

# Workers Power

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## IRAN WORKERS TIP THE SCALES

The total cessation of oil exports from Iran is undeniable testimony to the tremendous weight Iran's workers have thrown into the scales in the struggle against the blood soaked Shah. The strikes by bank workers, state employees, newspaper workers, car workers, are inexorably strangling the functioning of the Iranian economy. Unprecedented wage increases have been won (25% to 100%) over the last 3 months which partly recoup the effects of inflation but the strikes continue and are now overtly political, centring on calls for democratic rights, the kicking out of foreign exploiters and the overthrow of the Shah and his machinery of mass murder.

The Ayatollah Khomeini, a fierce anti-communist is forced by the obvious centrality of the working class's strength to overthrowing the Shah, to praise the strikers and call on all oppositionists to give them financial and other support.

The military regime despite unexampled savagery has been unable to restore order in the streets or break the workers resolve. The court camarilla, the generals and police chiefs and their CIA advisers have only two choices, more repression taken to genocidal proportions or concessions.

The latter course, to have any chance of producing a stable transitional government would necessitate the Shah's flight along with the most notorious generals, SAVAK chiefs etc.

The crucial question facing the Iranian revolution is the role of the working class. Already its



social weight is proving the single most decisive factor. But more than this is needed if more than the figurehead, the trappings of Pahlavi monarchy, are to be altered. A SAVAK-military dictatorship swathed in Islamic demagoguery would be no step forward for Iran's oppressed masses. A coalition of mullah nominees and bourgeois politicians swathed in anti-Imperialist rhetoric would be, at best, a concealed foe of the working class and democratic rights—one which the exigencies of the class struggle would soon drive sharply to the right. Whilst the proletariat can and should fight alongside the mullah led forces it will be fatal for it to support a Khomeini-style government. Therefore the objective strength of the working class in the anti-Shah movement must be transformed into conscious leadership. This requires the foc-

ussing of existing strike committees into effective workers councils. These must be organs not only of mass strikes against the Shah, or his military successors, but of armed insurrection. They must become organs which can lead the democratic and anti-Imperialist struggles to their fulfilment in an Iranian Socialist revolution.

To achieve this goal means the creation of an Iranian Trotskyist party capable of breaking the workers from the influence of the mullahs, the Tudeh and the Maoist guerilla organisations. The stagist conceptions of the Stalinists yield the leadership of the masses to anti-proletarian 'progressive forces'. The full democratic demands of the Iranian revolution can only be won under conscious proletarian leadership. They can only be safeguarded by proletarian power.

## No Arms No Intervention

There is no limit to the hardware Imperialism will provide to prop up its bloody puppet state in Iran.

The stoppage of oil supplies threatens severe disruption to the economies of Imperialism's most faithful henchmen—Israel and South Africa—as well as to the economies of the Imperialist heartlands.

That is why the Carter administration has committed its security apparatus and its fleet to the massacre of the Iranian workers and peasants.

Not to be outdone the British Labour Government—on the very day the Shah's British tanks mangled the bodies of demonstrators on

the streets of Ghazvin and Tehran—announced its commitment to the butchery in Iran. 100 Shir One Chieftan Tanks, worth over £500 million, will be delivered to Iran by the spring. Callaghan and Holy Owen have promised the fulfilment of £1 billion worth of arms orders with no cancellation.

British workers cannot remain silent as the Imperialists step up the butchery of the Iranian masses. If the British labour movement allows the transportation of arms to the forces of repression and murder in Iran then it too will be complicit in the deaths of thousands of Iranian workers and peasants.

A campaign of solidarity with the workers and peasants of Iran must be built in the British labour movement. There is no time to wait for fine speeches and petitions. Action must be taken now to black all arms supplies to the butchers of Iran. This means fighting for action by munitions workers, by transport workers, by dockers and airport workers to stop the flow of arms now.

In every town labour movement committees of solidarity must be built—committed to action, to blacking, to demonstrations to force the Labour Government to break with Imperialism and its allies in Iran.

## PUBLIC SECTOR KEY TEST ON 5%

by Steve McSweeney

Callaghan's Government remains firmly committed to imposing its 5% limit. Its determination to train and deploy troops to break the tanker drivers action shows the lengths to which it is prepared to go. In the next weeks it will be the low-paid workers of the public sector who will find themselves in the front line of battle with Labour's wage cutting pay norm.

By early December only 840,000 workers have settled their claims. Many settlements are significantly outside the Government's limit. The next months will determine not only the future of Labour's pay-code, but the future of the Labour Government itself.

The autumn round of pay negotiations, in which the government's attack mainly centred on the private industrial sector, proved indecisive as union leaders held back to await the outcome of the Ford dispute.

Nonetheless, the last three months have seen a massive increase in militancy right across industry. After four years of wage cuts and soaring unemployment, working class anger has in form at least, ruptured the treacherous "Social Contract" alliance between union leaders and the Labour Government. Much against their will the bureaucrats of the Labour movement have had to change their tactics—though not their allegiance.

Important sections of employers have adopted a more hard-nosed policy. This is not solely due to increased militancy. They are also emboldened by the success of Labour's anti-working class policies. The lock-out at *The Times* and Edwards' insistence on yet more redundancies at Leyland's, for example, were not dreamt up overnight. Plans like these, and they are only the first of many, reflect the long term intentions of the British ruling class faced with ever hotter international competition.

### Ford's

By far the most important change for workers has been in the tactics of the trade union leaders. At Ford's Evans and Todd leapt to make the strike official, ignoring the strict letter of the national agreement normally so beloved of union officials. By doing this they regained the initiative that had been taken by the Halewood and Southampton workers when they walked out. For the rest of the strike union leaders were determined not to lose that initiative. Take, for example, the blacking of Ford's goods and supplies. Rarely have T&G officials moved as quickly to enforce blacking. The purpose of this was to keep the 57,000 strikers out of the action, to convince them they had nothing to do but stay at home and wait. Compare this with the T&Gs "inability" to support the Garner's strikers by imposing a blacking on meat supplies from Smithfield Market where the T&G have a complete closed shop.

Evans did not leave it there. After three weeks Ford conceded the most important elements of the eventual settlement. The union bureaucrats were faced with a problem—without extending the strike into an all out offensive on the government's

policy through sympathy strikes etc. there was little chance of forcing more out of Ford's. At the same time the level of militancy after three weeks convinced them that the agreement would be rejected. What to do? Their answer was to keep up the militant face, reject the offer out of hand and keep "fighting". After nine weeks they felt safe enough to take the "new" agreement to the members. It still contained the penalty clauses against un-official strike action. When the terms of the agreement provoke such actions we will see Evans and Todd use the full weight of the union to isolate them, break them and victimise the militants.



Ford strikers at Transport House

### dambuster?

The Ford's strike also revealed the shallowness of the "Dambusters" theory of wage bargaining. According to this as soon as one section of workers broke through the government's policy others would be able to follow automatically. Certainly the Ford settlement was higher than the government wanted and will be something of a target for other sections, but for the weaker or less profitable sections to win their claims simultaneous action was and is vital. The Ford strike could have sparked an offensive on this scale.

Certainly the other major sections of the car industry could have come out and other sections who had claims in the pipeline, power workers, miners, local authority workers, tanker drivers, road haulage, would in these circumstances been encouraged to take action at the earliest opportunity. The Government's future was in jeopardy. It was the need to prevent such generalised action which dictated the tactics of the union leaders in late September and October.

Evans and Todd always argued Ford's as a special, profitable case. Vauxhall and Leyland were utterly different for them. Likewise the leaders of other unions held back to see what Ford would give. When Ron Keating of NUPE said, "The men at Ford are not alone. They will be followed by 1 million council workers, 250,000 hospital ancillaries plus water and ambulance staff" he meant precisely that, they would follow where others had led. Isolation of militant sections and divisions within the class are two of the great weaknesses of the working class not just in the struggle for wages but in the fight for control and transforma-

(continued on page 8)

**inflation and recession stare capitalists in the face**

# DOWN WE GO — AGAIN

by Dave Hughes

Despite their smiles in the sunny informality of Guadeloupe the leaders of the capitalist world have mounting cause for concern at the direction of the world economy. 1979 threatens to be a year when the world economy slides into its second major recession in the '70's.

The long period of post-war expansion and relative stability for capitalism is now definitely ended. This was shown most dramatically by the recession of 1974/5. In that one year alone economic output in the US fell by 14.4% and by 19.8% in Japan.

Since then, world capitalism has falteringly pulled itself out of recession only to face mounting rates of inflation, sharpening international competition and the threat of a new downturn in production. In the United States, output grew by 6% in 1976 - picking up the slack from the recession - but the OECD expects the US economy to have grown by only 3% in 1978. Carter and his economic advisers, are bracing themselves for a further slackening of the rate of growth. Even before the announcement of the new OPEC price rises, the Carter administration was officially predicting a growth rate of between 2-3% in 1979, while many stock market forecasters expect a new recession.

Such a slow down in the US economy is of enormous significance to the entire world economy. The American economy fuelled the post war boom and expansion through the massive export of capital. Any slow down in the rate of growth in the US, or a nosedive into recession, will necessarily affect the general level of activity throughout the world economy. Although West Germany has promised, at last year's Bonn Summit, to modestly reflate its economy in 1979 and although Japan has publicly committed herself to increasing public expenditure and accelerating imports, these economies will not be able to offset the effects of the shrinking growth rates of US capitalism. The British Treasury is perfectly aware of this, they declared in November, 'It seems that growth in the United States will be less in 1978 than last year, while in Europe it will be higher but not sufficiently to offset the slowdown of the United States...' This will be even more the case in 1979 as the US economy slows down further.

## inflation

The capitalists are fearful that any attempt to stoke up economic activity, in order to stave off recession, will unleash higher rates of inflation. Producer prices in the US rose at an annual rate of 9.6% in November 1978, pushing the Carter administration perilously close to the rocks of double figure inflation. In Canada inflation is running at 9.5%, in France at 9.3%, while in Britain, The Economist predicts 9% for the new year.

The OPEC decision to raise oil prices by 14.5% during 1979 only adds to the mounting problems of the major economies. In

the wake of oil shortages caused by the Iranian revolution, these new price rises threaten to push up inflation rates even higher. This was made quite clear by Alfred Khan, head of Carter's Council on Wage and Price Stability. He spoke of his deep disappointment at the OPEC decision, adding despairingly that, 'this complicates our whole anti-inflation plan.'

When the OECD reported in July that, 'there is widespread concern that a substantial stimulus to demand would quickly result in a re-acceleration of inflation,' they were simply voicing the deeply-felt fears of the major capitalist politicians and economic advisers.

In the face of mounting rates of inflation and declining confidence in the US economy, manifested in the falling rate of the dollar resulting from the flow of funds out of dollars, Governments have no alternative but to apply sharp restrictions on the supply of credit, to force up interest rates in an attempt to dampen the inflationary spiral. The lending rate in the US was pushed up to 11.6% by Carter last November. The slavish British Labour Government followed suit by pushing its minimum lending rate to 12½%. Such interest rates may temporarily and marginally stem the flow of funds away from the dollar, but they in turn restrict the supply of loans and credit for investment to the capitalists. New and even higher interest rates can only inch the major economies further towards recession.

Within this world economy, squeezed between the slide into recession and disruptive inflation, British capitalism remains a particularly weak link. The Gross Domestic Product rose by 2½% from the second half of 1977 to the end of the first half of 1978. The British capitalists talk, ironically, of the relative boom that the British economy has experienced in the last year! However, industrial production in Britain in mid-78 was still lower than the level achieved in early 1974 - immediately prior to the 1974/5 recession and during Heath's three day week. (Aggregated industrial production in France, West Germany, Britain and Italy in the Spring of 1978 was at the same level as pre-recession production in 1974. This underlines the extremely limited and feeble nature of the 'boom' of 1976-7.)

The British Treasury is expecting a growth rate of 2% in Britain in the coming year, and has based its forecast on only a 7% increase in average earnings this year. The more 'optimistic' National Institute predicts 2½%. Serious cracks in Callaghan's incomes policy and a threat of a new run on the pound, which is standing artificially high because of the plight of the dollar, show just how fragile such hopes are.



President Carter

The CBI's October report expressed the gloom of the British bosses very well. It showed that 60% of member firms were working below capacity and argued that the competitive standing of British industry was on the decline, 'price competitiveness has deteriorated and is poor,' they declared. The CBI could foresee no prospects for increased employment, there was, they said, 'no sign of any rising trend in the level of employment in manufacturing industry.'

## Callaghan

For a policy this board of British employers could only keep their fingers crossed for buoyancy and expansion in the world market, 'reasonable' pay settlements and better productivity. The world economy will not grow sufficiently to solve the problems of the CBI. Neither is there any indication that the British capitalists have succeeded in significantly raising the productivity of labour in British industry. According to The Economist, output per person in manufacturing industry over the last four years has grown by only 0.4% per annum. Only the beleaguered wages policy of Callaghan and Healey can offer any respite for the chiefs of the CBI.

What worries the leaders of the capitalist world is that either slowdown and recession or escalating inflation will trigger further disruptions in their world economy. There are mounting fears of protectionism and trade war as rival capitalisms attempt to defend themselves in the recessionary spiral.

Insecurity in the world money markets, the flow of funds from the dollar to stronger currencies and economies, underline the nervousness and fears of the capitalists as the world economy falters again. It is in this context that we can understand the frantic pressure being applied to Japan by US and European capitalists to increase its imports of their goods. Likewise the fears expressed by Callaghan in December that the new European Monetary System, launched by West Germany and France, would serve to intensify friction between US and European capitalisms.

The tendency to protectionism, to tariff walls and rising instability

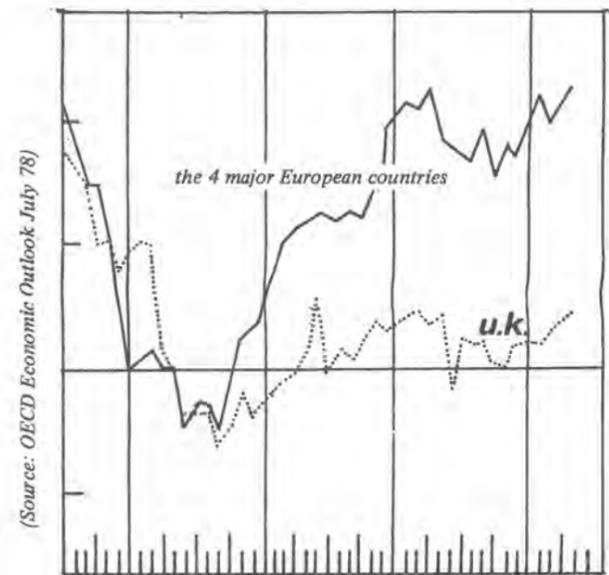
on the money markets, threaten all attempts to co-ordinate and plan the trading and financial institutions of the capitalist world. Schmidt is not overestimating when he declares that the alternative to a European currency bloc is that, 'the Common Market will degenerate.' A new world recession will accentuate the divisions and rivalries between national capitalisms as they struggle for survival in a shrinking world market.

In the ranks of the capitalist class there are those who brazenly advocate a slump to break the organised strength of the working class, to send the weaker capitalists to the wall for the benefit of the stronger and more efficient. Keith Joseph, with his policies of

on the road to Socialism' these gentlemen stand to positively disarm the workers movement in the face of the attacks and recession ahead.

For the working class, the slow down in the world economy means with certainty that the capitalists will redouble their attacks to force the working class to pay for their crisis. It will mean attempts to force up unemployment. In the second quarter of 1978, unemployment rates stood at 6.1% in the US, 5.8% in Britain. The OECD predicts that unemployment will increase in the first quarter of 1979 in the major capitalist economies.

In all these countries this will mean the direct intervention of the state to force down workers' living standards. Already the



## Industrial production 1974-8

restricting money supply is the most notable slump politician in the British ruling class at present. Let the slump do the work no capitalist government can do to force up profit rates and force down real wages, he argues. Joseph has his counterparts in every national capitalist class. In Britain, Callaghan and Healey, in the US, Carter and Blumenthal, all committed on taking office to maintain-

## socialism

ing welfare spending and to increasing economic growth, have increasingly resorted to restricting the money supply and raising the cost of loans in their attempt to force back the working class. Equally they all use the threat of increased unemployment to discipline wage demands as their hoped-for rates of growth fail to materialise.

In the face of these slump policies, the advocates of increased government spending, the discredited recipe of Keynesian economics, have increasingly found their homes in the social-democratic and labour parties. Painting up the old policies of government spending to prop up capitalism as 'Socialism' or, at least, 'a step

German steelworkers and last year's American miners' strike have shown that the workers of the once strong and stable capitalisms, as well as the weak, will be forced to do battle with their employers and government if they are to maintain their wages and conditions.

Equally, in all countries there will be a concerted effort to cut back on 'non-productive' investment in the publicly-owned sectors of the economy. In their drive to channel all available funds into buttressing the stronger companies monetarists the world over recognise this as a major target for attack.

A resolute stand against these plans by important sections of workers will add a new dimension to the crisis and instability of capitalism. It is in that crisis, fighting for a strategy that answers the capitalists' attacks and organises the working class to struggle for power, that serious advances have to be made in building a Trotskyist party fighting for the allegiance of the vanguard of the working class.

For nearly a decade now a prolonged guerrilla war has been raging in the six-county statelet of Northern Ireland. It is a war that has involved widespread resistance to British rule by the non-unionist population, mass rent and rate strikes, barricaded no-go areas, street committees and the military struggle of the IRA. The failure of British Governments, Labour and Tory, to find a 'solution' to the situation, has kept it an ideological and military thorn in the side of 'our' ruling class.

Ideologically it has at various times (Bloody Sunday, the cases of torture, H Block) blown sky high their democratic and human rights pretensions. Materially and militarily it has proved a serious drain on the stretched resources of 'the sick man of Europe'. It is however a situation which our rulers have been able to put to some effect. They have used it to train and equip a modern apparatus of repression, the weight of which the British working class will one day know to their cost.

Marxists make a sharp distinction with regard to nations and nationalism. Lenin, speaking at the Second Congress of the Comintern, summed it up thus: "What is the most important, the fundamental idea of our Theses? It is the difference between the oppressed and the oppressor nations." (Minutes Vol. 1 p109). Lenin draws from this distinction the imperative duty of the proletariat in the oppressor nation to support morally and materially the struggle against 'their own' ruling class. This support has a profoundly progressive character in both countries.

## Challenge

In the Imperialist heartland it leads to a struggle within the proletariat against all elements of national egotism and chauvinism. These attitudes are themselves chains binding workers to their exploiters. It challenges pacifism which cripples the working class whenever the bourgeoisie resorts to violence. Lastly it brings the working class allies in their own class struggle. In the oppressed nation the support of the proletariat of an oppressor nation brings of course moral and eventually material support, helps tie the hands of their enemies and increases the possibility of a victorious outcome. Furthermore the visible rupture of 'national unity' in the oppressor state helps to break down the illusions of petit-bourgeois nationalism (Irish versus Brits).

It demonstrates that class divisions are crucial and strengthens the role of revolutionary communists and the working class within the oppressed nation. This is particularly vital since only under their leadership can the anti-imperialist struggle rip up the last roots of Imperialism and defeat its last agents; ie overthrow the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation itself.

The majority of the British Left under the pressure of the outright chauvinism, economism and pacifism predominant in the labour movement has dishonestly

Troops prepare to attack stone throwing youths



# Civilian bombings a blind alley but For the IRA: Against the British Army

used the fact that the existing struggle is led by the petit-bourgeois Republicans to deny or limit the support they should have given. Eager not to be tarred with the same brush as 'terrorism' they have at times echoed the chauvinism or pacifism of the British reformist tradition.

This was shown most vividly in the case of IS (now SWP). When the war in Ireland spilled over into England in the form of a bombing campaign in 1972, IS quickly retreated from its previous commitment to unconditionally but critically support the IRA a mid cries of "individual terrorism" after Aldershot and the equation of British army terror with IRA terror after the Birmingham bombings. Obviously we have the severest criticisms of the tactic of bombing non military targets whether it be in Ireland or in Britain. Such tactics where they involve non-combatant deaths and maimings certainly fuel chauvinism. They do not however create it.

But when we criticise these tactics we do so because they cannot build, indeed are a blind alley substitute for, the mass anti-imperialist movement necessary to drive the British out of Ireland. We criticise these tactics from the vantage point of their effectiveness in freeing Ireland, not from the vantage point of their effects on the consciousness of British workers alone. Our central criticism is that these methods strengthen the enemies of Irish freedom.

The 'Militant' tendency also stigmatize the Provisionals as 'Individual Terrorists' and use it as an excuse for the most bitter invective. Furthermore they demonstrate the fundamental reformism they share with the CPGB in refusing to call for the withdrawal of British Troops now, tacitly accepting their claimed 'peace keeping' role, though preferring to replace them with a 'non sectarian trade union defence force'.

These positions are little more than pathetic 'Marxist' fig leaves. The category 'individual terrorism' cannot be applied to a prolonged military struggle against British forces.

The Provisional IRA remain the principle armed force of a mass resistance movement against British imperialism. For that reason they cannot be characterised as 'individual terrorists'. Their political bankruptcy forces them ever further in search of tactics that subordinate the building of a mass movement demonstrations of their own military prowess and daring. Even if the category of 'individual terrorism' did apply—as for example with the Red Army Fraction in West Germany—it would still not exonerate the 'Militant' from the duty to support them against the capitalist state.

The 'non-sectarian trade union defence force' is doubly ridiculous. Whilst 'sectarian acts' are detachable from the anti-imperialist struggle and socialists should combat them vigorously within it. For the Loyalists, as long as they remain pro-Imperialist, sectarian killings, pogroms etc are not excesses, over-reaction etc but the necessary tactic for maintaining British rule and the Protestant ascendancy.

## Unity

The inclusion of 'trade unions' as a basis for this shows a pathetic economic illusion. The Northern Ireland Trade Unions 'unite' catholic and protestant workers on the strict condition that all politics are excluded, even the pathetic reformist labourism which the Militant is a parasite on. Even as organs of economic self-defence the unions have systematically failed to challenge discrimination at work. The trade unions could only defend catholic workers, arms in hand, when their majority (ie the Protestant workers) have broken with Imperialism and the sectarian defence of their own political and economic privileges.

Thus undifferentiated 'sectarian terror' is seen as the main problem not Imperialist domination imposed by British army/police terror and backed by Orange pogrom gangs. The division of the working class is not seen as rooted in this reactionary alliance but produced by the revolt of the oppressed and the excesses that accompany it.

The road to breaking up this alliance lies inevitably through an intransigent struggle to break the British-Orange dominance. True only a secular, working class leadership and the involvement of

the southern workers fighting their own bourgeoisie for a Workers Republic can positively attract Protestant workers into a common front. But this unity will only be achieved on an Anti-imperialist basis. It cannot be built by turning ones back on this struggle. Nor can catholic workers 'wait' until the Protestants have been won over by economic or trade union struggles.

The Spartacists fall into a similar error. They see the primary problem in the north as that of 'intermixed peoples' and 'sectarian terror'. They offer as the principle slogan 'anti sectarian or integrated workers militias' to oppose IRA and Loyalist terror. These squads are supposed to prove to the Protestants that they have nothing to fear from catholic green nationalist oppression in a future united Irish Workers Republic. Here again the slogan assumes as a prerequisite what it is aimed at achieving (ie the non-orangism of Protestant workers). It implicitly equates green nationalism and orange sectarianism. True the Spartacists support IRA actions against the British Troops and call for their withdrawal. But they allow this to be pushed into the background by their denunciations of 'criminal' IRA sectarian killings.

Their reaction to the La Mon bombings, justifiably a cause for criticism, became a pretext for a hysterical denunciation. The Provisionals were accused of "fomenting sectarian violence in the service of nationalism, whose ultimate poisonous logic is genocide." Utterly careless of using identical terminology to that of Roy Mason or Airey Neave they characterise the act as 'criminal sectarian slaughter,' part of a 'seemingly endless cycle' (Workers Vanguard 17th March 1978). The conclusion is that pioneered by the SWP and the Militant: "Justice will only be done when the workers of Ireland join forces against their exploiters, both Orange and Green in the struggle for a

Socialist Federation of the British (sic) Isles."

Workers Power calls for the defeat of the British occupation army. This in no way abrogates our duty of criticising the strategies of republicans and socialists fighting that army, it merely states that as communists we place no conditions on support for their military struggle against Imperialism. To pose as uncritical supporters of the IRA, as the PAC do is to simply sow illusions in the ability of republicans to kick out imperialism. The RCG who dominate the PAC state: "Only the relentless struggle of the Republican Movement in Ireland united with an anti-imperialist movement in the British working class can ensure that the outcome of the present war is a united independent Irish Socialist Republic." (Hands Off Ireland No 5).

This obliterates the independence of the working class. It renounces the fight for working class leadership of the national struggle. In practical terms the strategy of the PAC is to centrally focus in this country around the issue of political prisoners. Whilst the Provisionals demands for political status for the prisoners must be supported and indeed their release demanded, the key arena for Irish work must centre around the demand for immediate withdrawal of troops and the dismantling of the Orange state.

## Solidarity

The call for 'Troops Out' is not an end in itself. We consider 'Troops Out Now'—coupled with the slogan 'Self-Determination for the Irish people as a whole' an adequate basis for an effective non-chauvinist united front in the British working class. By itself it does not inevitably lead to an anti-imperialist position. Mason's policy of scaling down visible troop patrols whilst maintaining a more effective military presence via undercover units and 'ulsterising' the conflict ie increasing local pro-imperialist forces like the UDR may well be intended to diffuse troops out feeling, since much of that feeling is based on a chauvinist inspired 'bring our boys home' and not out of support for the Irish struggle.

All the more dangerous then are those on the left who opportunistically raise troops out without clearly explaining why this is done from the standpoint of solidarity with the republican struggle. Anything less than this compromises us in the fight against chauvinism within the British labour movement.

To oppose, or refuse solidarity to the military struggle of the Provisionals places British socialists, firmly in the camp of the imperialists. The more resolutely colonies fight for their independence the more socialists in the aggressor nation should support that fight and expose the machinations of its ruling class. It is essential to take sides against 'our' army pointing out that British workers have every interest in identifying with their Irish counterparts against the same exploiters. To renege on this stand is to accommodate and capitulate to British chauvinism.

B. McAdam



Photos: E. O'Dwyer (IFL)

**March on  
BLOODY SUNDAY  
assemble 2.30  
Speakers Corner January 28th**

The prolonged revolutionary situation in Iran holds enormous potential for destabilising Western imperialism economically and politically. Carter and Owen, those sermonisers on 'human' rights and christian values, know that there are serious interests at stake in Iran. Serious enough for them to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Shahs he sheds rivers of blood to preserve the most savage tyranny on the planet. For this reason the Shah's 4,000 strong army has 1,200 military and 7,500 civilian American 'advisors'. The notorious Savak, set up in 1957 and reconstructed after the 1963 upheavals, has between thirty and sixty thousand men. It was 'advised' at all stages by the FBI and the CIA who have 50 top agents in Savak.

This enormous apparatus of repression was built up by the US and Britain to serve their economic and strategic interests. Iran yields massive super-profits. One British businessman is reported as saying that he 'makes 40% more profit here than in Britain'. At the heart of these interests is the oil industry. It supplies 13% of American and 17% of UK imports. Although formally nationalised, the consortium which controls it is 40% British and 40% UK in composition. These are the 'British and Western interests' that Dr David Owen talks about defending.

Even more important than the oil wealth and investments of Iran is its strategic position. Groomed by the United States and Britain to play the role of policeman of the Gulf area in the 'indirect' or 'neo-colonial' system which replaced the direct British military presence after 1968, the Shah's forces have seen service against the liberation forces in Oman.

The overthrow of this regime holds incalculable consequences for imperialism—hence the flood of telegrams of support for the Shah from the White House and Whitehall.

Much of the Iranian Left refer to the Shah's regime as 'fascist'. This is incorrect. The restoration of the Shah in 1953, by a military coup assisted by the CIA, initiated a *military bonapartist tyranny* of unusual severity. This regime represented the political expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the feudal landowning class in the interests of preserving capitalism in the interests of imperialism and against the working class. The Shah's regime rests upon imperialism externally, and internally upon an artificially induced impasse in the class struggle.

## Roots of crisis

The Shah has given, in a deformed way, certain social concessions to the various classes—land reform to the peasants, industrial development to the bourgeoisie. Political rights and expressions were, however, totally forbidden. The massive apparatus of repression is a testimony to the lack of a solid social base for the Shah's regime. It is this social basis which real fascism possesses in the enraged reactionary petit-bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat. Both these classes are, however, in the forefront of the opposition movement. They figure amongst those most bitterly opposed to the present regime.

Since the sixties there has been a considerable growth of industry, petrochemicals, steel, car, truck and bus production and assembly, electronics and machine tools. As a result the Iranian industrial proletariat has grown in size (2.5 million in 1977).

Yet despite all this the Iranian economy found itself in deep crisis by 1977. Partly this was the effect of the world capitalist crisis,

# IRAN: Workers must perm

partly the acculation of contradictions engendered in Iran's mode of industrialisation.

Firstly the Agrarian Reform the Shah had imposed after 1962 was typical of a 'revolution from above'—of Bonapartist land reforms which whilst it weakens the old landowning class and opens agriculture to capitalism, in fact swindles the vast majority of the peasantry leaving them landless (50%) or with tiny plots (30%). The reform was designed to strengthen those peasants who already owned land and implements and draught animals.

The net result has been the creation of two 'new' classes in the countryside, capitalist landowners and landless labourers. However the result has not been a rapid capitalisation and modernisation of agriculture. Land has been abandoned, villages deserted and the result has been rocketing imports of foodstuffs plus a flooding into the cities of the rural unemployed.

Secondly, there has been a tendency for the effects of the political regime to syphon off an increasing proportion of the oil revenue—arms and military spending and corruption. The failure to develop a skilled labour force also places severe limits on Iran's development.

The crisis of 1977-8 took the form of escalating inflation, food prices and rents in particular soaring. This affected the whole urban population.

## The Bazaar

The bazaar was, until the 1950s and 60s, the centre of urban economic life. Dominated by very wealthy merchants but consisting of its overwhelming bulk of one and a half million shopkeepers, money lenders, traders, craftsmen and artisans, it had in the past funded trade and been the centre of much production and nearly all exchange.

The foreign banks, the industrial production of consumer goods, the large stores have all undermined and threatened the traditional way of life and culture of the bazaar. This traditional culture is deeply Moslem. Its ideologists and leaders are the mullahs, its cultural and political centre the mosque. Shia Islam represents a unifying ideology, one that in 1963 and 1978 has spearheaded mass resistance to the Shah's regime.

Shia Islam has its origins in resistance to the constituted state authority, founded as it is on allegiance to the deposed and martyred son-in-law of the Prophet, Ali. Its most sacred figure after the prophet is the Imam Hossein murdered by the tyrannical Caliph Yazid—an event commemorated by the 'days of mourning' of early December (Moharram). It also has a pronounced millenarian aspect. Believers expect the 'return' of the twelfth Imman who will institute a pure Islamic order. Shia is much less attuned to the state than Sunni Islam—indeed it is headed by a powerful and independent caste of mullahs (180,000 of them) with a hierarchy of Ayatollahs the leader of whom Khomeini was elected in 1962.

The reality of the Religious Opposition leaders is at variance

with the Carter/Owen picture of them as reactionary fanatics who want to take Iran back to the seventh century. Khomeini insists that "I have always called strongly for economic and social development in my country" and expounds what he calls 'the principles of democracy and freedom'. By this he appears to mean a republic based on universal suffrage and with freedom for political parties. "... the Marxist will be free to express themselves because we are convinced that Islam contains the answer to the peoples needs. Our faith is capable of standing up against their ideology." (*Le Monde*, Paris, May 6th 1978). Khomeini can sum up his aim thus "As soon as the Shah goes we want the creation of an Islamic republic based on the popular vote." (*Le Monde*, November 8th, 1978). It is precisely the 'Islamic' nature of this state that holds the greatest dangers.

## Shi'ite veto

Whilst Khomeini has made it clear that he is not thinking of a regime like Saudi-Arabia or Pakistan he obviously intends to install in a future constitution provisions which give the Shia hierarchy a veto on legislation similar to that embodied in the 1906 Constitution. The non-Persian nationalities, the non-Shia religious minorities and women could expect little that is 'liberal' or 'democratic' in such a regime.

What Khomeini does loudly and vociferously attack is American Imperialism. He declares his support for the Palestinians. All these factors suggest that a Khomeini influenced regime would be of a populist Islamic nationalist type. To draw parallels with Pakistan or Indonesia is a mistake. Both these dictatorships were established in the *defeat* of a popular upsurge where the working class were unable to seize power.

Islamic ideology is Janus-Faced. It can justify anti-imperialism, resistance to the foreign powers seeking to exploit or dismember the states of the Middle East. It can also justify black reaction—the suppression of the working class and poor peasantry. The inner connection is that like all religions it defends private property. As long as the possessing classes of the imperialised nation feel the major threat to their property to lie with imperialism then they can play a vigorous role in the struggle against it. Islamic ideology will then have a 'progressive' populist colouration and orientation. When the working class or small peasants become a serious threat not only to imperialism but to the native larger property owners it can become a cloak for Bonapartist military dictatorship or even fascist reaction (as in Turkey).

Khomeini's movement can therefore not be defined by adding up progressive democratic points as against reactionary points. The USFI and the International Spartacist Tendency both use this method but get different answers to the sum. The USFI gets the answer that Khomeini is a 'progressive force', a democrat. The Spartacists find that he is a 'black reactionary'. One plays into the hands of the mullahs, the

other into the hands of the Carter and Owen propaganda for the Shah. Neither is of use to Iranian revolutionary communists who have to win the masses now under religious leadership or influence, to the perspective of proletarian revolution.

For those who see all evil as lying in the *religious* ideology of the opposition the secular 'Union of National Front Forces' led by Karim Sanjabi might seem to be a 'democratic' force of the sort Marxists could fight alongside of. This party of the large bazaar merchants, some industrialists and the professional middle class cloak itself in the bourgeois-nationalist mantle of Mossadeq, the prime minister overthrown by the CIA in 1953. But it is the most compromised and half-hearted force in the opposition. It remains irresolute and torn between Khomeini and the Shah. Its leaders names figure largely on the 'list of 80 names' the Shah has been pondering over as candidates to a government of 'national reconciliation'. Sanjabi is one of the three politicians most frequently cossetted with the Shah. The religious oppositionists know their measure. The Ayatollah of Abadan commented "Sanjabi and Bazargan at heart want to negotiate with the Shah. These men are bourgeois. We only have confidence in Khomeini for only he really wants the Shah to go." (*Le Monde*, November 6th, 1978)

The aspirations and mentality of the Iranian bourgeoisie is well expressed in the statement of a business man to the *Le Monde* correspondent, "But where is the intransigence of the Ayatollah Khomeini going to lead? The Shah is on his knees. The Ayatollah should take advantage of it to impose on him respect for, and consolidation of, the constitution we obtained from Sharif Emani's government and which General Azhari's cabinet is in the process of taking back." It is obvious that the 'democratic rights' these gentlemen desperately want are the posts of imperial ministers for themselves.

However as with the religious leaders it is not merely the caste interest or personal ambition which has determined their actions. The mass mobilisation have kept Sanjabi out of office just as they have radicalised the mullahs.

If the first wave of the revolution was spearheaded by intellectuals—writers and students and centred on the universities, the second wave, starting with demonstrations and massacres in Qom on January 9th 1978, the passage of the movement into the phase of 'religious leadership' then October and November 1978 showed the emergence of the Iranian proletariat as the force capable of toppling the

## The proletariat

The Iranian proletariat has a history of militant trade union socialist organisation. The unions in Iran were set up by workers returning from the oilfields in Russia after the end of the 1905 revolution. The labour movement participated in the 1907-1909 revolution in Abadan. After the war a communist party was formed and some of the unions affiliated to the Revolutionary Union of Labour Unions. The Pahlavi dictatorship crushed all independent workers organisations in 1928.

In 1944 an Iranian TUC was formed under communist influence. By 1946 it had a membership of 400,000; Fifty thousand workers celebrated May Day in Teheran in 1946. But the pro-Soviet politics of the Communist Party (Tudeh), which had 25,000 members, ruined the movement. They held back a strike wave while the Soviet Union was haggling with the British and Americans over Kurdistan and Azerbaijan in the north which had been set up in the North. Stalin traded these concessions for oil and gas concessions in Iran.

The Tudeh was initially opposed to Mossadeq (from the right) because his policies threatened

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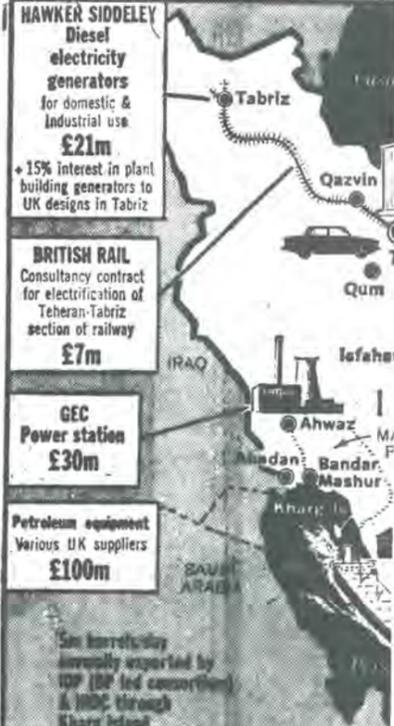
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upset the Soviet-Imperialist status quo), but it moved to a full popular frontist tailing of his bourgeois nationalism. It missed the crucial opportunity of mounting resistance to the coup of August 1953 and witnessed the immediate smashing of the trade unions and in 1955 the uncovering of its illegal and military organisations. The Tudeh was almost completely obliterated by Savak.

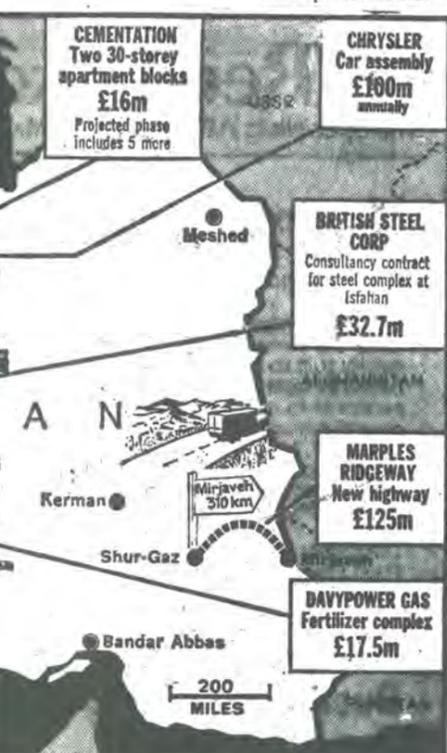
Only in September of 1978 did a section of the party decide to reconstitute a 'party of the interior'. According to *Le Monde* (December 6th 1978), "they admit that the reconstruction of the apparatus and the setting up of a serious organisation will take several years." Though this statement speaks volumes for Stalinist bureaucratism and inertia it also bears witness to the decay into which Tudeh has fallen. An added reason for such modest perspectives is that Moscow has by no means given the go-ahead for full-blooded participation in the overthrow of the Shah. Brezhnev's non-aggression pact with the Shah and his imperialist backers cripples the Tudeh as a party of the insurgent proletariat.

Yet despite the bankruptcy and destruction of the historic leaders, the Iranian proletariat has started to play an ever more decisive role. The atrocity of the cinema fire in Abadan revealed the depths of savagery of the Shah's regime to the oil workers and started their self-organisation.

The strike movement in the oilfields bears all the marks of the spontaneous revolutionising of the workers. On October 23rd the 12,000 workers at the Oil Refinery in Abadan came out on strike for economic demands. These were conceded in 3 days. After the return to work mass meetings ensued, students being present at the discussion of political questions. On the 29th, mass meetings formulated political demands:

"Abolition of Martial law, freeing of political prisoners, the disbandment of SAVAK, the departure of American

Some of the companies that operate in Iran



Anti Shah demonstrators gesture their defiance to troops from one of the dozens of burning barricades which block the streets of Tehran

advisors, a fight against corruption, the conviction of all those who have committed crimes against the people."

The strike has ebbed and flowed since then with thousands of troops driving workers at gun point into the refineries. Those inside have slowed production to a snail's pace. BBC correspondents in late December report the formation of factory or plant committees.

In Teheran the bank workers have not only struck but begun to exercise elements of inspection. They have revealed for example a list of 180 named persons prominent in the regime who had transferred 4.2 billion dollars out of Iran. The newspaper workers have fought bitter battles for the freedom to report the events of the Autumn.

## Mutinies

The working class is participating wholeheartedly in the struggle to bring down the Shah. Indeed, it alone has the economic strength and social cohesion to do this. The mass strike wave has put the noose around the Shah's neck and is tightening it. Strike committees are springing up in the struggle. They must, at the earliest opportunity, be generalised into city-wide workers' councils. The morale of the army is already weakened. In Tabriz on 18th December, a unit downed arms and joined demonstrators with their armoured cars. The formation, and arming of workers' militia as army discipline breaks down is crucial, as is the creation of barrack committees and soldiers' councils.

Iranian revolutionary communists must develop the strategy and tactics which the working class must employ to overthrow the Shah and smash the monstrous machinery of repression. This means marching alongside the 'religious opposition'. Its central and most deeply felt immediate demands, the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty, the smashing of SAVAK, the release of all political prisoners, free elections and freedom of political parties, the nationalisation of British and American monopolies are national-revolutionary and bourgeois-democratic demands that the proletariat must support. To this extent an anti-imperialist united front is possible. However, the religious leaders are, and will prove themselves to be, uncertain and treacherous allies. Khomeini has declared himself against any co-operation with communists, 'even to bring down the Shah.' His 'democratic' programme would enshrine a religious obscurantism in a new constitution. Should the working

class appear to threaten Iranian, moslem, private property (including the massive riches of the mosques) but prove unable to draw the non-proletarian masses behind it and seize power, then Khomeini or another religious leader could use the petty-bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat as fascist terror squads against the workers. Alternatively the *Ulema* could sanctify a new military dictatorship. At the moment, however, these masses, with all their religious prejudices, have democratic aspirations, that is they believe that democratic rights will alleviate their social needs. If Khomeini reconciled himself to an 'Islamic' military dictatorship immediately the Shah fell, he would undoubtedly lose his mass following rapidly.

It is illusions in the anti-imperialist and democratic credentials of Khomeini and the mullahs that revolutionaries must challenge. To do this means participation by Iranian Trotskyists in the struggles launched by those leaders, under clear, independent slogans with full warnings about the religious leaders. Democratic demands have enormous importance. Correctly and fully posed they can win first the proletariat and then other oppressed strata away from the religious and bourgeois leadership. The working class is, and can be, the only consistently democratic force. The demands that they fight for must include, freedom of speech, assembly and the press, legality for trade unions and political parties and the right to strike. The question of Iran's national minorities must not be forgotten, the Shah's empire is a, 'prison-house of nationalities'. Only 50% of Iran's population speak Farsi (Persian) though another two related languages make up another 11%. The rest belong to distinct national ethnic groups, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Baluchis and Arabs. The right to self-determination, up to and including separation, must be defended by the Iranian proletariat. They must support any national uprising of these peoples.

Likewise Iranian revolutionaries must fight for the full democratic rights of women and their emancipation from the age-old restrictions imposed by religion as well as the State. The right to own and dispose of property, entry to all occupations, equal rights in the family, in sum full legal equality in all spheres. Women have been active participants in the movement against the Shah. The religious leaders have tried to limit them to propagating the idea of a full return to the veil and the full rigours of Islamic law. Women must be won to the side of the

only class capable of gaining not only their equal rights but, via the destruction of capitalism, achieving their full social emancipation.

A clear majority of Iran's population is rural, consisting of landless or small-land owning peasants. The proletariat must raise the slogan 'the land to those who till it'. Part of the reason for the stability of the Pahlavi dynasty and for the effectiveness of the army as an instrument of repression, is the quiescence of the peasantry. In early December, the Shah is reported to have anxiously asked a visitor, 'But are the peasants also against me?' (*Le Monde* 6.12.78) The workers must encourage peasant seizure of large estates belonging to the old aristocracy, the Imperial family, the court clique and the foreign foreign agricultural enterprises. Whether an individual or a collective form of land ownership prevails will depend on the time scale of the proletarian seizure of power.

There are numerous religious minorities in Iran, Sunni Moslems, Armenians, Jews, Bahais etc. A Shi'ite republic would be oppressive to them as well as to women and the working class. Therefore, the demand for complete secularisation, the separation of Mosque and State is vital. The proletariat does not seek to trample on the religious scruples of any grouping where these affect only believers and do not violate the democratic rights of others.

All these democratic demands culminate in the demand for a constituent assembly, elected by full suffrage and with full powers, that is with no committee of *ulemas* to vet its actions. These demands, consistently and vigorously fought for, would enable the vanguard of the proletariat to rally behind it the social forces to ensure that the revolutionary process which has opened up in Iran, is not aborted in the form of an Islamic military Bonapartism, or of an inherently unstable bourgeois democracy with enormous concessions to Shi'ite theocracy. The Iranian revolution, if it is to accomplish even its anti-imperialist and democratic tasks, must become proletarian. However, the 'revolution in permanence' of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky is not an unconscious or automatic process. It necessitates a bolshevik vanguard party which has won the leadership of an armed working class organised in Soviets. To this task Iranian revolutionaries must devote themselves. British communists must render them every possible assistance.

By Andy Smith

## Rights and wrongs of the Spartacists

The Spartacists central slogan "Down with the Shah, Down with the Mullahs" is in our view seriously mistaken. Firstly the Shah is at the moment the central agent of Anglo-American imperialism. The Mullahs on the other hand are leading mass opposition to the Shah and his foreign advisors. To equate them outrages the anti-imperialist feelings of the Iranian masses. The Spartacists throw together in a hopeless jumble every aspect of the mass movement and label it reactionary. For example they see attacks on the cultural gifts of Western civilisation, pornography, luxury hotels, coca-cola stores merely as signs of obscurantism and backwardness. They present the mass demonstrations as "suicidal advances on the Shah troops" and talk about the "chilling spectacle of protesters clad in ceremonial white robes" being mown down as "equally grotesque" as the Shah's claims that few have been killed.

They draw attention to 'ritual self-flagellation' on the demonstrations despite the fact that Khomeini has explicitly called for this practice to be abandoned. It is one thing to warn against the anti-working class nature of the Shi'ite leaders. It is quite another to fall into using the same phrases as the White House and Downing Street apostles of civilisation and present the religious leaders and their movement as reactionary bigots no better, or possibly worse than, the Shah (after all the Shah does not want to return to the Seventeenth century, condemn women to the veil etc).

The Spartacists position would in practice rule out an anti-imperialist united front against the Shah in Iran. It would be a suicidal and sectarian position for an Iranian Trotskyist party. In the Imperialist heartland it defocusses from the central tasks of exposing the alibis of the Carter's, and Owens and mobilising the working class to block arms and supplies to their direct agents in Iran.

On three recent demonstrations in solidarity with the struggle in Iran the Spartacists have been excluded from the march by the organisers.

At the CARI demonstration of December 17th in London the Spartacist contingent was excluded by the CARI organisers with the full complicity of the IMG. Leading IMG members participated in a cordon to separate the Spartacists from the march. That cordon allowed the police to force their way into the demonstration and so harass the Spartacists until they left the demonstration.

This action by the CARI organisers and the IMG must be condemned. We hold no brief for the principle slogans of the Spartacists. But the CARI/IMG action (supported by the SWP) establishes a precedent of allowing the police to intervene in labour movement and solidarity demonstrations and actions. It means the establishment of bans and proscriptions in the labour movement—a tactic most naturally the property of the Stalinists and labour bureaucrats.

Workers Power—along with the I-C-L and the WSL—declared in advance our opposition to the ban on the Spartacists. We will continue to do so on all future demonstrations. In any united front slogans may be raised which other sections of the United Front find objectionable or even reactionary. Differences within the labour movement must be settled by argument, not by the use of goon squads or the capitalist police.

# German Marxists and Working Women

by  
**Breda Concannon**

The first women's organisation actively based on working class women and led by marxist women was built in Germany in the last decade of the last century. Politically and organisationally independent of the German bourgeois feminists, it also waged a war against the anti-women prejudices of male workers and of the German Social Democratic leadership.

In this article we will examine the experience of that period. We do so not out of idle historical curiosity but because communists can learn important lessons from the struggle of marxist women in Germany before the first world war.

The period of the 1880's and 1890's in Germany was a period of rapid industrialisation carried through under the guidance of the repressive German state. It saw the birth and growth of German Social Democracy as the mass workers party. It drew women, and children, into industry on a large scale.

It was in this situation that women within the SPD—particularly Clara Zetkin struggled to lay the basis for a socialist led, working class based, women's organisation. In 1891 the first issue of *Die Gleichheit*, subtitled 'for the interests of working women' appeared. It was an independent paper, with its own editorial board, led and coordinated by Social Democratic women, themselves disciplined party members.

The pioneers of *Die Gleichheit* faced very particular problems in the Germany of that time. Until 1908 laws in Prussia denied women freedom of association—thus legally barring them from party membership and trade union membership. Only in the more liberal states of Hamburg, Bremen, Baden and Württemberg did women have full rights of participation in politics. There was hostility in the party to the involvement and demands of militant women. Many trade unionists saw women workers simply as a threat to their jobs and bargaining position.

In this situation Social Democratic women had to find the ways and means of relating the socialist programme to working class women, drawing them into conscious political action under the party's leadership, despite all of the problems posed by repression, tradition and male hostility. Zetkin herself put it this way: "If they (the women comrades) wanted to bring socialism to the mass of proletarian women they had to take into account these women's political backwardness, their emotional peculiarities, their two fold burden at home and in the factory, in short, all the special features of their existence, actions, feelings and thoughts."

## marxist

Zetkin and her co-thinkers argued strongly against all attempts to transfer the ownership of *Die Gleichheit* directly to the Social Democratic Party. They resisted pressure from within the party to simplify its format, insisting that the paper existed to provide women comrades in struggle with a clear marxist understanding of women's oppression, to enable women in struggle to place themselves on the secure base of marxist politics. The paper existed, Zetkin argued "to provide an educational and promotional influence within the movement."

Under Zetkin's leadership the editorial board struck firmly to this principle, despite complaints that the articles were long and hard to read voiced by opportunists and bureaucrats. These gentlemen invariably really opposed the

marxism of the paper not its style!

But they also waged a consistent campaign for women's rights inside the party and the trade unions. In 1890 they secured the right to elect women delegated to party conference from special women's meetings. They won the adoption of a comprehensive party programme for the protection of women workers in 1891. In 1892 they succeeded in establishing a system of permanent women's *vertrauenspersonen*—women's spokespersons—in the party, whose task was the political education of proletarian women, the organisation of work amongst women.

The work to establish *Die Gleichheit*, and to force the party to seriously address the question of drawing women into struggle laid the basis for the enormous growth of socialist influence among working women in the first years of the 20th century.

Between 1882 and 1907 the proportion of women in the workforce increased from 18.5% to 44.3%. The abolition of the combination laws in 1908 assisted the drawing of women into trade union and political organisations. Between 1895 and 1907 women's membership of the trade unions increased by 2000%. From 1905-1910 women's membership of the party rose dramatically from 4,000 to 82,642. *Die Gleichheit's* readership increased dramatically too. Its circulation was estimated at approximately 4,000 in 1900 but had reached 23,000 by 1905 and 82,000 by 1910. *Die Gleichheit's* increased circulation went hand in hand with an increase in the number of women members of the party, as sales grew so too did the number of women members of the Social Democratic Party. Within this expansion the institution of female *vertrauenspersonen* took shape and developed. While there were only 25 registered in 1901, there were 407 by 1907 operating in all parts of Germany.

The network created by *Die Gleichheit* and the *vertrauenspersonen* enabled marxist women to work amongst and organise women still as yet, outside the party. Before the abolition of the combination laws the *vertrauenspersonen* organised educational associations for working women organisationally though not politically, independent of the party. But, as the growth of party membership among women shows, the organisational independence of *Die Gleichheit* did not mean that *Die Gleichheit* was posed as an alternative to the party, to joining its ranks. It was not an obstacle to, but rather an entry point, for working women coming towards the party.

Within the party women members held their own conference every 2 years, prior to the national conference, and reported directly

to the party conference.

This growth of a fighting socialist led women's movement actively involved in the struggles of working class women coincided with the development of suffrage oriented bourgeois feminism in Germany. Zetkin and the editors of *Die Gleichheit* waged an independent working class struggle for women's suffrage. They consistently argued for the complete independence of the working class women's movement from bourgeois feminism. Refusing to see the oppression of women as a feature of class society, the bourgeois feminists campaigned for the election of left liberals even though they refused to endorse women's suffrage. While the Social Democracy grew in influence among working women, the bourgeois feminists fragmented and declined in size and authority. By 1908 the Suffrage Union numbered only 2500 in its ranks. By 1914 they had split into three separate and mutually hostile societies. Only one of three splinters fully supported universal suffrage—the German Women's Suffrage League which had only 2000 members at its height.



Meeting of Social-Democratic Women, Berlin 1890

An important additional area of conflict between Social Democratic women and the bourgeois feminists was over the question of protective legislation. For the feminists 'emancipation' meant the right to freely compete with men on an equal basis inside capitalist society. It followed that they condemned all special provisions and protective legislation for women workers and were not prepared to support their struggles. Only *Die Gleichheit* and the Social Democratic women campaigned for protective legislation for women—whose standards could then be applied to all workers—recognising that women were the weakest and most exploited section of the working class.

But the Social Democratic women did not pose universal

suffrage, protective legislation as ends in themselves. For Zetkin the right to vote was to be fought for as part of the struggle to draw working class women into an active fight against capitalism as part of the struggle to draw working women into the battle for socialism.

This position and emphasis increasingly placed Zetkin and her supporters at odds with the general direction of the German Social Democratic party. For the party leadership electoralism, the vote winning work of the party, was increasingly counterposed to organising the masses for struggle. This had been pointed out by Ros Luxemburg in the first years of the century. As W. Thonnessen points out in his book on the period the party leaders were more concerned to assign and win women as election agents and canvassers than they were to support Zetkin's campaign to commit the party to leading, organising and educating working women in struggle.

It was no accident therefore that Zetkin and a series of other leading women comrades of German Social Democracy were on the left of the party. In 1914 Zetkin and her comrades were to oppose the war and break with Social Democracy definitively in 1918. It was in the German Communist Party, in the Communist International that the tradition represented by *Die Gleichheit* was

to be continued and elaborated although the paper was formally kept alive by the German Social Democrats after the break with Zetkin.

Always politically and organisationally independent of the bourgeois feminists Zetkin struggled to win working class women into struggle for socialism. That was the focus of the agitation of *Die Gleichheit* and its network of Social Democratic women organisers. They built organisational forms—in and out of the party—that related to the specific oppression and particular problems of women workers. But they were never counterposed to winning women workers to play an active role, alongside men, in the party itself, or to winning marxist leadership in the struggles of working women.

Shop floor militants need to be convinced that their own independent organisations, their own living standards and confidence are more important than Callaghan's anti-working class Government, point was to convince sections such as the public sector and other car workers to bring their claims forward, arguing for forms of organisation linking up the various workers in struggle.

S.W. did not even take the elementary steps that it could have in organising support for the Ford strike. The once much heralded National Rank and File Movement was never seen as a potential forum for militants in struggle to link up with other workers. No conference was called during the strike (or since and we are still in a period of important disputes) and Cox seems to overlook the existence of such a body in an article dealing with the crisis on the shop floor. That the SWP did not call a NRFM conference is testimony not only of their current weakness in the trade unions but also of their political underestimation of the need to generalise the struggle that was taking place around Fords.

But the answers that revolutionaries fight for amongst militants also have to square up to the political problems facing the working class. They have to meet the objective needs of the class, against unemployment, cuts, wage restraint etc, but also have to take the class forward in the struggle for socialism.

## demands

Here, however, we will confine ourselves to examining one demand in answer to a question posed by Cox. He asks: "How do we meet head on that big argument about wages and inflation?" Certainly we argue with workers that their wages are not to blame for inflation but we also put forward a concrete strategy for the working class to defend itself against inflation, placing the responsibility to pay for it on the shoulders of the bosses not the workers. In other words we argue that wages should be protected against inflation. This is a defensive measure. To compensate for the ravages of inflation we argue that workers should fight for a 1% rise for every 1% increase in a cost of living index calculated by workers and housewives who face price increases daily. We argue for such an index because it turns a defensive demand into an offensive struggle by workers against phoney capitalists' figures and for control over their own livelihoods.

So our 'answers' to the crisis on the shop floor attempt to do two things. First they attempt to meet the crying needs of the class today but secondly, rather than accommodating to the prejudices of the class (such as sectoralism) they also attempt to turn the 'instinct' of the class to defend itself into a consciousness of the need to challenge capitalism.

Similarly at the level of organisation we argue the need for workers to link up at a rank and file level to fight to turn their unions into organisations capable of fighting for such policies.

Cox believes the SWP is "trapped by traditions", so it is—a tradition of syndicalism and economism that has led its trade union work to a dead end. What is wanted is not a "new militant" but a communist strategy for the trade unions; Roger Cox comes no nearer to offering this than the SWP leadership.

# Can Scargill walk on water?

**in the unions**

On the eve of the 1978 NUM conference, Arthur Scargill, militant President of the Yorkshire NUM, was asked if he would accept a further round of wage restraint. He replied: "There is no way I am going to accept it—and I hope every worker in this country will oppose it. It's a thoroughly anti-socialist philosophy." (Sheffield Star 3.7.78).

This reply is typical of the boisterous 'King Arthur', probably the best known left-wing trade union leader in the country and certainly the one most hated and feared by the ruling class. But a systematic look at Scargill's record as a trade union leader reveals that his militancy usually takes the form of words rather than action. Thus as part of the preparation for their 41% pay claim, militants in the mining industry must be able to prove to rank and file miners this disparity between Scargill's words and his deeds.

In 1969 and 1970 Scargill emerged as a militant figurehead after unofficial strikes broke out in the Yorkshire mines in support of the NUM's national claim for an eight-hour day. This battle and the role militants in the Yorkshire fields played in organising to get similar action in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Scotland and Wales, undermined the hold of the right in the Yorkshire NUM.

On a national scale, the only opposition to the right been a phoney war conducted by the Communist Party dominated Broad Left. When the 1969 strikes did break out, miners directed their demands against both the NCB and the NUM bureaucracy. They not only demanded the eight-hour day but also the resignation of Gormley.

## Victories

To many the victory of Scargill in Yorkshire, has been synonymous with the victory of the rank and file. After all was it not Scargill who led and organised the direct action responsible for the victories in 1972 and 1974. Was it not he who led the flying pickets in their assaults on Saltley Gates and demanded strike action from both the official and unofficial trade union movement in Birmingham.

Since then Yorkshire miners have appeared at the Grunwick picket lines with Scargill and he has talked of smashing fascism at the ANL Carnival 2.

Such actions have given rise to the saying "Arthur Scargill walks on water." But the other, less militant side to this legend of 'King Arthur' often finds Scargill floundering beneath the waves.

For instance, during the 1973/4 claim three Yorkshire pits began to implement the over-

Miners voted and campaigned against the principle of productivity dealing in 1977

time ban days before the national one came into operation. Instead of supporting and building on this initiative Scargill condemned it for its lack of "organisation and discipline" (International Socialism 68).

Throughout the 1973/4 strike Scargill proved himself a reliable ally of the Gormley-led Right in the NUM bureaucracy. He vigorously defended the bureaucratic organisation of the strike action, the limiting of picket sizes, etc. Summing up the differences between the '72 and '74 strike, he said "... we didn't need any more than six or eight pickets at the contested points because the unions ... resounded magnificently."

## £6 limit

His bureaucratic leanings again showed themselves at the 1975 Conference. In spite of his claim that the new Labour Government would not affect that year's claim he accepted a re-wording of the Yorkshire resolution for £100 a week (proposed by the CP-led Scottish delegation) that allowed the executive, only a few weeks after the conference, to postpone the claim for £100 and accept the £6 limit! Scargill was angered by this but he did not do anything about it. The Broad Left, to which he belonged, had no base in the rank and file that would have been capable of challenging the executive. So Scargill's anger could not possibly be expressed in anything other than words. A year later he said: "If you have a claim for wages and if it's right, then it is immoral on the part of leaders to abandon it because we have a Labour Government. To adopt one set of standards for a Tory Government and a different set ... for a Labour Government." . . . . .

"What we should really do is to go harder into the attack because a Labour Government should never, ever find itself in a position of conflict with the trade unions in this way." (NLR 92, page 24) But abandon the claim he did — attack the Labour Government he didn't.

The most glaring example of Scargill's irresolute leadership came during the 1977/78 dispute over pay and productivity. At the 1977 Conference he led the fight against wage restraint and productivity dealing. But after the Conference he did nothing to build a movement against them. Against a counterattack by the Right to overturn Conference decisions, he campaigned for, and won, a big majority in a national ballot on the principle of productivity deals.

In a second ballot on separate pit negotiation for productivity deals, the Right proposed each area should vote separately. Scargill led no fight against this. Yorkshire was one of the last areas to vote and Scargill did not even recommend to his own member-

ship a No vote. In fact, he refused to show his face to the press who wanted to know which way he would tell the Yorkshire miners to vote.

The devastating effect this has had on union organisation cannot be underestimated. The unity that had grown during the '72 and '74 strikes has been shattered—now area is set against area, pit against pit, in a cut throat battle to increase productivity and so boost bonuses. Despite Scargill's initial propaganda campaign against the deals and for the defence of union democracy he was outmanoeuvred by the Right. What was his response to this?

Instead of linking up the militant areas who were against the deals (Kent, South Wales and Yorkshire) on the unofficial lines of the '69 and '70 strikes Scargill went to the capitalist courts to get an injunction against his executive. In this he revealed his weakness and irresponsibility as a leader. He turned his back on his own rank and file and he opened the door to the total victory of the Right-wing who were backed to the hilt by the state's officers of 'justice'. After being defeated in court Scargill said, with the air of a bewildered child: "I believe this judgement should firmly convince any trade unionist that it is useless hoping for justice in the courts of this land." (Socialist Challenge 27). The point is that he should never have gone to the courts in the first place.

## Next test

The Pit Rescue Teams dispute in June 1978, which was over bonus payments, was the next test for Scargill after the prod-deals debacle.

Miners in Yorkshire had taken unofficial action in support of the rescue teams. But Scargill defused the situation at an Area Council meeting when, after a secret phone call with an NCB official, he forced through a postponement of an all Yorkshire strike in support of the rescue men. Then, when the NCB reneged on its offer, at the request of Gormley, Scargill was caught in a cleft stick and, though expressing disgust all the way, he had to give in. He did not call for any strike action, stating on television that miners would merely be advised not to work in unsafe pits. Once again his militancy was only verbal—it failed the test of action.

What does this record tell us of Scargill and his politics? First it reveals the bankruptcy of the idea shared by the Broad Left/CP in most unions, of electing an altern-

ative 'left' leadership. Scargill does not accept that any serious socialist leadership has to base itself squarely on the shop (or pit) floor, absolutely accountable to and under the discipline of the rank and file. When the NUM leadership recently awarded itself a rise well outside the 5% limit a leader based on the rank and file would have immediately organised a campaign to get officials paid the average wage of the workers they represent while at the same time organising to defend the living standards of miners by fighting to bust the 5% limit. Scargill did not do this.

Indeed on the question of building a movement that could fight tooth and nail the degenerate and corrupt leadership of company director Gormley and his friends, Scargill is thoroughly ambiguous. He has announced that there will be no fight to oust the present leadership; the base of the union will just have to put up with them until they go of their own accord: "I'm talking about a leadership being created which will be ready to replace the present leadership when that leadership goes." (Scargill in Socialist Challenge 70)

And when asked if the NUM would be better off without Gormley, a proven enemy of the miners, Scargill replied: "Not at all. I like Joe". (Sheffield Morning Telegraph 1.7.78)

Scargill undoubtedly sees himself as a fully integrated member of the NUM bureaucracy but one who has arrived there through miners a active struggle. Thus at certain times he is forced to reflect pit militancy on the Executive but he has learnt that he has to do this in such a way so as to prevent the Right breaking off all relations with him.

Arguing against building a rank and file organisation to break the hold of Gormley and Co, he has said: . . . . . "And I think it would be a contradiction in terms to set up an organisation which would be a departure from the labour and trade union movement." (Socialist Challenge 70). No wonder he turns his back on the traditions of the Minority Movement. In NLR 92 he declared without qualification: "... it (the Minority Movement) didn't turn out to be all that effective and there were many weaknesses in it."

## Brokers

At the same time he argues that "an organised left-wing in the labour movement, committed to class struggle policies" must be built. (Socialist Challenge 19) However his his conception of such a movement is one of an enlightened left-wing leadership enjoying the passive support of the members. The bureaucratic pride with which he can say: "If we gave an instruction to come out on strike tomorrow, they would come out. There would be no argument, they would come out on strike." (NLR 92, page 9) proves the point.

This conception, which ignores the position of the trade union bureaucracy in capitalism as inevitable brokers between capital and labour. The practical results of this perspective can be seen in Scargill's own record of vacillation. He is widely tipped to become Gormley's successor. But Scargill is not immune to the disease which affect all bureaucrats. Lawrence Daly, once a left like



John Sturrock (Report)

Scargill—at ease in office

Scargill, is now an avid henchman of Gormley. Why should Scargill's fate be any different?

Scargill's politics, his whole history, reveal a tendency to vacillate. On the one hand he can call a strike to drive a fascist out of a Yorkshire pit but on the other he can be instrumental in preventing a mobilisation against a fascist march, as at Carnival 2. From the Carnival platform he could talk of smashing the fascists while the NF prepared to march a few miles away. Yet he could issue no immediate call to action.

## Profiteers

Scargill is in favour of: "A national planned economy in which decisions are made in the public interest rather than in the private profiteers' interest." (The Yorkshire Miner, October 1978). Yet when asked what strategy is needed to achieve this, he has no specific answer, believing that the struggle for Socialism will arise spontaneously out of the wages struggle: "Even if you get a wage increase the problem will be there tomorrow. But struggles convince workers of the need for real control over society." (NLR 92, page 25).

Scargill may think that this absolves him from putting forward a programme based on the real needs of the class and of leading direct action capable of smashing capitalism. He contents himself with grand statements about socialism. This means that on occasions Scargill can be made to fight and lead—and militants must constantly demand this from him. But, as a left trade union official prey to the pressures of every other official, Scargill is no substitute for solidly based self confident rank and file organisation. He must be forced to fight but he can never be relied on.

The alarm bells must therefore be sounded for the coming pay claim. Callaghan is set on maintaining the 5%.

The miners struggle for their 41% claim will be crucial in smashing the 5% limit. But success will not come from relying on the NUM leadership, including those with Left-wing credentials, to do the job. It can only be guaranteed by building a pit-based organisation capable of sustaining a fight regardless of the leadership's vacillations and capable of fighting for a class-wide, socialist answer to the bosses' crisis.

BY  
MARK  
HOSKISSON



# workers power

## public sector

(cont'd from p.1)

tion of society. The "Dambusters" theory panders to this division and obscures what is really necessary for the class.

In a very different context the Bakers' strike revealed the same phenomenon of bureaucrats being forced to take a militant attitude. Unlike the car industry, bakery has never been fully unionised and the union has no long history of fighting for its members. Last year's strike convinced Maddox and Co that they would be left behind if they did not give a lead this time. The strike was sprung on the membership with little warning or preparation. It is testimony to the foul conditions and low pay that have been allowed in the industry that the strike call was answered with such determination by workers up and down the country. However, the lack of preparation and the weakness of rank and file organisation both locally and nationally was reflected in the final settlement with its abandonment of the closed shop.

### pattern

The general pattern of bureaucrats offering to lead struggles so as to draw the sting of rank and file militancy is repeated across the whole spectrum of the TUC. Vicious rightwingers like Basnett, Weighell and Jackson, having failed to torpedo the militancy of other unions are now putting on their "left" faces. If there is to be a "free for all" they say, then their members are not going to be left out.

With public sector workers the next in line for confrontation with the government, it is important to assess the tactics of their union leaders. As individual union leaders they are each determined to head off militancy with left rhetoric and bluster. The government and the bosses understand that this is aimed mainly at the rank and file, not them. More importantly, the bureaucrats, as the fifth column of the bosses in the workers' movement, are determined not to allow any generalisation of determined strike action across the various unions.

They will, of course, do everything in their power to hold back each dispute through their traditional methods of counter-productive token strikes, lobbies and rallies. At the same time they realise that even these limited actions could develop into concerted strike action. In that event they will fall back on more ideological weapons as well as direct sabotage. Central to their armoury will be the question of the survival of the Labour government and the spectre of a new Tory administration. Such blackmail has to be resisted. We must hammer it home that it is Callaghan who has chosen to stake his government's life on



PHOTO: John Sturrock (Report)

strikers demonstrate outside parliament defying TUC and Labour Conference decisions.

An important division within the public sector is that between the 'service' industries and the 'productive'. In the first are grouped hospitals, water workers, dustmen, etc, in the second are the much more powerful power workers and miners. The government have already given notice that it is in the public sector that they intend to do everything possible to hold the 5% line. For them round two is the crucial round in the wages fight.

Despite the militancy that has previously been shown by service sector workers in opposing government policy, it has to be recognised that their economic power is limited. In the last analysis the government really doesn't care about hospital patients and refuse disposal when its economic policy is at stake. It cannot, however, ignore action taken in the industrial sector, the more so if it is concerted and coordinated across industries. It is towards building such generalised strike action that militants in all state owned industries have to direct their efforts.

The possibility and potential of a fighting alliance in the public sector is so glaringly obvious that

even the bureaucrats have had to make a nod in its direction. The national day of action on January 22nd called by leaders in the service sector is a recognition of this. However, they have no intention whatsoever of using the weapon effectively. Once before, in November of 1976, they coordinated a one day strike and a massive demonstration in London, it was never followed up and they hope to repeat the exercise again.

In no way should an alliance of the public sector only apply to the service workers. Even with their massive potential strength miners and power workers are not invincible. They too are led by blatantly treacherous right wing leaders and subject to the barrage of propaganda that will be thrown at them by the mass media. Within their own ranks they have serious weaknesses. The miners, for example, cannot assume the monolithic unity of '72 and '74 after the affects of the productivity deal. Neither, can they automatically count on the solidarity from other workers that was their great strength in the years of confrontation with Heath.

### claims

At every level of their unions workers in the public sector have to fight for the creation of a public sector alliance, committed to all-out strike action by all unions to smash the government's pay policy. Claims need to be brought forward where necessary to bring them into line with the first sections which go into battle. Solidarity from other unions has to be prepared beforehand. The maximum pressure must be brought to bear on union officials to force them to assist in this vital preparation. But if they will not then the rank and file must organise to do it themselves.

The last three months have



PHOTO: John Sturrock (Report)

Ford strikers and supporters marching in London

Roger Cox, 'not by instinct alone ...'

## SWP: a cry for help

It has become glaringly apparent that trade union militancy on its own is increasingly unlikely to generate a class wide battle and the setting of the working class on the road to a socialist transformation of society. Militants on the shop floor are faced with a political crisis that cannot be answered in the old 'trade union' way. A political answer is what militants on the shop floor need if they are to be able to lead workers in successful struggles. Even the most dedicated advocates of spontaneity, the Socialist Workers Party, have come to recognise that something is wrong with their time worn belief that pure militancy will provide the way forward for the class.

In an article by AUEW shop steward and ex-secretary of the National Rank and File Movement, Roger Cox, this very problem is addressed. (Wanted: the New Militant - Socialist Worker 9th Dec 1978). Cox admits that the SWP prediction that Labour would enjoy a brief 'honeymoon' period and then the same militancy that overthrew Heath would re-emerge was completely wrong.

### despair

So, in his article, Cox argues that new answers need to be found to the new problems facing militants as a result of a so far successful wage cutting Labour Government. Declaring, with honest despair, that the Government's strategy has triumphed, Cox argues: "We must not be steered by the workers' instincts alone, even though this is often the easiest way. Those instincts MUST be tempered by answers to the questions which instinct by itself will not provide." For a member of an organisation whose practice has always been to tail, never lead, spontaneous working class struggles, this is a forthright admission.

But, despite his honesty Cox is not as forthcoming in giving his own or his organisation's answers to the present crisis on the shop floor. His party's immediate record would make such extended

shown beyond doubt that working class anger and militancy are now greater than at any time since the fall of the Tories. It is essential that the lessons of the first round of the pay battle are learnt. Rank and file pressure has forced union leaders to lodge anti-government pay claims. None of them are perfect by any means. They do not, for example, provide protection against inflation and calls for a reduction in hours are seen by most officials, and many members, as mere window dressing. However, it is on these claims that the fight is being waged. The emphasis has now to focus on how to fight for then, how to escape from the dead hand of the bureaucrats as they try to isolate and demoralise.

At both local and national level, Fords, Leyland and the Bakers, have shown the possibilities of and the need for rank and file involvement in, and control of, strike action. Elected strike committees and mass pickets are essential for this.

The trade union bureaucrats may well be forced to take up the fight if there is enough pressure

honesty difficult. In the Ford strike Socialist Worker did issue warnings against the trade union leaders like Todd, but they kept insisting that the strike was solid and all was well. The fight to take the strike out of the leaders hands, by fighting for mass meetings, pickets, strike committees and the recall of the Coventry shop stewards conference, was never central to the SWP's propaganda around Fords. Nor has SW called for demands which would have cut across the sectoralism that weakened the Ford strike and laid the basis for a united class fight back. Rather than looking for answers that start with today's consciousness and struggles but point the way to a battle for economic and political power by the working class Cox lapses into time worn generalities about the need "to argue the socialist case". In one sense this is true and the socialist case does have to be argued, but not as a meaningless and abstract goal of the future.

Cox is making no break here with the method of the SWP—indeed he simplifies it. Cox believes that once 'socialist ideas' are got across to workers e.g. convincing them by argument that wages do not cause inflation then the old militancy will re-assert itself and everything will be fine for socialists. True, some workers will be convinced by argument, others by the experience of steadily eroding living standards, but unless new goals and methods of struggle are put forward then pure militancy will inevitably exhaust itself once again.

### crucial

Over the last three months the central argument that revolutionaries should have been having with militants was over the need for a class wide offensive against the Labour Government's 5% limit. Headlines like "They can afford it" (ie Fords can because its profitable) reflected the SWP's tailing of a militant special case argument put forward by the shop floor leadership at Fords. The crucial

Continued on page six

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