (The Struggle for Workers Power). But that compromise is now written into the WA programme. As such it is a measure of the ongoing process of W.A.'s adaptation to the reformist milieu.

It is therefore no accident that

Workers Action does not go beyond a reference to "networks of factory committees", as an adjunct to the workers government, rather than as the key organs of the real struggle

"...the councils of action and the workers' militia cannot be raised in this passive, parliamentarist fashion ..."

for power. The demands in W.A.'s programme to dissolve the repressive state apparatus - the police and the army are posed purely as 'governmental measures'. The workers militia is posed simply as a 'replacement' for the 'abolished' army, "as far as there will be a need for defence the working class movement can itself organise defence from its own ranks" (WA 173).

Here the workers militia is posed simply as if in reply to a question from an astonished reformist worker "But don't we (ie Britain) need a defence force, a public order force?" Doubtless such questions will be asked if the issue is only raised as one of a list of policies to be adopted by a Labour parliamentary majority. No comrades, the councils of action and the workers militia cannot be raised in this passive parliamentarist fashion. They will be developed from pickets, via workers defence squads, in mass strike situations, in bitter clashes which will ensue with the police and army.

The call on reformist and centrist leaders to "dissolve the army" is the call to open the arsenals and arm the workers - it is a call to aid the workers themselves to dissolve the state forces and as such it carries with it the perspective of civil war. The workers government is not a way of avoiding these shocking or unpleasant realities.

A situation where the question of power is posed but where workers still have reformist illusions does not relegate the need for an armed struggle to mere propaganda. Nor does it relegate to the background the question of a disciplined combat political party different in essence to the vote-gathering machine of the LP. Indeed it poses it more sharply. Of course this does not mean that revolutionaries are obliged to remain outside the Labour Party or to organise only those workers who tear up their LP membership cards.

At different times revolutionaries may or may not carry out an entry tactic, but we do not cease to raise political questions simply because we are not in the process of entering a reformist party. (Contrary to WA's assertions syndicalism is not the only alternative to entry). Nor do revolutionaries at any time attempt to persuade workers that the only way they can take up politics is to join a reformist party.

WA predicts that the working class could suffer irrevocable defeat during the 1980s. In this situation, does WA say "Fight for councils of action, build the organisations that can stand as alternatives to the bourgeois state as a matter of great urgency, build a vanguard party that can spearhead the offensive against the bosses and the ultra-reactionary state forces"? No! WA says: join the Labour Party and try and force it to the left (and try and democ-

ratise the unions while you are at it). And WA also extends this advice to all subjective revolutionaries (perhaps taking a leaf out of Tony Benn's book):

"... we must turn industrial militants towards the Labour Party - and towards the political perspective of a workers government. For the revolutionary left this is essential to insist on. The experience of 1973-4 is fundamentally that because the best industrial militants were not also involved in the Labour Party, they had no political instrument even to fight for reforms"

"... definitely subordinate to the central task of revolutionaries - to build a revolutionary organisation rooted in the workplaces ..."

WA 174). So for the working class the key task prior to the advent of apocalypse now is the revitalisation and transformation of the Labour Party.

Leaving aside the mistaken perspective of the central area for work, W.A.'s position would not be quite so disastrous if WA were seriously attempting to build a revolutionary current in the Labour Party. But they explicitly disavow this project in favour of building the propaganda group of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV), which has a mish-mash centrist programme. It is not a united front for action with reformists on a number of clear and limited issues. As such it gives the reformists and centrists an ideal cloak to gain a cheap 'left' reputation.

As we have argued in previous polemics with WA (see WP 11), WORKERS POWER does not rule out the tactic of building a revolutionary current in the Labour Party to win its rank and file to the creation of a new leadership and eventually a new party. But this is definitely subordinate to the central task of revolutionaries - to build a revolutionary organisation rooted in the workplaces, capable of directing the industrial strength of the working class into a political assault on the bourgeois state.

The high road to the socialist revolution does not lie in the fight to transform the Labour Party, nor in the fight for an unstable, non-communist workers government. We would argue that this perspective has no value for the working class. But it does to Workers Action. It rationalises and legitimates a manoeuvre, a long-term stay in the reformist party in the hope of building WA. As we have argued previously, every attempt to justify and prolong a strategic orientation to the transformation of the Labour Party is a sign-post in the rightward degeneration of WA. They now systematically evade the key programmatic questions facing workers, which can be summed up as the need for a revolutionary party and the question of state power. In theorising these evasions, WA has adopted an increasingly centrist practice, most clearly seen in the SCLV'

To those supporters of Workers Action who oppose the rightward drift, we would say this. Your leadership talks of revitalising and transforming the Labour Party. For the time being you would do well to turn your attentions to programmatically transforming Workers Action from an organisation which makes ever greater concessions to reformism into an organisation capable of really fighting reformism - a revolutionary communist organisation. Your failure to do this will be to condemn your organisation to interminable sectarian manoeuvres in the reformist milieu, and ultimately to irrelevance in the struggles of the working class.

Charlie Shell



A detachment of armed workers in the Ruhr, 1920, during the general strike called by the Social Democrats trade union leaders against the attempted putsch by right-wing generals (Kapp putsch). Arming the workers must be a central element of a general strike if the possibility of power is to become a reality. But even Soviets and armed workers cannot substitute for a revolutionary leadership - a party. Workers Action pose the Workers Government outside of this perspective and therefore necessarily in a parliamentarist fashion.

of continuing struggle for all socialists and trade union militants who really want to settle accounts with the Tories and with capitalism" (WA 174).

In other words even if the Brighton decisions are reversed and the opportunity to force the Labour Party to become a workers government evaporates, WA will continue to put its major emphasis on work in Party wards to democratise the Labour Party. But what about the catastrophe? What way forward is there for workers if the Labour Party's transformation is seriously delayed?

Here again WA veers away from the harsh reality of the British labour movement. Unless the unions are transformed, ie unless the shop stewards committees are turned into real fighting factory committees, unless the hold of the Duffys, Chapples and Evans's is disrupted and broken, then the defeats that will ensue will lower the political consciousness of workers. This means arguing the essential elements of the transitional programme, including its strategic goal of working class power in the unions.

It means building a rank and file opposition to the bureaucrats. An important aspect of this is to demand the raising of politics in the unions, including the question of what politics and structure the Labour Party should adopt. But the strategic goal of the transitional programme is not the workers government but the proletarian dictatorship based on workers councils. WA, because its action programme is designed first and foremost for the strategic goal of a workers government, talks about the need "to crown that programme with the call for the creation of a workers government which will at least fight for the immediate interests of the working class, breaking with the bourgeoisie where necessary and to the extent necessary..." (WA 174).

This is a sharp turn away from the positions argued as late as 1977 when WA supported the following position: "The call for a workers government is a bold tactical compromise which revolutionaries may use in struggle. We do not write that compromise into our programme as a necessary aim" (The Struggle for Workers Power). But that compromise is now written into the WA programme. As such it is a measure of the ongoing process of W.A.'s adaptation to the reformist milieu.

It is therefore no accident that

Workers Action does not go beyond a reference to "networks of factory committees", as an adjunct to the workers government, rather than as the key organs of the real struggle

"...the councils of action and the workers' militia cannot be raised in this passive, parliamentarist fashion ..."

for power. The demands in W.A.'s programme to dissolve the repressive state apparatus - the police and the army are posed purely as 'governmental measures'. The workers militia is posed simply as a 'replacement' for the 'abolished' army, "as far as there will be a need for defence the working class movement can itself organise defence from its own ranks" (WA 173).

Here the workers militia is posed simply as if in reply to a question from an astonished reformist worker "But don't we (ie Britain) need a defence force, a public order force?" Doubtless such questions will be asked if the issue is only raised as one of a list of policies to be adopted by a Labour parliamentary majority. No comrades, the councils of action and the workers militia cannot be raised in this passive parliamentarist fashion. They will be developed from pickets, via workers defence squads, in mass strike situations, in bitter clashes which will ensue with the police and army.

The call on reformist and centrist leaders to "dissolve the army" is the call to open the arsenals and arm the workers - it is a call to aid the workers themselves to dissolve the state forces and as such it carries with it the perspective of civil war. The workers government is not a way of avoiding these shocking or unpleasant realities.

A situation where the question of power is posed but where workers still have reformist illusions does not relegate the need for an armed struggle to mere propaganda. Nor does it relegate to the background the question of a disciplined combat political party different in essence to the vote-gathering machine of the LP. Indeed it poses it more sharply. Of course this does not mean that revolutionaries are obliged to remain outside the Labour Party or to organise only those workers who tear up their LP membership cards.

At different times revolutionaries may or may not carry out an entry tactic, but we do not cease to raise political questions simply because we are not in the process of entering a reformist party. (Contrary to WA's assertions syndicalism is not the only alternative to entry). Nor do revolutionaries at any time attempt to persuade workers that the only way they can take up politics is to join a reformist party.

WA predicts that the working class could suffer irrevocable defeat during the 1980s. In this situation, does WA say "Fight for councils of action, build the organisations that can stand as alternatives to the bourgeois state as a matter of great urgency, build a vanguard party that can spearhead the offensive against the bosses and the ultra-reactionary state forces"? No! WA says: join the Labour Party and try and force it to the left (and try and democ-

workers power

The Engineering Charter has called a conference for June 28th. This conference provides a crucial opportunity for militants to organise themselves to break the right-wing stranglehold in the AUEW.

Since defeating the Broad Left in 1975, Duffy and Boyd have systematically set out to destroy the fighting ability of the union. It now seems certain that the forthcoming Rules Revision Conference will accept Duffy's plans for a merger with the EEPTU and for an increase in the size of branches and their supervision by appointed officials.

While Duffy has awarded himself a handsome 28% payrise, the recent National Committee produced no clear commitment to fight for a national pay claim this year.

Indeed the £100 minimum that the 1979 conference unanimously called for has not been put forward to the employers and this year the executive has explicitly rejected demands for exact figures to be put on the national wage claim.

With such a leadership openly committed to NOT fighting for defence and improvement of its members' living standards, it becomes more urgent and pressing that a rank and file movement is built that can galvanise support from rank and file members of the union to remove these leaders and put the union in the hands of those who will fight in the interests of the members.

At present two groupings exist inside the union that are opposed to the regime of Duffy and Boyd . . . the CP-dominated Broad Left and the SWP led Engineers Charter.

The years since 1967 have proved that the Broad Left is incapable of beating the employers and the openly pro-employer Right wing in the union. In 1967 it succeeded in getting Hugh, now Lord, Scanlon elected as president. But they failed to launch a campaign committed to even carrying out Scanlon's election programme.

While Scanlon's election platform had called for a meaningful national annual pay claim he, with the Broad Left in toe, meekly accepted a three-year wage deal in 1968. The next negotiations took place in 1971 under a Tory government. When the EEF broke off negotiations, the Broad Left dominated executive refused to respond on a national scale.

Instead they tried to isolate action by recommending that each plant take on their own employer individually. Militants in Manchester and Sheffield did manage to hold their areas together. In Manchester piece work was banned and when the employers replied with lockouts they were countered by 30 occupations. Scanlon left the Manchester engineers to fight alone and again the Broad Left did not criticise him.

Build

The refusal of the Broad Left to build a base in the rank and file of the union around a programme of action, their tailing of the Scanlon-led executive inevitably opened the way to the isolation and demoralisation of militants in the union and the right wing victories of 1975.

The Broad Left has learned none of the lessons of this period. Where was their independent face during the last national strike? Their bureaucratic policies offer only a dead-end to the rank and file and will leave the union firmly in the hands of Duffy and Boyd.

So what does the Charter offer as an alternative to the Broad Left? On the showing of the last months, they offer no more than a prospect of tailing it. They are supporting Bob Wright in the Presidential elections this autumn. Bob Wright stands firmly in the tradition of the Broad Left. Speaking at a rally in Preston on the 23rd of February, he said it was



John Sturrock (Report)

Bob Wright

(From page 1)

Afghanistan back to the landlord-based opposition, or to the international vultures who are descending on it. They key question in Afghanistan is how to defend and strengthen these forces against both the Soviet Armed Forces (SAF) and the Peshawar-based opposition.

The Soviet bureaucracy has tried to put together a government composed of supporters of the Karmal-led 'Parcham' faction, and elements of the 'Khalq' faction who were deposed in the bloody coup with which Amin overthrew Taraki in September 1979. Sarvari (deputy prime minister) Watanja (communications minister) and Gulabzoi (interior minister) were all Khalqis ousted by Amin. Not only is the base of this regime withering away as the immediate threat of the reactionary opposition recedes and the repressive actions of the Soviet troops become more obvious - May's demonstrations underlined this fact - but there are mounting signs of differences between Khalqi and Parcham elements in the isolated and daily more unpopular regime of Babrak Karmal.

The Soviet bureaucrats are interested only in securing Afghanistan as a safe buffer zone on their Southern border. If the Karmal government cannot provide this, then they would willingly do a deal with the former Afghan monarch (whom they have been talking to recently), with the regimes of Iran and Pakistan, if they

were able to secure their interests by doing so. All the evidence suggests at present that neither the Afghan king nor the Islamic dictators are prepared as yet to do a deal that allows for a continued military presence of the Soviet bureaucracy in Afghanistan. That is why the Soviet bureaucracy is forced to prop up the Karmal regime.

nationalities

The Afghan workers and peasants, in their fight to defend their organisations and the limited gains made since 1978 against the Peshawar-based reactionary opposition, will, in the conditions created by the Soviet intervention, be obliged to cooperate militarily with the SAF, the Afghan army and the PDPA militia, where these forces act (temporarily and out of self-interest) in defence of these organisations and gains. Where, on the other hand, they attempt to crush the self-organisation of the workers and peasants, or act against progressive gains or struggles, Afghan revolutionaries should oppose them - by armed force when necessary.

The strategic task for revolutionaries in Afghanistan must be to weld together sufficient forces under their own banner not only to prevent the inevitable attacks on the workers and peasants that the SAF have delivered and will continue to deliver, but also

to militarily defeat the designs of the Soviet bureaucracy, world imperialism and its allies, and the landlords and tribal chiefs.

This can only be done by a party that consistently defends the self-organisation of the workers and peasants, and the democratic right of self-determination of the historically oppressed nationalities, up to and including the right to separate. This revolutionary force can be built in conflict not only with the leaders of the reactionary opposition, but also with the Soviet armed forces and their puppet Karmal government.

If a new period of black reaction and potential partition in Afghanistan is to be avoided, it will not be as a result of the action of the SAF. It will be the result of the building of a leadership out of precisely such elements as clashed with the Soviet army in Kabul in May, a leadership that having broken with the Stalinist programme and traditions of the PDPA and the Soviet army could defeat the forces of reaction and solve the problems of the Afghan people, by linking up the struggles of the working class and nationalities in Iran, the momentous struggles that the masses of Pakistan and Baluchistan will wage to rid themselves of the bloody Zia dictatorship, in a SOCIALIST FEDERATION OF SOUTH WEST ASIA.

ENGINEERS
CHARTER

Conference

In the fight against Duffy

Wright's policies spell disaster

"...high time that the unions united behind a policy that no factories should be allowed to close or be cut back without the full consent of the trade union movement".

negotiate

Wright, in the true colours of the Broad Left, seeks not to build a united rank and file fight against all cuts and closures but instead to secure the right for the unions to negotiate on them. Should the management refuse to talk and deal with the union leaders, then Wright says he would call for "the method of take-over and occupation with the backing of the union."

In order to fight against the right, Bob Wright calls for the rebuilding of the rank and file base of the union. Yet, in the face of the Duffy Plans for a national secret ballot and the curtailing of rights of branches, Wright's bureaucratic recipe is simple: "We may have to increase the size of branches, hold meetings monthly, bi-monthly or perhaps even quarterly."

Such a policy offers no alternative to the strangle hold of the right. However, we should support Wright against Duffy in the forthcoming elections. Wright does not stand on a positive programme of destroying the elements of rank and file democracy that exist in the AUEW as does Duffy.

Moreover, those rank and file members who will be supporting Wright must be broken, during the election campaign, from the legacy and traditions of the Broad Left. This means militants fight-

ing for their own programme, producing their own propaganda, independent of the politics and structures of the Broad Left. *Critical support* must be the order of the day.

The SWP and the Engineers Charter, however, have become the most uncritical followers of Bob Wright's supporters. In the Engineers Charter of March of this year, Ian Morris writes: "Two years ago I stood as the Charter's candidate in the Presidential elections when the Charter had some criticisms of Bob Wright's role during the Labour Government's wage restraint; this time we cannot afford the luxury."

Critical?

Morris, in this article - "Kick Out the Rights, Vote Wright" fails to raise any real criticisms of Wright despite the fact that the last national business meeting of the Charter held in Manchester, decided to campaign for critical support for Wright around the Charter programme. In fact all the Charter offers now is a 'Vote Bob Wright for God Sake' campaign.

Where is the Charter's own programme anyway? The pages of its paper are full of more-or-less amusing articles but nowhere do we find a programme that can show a way forward for militants. Even the formal 'Charter' is no longer printed.

The Charter will be put to the test at the June 28th conference. It must be able to offer a concrete alternative to the bankrupt bureaucratic policies of the Broad

Left. It must decide on a programme and perspectives to build a new shop-floor based leadership that can defeat Duffy and defend jobs and wages in the battle with employers.

Programme

The key elements of the programme which Workers Power supporters in the AUEW will be fighting for at the Engineers Charter conference are:

* **No to the merger with the EEPTU.**

Complete the amalgamation of the AUEW on a democratic basis. All officials to be subject to annual election, to be recallable and paid the average wage.

* **For factory branches of the AUEW meeting in work-time without loss of pay.**

For delegate area committees to ensure the free flow of information and maximum solidarity.

* **Open the books of the employers to workers inspection.**

For the right of workers representatives to inspect the books, accounts and meetings of the employers.

* **No to all redundancies.**

For work sharing under shop stewards' control with no loss of earnings - cut the hours not the jobs.

For shop stewards control of hiring and firing and the speed of work.

For occupations to prevent closures.

* **Real equality for women workers.**

For a woman's right to work. For real equal pay.

Subscribe to

WORKERS
POWER

NAME

ADDRESS

Send £2 to the address below and receive 12 issues of the paper.

Please make cheques or postal orders payable to Workers Power.

Forward to Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1V 6XX.

For child care facilities organised by the union at all union meetings.

* **For the sliding scale of wages:** 1% rise in take home pay for every 1% rise in the cost of living as calculated by committees of workers and housewives.

* **Nationalise the entire engineering industry under workers control with no compensation to the bosses.**

John Dawe