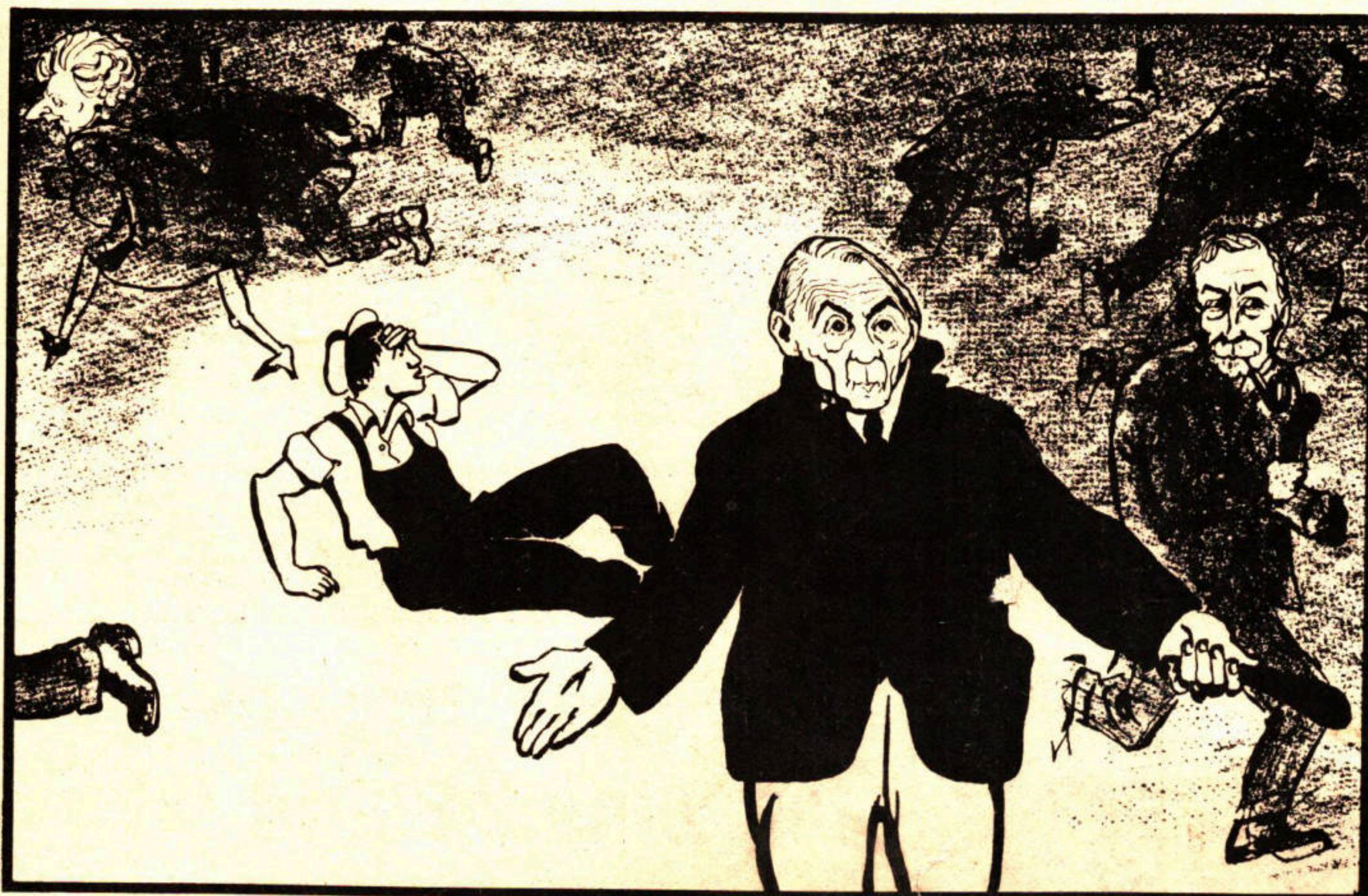


the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency 20p



'Don't look at me — the man's priced himself out of a job'

The TUC and the Labour Party conference

NO TO ANOTHER SOCIAL CONTRACT!

If you thought the last Labour Government was bad enough, take a look at what the Labour Party's preparing for next time around. Everybody from Tony Benn to Moss Evans now agrees there'll have to be some sort of wage control; and they all accept unemployment as a fact of life. The official labour movement is passing its summer conference season working out the outlines of another Social Contract.

What they say...

THE RT HON LEN MURRAY OBE and his friends condemn the Tory Government's economic strategy and industrial relations policy. They all denounce Thatcher and Joseph for ignoring 'trade union opinion' and moan about how they haven't been consulted over issues which affect the 'national interest'.

what they mean...

The leadership of the labour movement has no real alternative to the Tory strategy. It is prepared to accept Prior's Employment Bill, the need for 'sacrifices' and rising unemployment. The only difference the labour bureaucrats have with Thatcher is one of emphasis. The TUC and the Labour Party share the Tories' aim of restoring capitalist profitability and putting industry back on its feet. They would just prefer to fulfil it through the co-operation of the working class.

During the past month more and more union leaders have come out in favour of a social contract. Ken Baker is an elder statesman on the TUC General Council and president of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions; he told the CSEU's June conference to prepare for a new social contract. Moss Evans of the TGWU agreed.

But Baker and Evans were only echoing

the idea that Labour leader Callaghan first floated at the party's special conference in May. Even Tony Benn, Callaghan's bitter rival and star of the Labour left, wants a new incomes policy. Of course, when he was interviewed on the ITV programme 'Union Power', Benn presented his acceptance of wage control very delicately. He said he wanted 'a broadening of the area of collective bargaining from wages to include, at the place of work, what happens to the profits' (*The Guardian*, 7 July 1980). Whichever way you twist the words, they add up to the same thing — *wage control*.

All the TUC and the Labour Party have to offer is more of the same treatment we've had from the Tories. At Brighton and Blackpool, delegate after delegate will make militant speeches about the evils of the system and the viciousness of the Tories. But, as usual the labour bureaucrats are busy hammering out another way of cutting working class living standards.

...and what they've done

The labour leaders have done next to nothing to defend the working class against the capitalist attack. They've organised a few demonstrations and rallies. They've printed a lot of stickers. But this scarcely hides the fact that they're not prepared to lift a finger to oppose the

new employment laws or defend workers in struggle.

In fact the only time the labour bureaucrats ever act decisively is against their own members. Electricians' union leader Frank Chapple has moved swiftly to crush democratically elected left-wing representatives of his members in South Wales. Railway workers' chief Sid Weighell had no hesitation in pushing through a motion at the NUR July annual conference calling for a witchhunt against the left. Terry Duffy has been busy driving left-wing full-timers out of the engineering union.

The labour leaders' main concern is to consolidate their domination over the working class. This objective unites TASS leader and Communist Party member Ken Gill with the AUEW's John Boyd — one of the most right-wing supporters the Labour Party has. The central thrust of the union leaders' attack on the Tories — Thatcher's refusal to talk to the unions — concerns only the bureaucracy's own position. If they are to maintain credibility with the rank and file, union leaders have to show that they are important enough for the Tories to consult with them.

Unemployment — their biggest crime

Because the labour leadership believes in regenerating British industry, it is prepared

to allow the working class to pay for the capitalist crisis. The bureaucrats thus accept unemployment as a necessary evil. Bob Wright, candidate of the Broad Left for the presidency of the AUEW, put it bluntly in his recent announcement that trade unions cannot fight unemployment.

Given the consensus of the left and the right-wing of the bureaucracy on the inevitability of mass unemployment, it's surprising that the TUC has plans to organise the unemployed. Confidential documents sent anonymously to *the next step* reveal the real reason behind this sudden concern for workers languishing on the dole. At the June meeting of the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee, the union bureaucrats made their motives clear by arguing that:

'Unless effective action was taken groups of unemployed would be organised and used for their own purposes by the extreme right or the extreme left.' (Committee minutes, 23 June 1980)

The TUC is worried about the influence of 'extremists' on the unemployed. The labour leadership will take steps to counter this or any other threat to its position. Its solutions are the bosses' solutions. The annual public relations exercises carried out around the TUC and the Labour Party conference are designed to make these solutions palatable to the working class.

Transform our movement!

There is a major fight ahead. The problem is not merely the labour leaders, but the organisations and traditions that perpetuate the domination of Labour politics in the working class. The leadership of the working class is able to play its reactionary role because its politics have strong roots on the shop floor. The way the labour movement is organised doesn't only reproduce the divisions that capitalism imposes on the working class; it keeps industrial disputes separate from political struggles. The division between the TUC and the Labour Party — between economics and politics — is the most effective instrument for destroying the united strength of the working class.

The crisis of working class leadership is not one of personnel. It is an ideological crisis that can only be overcome in the struggle to build a political alternative in the labour movement. Until workers take on the Labour Party and its reformist programme, our movement will continue to be dominated by the Callaghans, Benns and Wrights of this world. Now is the time to show our fellow workers that to go forward we have to challenge the right of the Labour Party to speak on our behalf.

INSIDE

Ireland: the TUC, the PTA... and the anti-war movement on Vietnam in the USA	2,4,5
Another racist murder in East London: ELWAR on the offensive	7
Socialism = nuclear power + a cruise missile aimed at the bosses	8,9
The case for revolution in the AUEW	12
Review: Harry Haywood, Black Bolshevik	6

Ireland

Teach the TUC a lesson!

THE TUC has responded unequivocally to Tameside Trades Council's fight for reaffiliation. For the Congress House bureaucrats Tameside is now 'outside the official trade union movement'; there can be 'no appeal' against the General Council's withdrawal of recognition (TUC, minutes of the Trades Councils' Joint Consultative Committee, 29 May 1980).

There, thought the bureaucrats, the matter ended. But it didn't. Tameside Trades Council's campaign against TUC bans has grown from strength to strength. Since May, no less than 46 trades councils have passed resolutions in its defence. Numerous union branches have discussed the victimisation of Tameside and have condemned the TUC. As a result the discussion of the Irish War in the labour movement has been given an important impetus.

Her Majesty's Communist Party

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was the organisation that started

the witchhunt against Tameside (see *the next step*, No 4, April/May). And it has continued to obstruct the campaign against the TUC ban. When ex-Tameside secretary Dave Hallsworth told the truth about Tameside's expulsion at the 19 June meeting of Liverpool Trades Council, CP members were enraged. Here's what Hallsworth said:

'It was not the labour movement that disaffiliated Tameside Trades Council but the class collaborators at the top - the TUC and their good friends in our ranks - the Communist Party. Both line up with the British state when faced with the war in Ireland. Faced with the crisis in Britain, they wave the Union Jack and call on workers to support import controls to save "our" industries.'

But, while one old Stalinist spluttered 'These sectarians are worse than the Trotskyites in the docks in the 'forties', other 'Trotskyites' were silent too. Reformists in Militant and radicals in the SWP were embarrassed by Hallsworth's attack on chauvinism - their cosy relation-

ship with the CP had been upset. All they could say was that the 'case' for Tameside has not been well put.

The Tameside campaign has begun to show the lengths to which the CPGB will go to defend the Rt Hon Lionel Murray and his fellow dignitaries from their opponents. Given the importance of the Irish War to the British working class this was inevitable. There is no comfortable middle ground between the Irish people and the British state for the CPGB to occupy. It has demonstrated where it stands on the issue - by its attacks on anti-imperialists.

We can now see what the labour bureaucrats of the TUC mean by the phrase 'official trade union movement'. They provide an important service for the capitalist state. In return the state certifies them as 'official'. The Tameside campaign indicates that working class support for the liberation struggle in Ireland is an important step towards bringing the organisations of the labour movement

under the control of those who built them: the workers.

Teach them a lesson

Supporters of Tameside will be in Brighton to remind the TUC that Tameside will not go away. A march to the TUC Congress has been organised for 3 September to protest against the disaffiliation. Our appeal is not to the officials, but to the thousands of workers who want to defend their class interests.

Defend Tameside Trades Council!

Support Tameside's lobby of the TUC!

March to assemble on Wednesday 3 September at 12 noon outside Brighton train station.
Public meeting: *Tameside and the fight ahead* Wednesday 3 September, 7.30pm, The Playhall, Resources Centre, North Road, Central Brighton

the next step

Ireland - ten years of war
SMASH THE PTA!

Leyland
THE CRUNCH

the next step

Fighting redundancies

the next step



CAN LABOUR FIGHT THE TORIES?

the next step



THE PRICE OF TUC LEADERSHIP

the next step

TUC in 'action', Labour Party in conference
Don't let them drag us down!

Five good reasons for going monthly

Since we launched it in December last year, we've been bringing out the next step every six weeks. Now we're ready to go monthly - but we need £3000 to do it. Here are five good reasons why you should dig deep to help the next step expand.

- 1 The war in Ireland drags on. While Atkins tries to work out a constitutional solution, republicans are still being shot, new regiments are moving onto the streets of the Six Counties and the Orange Lodges are growing in strength. Only *the next step* analyses developments like these scientifically - and with the vital aim of building an anti-imperialist movement in Britain.
- 2 Fighting redundancies is a task more urgent than ever. Everywhere factories are closing down or cutting back. *the next step* is unique because it consistently puts the defence of jobs above the demands of the capitalist economy.
- 3 The Labour Party remains the biggest political obstacle to the defence of the working class. It wants fairer cuts, a fairer version of the last social contract, fairer immigration controls, fairer oppression of the Irish... We want to be 'fairer' on the Labour Party - by

attacking it 12 times a year instead of only 8.

- 4 The TUC wants to see another Labour government as soon as possible. In the meantime it'll settle for a Tory U-turn - if that means more consultation and less confrontation, more of the sensible Prior and less of the madman Joseph. Supporters of *the next step* on Tameside Trades Council have caused some headaches at Congress House: we hope to cause more in the future.
- 5 Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Iran - the struggle against imperialism goes on worldwide. Monthly issues of *the next step* will allow us to cover developments in that struggle more quickly, the better to prevent the British labour movement from falling prey to the bourgeois hysteria that greets every upsurge of the oppressed.

Send your contributions to:
RCT Association
BM RCT, London WC1V 6XX

1,896,643
reasons for
taking
the next
step

With James Callaghan in the lead of the attack on the Tories' record unemployment levels, people on the dole need all the help they can get.

What they need most of all is a way of getting together with workers who still have jobs in a common battle against the system that can only survive through creating mass misery and deprivation.

Every issue of *the next step* contains the politics for fighting unemployment and the bankrupt leadership of the Labour Party. Make sure you get it by taking out a subscription (1 year - £3.20). Take a few extra copies to sell at work or outside the dole office (10 copies - £2.00). Better still join in some of the action supporters of *the next step* are organising in August (see p14 for details).

Contents

Editorial	
<i>The fight for jobs</i>	3
Ireland	
<i>Teach the TUC a lesson!</i>	2
<i>Fighting the Irish War in Britain</i>	4
<i>What sort of anti-imperialist movement?</i>	5
Racial oppression	
<i>Stop these racist murders!</i>	7
<i>Warrington fights back</i>	7
Nuclear power... nuclear weapons	
<i>Anti-nuclear campaign? No thanks!</i>	8
<i>The pacifist fraud</i>	9
Labour movement	
<i>No to another social contract!</i>	1
<i>The 'Permanent Arms Economy'</i>	10
<i>The battle in engineering</i>	11
<i>The case for revolution in the AUEW</i>	12
<i>The Labour left: born to lose</i>	13
Imperialism	
<i>South Africa: party or trade union?</i>	15
<i>South Africa erupts</i>	16
Letters	14

The RCT

<i>Five good reasons for a monthly the next step</i>	14
<i>RCT activities in August</i>	14
<i>Imperialism conference</i>	16
Review	
<i>Harry Haywood, Black Bolshevik</i>	6

Editor

Frank Richards
Editorial board
Tony Allen, Lindsay Finch, Mike Freeman,
Kevin Green, Nick Jenkins, Fenna King,
James Wood.

Published by Junius Publications Ltd
BCM JPLTD, London WC1V 6XX
Printed by Anvil Printers Ltd (TU)
Typeset by Junius Typesetters (TU)
ISSN 0144-350X August 1980

I want to fight unemployment with the next step and
I would like more information about the RCT
I would like to order
the next step (10 copies - £2.00)
I would like to subscribe to
the next step (1 year - £3.20) ☐

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____

THE FIGHT FOR JOBS

THE DRASTIC RISE in unemployment reveals the magnitude of British capitalism's crisis. Official unemployment figures stand at almost two million. But add to them the thousands of married women and youths who do not bother to register, the thousands more who receive subsistence level dole money on government employment schemes, and the number becomes staggering.

No section of industry is immune to the threat of redundancies. Sectors of industry which are suffering collapse such as steel, shipbuilding, the docks and textiles continue to throw workers on the dole. But now even industries which seemed to provide job security are beginning a massive shake-out of labour. Every day the papers carry news of redundancies: 2000 jobs are to go at Ford, another 2000 at GKN, 1300 more at Talbot and 8000 at Lucas. And the list is growing.

Unemployment must be understood from the standpoints of the opposing classes in society. For the capitalist class it is one of the measures needed to restore profitable production. Capitalists take advantage of the large reserve army of labour to discipline the workforce and keep wages down. In this way they can force those workers who manage to hold on to their jobs to work harder and produce more surplus-value. At the same time, the control of the capitalists over the entire labour movement increases as divisions between employed and unemployed take on a greater significance.

For the working class unemployment is a direct attack on the only serious right it has left in capitalist society — *the right to employment*. This right is fundamental to the survival of the working class. Unemployment threatens to destroy the labour movement as growing numbers of workers are thrown into a bitter struggle for physical survival. If the labour movement accepts the impoverishment of sections of workers, it will have to accept its disintegration as a social and political force. Every time a redundancy notice goes by unchallenged, the capitalist class becomes that much more able to push through another round of sackings.

Too important to compromise

Faced with the threat of a factory closure or redundancies, the labour bureaucracy tries to find a compromise. Again and again labour leaders enter into negotiations over the numbers to be sacked. This, they say, is the only realistic alternative to more job losses and more factory closures. The union leaders are not prepared to fight all redundancies because they hold to capitalist arithmetic. They attach the same importance to the survival of British industry as to the welfare of workers. As a result they will accept the measures necessary for running the capitalist economy.

The TUC and the Labour Party aim to ease the burden of unemployment, not to defend jobs. They ask for more palliatives such as Manpower Services Commission schemes for school leavers, 'job creation' schemes and temporary employment subsidies. They want to be consulted: to be allowed to discuss with the government and the bosses the location, time scale and number of redundancies. In other words, they want to ensure that jobs are cut in the fairest way possible.

Many workers have seen through the actions of the labour leaders. They know that they can expect little help from the TUC. There are still many militants who ask 'can we fight redundancies?', 'can anything be done to stop the dole queues rising?'

No magic formula

There is no magic formula for fighting unemployment. In principle there is nothing wrong with demands for a 35 hour week, a sliding scale of hours or worksharing with full pay. Nor with the call for the creation of new jobs through a programme for useful public works. The trouble is that, presented in this abstract fashion, these demands bear no relationship to the experience and consciousness of the working class. They cannot unite workers to fight unemployment. Because they ignore the political experience of the working class they can provide no solutions to its immediate problems.

The trade union leadership has managed to integrate the rank and file into the capitalist system. Many workers have come to see industry as their 'own' and are prepared to subordinate their distinct class interests to those of the bosses. All too often, when redundancies are announced, workers dissipate their energies trying to find a solution to 'their' industry's problems, in an attempt to minimise job losses. Instead of fighting redundancies *regardless* of the consequences for industry, they seek answers in import controls, better planning or in an alternative business strategy.

In opposing the choice between different capitalist options we must make two things clear. First, the running of capitalist industry is the affair of the bosses; if workers make it their business they will be unable to defend their own class interests. Second, *the starting point for fighting redundancies is the recognition that the defence of jobs and the requirements of capitalist industry are fundamentally antagonistic.*

At present few workers are prepared to demand the right to employment regardless of the state of British industry. As a result workers ranks are divided in the face of the bosses' attacks. The employers know this and are extremely skilled in making the most of the divisions in the labour movement.

Whenever job losses are on the cards the employers seek to play off one section of workers against another. In the engineering industry they attack white collar staff first. Once manual workers have been lulled into a false sense of security the chop hits them. At BL Edwardes has given assurances to the skilled AUEW workers and successfully isolated them from the unskilled TGWU workers. This tactic has worked in numerous plants.

To diffuse the response to unemployment the bosses have picked on the weaker sections of the working class. School leavers are an obvious target. The trade union leaders feel little pressure from their members to defend the thousands of young workers on the dole. Blacks are also in the front line. During the past year, unemployment among blacks has risen four times as fast as among whites. Racism in the labour movement has ensured that nothing has been done to defend the jobs of these workers.

General slogans about worksharing and the like do nothing to unite a divided working class. The fight against unemployment must begin with a political offensive against the labour bureaucracy. Our aim must be to build a class leadership that will counterpose our class interests to those of the bosses.

The struggle ahead

A class conscious leadership that can fight the collaborationist policies of the bureaucracy is a precondition for uniting the labour movement against the capitalist offensive. But there is no point in waiting

for such a leadership to drop out of the skies — we have to build it now in the day to day struggles.

Effective opposition to job cuts requires a concrete assessment of the balance of forces in each dispute. General slogans are a barrier to grasping the issues at stake in a particular struggle. There are, however, a number of issues which active workers must have answers to in every redundancy dispute.

Opposition to all redundancies. The bureaucrats will say that this is unrealistic, that it is better to lose a few jobs than risk losing them all. If we give even an inch then the battle is lost. The right of the bosses to sack whoever they like will have been established, and the right of workers to employment sacrificed. This realism is the realism of the bosses. Whether we can defend our jobs depends, not on some mystical force, but on the relative strength of both sides. It has always been that way. Capitalists will do anything — if they can get away with it. On the other hand, if they are confronted with the united power of the working class they will 'realistically' make concessions to save their skins.

No to the politics of class collaboration. A fight against redundancies is about defending jobs and nothing else. Every attempt to cloud the issue by examining the viability of the industry concerned, the nature of the commodities produced or the problems of competition from foreign imports must be fought. Let the bosses run their business — our concern is to defend every job.

Joint strike committees. Only the most militant action can thwart the employers' plans to cut jobs. This requires that, at the outset, strike committees composed of delegates from all sections of the workforce are established. The bosses like to negotiate with one section at a time. Trade union bureaucrats often encourage negotiations to make separate deals at the expense of members of other unions. Active workers must not remain tied to the existing union structures. A united response is more important than the long established traditions and bureaucratic procedures. Every effort has to be made to counter craft prejudices. All negotiations should be conducted by delegates of strike committees who represent all the workers — not by full-time trade union officials.

No wage cuts — no productivity deals. Every time workers defend their living standards they are accused of pricing themselves out of their jobs. Capitalists often threaten that redundancies are necessary — unless wages fall behind inflation or productivity is increased. Active workers must reject any attempt to link the defence of jobs to changes in working conditions. Jobs cannot be made conditional on the criteria set by the bosses.

The demands put forward by strike committees will depend on particular circumstances. In certain industries an effective struggle will be able to maintain the status quo. In weak industries the bosses will have to run the plants at half capacity or seek a subsidy from their fellow capitalists. Whatever the final outcome, all jobs must be safeguarded — without loss of pay. Worksharing or a shorter working week can be accepted as long as wages are not reduced. In *all* cases it should be the representatives of the shopfloor that decide how worksharing should be implemented. Factory committees should not allow management to

have any say in who works, when and for how long.

Nationalisation — a temporary solution. If the industry is near collapse, workers will have to force the capitalist class as a whole, through its state, to guarantee all jobs. At the same time, workers must counter the view that the state has a positive role to play, or that nationalisation is a progressive step. Only a determined struggle can force the state to safeguard all jobs. Only the vigilance of the working class can prevent the state from throwing workers on the dole at the first opportune moment.

The continuing crisis of the capitalist system ensures that every successful struggle against unemployment is only a temporary victory. The capitalist class will always prepare for the next round to reverse any gains. As long as capitalism exists the right to employment is partial: it depends on the ability of the working class to defend its past gains. That's why a consistent defence of jobs requires the overthrow of the capitalist system. The fight against capitalism cannot be put off until the immediate struggle has been won. A working class that is anti-capitalist will be that much more united and resolute to defend every single job.

The unemployed. The reserve army of labour exists and is growing every day. Workers cannot remain indifferent to the plight of the unemployed. Unemployment weakens the working class as a whole. Active workers must force the unions to organise the unemployed. They have to reject the token concessions that union leaders make to their unemployed members. The unions must force the capitalists to provide jobs and full wages to workers on the dole. Special attention must be paid to school leavers who have no experience of the labour movement and who are particularly susceptible to demoralisation.

* * *

The fight for jobs today is a political struggle that cannot be reduced to a few snappy slogans. If this fight is to be successful we have to change the attitudes and traditions that have been perpetuated by the labour bureaucracy. The basic contradiction between the right to profit and the right to employment has been blurred over by reformist clap-trap about saving British industry and the nation.

The left has ignored the political obstacles to effective working class action. Many organisations have sought refuge in fancy slogans about the sliding scale of hours and wages which fail to address the reality of today's class struggle. Others have opted for trade unionism, hoping to defend basic labour movement principles. Both alternatives are irrelevant. Neither confronts the political problems facing workers.

For the RCT the fight against redundancies cannot be separated from the struggle to develop the *political independence* of the working class. We fight against all attempts to subordinate workers to alien class interests: in particular racism and chauvinism which unite worker and capitalist against other workers, and bourgeois realism which depicts workers' living standards as conditional on capitalist prosperity. We place this political struggle to the fore because until workers speak with an independent voice even the most basic right will be up for grabs. That's why the defence of the most fundamental right of them all — the right to employment — requires a broad proletarian, anti-capitalist outlook.

As long as the war in Ireland continues the government will have to suppress Irish and British opponents of its military occupation in Britain. The Special Branch was founded in the nineteenth century to deal with republicans; today the Anti-Terrorism Squad specialises in terrorising anti-imperialists. We review the background to the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the work of the Smash the PTA Campaign in the city where the PTA is in daily use — Liverpool.

NO HOLDS BARRED!

No news is good news

During the last ten years the state has acted again and again to suppress news and reports of the War. It does not object to portrayals of the facts of repression. The Labour Government's 1979 Bennett Report confirmed that the torture and beating of republican sympathisers still is standard practice. The condition and treatment of prisoners in Armagh and Long Kesh has been widely reported. The bourgeoisie is quite prepared to admit to its bold measures — and to justify them as necessary. It does, however, object to any coverage which shows that the struggle in Ireland is a war. TV, radio or newspaper reports which suggest that the IRA is a well organised guerrilla army, or reveal the widespread support it has among the Catholic population, invariably meet immediate suppression.

In the late 'sixties, when opposition to British domination mainly took place through the campaign for civil rights, news coverage of events was permitted. But as the Irish people were forced into armed conflict with the British army, state control over media coverage became tighter. In 1971 the Government banned an ITV film 'South of the Border' simply because it included shots of a Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (annual conference). Last year a TV crew filmed an IRA operation in which fully-armed freedom fighters took control of Carrickmore, a village in the strongly republican county Tyrone. As soon as rumours about this film reached Whitehall, the police were dispatched to the BBC to seize the offending reels. The government takes no chances. It has agreements with Fleet Street, the BBC and ITV: all coverage of the Irish War is monitored by government officials to ensure a consistent pro-British, pro-army outlook.

Liberal protestors about media censorship on Ireland always miss the point. They protest that the public is being denied the facts and not told the truth. The real problem is that people are fully informed about the progress of the war — from the British point of view. It's no use asking editors and broadcasters to put the case for Irish independence. We expose the complicity of the media in the British domination of Ireland to show the sensitivity of the British state to anti-imperialist politics. Our response is not to call for the facts but to make the events of the War part of a political appeal to the British labour movement to stand up to government propaganda and oppose the war in Ireland. That struggle begins in Britain.

'We make the rules!'

When dealing with the Irish War the police have not hesitated to throw the rule book out of the window. The end has always justified the means. To maintain the integrity of the British state and suppress the liberation struggle, democratic rights and normally sacrosanct legal procedures are conveniently forgotten. Their abuses extend through the whole range of police

activity, from the detention and questioning of suspects to the conduct of trials.

Detainees have frequently been held for longer than the law allows. Even before the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which made such measures legal, they were denied the right to contact friends, relatives or a solicitor. It's the same in court. In the Six Counties trial by jury has been abolished for Republicans. In Britain where this might be too much for public opinion, the state operates more discreetly. Jury-vetting, the checking up on the political and social background of potential jurors to ensure that they have no sympathy with the oppressed and can be relied on to convict, has been standard practice since 1974. The approach of the police is summed up well by Sir Robert Mark, former head of the Metropolitan Police. Referring to his decision to detain suspected IRA members beyond the permitted 24 hours without charging them, he remarked:

'If we played the game strictly according to the rules we should have released them to return to Ireland. Of course there was no question of us doing anything of the kind. The bombers were held incommunicado at Ealing for four days.' (Sir Robert Mark, *In the office of constable*, 1978).

When it comes to defending the integrity of the British state there are no holds barred.

The law to fight the War

Between 1969 and 1974 the state developed most of the rules and techniques it needed to fight the War in Britain. In late 1974 they were brought together in the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Although it was rushed through Parliament in the aftermath of the Birmingham bombings, supposedly as a means of aiding the fight against IRA Active Service Units, the PTA has a far broader purpose. Its aim is to legitimise the harassment of the republican movement, its sympathisers and the entire Irish community in Britain, and to root out any opposition to imperialism.

The Act allows the exclusion from Britain of persons involved in 'terrorism' and the detention of suspects for up to a week without charge or access to a solicitor. It outlaws financial contributions which might aid terrorists, and the withholding of information. In this way the PTA has given legal sanction to the continuous monitoring and suppression of anti-imperialist activity. This much is clear from a review of its use. In its first year only 63 of the 1067 people held by police were charged with any offence at all — and only three of them with an offence under the PTA. The remainder were simply locked up for seven days, interrogated for scraps of information and, frequently, given a good beating.

On top of that the PTA makes a major contribution to ruling class attempts to maintain the appropriate climate of public opinion to conduct its Irish War. A regular part of police activity is to inform a suspect's employer that he is a potential

terrorist. Six years after the Birmingham bombings there are still posters on trains and buses throughout Britain informing passengers of the dangers of unattended packages and parcels. The media occasionally issue warnings of Irish labourers buying transistor radios: they could be members of Active Service Units assembling the components of a deadly explosive. The climate of anti-Irish chauvinism has made police swoops on the Irish community and the barbarity of British rule in the Six Counties acceptable facts of British life.

Smash the PTA!

The RCT devotes most of its work on the Irish issue to our Smash the PTA Campaign. Our approach is distinctive. Most groups oppose the PTA because they see it as a taste of things to come, an indication of measures which the ruling class has in store for the British labour movement. Others have protested against the Act because it is used against trade unionists. In fact the PTA has not been used against trade unionists — unless they happened to be Irish or involved in anti-imperialist politics.

For us the PTA is a taste of things that are already here. It is a major weapon the bourgeoisie has in its war against the Irish. Trade unionists will not be won to oppose the Act by arguments that it is a *potential* threat to them. No militant who fails to oppose Britain's right to be in Ireland and accepts the measures the ruling class takes in conducting its war, will fight actively against the PTA. This is why no campaign against the PTA can remain neutral on the question of the Irish War. SPTAC has taken sides from the outset. We side 100 per cent with the struggle against imperialism. The bourgeoisie has no inhibitions about conducting its war in this country. The British working class must have none either.

Rob Knight

Fighting the PTA on Merseyside

MUCH OF THE ACTIVITY of the North-West Committee of the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign is concentrated in the Liverpool area. On Saturday 14 June SPTAC arrived in Church Street, a busy city centre shopping area, to hold a street meeting protesting against the PTA. It was intended as a follow-up to one held a month before

which had attracted an audience of more than 80 people — before the police intervened to halt it. This time the Special Branch was there to prevent any speeches at all. Before SPTAC supporters had a chance to take out a megaphone they were told in no uncertain terms that anti-imperialist views on Ireland would not be countenanced.

The police in Liverpool has had plenty of practice. Take the PTA itself. In the last five years over a quarter of the 4600 arrests under it were made in the Merseyside area. Liverpool has 16 Special Branch men specifically detailed to find PTA victims and covertly employed at the docks, the airport and Lime Street station. The city's Bridewell police station has a row of cells specially set aside for PTA detainees. Every person stepping off the Belfast ferry is a suspect, liable to arrest and seven days' detention without access to friends, relatives or a solicitor.

All this police activity wasn't the only reason why SPTAC thinks work in the Liverpool area is crucial. Another is the fact that, although the working class there is militant and well organised, it has never opposed the PTA. Employers steer clear of the area because they fear its militant reputation, but the police know they can detain people under the PTA at will without provoking a backlash from the labour movement. This, despite the fact that Merseyside workers have come up against the state time and time again — in the Cammell-Laird strike of 1975, the Kirkby rent strike and the factory occupations of KME and Massey Ferguson.

The contrast between the labour movement's willingness to fight on economic issues and its passivity in the face of political repression was highlighted on 14 May. On Merseyside that day 10 000 angry workers marched against the cuts and Prior's Employment Bill. Unknown to them a group of Irish PTA victims were preparing to spend their third night in custody at the Bridewell. Their presence was only discovered two days later.

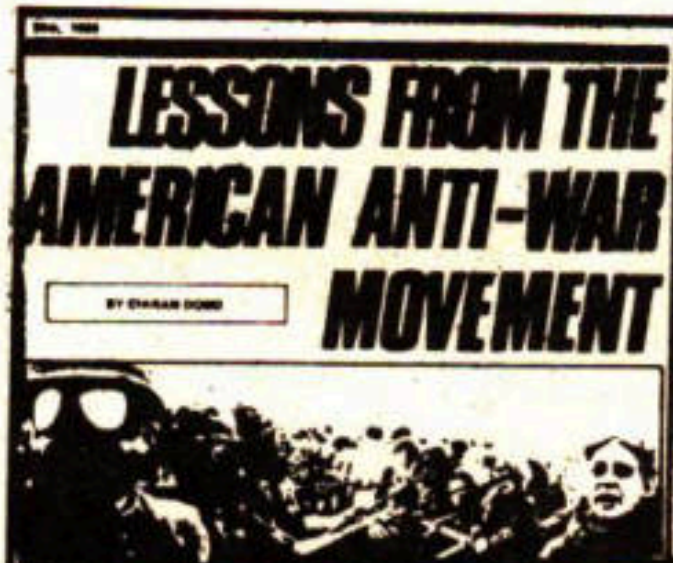
What me, a terrorist?

People have tried to win labour movement opposition to the PTA in the past, but they've always failed. The first campaign against Britain's presence in the Six Counties — the British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign (BWNIC) — set the pattern for all the radical left's work since.

In November 1974, shortly before the introduction of the PTA, 14 members of BWNIC, including two from Liverpool, were held under the Incitement to Disaffection Act (1934). They had offended the state by distributing a leaflet entitled 'Some information for discontented soldiers' which demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. But their offence to the working class movement was much more serious: throughout their 18-month trial they took every opportunity to distance themselves from 'terrorism' and violence.

BWNIC was a group of liberals: its Liverpool branch eventually degenerated

What sort of anti-imperialist movement?



Over the past year several contributors (including the RCT) to An Phoblacht/Republican News, the weekly paper of the Irish republican movement, have discussed the way forward for the anti-imperialist movement in Britain. We reprint here the views of regular AP/RN feature writer Ciaran Dowd (24 May) who sees the US anti-war movement on Vietnam as a model campaign – and our reply which was published in AP/RN.

into the Merseyside Ad Hoc Committee to Change the World. So it was unlikely to come down on the side of the Irish with any firmness. But the Troops Out Movement, the radical left's longest surviving attempt at solidarity work, has shown the same weakness. Despite the fact that TOM calls (sometimes) for 'Troops out now' and 'Self-determination for the Irish people', it too denounces 'terrorism'. When police detained prominent Irish trade unionist Phil Flynn in December 1977, Merseyside UTOM spokesman Alan Evans announced:

'The use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in this way to harass people is a suppression of democracy in this country. It is not being used to deal with terrorism.' (Liverpool Daily Post, 31 December 1977, our emphasis)

Evans' comments were clearly not a slip of the tongue or a slander by a right-wing local paper. Liverpoolians who missed them could find the same statement made, without editorial comment, in Merseyside UTOM's pamphlet *Repeal the terror act – the Prevention of Terrorism Act exposed on Merseyside* (p6).

SPTAC plans to change all that

With this kind of politics to lead them, few workers in Liverpool have been convinced that they should oppose the PTA. The responsibility for this lies with the groups who have failed to take anti-imperialist politics into the labour movement, but its consequences weigh heavily on the whole working class.

SPTAC argues for support for the Irish liberation struggle for two reasons. First, because we want to see British imperialism defeated. Second, because we say that taking a stand on the PTA will add immeasurably to the political strength of the British labour movement. For that to happen the British working class must become an active participant in the Irish War – on the side of the Irish people.

In Liverpool there is plenty of opportunity. The PTA is a daily reality. At the moment the most pressing need is for defence work. But this is at a very primitive level. After six years of the PTA's existence nobody has reliable information about arrests. That's why we will be arguing in the Transport and General Workers Union, which unionises the docks, that its members pass on information about detentions as soon as they occur. Once we have that information, SPTAC can organise the pickets and mobilise local trade unionists and anti-imperialists. These are the first steps in a struggle which will gain real momentum when a PTA arrest in Liverpool is immediately greeted by thousands of workers from the docks and industrial estates walking out in protest.

Alan Harding

If you know anything about the use of the PTA in your area, or if you're prepared to support pickets and activities of the SPTAC, write to us at:

Box 33, 164-66 Corn Exchange Building
Hanging Ditch
Manchester M4 3BD

THE leaders of the national liberation struggle in Vietnam always recognised the importance of a broad-based movement against the war being developed in the imperialist heartland itself. They did not think it pointless or impossible to build a troops out movement, in spite of widespread support in America for the war – including amongst the trade unions.

The Vietnamese leaders always appealed for unity in action amongst the various anti-war organisations in America.

Xuan Thuy, ambassador to the Paris peace talks, put it like this:

'Facing the serious situation as it presents itself now, I call upon the progressive American people and all anti-war organisations in the United States to unite closely, to associate all forces and strata of the population irrespective of their skin colour, religion and political trend, thus making a united and strong movement so as to curb in time new military adventures by the US administration, to demand an end to their war of aggression in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, to demand the withdrawal of all American troops from Indochina and let the Indochina people settle their own internal affairs.'

The principle is that an anti-war movement in an imperialist country must unite the broadest possible forces behind the basic demands of 'troops out' and 'self-determination'.

ACTION

The stress of the American anti-war movement was always on action, rather than, for example, on working in Congress. So, there were huge demonstrations against the war over a number

of years, such as the 800 000 who marched in Washington in 1971. There were protests, teach-ins and mass mobilisations up and down the country throughout the war, especially after the draft was introduced.

This movement had two main principles. First it had a non-exclusionary line, in other words anyone who supported the basic demands was free to participate.

Secondly, it was a single-issue campaign, which did not include in its programme points on broader political issues.

If these principles are applied in Britain what is the result?

If the Young Liberals or Cyril Smith or a number of Labour MPs say 'troops out of Ireland', but take reactionary positions on other issues, then clearly this conflict is their problem and not that of activists in the troops out movement, so long as their actions help in some way to build a troops out movement.

DANGER

It is always the danger in building an anti-war movement in a hostile situation of making it politically factional. Republicans would obviously like to see hundreds of thousands marching through London calling for the withdrawal of British troops on a principled, anti-imperialist basis. But, it may well be more likely that a 'Bring the Boys home' movement will develop based on British self-interest and chauvinist sentiment. This would seem to be what the *Daily Mirror* has been advocating. In a purely objective sense this could unwittingly result in action against British interests.

So, while a progressive anti-imperialist move-

ment would be the more welcome, Republicans cannot ignore the prospect of a movement saying 'troops out' for its own chauvinist reasons ('let the Irish sort themselves out'). Protest action is what is wanted, no matter what the basis. However, within this movement the radicals should, of course, try to educate people around the issues raised in the war.

TRADE UNIONS

As was stated earlier, the trade unions in America were mainly favourable to the war in Vietnam. This was basically on a pro-imperialist basis, and purely for self-interest because the war meant more jobs. Building workers in New York, the 'hard hats', even violently attacked anti-war demonstrations in the streets.

Gradually, the building of a mass movement against the war, mainly supported by students and black people, turned the tide in the trade unions, and many came out against the war.

In Britain, it would seem the situation is more favourable for building a 'troops out' movement within the organised labour movement. Support for the Chile Solidarity Campaign (set up after the bloody military coup in 1973) was, for example, quite widespread amongst trade councils and unions.

On Ireland, most trade unionists seem to be not so much hostile as ignorant of the situation here.

It is for those active in the troops out movement to decide themselves how best to pursue their activity. But the prospects look good, if a principled yet flexible approach is adopted, based on the 'non-exclusionary' and 'single-issue' principles.

WHO SHALL OVERCOME?

Ciaran Dowd (AP/RN, 24 May 1980) argues that the protest movement against the war in Vietnam has 'valuable' lessons for those 'committed to building a troops out movement in Britain'.

A comparison of the relationship of the US to Vietnam and that of Britain to Ireland shows conclusions which are different than those drawn by Ciaran Dowd. Vietnam was one of many liberation struggles that US imperialism faced in the post-war period. Washington's defeat in Vietnam was important but not critical for the survival of US imperialism. It was precisely because withdrawal from Vietnam did not constitute a direct threat to US capitalism that the anti-war movement was able to attract support from all sections of society. Many Americans could remain good patriots and still argue for withdrawal simply because the continuation of the war was too high a price to pay.

For Britain, the domination of Ireland is central to its survival. Unlike Vietnam and the US, the Six Counties of Ireland are directly integrated into the British state. And the ruling class of the Six Counties is the extension of that of Britain. A defeat for Britain in Ireland would represent a direct blow to British imperialism. It would severely undermine social stability in Britain itself. That's why British imperialism has no choice but to continue its oppressive policies regardless of the costs.

Every major politician of the Labour, Tory and Liberal party has instinctively understood that British imperialism could not afford to lose in Ireland. In December 1920, Churchill summed up succinctly when he said that Ireland was the 'heart' centre of the British Empire. Any distur-

bance or movement there produces vibrations, almost convulsions, throughout the whole of our system of society'. This view has prevailed ever since. At last year's Labour Party Conference, Stan Orme warned delegates that the Irish War threatened law and order in Britain, and that it 'could overflow into the cities of Britain, into the Liverpools and the Glasgows and the Londons, the Birminghams and the Manchesters'.

Because the maintenance of British imperialism is so intimately intertwined with its domination of Ireland, a troops out movement based on chauvinist sentiments cannot be built. Ciaran Dowd is wrong to suggest this possibility and to point to the anti-war movement in the US as a model. Every attempt to utilise liberal moralism and war weariness has failed to build an anti-war movement.

In Britain an anti-war movement can only be built from an anti-imperialist point of view. All too often liberal critics of British imperialism have served as its apologists – suggesting that Britain could play a different and more progressive role in Ireland. Only those who oppose their own state and their own ruling class can fight against Britain's oppression of Ireland.

There is a lesson that Ciaran Dowd does not draw from the US experience. The chauvinist US anti-war movement did not threaten the ruling class, indeed it allowed imperialism to extricate itself from Vietnam. Today when Washington is more vulnerable, the old leadership of this movement is right behind Carter's denunciation of Vietnam. Nor is it accidental that Joan Baez, one of the stars of this movement, made common cause with the 'peace people' in the Six Counties not so long

ago. A chauvinist anti-war movement is a weapon that will be turned against the liberation struggle when imperialism is under fire. Ciaran Dowd is right to suggest that there is considerable potential for building a troops out movement in the British working class – but only if this work is approached from an anti-imperialist point of view will this potential be realised. Victory to the Irish people.

Andre Robinson

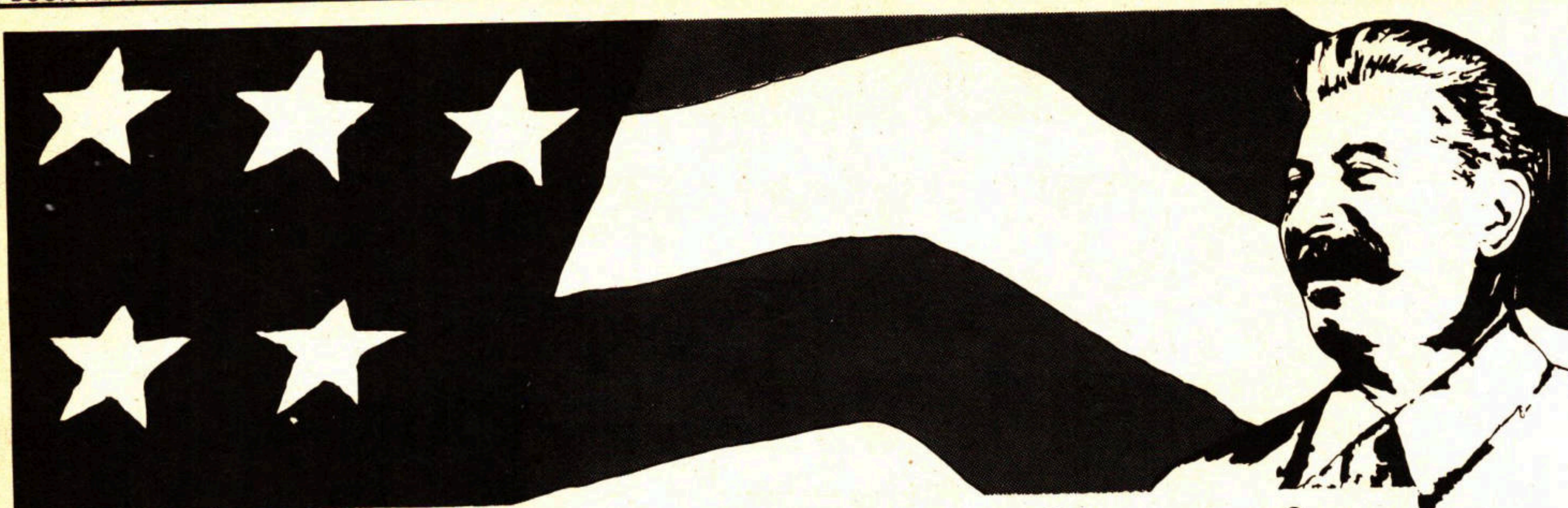
IRELAND'S VICTORY MEANS BRITAIN'S DEFEAT

Northern Ireland Minister Humphrey Atkins has now produced his long awaited proposals on the future government of Britain's occupied territories in Ireland. As predicted in the RCT's latest pamphlet, he has no alternative to direct rule: military control over the Six Counties from Westminster is guaranteed in perpetuity.

Atkins' scheme is, by universal agreement, a non-starter. His constitutional alternatives – either assured Catholic representation in a Protestant dominated administration or a Catholic controlled second assembly to act as a block on an all-Protestant government – are unacceptable: the first particularly to the Catholics, the second especially to the Protestants. So the war goes on.

The central theme of *Ireland's victory means Britain's defeat* is that the Irish War will be resolved, not by White Papers, but when either the Irish people drive out British imperialism or are crushed in the attempt. The aim of the pamphlet is to make sure the Irish liberation struggle prevails over British barbarism, by building a movement committed to Britain's defeat in Britain itself.

Get it now from BCM JPLTD, LONDON
WC1V 6XX. 35p + 17p postage.



Stalinism blocks black liberation

Review: Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik* – autobiography of an Afro-American Communist, Liberator Press, 1978.

HARRY HAYWOOD was a prominent black leader of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). A respected figure in the international Stalinist movement, he was one of its spokesmen on the question of black oppression. Haywood's book is an unconscious indictment of Stalinism – the movement he helped to build. The tragic consequences of Stalinism are particularly evident on the question of black oppression. Haywood's description of the CPUSA's internal life in the late 'forties is of contemporary relevance: 'It was an atmosphere which was conducive to the development of a particularly paternalistic and patronising form of white chauvinism, as well as to a rise in petty bourgeois narrow nationalism among Blacks' (p588).

Anybody familiar with the traditions of the British left will find that Haywood's picture of the CPUSA has its replica today. The left leaves anti-racist work to blacks and does nothing to confront chauvinism among white workers. Blacks are encouraged to organise among themselves so that the left is let off the hook of fighting racism in the labour movement.

Stalinism: a personal tragedy...

As an individual there can be no doubt on which side Haywood stood. His personal record is one of continual struggle for proletarian internationalism. In his own way he sought to fight racism from a working class point of view. Unfortunately he was too immersed in the Stalinist tradition to understand the reactionary forces around him. Like thousands of other militants he saw Stalinism as the continuation of the Marxist-Leninist tradition. Haywood actively fought Trotskyism in the international working class movement. He uncritically supported Stalin's purge of the old Bolsheviks and the Moscow show-trials of the 'thirties.

As a Stalinist, Haywood was unable to comprehend the disintegration of the Communist International. His sudden exclusion from the leadership of the CPUSA in 1938 and the adaptation of his party to chauvinism were developments he could not explain. All this he saw as a deviation from the Stalinist line rather than what it really was: its inevitable outcome. Haywood became the victim of his own politics.

...and a victory for racism

The rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and its domination of the Communist International stimulated the growth of nationalist trends. The bureaucracy's strategy of building social-

ism in one country rejected the practical significance of proletarian internationalism. The working class no longer needed international solutions – its interests could be defended within the boundaries of one nation. Once the Stalinist bureaucracy adopted this national framework *nationalism* followed suit. Increasingly the bureaucracy justified its position through appeals to Russian nationalism. By 1926 the Leninist approach to fighting Great Russian chauvinism had been reversed.

The Stalinist bureaucracy did not have a monopoly of patriotism. Stalin's liquidation of revolutionary elements inside the Western communist parties pushed the International in a reformist direction. Despite their militant rhetoric the communist parties fell under the sway of capitalist ideology. They became more *national* and less *international*. The Leninist principle of uncompromising struggle against imperialist oppression was abandoned in favour of more 'realistic' alternatives. The communist parties fought racism in words, but their deeds told a different story.

In 1926, the French Communist Party responded to a wave of hysterical attacks on immigrant workers by demanding 'the prohibition of collective immigration of foreign labour'. The German Communist Party's answer to the rise of the Nazis was to publicise its commitment to what it called 'National Bolshevism'. A pamphlet published in 1930 demonstrated just what 'National Bolshevism' meant: it boasted that there wasn't a single Jew to be found on the Central Committee of the German Communist Party!

Popular nationalism

To a considerable degree Haywood's faith in Stalinism stems from the decisions taken at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928. During this Congress, chauvinist trends were denounced by the Stalinist leadership. Elaborate theses were drawn up, giving guidance for the fight against the oppression of blacks in the USA and South Africa. Haywood saw the new position of 'self-determination' for blacks in the USA as an indication of Moscow's commitment to fighting racial oppression.

It is true that for a brief period in the early 'thirties the CPUSA and its front organisation, the 'League of Struggle for Negro Rights', fought against racism. Notable success was achieved in the South of the USA among share croppers and textile workers. But this brief interlude of anti-racist struggle was put to a stop by 1935. The CPUSA wound up the League of Struggle for Negro Rights and put anti-racist work on ice. Why?

The real purpose of the anti-chauvinist campaign at the Sixth Congress was to consolidate the controls that the Stalinist

bureaucracy exercised over the International. Stalin used left rhetoric to get rid of Bukharin and his supporters. Under the guise of fighting chauvinism the bureaucracy imposed a new, more pliable leadership on the communist parties.

If the real intentions of the Communist International were still unclear in the early 'thirties they should have been obvious by 1935. At this time Moscow directed all communist parties to pursue the Popular Front strategy. The bureaucracy wanted to develop an alliance with the democratic imperialist powers against Hitler. This was the objective the parties were instructed to pursue. The communist parties didn't need much convincing. They saw the politics of democratic nationalism as a useful means for overcoming their 'extremist' image.

During the Popular Front period chauvinist trends within the communist parties were consolidated. It was now acceptable for communists to be good patriots. The CPUSA's paper *Daily Worker* carried pictures of Lenin and George Washington side by side, and 'The Star Spangled Banner' was displayed at its meetings. Nationalism in imperialist countries meant acquiescence to the oppression of the colonial people. The Stalinists did not take long to learn this lesson. In 1935 the French Communist Party promptly ceased its support for the Arab national liberation struggle in North Africa.

The defeat of internationalism

Even with hindsight Haywood failed to understand the reactionary nature of Popular Front politics. He could comprehend their fatal consequences yet blamed the destruction of the working class vanguard on certain individuals. He writes of Earl Browder, CPUSA leader at the time, that 'with hindsight, Browder's statements were actually a forewarning of what was later to become an entire theory, the justification for dissolving the party as a Marxist-Leninist vanguard' (p464).

Yet Browder was merely articulating the accepted programme of the Stalinist International. What Haywood was witnessing was the destruction of the working class vanguard during the 'thirties. In this period the Stalinist leadership forced the most conscious section of the working class to postpone the fight for socialism and to defend bourgeois democracy against fascism.

This all-class defence of bourgeois democracy did not extend to defending the democratic rights of the oppressed. It was the defence of the democracy of one group of imperialist powers against the fascism of another group of imperialists. From the mid 'thirties onwards the communist parties were implicated in imperialist oppression.

During the Second World War the Stalinist parties denounced any serious attempts to fight racial and national oppression as a diversion from the fascist struggle. They branded the Indian people's struggle against British imperialism as 'unrealistic' and 'detrimental to the true interests of the Indian people'.

But it was in Haywood's own party, the CPUSA, that chauvinist trends took on the clearest form. The American Stalinists told blacks that they should postpone their struggle for equal rights until after the war. Attempts to fight for the abolition of racial segregation in the armed forces and for the demand of equal pay for equal work were condemned as 'sabotage of the war effort'.

The reaction of the CPUSA to the 1943 Detroit race riot in which 34 people died was predictable. The Stalinists criticised the police and called for martial law. But at the same time they told blacks to forget about fighting back – to go back to work and not to disrupt war production. This was at a time when racist violence was an everyday phenomenon, and when blacks had been lynched throughout the war years.

Too little, too late

It took Haywood until 1957, when the CPUSA, at its sixteenth party convention, explicitly adopted a reformist document on the issue of black oppression and refused to support independence for Puerto Rico, to realise that a new party was needed. But Haywood could not offer an alternative to Stalinism. He was too much a product of the period of working class defeats to rise above his political tradition. That's why *Black Bolshevik* is a warning rather than an answer to the problems facing anti-imperialists today.

It is a warning that the working class movement cannot afford to ignore. Social-chauvinism is the greatest obstacle to the anti-capitalist struggle in the imperialist countries. All the reformist parties in Britain and elsewhere accept the right of the bourgeois state to control the movement of immigrant workers. The protestations of the Labour left and the CPGB against racism mean nothing: they allow the state to control the movement of immigrants. Not only is the Western labour movement divided along racial lines: these divisions are perpetuated by the labour bureaucracy.

Adaptation to chauvinism was the most striking indication of the Communist International's degeneration. The determination and effectiveness with which the working class fights racial oppression will be one of the most striking indications of the development of a proletarian vanguard.

Helen Swift

East London Workers Against Racism says

STOP THESE RACIST MURDERS!

The Government's response to the unrest in Bristol in April has been to tighten the screw on black communities in Britain. Blacks in North London workplaces have been finding out about the Government's tougher approach first hand. They used to get picked up for questioning in ones and twos. Now they're being herded into cells in their dozens by squads of police and Home Office officials with dogs – squads on 'fishing expeditions'. As one victim of these expeditions told the next step: 'There is no doubt about it – they're out to smash us!'

Every racist thug will take comfort from the response of the TUC and Labour Party leadership to these attacks. The labour bureaucracy is of course embarrassed but prefers to ignore matters that fall outside the realm of 'industrial relations'. Fishing expeditions and hunting parties are the bosses' response. Workers' defence is ours. Below we look at how the RCT is trying to turn the tables on the racists.



* 1978 – Altab Ali: stabbed to death in a Whitechapel gutter

* 1979 – Ishaque Ali: bludgeoned to death on the street in Hackney

* 1979 – Ankelsaria: kicked to death at Bromley-by-Bow tube station

* 1980 – Akhtar Ali Baig: stabbed in broad daylight in East Ham

THE LATEST victim of racial violence in East London, a young man of Pakistani origin, was stabbed in the chest as he walked out of an office in East Ham High Street on the afternoon of Thursday 17 July. Four youths have been charged with his murder.

Racism is on the rampage in East London. One day it's mass immigration raids, detentions and deportations; the next it's bricks through the windows of blacks' homes and bottles and knives on the streets. Every day black people get the blame from those who believe the country is in a mess because of foreigners and immigrants. The rantings of racist politicians and the immigration officials' 'fishing expeditions' for 'illegal' immigrants have created the right climate for the racist gangs that hunt in packs in East London.

Blacks fight back

Black people in Newham have had enough of being the target of physical attacks, police harassment and racist abuse. Within hours of the East Ham murder hundreds gathered on the streets and marched to the local police station, protesting about the stabbing and the fact that the latest victim bled to death on the pavement before an ambulance arrived. Two days later more than 3000 people marched from Plashet Park past the scene of the murder to Forest Gate police station.

They were in angry mood. Local Labour MP Ron Leighton tried to address the pre-march rally: his speech lasted about 20 seconds before he was drowned out by young blacks and ELWAR supporters. Labour's record of encouragement for immigration controls and tighter 'community policing' is well known in Newham. Leighton and his parliamentary colleague Nigel Spearing were treated with the contempt they deserved. They were left to

fraternise with the police and impotent 'community relations' officials while the march set off.

Racists in East London have been shouting abuse at Asians on the streets for too long – but they got some of their just deserts on the demo. People who gesticulated against it from the safety of upstairs windows got bricks in reply; others were chased down side streets. A few who tried to drive cars through the march saw their vehicles receive heavy damage. Police had to battle with marchers to get every one of the 29 people they arrested into black marias. The demonstration stopped for an hour outside Forest Gate police station, demanding the release of those arrested.

ELWAR action

ELWAR played an active part in both the immediate response to the East Ham killing and in the later demonstration. Fran Eden of ELWAR was the only speaker from the British labour movement to address the rally at the conclusion of the

march. She made two points. First, that the fight against racist terror on the streets of East London was first and foremost a battle against the politics of the Labour Party, that in both local government and at the constituency level Labour councillors and politicians have played a big part in making racism respectable in Britain. Second, that ELWAR is committed to mobilising the working class to defend black people against racist violence.

Given the indifference of most trade unions to immigration raids and physical attacks, it is not surprising that many young blacks should take up the chant 'Self-defence is the only way' in response to the latest murder. It is also not surprising that the handful of radical left supporters who turned up should echo this cry. It relieves them of the hard but essential struggle to convince trade unionists to fight the victimisation and harassment of black people.

It is this struggle that ELWAR has been fighting for the last six months – and with increasing success. We held a demonstration in March outside West

Ham police station to protest against police attacks on black people; later in the month we held another march over the murder of a black student in Spitalfields. We have held hundreds of street meetings and canvassed housing estates to persuade workers to get out and help defend blacks against racist attacks. In Plaistow we have helped Asian families to organise defence against gangs of racist thugs. We have distributed thousands of leaflets and put up hundreds of anti-racist posters in Newham, Tower Hamlets and Hackney. Despite attacks from the police and the fascists, our campaign is growing in strength.

Since the racist murder in East Ham, ELWAR has been centrally involved in building a defence campaign in the area. An ad hoc committee composed of local Asian organisations, with a representative from ELWAR, has been set up. Its immediate aim is to mobilise for a national demonstration against racism on 2 August. As we go to press there is every indication that this event will be a major success.

WARRINGTON FIGHTS BACK

Warrington, Cheshire, is a community in crisis. In July 800 steelmen were thrown out of work, joining 5000 workers on the dole. For some time now, the local National Front branch has been trying to build on the frustration of the unemployed and of all those living in bad housing and facing bleak prospects. So when Warrington recently opened its doors to a number of 'boat people' from Vietnam, the NF saw its chance and called a demonstration to direct workers' anger against them.

Co-operating closely with the police, the NF kept details of its mobilisation secret. But, one week beforehand, the RCT got hold of the NF's plans. We organised quickly to oppose the NF,

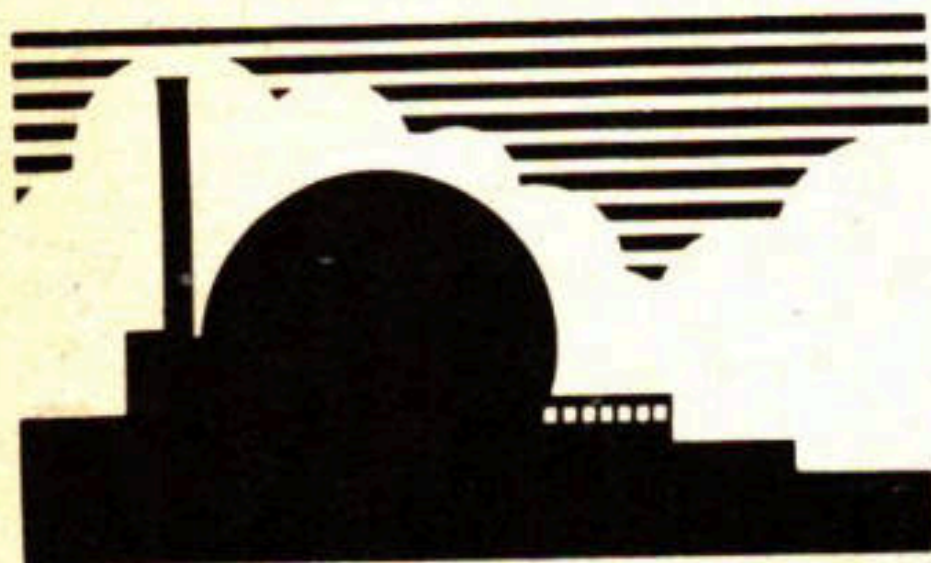
getting the support of members of the ANL, the SWP and the Labour Party. Most importantly the trade union movement was alerted to the threat of organised racists to the working class.

A counter-demonstration of 300 people overwhelmed a puny fascist turn-out of 60. The Warrington labour movement took a decisive stand: for solidarity with immigrants, against the racist filth of the NF. Attitudes like these will play a key part in strengthening the working class for the battles ahead. As one trade unionist told the next step: 'if we can mobilise the same sort of class unity against the bosses then all new closures could be stopped'.

Isolate the racists in East London!

Build working class opposition to the oppression of black people – join ELWAR!

**Call 01-274 3951
Write to ELWAR
c/o Box 22
136 Kingsland
High Street
London E8**



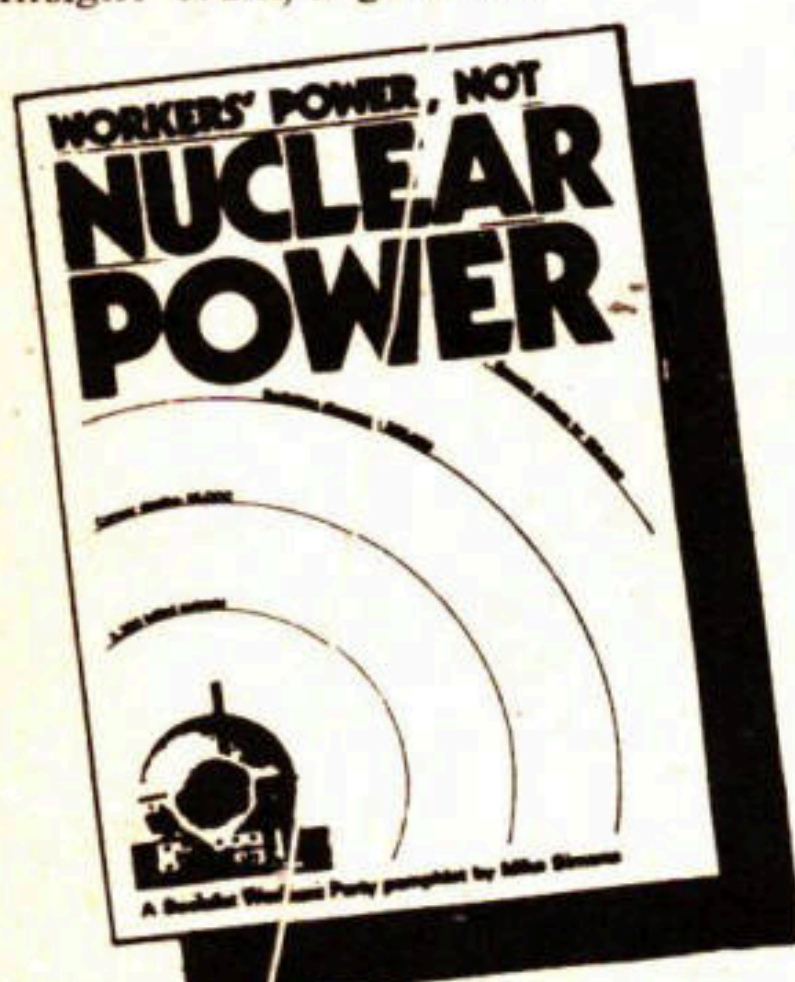
Britain has been using nuclear power since the 'fifties; the
Yet the Labour Party, left-wing trade union leaders a
moment to protest against nuclear power stations and atom
leadership on the issues that matter, the left has taken re
harmless demonstrations against cruise missiles. Here w
Workers power, not nuclear power in the light of Lenin's dictum
And we examine the call for disarmament in contra

SWP vs the atom

Anti-nuclear campaign? No thanks!

SIMONS CERTAINLY gets off to a bad start. His very first sentence states that 'Everything around us is made up of atoms, each a central core of tiny electrons'. This is an inauspicious beginning if only because the central core of an atom is composed of protons and neutrons, not electrons. Next, Simons maintains that harnessing the atom first gained favour in the 'twenties and 'thirties, when 'politicians, scientists and workers alike looked forward to atomic power as a way of finding cheap, safe, abundant energy'. This is just untrue. And, to cap it all, Simons comes up with something truly outrageous in his account of the military origins of nuclear power. Referring to the USA's destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic weapons, Simons argues: 'The justification for dropping these bombs - that it would end the war quickly - is weak'. No doubt a 'strong' justification for one of the worst atrocities in the history of imperialism would have been better.

But all this is beside the point. The point is, quite simply, that Simons takes the stand of the bourgeois liberal, not the revolutionary worker. Throughout the pamphlet we're up against guilty governments and conniving companies. The opening of the first of Britain's gas cooled, graphite moderated Magnox reactors in 1956 'marked the beginning of a major confidence trick on the British public'. Britain's second series of atomic power stations, the Advanced Gas Reactor, was a 'fiasco'. Public debate 'is long overdue, to put it mildly'. And so, in the best traditions of the *Sunday Times* 'Insight' team, it goes on.



Reactors aren't reactionary - 'anti-Nukes' are

Until we get to Simons' conclusion. Here it is:

'We oppose nuclear power because of the dangers involved, because of the permanent threat to the lives of workers in the nuclear industry, because of the danger that at any time a nuclear 'incident'... will kill hundreds of thousands of people, because of the military implications of nuclear power. ... But we also oppose it because it personifies the capitalist

system: a ruthless, centralised operation that seeks power at whatever cost to those who work it.

'For us the fight against a nuclear future is linked with the fight for socialism, for a more democratic system... in which power... is not concentrated in the hands of the few, but in the hands of the many - in which there is workers' power.

'That's why the choice is "Nuclear power or workers' power". The two are incompatible'. (p46)

Let's take the arguments one by one.

A danger to nuclear power workers

All stages of the nuclear fuel cycle are dangerous. But whether nuclear technology is intrinsically more dangerous than coal mining, drilling for offshore oil or other means of energy production is something which only a workers' state will be able to determine. To focus on the hazards of nuclear work to the exclusion of those associated with other industries is wrong.

This is just what Simons does. But that's not his main error. Simons indulges illusions that the state can look after life and limb in the production process. He gives the case of Wally Newton, who was subjected to high levels of radiation when taken on to strip asbestos out of Winfrith nuclear power station. Newton: 'That this should go on in government establishments, with the knowledge of the Health and Safety Executive, is outrageous'. Simons just lets this by. He fails to understand that, under capitalism, all establishments - government ones included - are unsafe because they're run flat out for profit. The struggle for safety at work, in nuclear power as elsewhere, is a struggle against the profit system or it is nothing. Once workers rely on state bodies like the Health and Safety Executive to overcome work hazards for them, they will find it impossible to resist the intervention of armed guards and police in establishing 'safe working practices' in the nuclear power industry.

A danger to everybody

Simons is very worried about the dangers of a reactor exploding. Indeed the cover of his pamphlet has a diagram on it detailing the massive casualties that would follow such an incident. But what Simons misses is that the explosion of a reactor has nothing to do with independent working class politics and everything to do with individual politics. Radioactivity does not discriminate between classes. Because nuclear mishaps affect 'everybody', anxiety about them is first and foremost a matter of personal survival. By spreading it the SWP reinforces classless individualism in the labour movement - the same individualism that Thatcher wants to encourage through attacks on the closed shop, secret ballots and restrictions on the right to picket. It turns

workers away from defence of their interests towards defence of 'civilisation as we know it'. In other words, capitalism.

The SWP follows biological instincts rather than class politics. SWP docker Bob Light made this very clear in his recent review of *Workers power*...

'Let me first declare an interest in this pamphlet.

'For most of my life, I've had an ambition not to die young. That's one reason I am opposed to nuclear power.' (*Socialist Worker*, 5 April 1980)

Every danger that faces the working class stems from capitalist social relations. The bourgeoisie tries to obscure this by perpetuating fears about uncontrollable natural forces. The recent spate of survival films about towering infernos, earthquakes, sharks and nuclear disasters is an attempt to distract us from the social problems we face. Simons is so pre-occupied with picking up his old-age pension that he forgets about fighting capitalism.

A danger to democracy

Simons is most concerned that the adoption of nuclear power will strengthen the centralisation of economic and political power under capitalism. He attacks the Central Electricity Generating Board because it is 'large and capital intensive' and nuclear power because it 'is only usable with a national electricity grid'. He recommends decentralised forms of alternative energy like solar panels and windmills because they can 'meet local needs' and provide electricity 'for one home or perhaps a small community'.

In all this Simons goes directly against Marx and Lenin. Marx showed in *Capital* that the centralisation of production and the creation of large-scale industry was a progressive tendency of capitalism. Insofar as capitalism can raise productivity it creates the foundation for socialism. Again, Lenin, in his *State and revolution*, explained to the petit-bourgeois liberals of his day that centralised political power was one of the features of capitalism that the dictatorship of the proletariat would have to emulate.

The fact that the SWP publishes a pamphlet with views like this in it isn't surprising. A defining feature of the SWP is that it regards the Soviet Union as a capitalist regime. Why? Because economic and political power there is centralised - in the hands of the Soviet bureaucracy. As if economic and political power would not be centralised under a real proletarian dictatorship! Simons has only drawn out the logic of the SWP's 'theory' of state capitalism. His conclusion: small is beautiful.

Wind power, not workers' power

In rushing to protect the individual and democracy from nuclear power, the SWP

subordinates workers' interests to the national interest. The nuclear industry hides the truth about the use of energy in 'our society'. Analysis by the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (a Labour Party ginger group) shows that, among other things, tidal and wave power could provide 'up to half our power requirements'. 'We' could develop better electricity storage systems. In fact, Simons argues, what Britain really needs is an alternative energy programme.

Simons even argues that the Thatcher Government are bad capitalists because of the 'enormous cost' of nuclear power. The argument that nuclear power is bad economics is used to justify the view that capitalism *does* need nuclear power - but for political reasons.

Simons is forced to deny the plain truth that nuclear power is profitable to back up his moralistic critique. His conspiracy theory revolves around a secret but by now widely quoted Tory Government memorandum to the effect that adoption of nuclear power would be a good 'insurance policy' against the threat of a future miners' strike. This is good cloak and dagger stuff but it fails to explain why every imperialist nation is busy developing nuclear power - unless they are all afraid of a miners' strike in Britain.

When Scargill comes can the SWP be far behind?

Arthur Scargill is an ardent opponent of nuclear power. His union, the NUM, is one of Britain's most militant. Traditionally, too, the SWP has always been prepared to abandon political principle in its desire to adapt to trade union militancy. So when militant Scargill comes out in favour of using coal rather than uranium as a source of energy, the SWP isn't far behind.

Scargill's position isn't very exceptional. He sees his members' jobs threatened by the capitalist crisis; but instead of electing to defend them and only them, he defends his industry against others - and therefore against the workers in others. But what is exceptional is that the SWP supports Scargill so uncritically. For Scargill's logic leads to the sort of divisions exhibited at the Isle of Grain dispute in May, where engineering workers broke picket lines because they wanted to save their jobs at the expense of those of the laggards. Yet the SWP is ready to rush down the same road.

What can we say of Brother Simons' pamphlet? It shows all the prejudices of the middle class amateur ecologist, all the hopes and fears of the energy planner, and all the narrow sectionalism of the trade union official. For the workers' movement it is politics like these that are the problem, not nuclear power.

James Wood

the British army has had nuclear weapons for 30 years. Leaders and their radical allies have chosen 1980 as the year to scrap atom bombs. Incapable of fighting the Tories or the Labour Party, they have taken refuge in pamphlets attacking nuclear power and in the Labour Party. Here we look critically at Mike Simons' SWP pamphlet 'Socialism equals electrification plus soviet power'. The contrast to the Marxist approach to arms and war.

Labour Party against cruise missiles

The pacifist fraud

Conference of the Allies, Yalta, February 1945: six months before Hiroshima, all they were saying was give peace a chance



THE WORKING CLASS has every interest in opposing militarism and imperialist military alliances such as NATO. However, opposition to the military must stem not from an abstract dislike of arms, but from the knowledge that the army and its weapons will be used by the state against the working class.

We are not against all wars. Just as the rule of capitalism is based on class violence, so its overthrow will require the concentrated violence of the proletariat. The reason we support wars of a national liberation army directed against imperialist oppression is that the violence of the oppressed is the indispensable means for achieving basic democratic rights.

One of Lenin's merits was that he always approached militarism from a class point of view. He showed that militarism had an objective basis in capitalism and that imperialism necessarily led to war. The ruling classes of the metropolitan countries had no choice but to arm themselves to the teeth if they were to defend their profits against their imperialist rivals. The First and Second World Wars were not accidents that could have been avoided by more peaceful policies. They were the inevitable outcome of the crisis of capitalism.

Today's drive towards war is founded on the same inescapable logic. The West's renewed emphasis on military intervention and its desperate rush to increase arms spending are symptoms of the impasse capitalism has reached. Nuclear weapons and militarism cannot be reformed out of existence as long as the bourgeoisie is in power. The struggle against militarism only makes sense if it is aimed against the system of capitalist production itself.

Pacifist dreams — workers' nightmares

Lenin argued that it was important for revolutionaries to take notice of popular yearnings for peace. The question was how. Lenin rejected the resounding declarations of the pacifists of his time as hypocritical: they meant 'deceiving the people with illusion that the existing governments, the present-day master classes, are capable — without being "taught" a lesson (or rather without being eliminated) by a series of revolutions — of granting a peace in any way satisfactory to democracy and the working

class' ('The Question of Peace', *Collected Works* 21, 1915). He continually stressed that 'without revolutionary action by the proletariat there can be neither a democratic peace nor disarmament'. Those who restricted their disgust with militarism merely to calls for peace and disarmament were only fooling workers into believing that capitalism could exist without violence: '“Disarmament” means simply running away from unpleasant reality, not fighting it' ('The “Disarmament” slogan', *Collected Works* 23, 1916).

It is a sign that their slogans are utopian that pacifists always drop them as soon as hostilities begin in earnest. Why else did 'thirties Labour left-wingers like Stafford Cripps, who campaigned for peace before the Second World War, eventually wind up as recruiting sergeants for imperialism? Wars force everybody to take sides — and when it comes to the crunch pacifists forget their fine principles and rally support for the fatherland.

Take those bombs off their hands!

Calls for peace and disarmament are not only utopian but also reactionary. They distract the working class from its historic task of overthrowing capitalism. Opposition to arms at a time when the ruling class relies on force for its very survival dooms workers to defeat. Force is used against workers on picket lines and on the streets. It is clear that ultimately workers can only defend their interests if they meet force with force. As long as capitalism exists the working class must be prepared to countenance every military tactic.

The call for 'disarmament' makes no sense. No ruling class will ever voluntarily disarm itself and so end its hegemony over society. The bourgeoisie is no exception to this. Instead of pleading with its oppressors to lay down their weapons, the working class must take matters into its own hands and disarm the ruling class. Lenin wrote:

'Our slogan must be: arming of the proletariat to defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie. These are the only tactics possible for a revolutionary class, tactics that follow logically from, and are dictated by, the whole objective development of capitalist militarism. Only after the proletariat has disarmed the

bourgeoisie will it be able, without betraying its world historic mission, to consign all armaments to the scrap-heap. And the proletariat will undoubtedly do this, but only when this condition has been fulfilled, certainly not before.' ('The “Disarmament” slogan')

Today the bourgeois state is marshalling its forces against both the working class and its foreign rivals. The increasing use of armed police, the new laws against picketing and the proposed modifications of the Public Order Act should alert us to prepare politically, organisationally and physically for the onslaught to come. Peace today can only mean peace on the terms of the ruling class.

'Peaceful coexistence'?

In the international labour movement the Stalinists are the most consistent advocates of pacifism. To justify their repeated accommodations to imperialism, the Stalinist bureaucrats of the Soviet Union rejected Lenin's position that wars were the unavoidable outcome of imperialism. In its place they developed the theory of 'Peaceful coexistence' between East and West. They argued that everybody had an interest in avoiding war and that a concerted peace campaign could prevent its outbreak.

'The policy of peaceful coexistence meets the basic interests of all peoples, of all who want no new cruel wars and seek durable peace. This policy strengthens the positions of socialism, enhances the prestige and international influence of the socialist countries and promotes the prestige and influence of the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries. Peace is a loyal ally of socialism, for time is working for socialism against capitalism.' (*Statement and appeal of the world's Communist Parties, Moscow, 1960*)

It is only natural that those who peddled peaceful coexistence also argued for a peaceful road to socialism. The Communist Party of Great Britain thinks that the idea of peace is so compelling that imperialist wars will be avoided, and that the working class will achieve power through gentle persuasion. Just 'give peace a chance'.

It is not surprising that Stalinists have always been in the forefront of peace movements like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Their interests lie in maintaining the status quo internationally and between classes in the capitalist countries. Aided and abetted by the

Labour and radical left, they have provided the inspiration behind the 'No cruise missiles' campaign.

Cruising off to oblivion

Nuclear missiles have been with us a long time. So why the sudden interest in cruise missiles by MPs on the Labour left? The reason is simple. They need issues to distinguish themselves from the Labour right and the Tories. They can't really take up the cuts in wages or in social services because they accept the need to make economies in order to regenerate British industry. They need other, 'safe' issues. The EEC is one; cruise missiles is another.

Instead of making a class stand against capitalism and militarism, they whip up moral hatred for its most obvious excesses. And, as ever, moralism goes with nationalism. Though they still want unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain, their strongest words are reserved for American cruise missiles. They don't want those crazy Yankee fingers pressing the buttons to activate Britain's 'deterrent'.

Radical guidance systems

The Stalinists don't like cruise missiles. The Labour lefts don't either. And of course neither does the radical left.

The IMG tries to have its pacifism both ways. In concluding a *Socialist Challenge* centre-page spread on militarism, it makes one correct observation: 'When the working class of the world has finally overthrown the imperialist warmongers, then human kind will be free of the threat of war and nuclear annihilation'. It caps this with an astounding piece of logic: 'That is why we oppose cruise missiles in this country' (19 June 1980).

The SWP is at least more coherent: 'We need a socialist campaign that not only calls for no cruise missiles, but for no nuclear weapons at all, that demands Britain get out of NATO, we don't want to be part of America's police force in Europe' (*Socialist Worker*, 21 June 1980). Yes, comrades! America's to blame!

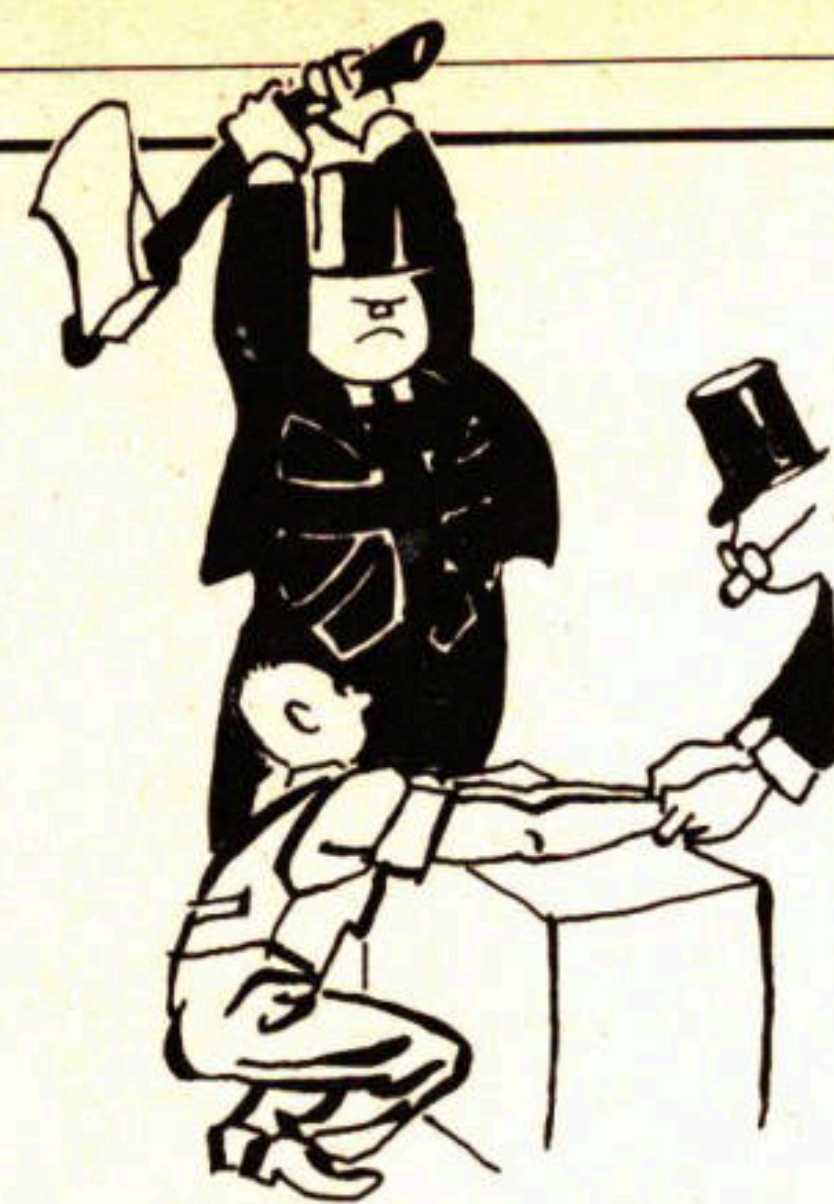
The campaign against cruise missiles is a diversion. It can only retard the development of independent working class politics in Britain. Socialists must resist it in every way — by popularising the need to disarm the ruling class.

Pat Roberts

The 'Permanent Arms Economy'

Disarming the working class

The theory of the 'permanent arms economy' was put forward by the leaders of today's Socialist Workers Party in the 'fifties and 'sixties to explain the expansion and stabilisation of capitalism after the Second World War. Below we examine this distinctive theory of the SWP — and its political consequences.



ARMS SPENDING is a favourite target for radical attack. Labour Party and Communist Party spokesmen continually criticise government defence expenditure, complaining that the money could be better spent on hospitals and schools. They recommend that the imperialist powers give up their weapons and resolve their conflicts peaceably.

Military expenditure has also played a part in reformists' understanding of capitalism. During the years of rearmament before the Second World War, many radicals believed that capitalism could only survive by pumping money into making weapons. Not survive in the imperialist struggle that was to come, but survive the economic crisis of the 'thirties. Rearmament was seen as a measure to boost industry's profits, reflate the economy and cut unemployment.

After the war, arms spending was understood as necessary to maintain the post-war boom. High levels of state spending, especially on defence, appeared to be the reason why there was no slump as after the First World War. This was the golden age of Keynesianism, an economic theory which holds that economic stagnation can be avoided through state spending policies. The term 'welfare-warfare state' was used in radical circles to describe the greater levels of state economic intervention and the Cold War arms race.

A theory is born

The boom was an unexpected and inexplicable development for the British left. The radical left could not challenge the reformists' impressionistic view that rearmament had provided a solution to the slump. It replied with moral critiques of militarism and waste.

The theory of the Permanent Arms Economy (PAE) codified current reformist prejudices about arms expenditure. Its essential thesis is that capitalism can avoid collapse through military spending. This is how its former leading advocate, Michael Kidron, summed up the development of the theory:

'Its origins were in a heavily Keynesian view of the post-Second World War economic order. ... It was brought over with its Keynesianism more or less intact in an article by Cliff in *Socialist Review*, May 1957, and only later underwent a Marxist conversion. Even then it was never elaborated in any detail: a couple of articles in *International Socialism*, one of which is repeated as a chapter in a book, a few further passing observations in other articles, some of which were collected in another book, and that's all. Not much for an analysis that was meant to encompass the world order and explain its innermost drives.' (*International Socialism*, No 100, July 1977, p7)

Not much indeed! But this theory was, and still is, one of the main distinguishing features of the SWP. The SWP likes to present the PAE theory as its original contribution to the Marxist analysis of capitalism. Kidron himself has already disposed of its claim to originality. Let us dispose of its claim to be Marxist.

Permanent capitalism

Kidron's book *Western capitalism since the war* (1968, revised Pelican edition 1970) gives the most systematic exposition of the PAE theory. The key to

capitalist stability is discovered in 'the permanent arms budget' of the major capitalist powers (p49). The theory contains three major elements.

First, Kidron maintains that state expenditure on arms slows down capital accumulation because it is financed by taxation of private capitalists who therefore have less resources to invest in other spheres. The result of this, he contends, is that the organic composition of capital (the proportion invested in plant, machinery and raw materials compared with wages) rises slowly or not at all. Marx showed that as capitalist production proceeds there is a tendency for the capitalist to invest more in means of production than in living labour-power. The result is that the organic composition of capital rises and the rate of profit falls. The PAE theory denies this inherent tendency towards crisis in capitalist society — there is thus every reason to believe that the 'arms economy' will be 'permanent'. Kidron concluded that 'arms production is the key, and seemingly permanent, offset to the "tendency of the rate of profit to fall"' (p56).

Second, Kidron argues that although arms expenditure sustains industries such as aerospace, engineering and shipbuilding, rising investment in these spheres has no adverse effect on profitability overall because arms are 'luxury' commodities. Guns, tanks and bombs cannot be consumed by workers, nor can they be used in industry. So, we are told, accumulation and a rising organic composition of capital in the 'arms sector' cannot bring about a decline in the average rate of profit (pp55-6).

Third, the PAE theory notes that accumulation in the arms sector does not add to the productive capacity of the economy because its products are wasted. Arms — 'a fast-wasting end-product' — are either blown up or rendered obsolete by the 'arms race' among rival world powers. However, arms spending does provide jobs and wages to buy the goods produced in other sectors of the economy. Thus the arms economy can maintain full employment and a rising demand for commodities.

Getting your missiles in a twist

Thus in 1970 — on the eve of the most severe capitalist recession for 40 years — the theoretical architects of the SWP could see no fundamental reason why the capitalist boom should not last for ever. Motivated by a petit-bourgeois distaste for the excesses of bourgeois society — its inequality and poverty, its chaotic organisation and squandering of resources, its philistinism and proclivity for military barbarism — the radical left looked around for anything that might 'destabilise' the seemingly unshakeable system. Abandoning Marxism, radical theoreticians took refuge in the possibilities created by uneven growth rates in the world economy, inflation and superficial impressions of a working class made 'confident' by the boom.

The PAE theory is a travesty of scientific analysis, full of inconsistencies and idiotic propositions. Let us take the points in turn.

First, how could there be a post-war boom in the major capitalist economies if arms expenditure slows the growth of accumulation, as Kidron maintains? This is a mystery. In a recent attempt to rescue the PAE theory from the self-criticism of its leading exponent, Chris Harman tried to cover up this problem by arguing that growth was slower in the 'fifties than in the periods of expansion before the war, but it was more steady' (*International Socialism*, No 100). But a steadily rising organic composition of capital would still depress capitalist profit rates, contrary to Kidron's conclusion.

On the second point more mysteries abound. Marx explained that an average rate of profit is formed by capital flowing from less to more profitable branches of production. Even if supported by the state, the private defence industries are still branches of capitalist production. Commodities are produced which embody value and surplus-value. What barrier is there between these and other industries that can prevent profit rates from averaging out? No answer.

Marx, Kidron and Keynes

The Marxist understanding of luxury production is the opposite of Kidron's: accumulation in this sector has a particularly adverse effect on the rate of profit. If capitalists raise productivity in industries which produce commodities consumed by the working class, such as food and clothing, the value of these articles can be lowered and the value of labour-power reduced. This allows exploitation to be increased. The same result occurs if productivity is raised in industries producing means of production. Cheaper machinery and raw materials lower the costs of producing all commodities. These ways of cutting the value of labour-power can't work for capitalists who produce *luxuries* — goods purchased neither by industry nor with workers' wages. Raising productivity here does not help the capitalists to increase the rate of exploitation. So, as investment rises in the luxury sector, capitalists are less able to fight falling profitability. The rate of profit falls faster.

The last resort of the SWP theoreticians is the old reformist theory of underconsumptionism. The problem they identify in capitalist society is that workers do not have enough money to buy what capitalism produces; the result is an overproduction of commodities that nobody can afford on the one hand, and poverty on the other. The traditional reformist solution is to increase government spending, put money into people's pockets and stimulate demand — industry will thrive and unemployment disappear. For Kidron arms spending is the key source of the cash input that resolves the 'underconsumptionist' crisis. But this money is a deduction from the surplus-value of private capitalists. Taxation for the military budget cuts into profits; it exacerbates the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. The central aim of capitalist production is to make profit — not merely sell commodities. This objective limits the expansion of capitalist production — and it limits the capacity of the

state to overcome the tendency of capitalist society towards crisis.

Booms and bangs

The post-war boom had nothing to do with arms expenditure. It rested on two factors which allowed the bourgeoisie to raise the rate of profit and recommence accumulation after a prolonged slump.

First, the enormous destruction of capital which resulted from the war enabled production to be reorganised and made more efficient. Second, the international working class suffered major defeats. In some countries, fascism destroyed the trade unions and working class organisations. In others, the labour bureaucracy ensured that workers made sacrifices in the 'national interest'. The bourgeoisie was able to increase its exploitation of the working class. Mass destruction and oppression allowed capitalism to emerge from the depression and enjoy a boom.

The world market was redivided under the domination of the USA. To maintain its hold, the United States had to spend money on armaments. Wishing to protect their profits Britain and other imperialist countries followed suit. But arms spending, like other forms of state expenditure, only stimulated the economy because the conditions for profitable accumulation already existed.

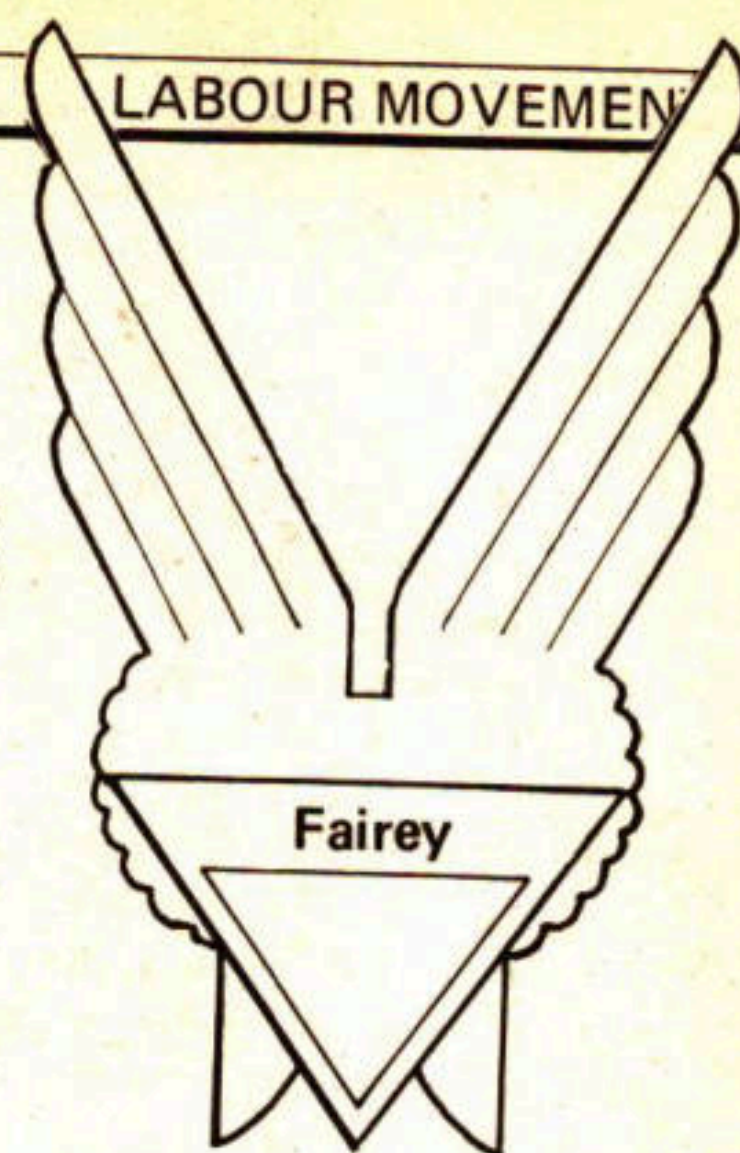
This elementary Marxist appreciation of the post-war boom is beyond the SWP. According to another of its theoreticians, Duncan Hallas, rearmament itself can solve capitalism's problems. He argues that *before* the war arms spending had got rid of the crisis:

'What did end the slump, in Europe as well as in the USA, was armament production. There can be absolutely no doubt about this.' (*Socialist Worker*, 12 May 1979)

Hallas ignores the fact that the slump itself gave capitalism some room for growth in the 'thirties, by cutting workers' living standards and wiping out the less efficient firms. He also confuses rearmament with economic recovery. The rearmament 'boom' of the late 'thirties was founded on massive state indebtedness, especially in Britain. It raised output and employment levels but failed to provide any firm basis for capital accumulation.

For Hallas the war appears as a tragic accident, caused not by economic necessity but by political belligerence. There was no need for the imperialist powers to redivide the world, defeat the working class and extend economic war into military conflict because the crisis had already been solved! There 'can be absolutely no doubt' that this is yet another PAE absurdity.

The implications of the PAE do not stop at 1939. Because it contains no assessment of the defeats inflicted on the labour movement before, during and after the war it ignores such vital facts as the increase in the rate of exploitation of the working class. More importantly, it gives no estimation of the liquidation of Marxism in the labour movement. This, the central political problem of our epoch, is not even recognised as a problem by the SWP. This is why the SWP can



The battle in engineering

Turning the tide at Fairey's

Not a day goes by without employers in the British engineering industry announcing thousands of redundancies. Wage cuts are coming thick and fast too. Below, we outline how workers at Fairey Engineering, a Stockport-based bridgework/nuclear equipment/robotics factory which is part of the Pearson Longman group, have responded to their bosses' threats of sackings and reductions in living standards.

glorify trade union militancy and ignore the hold of reformism on workers' struggles. Specious theories like the PAE are testimony to the degeneration of Marxism. So is the unpreparedness of our movement for the tasks which face it today.

PAE in the sky

How does the PAE theory explain today's crisis? Noting a fall in defence spending in the USA and USSR between 1968 and 1977, a recent issue of *Socialist Review* proclaims: 'It is, of course, this steady decline in the proportion of GDP devoted to defence spending in both the USA and USSR which explains the progressive undermining of the permanent arms economy's stabilising role during the 1970s' (February/March 1980).

Did the drop in arms spending in the imperialist world cause the crisis? Not a chance, since it was not responsible for the boom in the first place. And any decline in military outlays by the state was more than offset by other forms of state expenditure. Following the PAE theory, state spending on health, education, social security etc should play the same role as arms spending. This too would take profits from private capital, slow down investment and create extra 'demand'. If the SWP followed its theory consistently it could not find any explanation for today's recession.

But the crisis occurred anyway. The international decline in the rate of profit finally took its toll. Unemployment rose, capitalist production and investment stagnated. As far as the bourgeoisie was concerned, state spending only made things worse.

But Chris Harman sees a way out. Skilfully blending the Marxist theory of crisis with the PAE theory, he arrives at the following result: 'An increased level in military spending would permit investable funds to find an outlet in non-productive investments and would end the recession' (*International Socialism*, No 100, our emphasis). As if the crisis could be ended for capitalism by wasting what little profit it has! History has dealt unkindly with the PAE theory. In the last two years military spending in the NATO bloc has increased dramatically. But the crisis has gone from bad to worse instead of disappearing as Harman predicted.

At a time when imperialism is rearming in preparation for war, the SWP can only confuse the working class with this absurd theory. Superficially, it might appear that the PAE theory highlights the relationship between capitalist crisis and arms spending. In reality, all it does is obscure the link.

The PAE theory is a vulgar, reformist analysis of capitalism. It is unable to show the tendency towards capitalist breakdown, and by implication offers a counter-crisis strategy in state spending policies, if not rearmament. Today we have to fight capitalist attempts to make workers pay for the crisis — and for its war plans — by cutting social services. The SWP creates an obstacle to this task by giving credence to reformist alternatives.

Tony Allen

LAST CHRISTMAS the management at Fairey's pushed through scores of voluntary redundancies among the plant's 1400-strong workforce (see *the next step*, No 2, January 1980). To add insult to injury, it replied to the unions' subsequent demand for 'a substantial increase' in wages with an offer of six per cent. Five months later, when the official bargaining procedure on pay was almost exhausted, it proclaimed that more than 200 jobs would have to go. The battle to defend workers' livelihoods was on — in earnest.

News of the impending redundancies was first leaked to Fairey workers in a bulletin issued by factory supporters of *the next step*. Their colleagues were angry at the threat of sackings. And the leaders of the unions at Fairey's were angry too, but only because they 'hadn't been consulted'.

The bulletin made two main points, both of which were taken up and discussed around the factory. It didn't just reject the redundancies and the management's derisory six per cent pay offer: it gave the political arguments necessary to make that rejection unequivocal. First, it contended that the employers had to be made aware that Fairey workers would not give up their jobs and living standards to restore capitalist profits: 'If their system is in a crisis it is not of our making and we won't pay for its recovery'. Second, it called on manual workers at Fairey's to defend the jobs of white collar workers there, and it called on white collar workers to support the manual workers' wages struggle. These two points — about the profitability of the company and about the divisions in its workforce — proved critical.

Company viability, union disunity

Back at Christmas the convenor of the AUEW/TGWU/EETPU Joint Shop Stewards Committee (JSSC) at Fairey's and most of the stewards on it had allowed redundancies to go through. Why? Because of their commitment to seeing Fairey's through bad times, to seeing the firm a viable concern once more. That commitment was all too evident when the new round of redundancies was revealed in May. Local full-time officials agreed to conduct a study to see whether slimming down the workforce was necessary — and the senior stewards backed them up. As far as they were concerned, the company's interests came before the workers'.

Loyalty to Fairey's wasn't the only tactic the management could use to push through the sackings. By 9 June and the collapse of the official wage bargaining procedure, it was ready to employ another one: playing one section of workers off against another.

The management's original pay offer had been put in percentage terms. Six per cent meant skilled workers would have got about £6 more and unskilled about £4. The widening of differentials had caused a lot of squabbles on the JSSC, all of them to management's advantage. To sow further dissension, the management had given white collar members of TASS a 16 per cent rise. The reason: it hoped staff members in APEX would turn against TASS. And it hoped the JSSC unions

would do the same. (The fact that both TASS and APEX, as well as the boiler-makers at the factory, were not represented on the JSSC favoured the bosses' tactics.)

Two strikes, a setback — and a gain too

All this was history by 9 June. But when, following the breakdown in negotiations, the JSSC called a factory meeting for the next day, it wasn't surprising that the management's new offer again came in percentage terms — nine per cent.

The secretary of the TGWU branch recommended the offer. But the workers unanimously rejected it, called a one-day strike, and determined not to re-open

What's the use of talking?

Many people who've seen *the next step* or heard our arguments acknowledge that they broadly agree with our point of view, but say they can't see the point of reading more about it and discussing it further. They're fed up with newsprint and talk — they want to see some action to save jobs and wages.

So why are trade union supporters of *the next step* in the north west setting up discussions? 'Because', says group convenor Keith Tompson, 'we think it's important for shop stewards and militants from different industries to get together and work out the political arguments that can defend workers from the employers' attacks'. For us, discussion like this is vital if broad-based support for successful action is to be won.

The fortnightly meetings will focus on the questions militants on the shopfloor have to answer time and again. What's the basic cause of the crisis? Is it possible to fight redundancies in a declining industry? How do you convince people that import controls are no solution? How do we take on the employers and their pals in the trade union bureaucracy?

The second half of each meeting will concentrate on the situation in a particular workplace where our supporters are active in the union. Set in a clear political context, this exchange of experiences will help broaden understanding of the class struggle and provide practical guidelines for action to defend working class living standards.

If you live in the north west, want to join in the battle against the politics of the TUC and the labour leaders and want to turn back the tide of job losses, contact:

Box 33,
164-66 Corn Exchange Building,
Hanging Ditch, Manchester M4 3BD

negotiations until the management put a major increase on the table.

On 17 June the management came back with 11 per cent. Not content with trying to widen differentials by £3, it tried to get the indirect and inspection workers to endorse a new earnings ceiling on pieceworkers. The JSSC recommended rejection of this, and got it; and there was near unanimous approval for a two-day strike.

The warnings against disunity in the first and second factory bulletins put out by *the next step* had proved timely. The fight was on to build a joint committee representative of all the unions at Fairey's — and to go for across-the-board pay rises in line with inflation. But the management's threat to limit the bonuses paid to pieceworkers proved to be a decoy. It merely had to drop it for the convenor of the JSSC to come out in favour of 'reluctant' acceptance of 11 per cent. His line was narrowly carried on the JSSC against opposition from supporters of *the next step* and narrowly carried again at a mass meeting on 24 June.

All was not lost, however. As the third factory bulletin described the outcome of the mass meeting:

'Twelve shop stewards and 173 shop floor workers resisted management's attempt to cut wages. This is a gain to be built on... The next step for Fairey's workers is to ensure that the coming battle against redundancies is won.'

The workers who consistently rejected wage cuts and shabby compromises put their class interests before the well-being of Fairey engineering. As a shop steward supporter of *the next step* explained: 'If they can get away with pushing down wages and chopping jobs it will worsen the condition of all workers. We've got to save jobs and keep up wages to strengthen ourselves and weaken their grip. We couldn't care less about their profit margins — that's their problem. Our living standards come first'.

Preparing a fightback

What about the battle over jobs? The local TGWU leadership began in high style. It launched a campaign against one of the militant shop stewards who had led opposition to management — and to their conciliatory attitude toward management attempts to impose a wage cut. Thankfully the campaign failed: the steward went straight to his own section, explained the issues involved, and won a unanimous vote of confidence.

The politics of *the next step* are a challenge to the class collaboration of the bureaucrats and one which they will fight with every means at their disposal. *the next step* shows how to unite workers against those who place the bosses' profits before workers' livelihoods — union leaders included. The recent battles at Fairey's show the way we can begin to separate out a militant rank and file opposition to the employers and the bureaucrats. It was the politics of *the next step* that helped win support for the witch-hunted steward; the politics of *the next step* show the way forward in the coming struggle against redundancies.

Keith Tompson

THE WAY the SWP tells it, the rise of bureaucrats like John Boyd and Terry Duffy happened like this. In the 'sixties there was a powerful shop stewards' movement in engineering. The Broad Left, an alliance of Communist Party and left-wing Labour militants, organised British factories well — and built links between the two. But the Broad Left had one fatal flaw: it spent all its time trying to get its candidates elected to high office in the AUEW.

When the Broad Left's favourite son Hugh Scanlon was elected president in the late 'sixties, the error in the left's approach soon became obvious. Scanlon turned against the movement that had put him in power. By the mid 'seventies he was, along with TGWU leader Jack Jones, one of the main defenders of Wilson and Callaghan's Social Contract. He forced his members to accept wage cuts and betrayed a whole succession of strikes.

The SWP makes the point that Scanlon wasn't the only villain of the piece. As junior Broad Left convenors and stewards rose up through the union hierarchy, they increasingly collaborated with the employers. They moved further and further away from the shop floor, and closer and closer to 'moderate' politics. As a result rank and file workers became demoralised and lost confidence in strong trade unionism; while the remaining factory militants found their support dwindling.

The rest of the SWP's account is familiar enough. Over the last year tens of thousands of engineering workers have joined the dole queues. The bosses have launched a vigorous assault on shop floor organisation and have succeeded in dismissing prominent Broad Left convenor Derek Robinson in the process. In addition, Duffy and Boyd have tightened their grip on the AUEW leadership and have effectively vanquished the Broad Left.

The SWP's solution to all this is simple: back to basics. Rebuild the shop stewards' movement of the 'sixties under a new name — a 'fighting rank and file movement'. It's a conclusion that's logical enough, given the direction of the SWP's analysis. But is that analysis right?

Selling the Contract...

The SWP wants to get back to the 'sixties. Then, because the British engineering industry was relatively prosperous and unemployment low, union representatives enjoyed a good bargaining position in their negotiations with management. Better wages and better conditions could be won through good workplace organisation and militancy.

The SWP is correct to note that this struggle was led by the Broad Left. But the Broad Left was only one component in the Communist Party's scheme of things. Anxious to complete its escape from the general isolation of the Cold War years, the CP used the Broad Left as a means of furthering its project of 'Left unity'.

'Left unity' meant campaigning with left-wing Labour Party members for the election of a leftward-leaning Labour government. In the engineering industry the policy meant convincing militant shop stewards that their battles for higher pay were best assisted by the installation of a 'progressive' Labour government. Progressive, as the Broad Left's rank and file paper *Engineering Voice* made clear, in the sense that putting a radical Labour administration in power was the best way to prevent the British economy and British engineering going into decline.

The Broad Left — and it is just this that the SWP ignores — was a vital aspect of the CP's efforts to popularise reformist politics among the more militant sections of the working class. Its politics were persuasive. The argument went like this: 'you want easier work for more money. But that will only be possible if our industry is revitalised. Only a Labour government committed to left advance

SWP asks: what's wrong in engineering?

The case for revolution in the AUEW

At the end of June 200 members of the AUEW took part in a conference in London called by The Charter, the Socialist Workers Party's 'rank and file' paper for engineers. Much of what they heard was based on a new Charter/SWP pamphlet, *What's gone wrong in engineering?* The case for change in the AUEW. Below, we look at the SWP's diagnosis of the shift to the right in the AUEW — and at its strategy for fighting the redundancies, the attacks on union rights and the wage cuts of recent months.

can assure this. So fight for one.' All the organisational merits of the Broad Left that the SWP enthuses about can't hide the fact that Broad Left politics consolidated workers' commitment to the viability of British engineering.

...and signing it

The consequences of Broad Left politics only began to emerge as Britain's post-war boom came to an end. So long as profitability in engineering was high enough to allow regular wage rises to be granted, the Broad Left's platform was not put to the test. But as the British economy began the slow slide into crisis, the reactionary nature of that platform and the vulnerability of the shop stewards' movement became ever more obvious.

The betrayals of the 'seventies are not to be explained, as the SWP suggests, by the Broad Left's fondness for the union ballot box. Nor are they the result of the fact that Scanlon and followers got 'out of touch' with shop floor sentiment. Scanlon and his followers betrayed AUEW workers because, in a recession, their longstanding loyalty to British capitalism ensured they could do nothing else.

Labour wanted to regenerate British engineering. That demanded pay restraint and closures — measures that Scanlon could not but accept. In fact matters went further. Stalinist stewards welcomed the Labour Government's National Enterprise Board and its efforts to restructure companies like British Leyland at the expense of the working class. Derek Robinson led fellow militants into the elaborate charade of 'participation' with Leyland management in decisions about the company's future. He fixed it so workers wound up participating in sackings, speed-up and the dismembering

of shop floor organisation.

Rank and file AUEW members have turned away from the organisational structures of the Broad Left because of the catastrophic effect of Broad Left politics. They weren't all that concerned about Scanlon's peerage, but they were concerned about the Broad Left's inability to defend their living standards from the privations of the Social Contract. When the bosses cried that wage rises caused inflation, when they contended that workers should take responsibility for the mess their industry was in, the Broad Left could only agree. The tactics of the 'sixties proved ineffective when more than a million workers were unemployed and when inflation was running at levels of 20 per cent.

They're just as ineffective today. This is what the SWP ignores.

Is Wright alright?

Over the last five years the Broad Left in the AUEW has collapsed and the SWP's tiny 'rank and file' grouping has stagnated. The defensive, self-effacing tone of the Charter pamphlet reflects the beleaguered outlook of the radical remnants in the AUEW. 'No, trade unionists are not ruining the country', it reassures readers, reminding us that 'even some Tories are trade union members'. However the most striking feature of the SWP pamphlet is not that it glorifies the record of the Broad Left, nor that it fails to mention the SWP, but that it promotes Broad Left politics on all the important issues facing engineering workers.

Like the Broad Left, *What's gone wrong...* uses economic arguments against a wage freeze. According to *What's gone wrong...*, wage increases do not create unemployment; indeed 'wage cuts lead to

more unemployment' (p22). This is not the place to take up the SWP's dubious Keynesian economics. But one thing is clear: the struggle to increase wages is necessary to defend our class interests, not because it makes economic sense. What if wage rises do deepen the capitalist crisis? Like the Broad Left, *What's gone wrong...* cannot bring itself to state plainly that the interests of the working class are fundamentally antagonistic to the capitalist system and that we'll defend our class regardless of the consequences for the economy.

On wages, *What's gone wrong...* promotes Broad Left politics. On import controls it evades them. While Bob Wright, Broad Left candidate for the presidency of the AUEW, stomps the country telling engineering workers to follow Michael Edwards and keep Japanese goods out of Britain, *What's gone wrong...* says nothing. *There's not a word about import controls in the whole pamphlet.* Backing Wright's bid for high office at the Charter conference, Charter supporter Mick Brightman gave a clue why: 'the seriousness of the situation' in the AUEW was such, he said, that 'we can't afford the luxury of a long debate and our own Charter candidate' (*Socialist Worker*, 5 July 1980). For the SWP, independent working class politics and the fight against national chauvinism in the labour movement are a luxury.

So is a Charter candidate. The SWP has no substantial differences with Bob Wright; it would indeed be a luxury to run somebody against him. Bob Wright is against the Tories, the SWP's against the Tories, therefore the SWP votes for Bob Wright. There the whole thing begins and ends. The SWP needn't worry about getting back to the Broad Left traditions of the 'sixties — it's taken them on in their entirety. The old campaign for a new Labour government is the unifying spirit behind its 'fighting rank and file movement' of the 'eighties. The SWP has merely stepped into the space left vacant by the vanishing Broad Left.

Stop the rot!

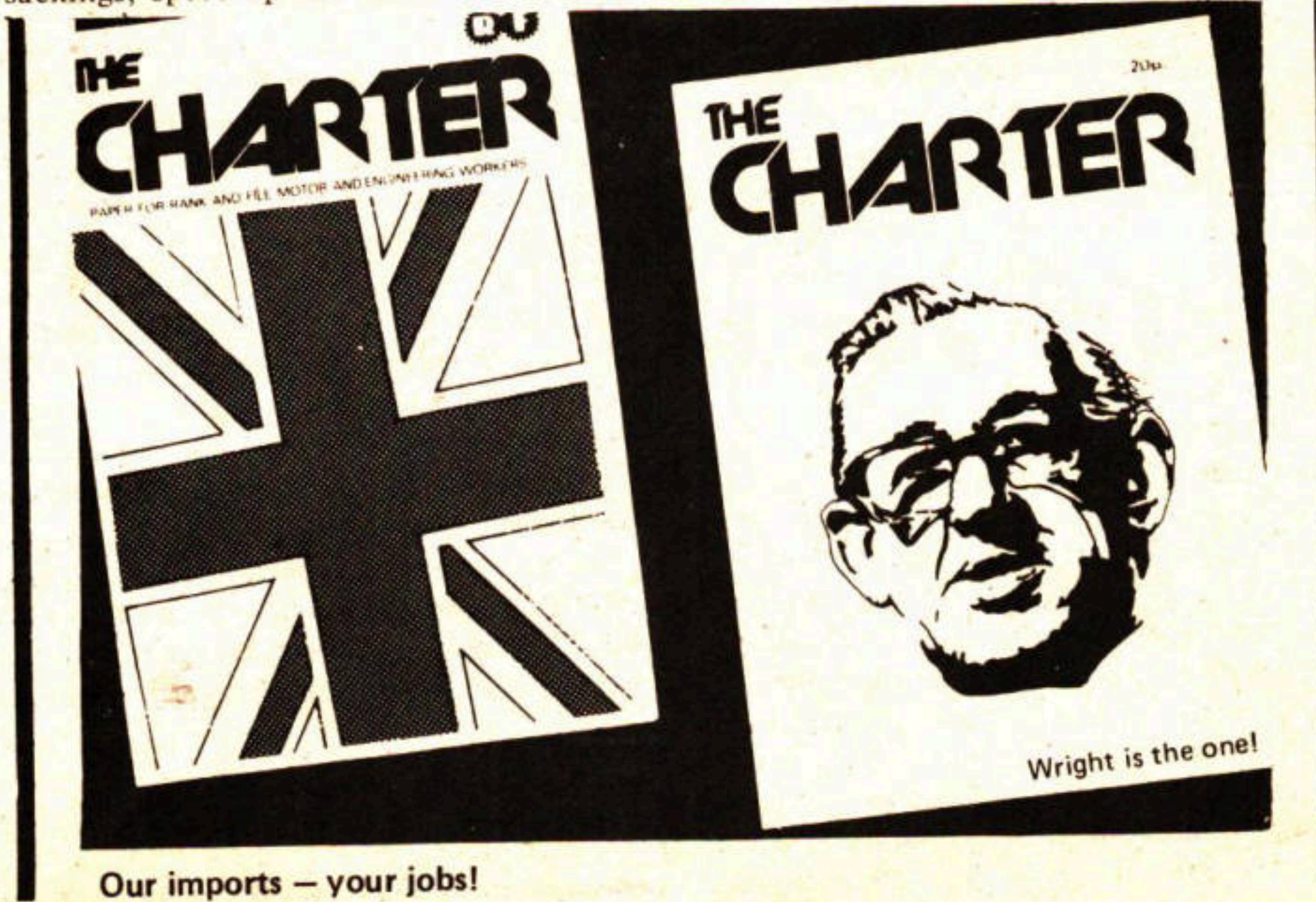
What's gone wrong in engineering? winds up with some timid proposals for getting workers more involved in union activity, building up their confidence and making the AUEW more democratic. But workers need more than patronising advice like this. They need a genuine political alternative, not only to the AUEW leadership of Duffy and Boyd but also to the Broad Left — the force responsible for the rise of Duffy and Boyd.

The only way to stop the rot in engineering is to destroy the political influence of the Broad Left. But all the SWP can offer is a re-run of that organisation. This is what the pamphlet has to say to AUEW militants about beating the likes of Duffy:

'What is missing is an organisation, at rank and file level, which is linking all those groups of fed-up, sold-out workers together. If such an organisation were built, as happened to put Scanlon in, they would be in real trouble.' (p25)

The RCT believes that fed-up, sold-out workers want more than another sell-out. That's why we will be telling engineers to reject Bob Wright and his platform of economic nationalism when the election for president comes up. Every militant knows what to expect from Duffy and Boyd. But beware of Wright and his smooth campaign to link the defence of engineers' interests to the survival of British industry! Beware his attempts to blur over opposing class interests and protect 'us' from 'unfair foreign competition!' In the past the Broad Left has created apathy and cynicism among engineering workers and has made militants politically impotent. It's time to learn from this and build an opposition in the AUEW committed to class politics.

Judith Harrison



The left on the loose

Ever since Margaret Thatcher walked into Number 10 last year the Labour left has been trying to give the party a new image. It has striven to portray the Labour Party of the 'eighties as something different from the party in government between 1974 and 1979.

If the press is to be believed, rank and file members are embracing unbridled socialism as never before. The 500 resolutions to the October conference apparently reveal 'overwhelming support' for unilateral disarmament, withdrawal from the EEC and renationalisation without compensation ('Labour faces left-wing constituency challenge', *The Times*, 21 July 1980). Labour's NEC remains committed to the three principles of party 'democracy' it has been campaigning about for the past year and more. The left wants to:

- have Labour's leader chosen, not by the parliamentary party (as at present), but by a broader 'electoral college'
- have the manifesto controlled, not by the Shadow Cabinet, but by the NEC
- subject all Labour MPs to mandatory reselection.

The striking thing about the left's great causes is that they have little connection with the main problems facing workers: unemployment and falling living standards. All the left can offer is pacifism (the anti-cruise campaign), chauvinism (the anti-EEC campaign) and old favourites like more nationalisation and the abolition of the House of Lords. On the issues that matter the left leaves it to the right: in Labour's offensive against the Tories on jobs, James Callaghan takes the lead. And as for the structure and policy of the Labour Party — the last word lies with the trade union bureaucrats.

Union power

The trade union leaders call the shots on the vital issues in the Labour Party. In recent months they have forced the left to knuckle under to their requirements for the future of the party. Under mounting pressure, leading NEC left-winger Eric Heffer has been forced to come to terms with the moderate party leaders Callaghan and Foot. Heffer has accepted the common call of the right-wing parliamentarians and trade union leaders to submerge their differences in united opposition to the Tories. Fearing even greater isolation, Tony Benn has been dragged along behind.

The trade union leaders have intervened decisively in Labour Party affairs because they are desperate for a new Labour government. Mass unemployment undermines the unions' bargaining position: already they are being forced to accept wage cuts, punitive productivity deals and falling membership. Engineers' leader Terry Duffy put the question that the recession raises in the worried mind of every trade union official: 'When the Labour Party are not in power, how can they help us?' (*The Times*, 24 June 1980). Duffy wants to get back to the good old days after 1974 when the senior trade union leaders were an established part of the scene in Whitehall.

The trade union bureaucrats have always been the king-makers in the Labour Party. Although no clearly acceptable alternative to Callaghan has yet emerged, they have made their position clear against his radical challenger Tony Benn. Even left-wing union leaders like Moss Evans (TGWU), Clive Jenkins (ASTMS) and Stalinist Ken Gill (AUEW-TASS) have joined the right to back Callaghan. The top bureaucrats want Labour back in power — they cannot risk facing the electorate with the idiosyncratic radicalism of Benn.

The ascendancy of the trade union right wing in the Labour Party, its endorsement of Callaghan and incomes policy

The Labour left

Born to lose

Reading the popular press you would think the Labour Party was in the grip of its left-wing. But in the internal disputes that have rocked the party since its May special conference the right has been on the offensive. Late in June, AUEW leader Terry Duffy threatened to cut off his union's funds to the party unless the left quietened down. Early in July, the right effectively scuttled Labour's Commission of Inquiry by making sure that all the decisions are taken at the forthcoming annual conference where the leadership has all the big trade union bloc votes behind it. Then the right-wing Shadow Cabinet registered its disapproval of the left-wing National Executive Committee's draft manifesto by cancelling the press conference at which it was to be launched. Once again the right has the left on the run: we show why the dreams of the left always end up in the pain of defeat at the hands of the party leadership.

reflects the strong position of the union leaders over their own rank and file. There have been some upsets — the leadership in the NUR and the UPW both had deals they approved on pay and productivity repudiated by delegate conferences. The UCATT conference rejected its leadership's right-wing policy on the Labour Party inquiry. But in general the union bureaucrats have been under little pressure from below; they have enjoyed unusual liberty to pursue their own reactionary objectives.

Always being so blue

It is the destiny of the Labour left to be humiliated by the right. This has been its lot ever since the party was founded: it must always be so because however radical the left is, however hostile to the leadership, it has no basic differences with the right. The NEC's draft manifesto wants import controls, a bigger role for the National Enterprise Board and reflation through higher state expenditure; the Shadow Cabinet/TUC paper *Trade and industry: a policy for expansion* wants exactly the same.

The left has been pushing the same strategy ever since its heyday in the early 'seventies. In 1973 it won the party to a radical programme featuring the National Enterprise Board, planning agreements and industrial democracy. A similar programme was again endorsed by the Labour Party in 1976. During this period the left's enthusiastic advocacy of Labour's 'alternative economic strategy' helped the party to win two General Elections and sustain working class support for the Social Contract.

For the leadership the left programme was a great success. It took over the core of the strategy: the drive to regenerate British industry through state promoted rationalisation. Wilson and Callaghan threw out elements of the programme that were unrealistic (industrial democracy) or not expedient (import controls) for British capitalism. However these radical aspects of the programme helped the Government to win workers' acquiescence to wage controls and cuts. The result was the sharpest drop in living standards in a generation.

The left was angered and confused at its policies being used in this way. But its feeble protests were unjustified. The left's objective was to make British industry competitive — and the Labour leadership did its best to achieve this. The only way to make motors, engineering, shipbuilding and steel profitable was through mass redundancies, attacks on trade unions and wage controls. The working class paid the

price for the left's illusions.

The left today is more sober. It no longer offers the 'fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families' it promised in 1973. Instead the NEC's draft manifesto concedes it will take a Labour government half a decade to implement the more egalitarian parts of its plans — that 'our first years in office, indeed, are likely to be dominated by our efforts to rebuild British industry'.

The left's dream is that it is possible 'to rebuild British industry' without attacking the working class. The right in the Labour Party does not suffer from these delusions. It knows the ledgers of UK Ltd inside out; it is ready to take whatever action is necessary to balance them. The leadership is backed up by all the traditions of Labourism, all the experience of seven terms of office, all the commonsense arguments of a host of journalists and academics. The left has nothing but hopes and dreams.

Born to fuse

The Labour left sustains the myth that capitalism can be reformed. The radical left sustains the myth that the Labour Party can be reformed. Drawing the boundaries between the radical left and the Labour Party is getting harder as every month passes.

Militant, the Chartists and Workers' Action are submerged in the Labour Party. They're still looking for a break. The IMG is half in and half out, although its recent observation that 'planning agreements and other 'Bennite policies' would 'bring many benefits to ordinary people' suggests that its disappearance is imminent. ('Leninism in the 'eighties?', *Socialist Challenge*, 12 June 1980). But the SWP, estranged from the Labour Party since the 'sixties, appears a case apart. Let's see how much it is.

The SWP has two reasons not to join the Labour Party. The first is that Labour concentrates on *parliamentary*, not extra-parliamentary action. The second is that Labour's *record* has shown it to be organically incapable of achieving socialism. The first is a tactical disagreement masquerading as one of principle, the second is an empirical observation masquerading as historical materialism.

Reviving the Labour Party

For SWP leader Tony Cliff the problem with Benn and his friends is that 'they are parliamentarians through and through' (*Socialist Worker*, 14 June 1980). Close collaborator with the SWP Peter Hain

agrees that the Labour Party is 'far too committed to parliamentarianism' in a new pamphlet 'on reviving the Labour Party' entitled *Refreshing the parts that others cannot reach*. Hain's solution is similar to Cliff's: he wants to 'give a priority to extra-parliamentary action', and to concentrate on 'workplace action' and campaigns such as the women's movement, the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Nuclear Campaign.

But as Benn informed his radical audience at the recent Debate of the Decade, he 'fully supports' the 'extra-parliamentary struggle' (quoted in *Socialist Challenge*, 12 June 1980). His record confirms this. As a minister in successive Labour governments Benn has taken his radical alternative policies to rank and file workers in shipbuilding on the Clyde, to shop stewards' committees with alternative plans such as those at Lucas and to workers participating in his co-operative experiments at KME, Meriden and elsewhere. Benn's radicalism helped to smooth the way to closures and redundancies. His strength — and his danger to the working class — is that he has always brought the politics of Labourism out of parliament, down to the factory floor.

Since last year's party conference Benn has been trying to get the radical left to campaign on his behalf. The recent gains of the right have pushed him further in this direction. Cliff thinks that the problem with Benn is that he won't mobilise the rank and file against the trade union bureaucrats and the party leadership. But at the Wembley conference his supporters clubbed together to launch ... the Rank and File Mobilising Committee. The objective of this radical coalition is to defend 'Labour democracy' against the right and advance the cause of Benn through a vigorous campaign to 'refresh' the parts of the labour movement Benn himself could not reach.

The SWP has no answer to Hain and Benn. Party leader Duncan Hallas could only applaud Hain's call for an activist Labour Party as 'SPLENDID' and pledge that the SWP 'will certainly co-operate enthusiastically' in his initiatives to revive the Labour Party (*Socialist Worker*, 28 June 1980). But Hallas is sceptical. Reviewing the recent record of the Labour Party, he wonders 'can this leopard change its spots?' In the end his polemic with Hain boils down to a difference of opinion on this question: 'Hain thinks so. We think not.' The SWP has no fundamental political dispute with the Labour Party: if Hain's campaign succeeds there is no reason why Hallas should not join him in the Labour Party.

The SWP is not yet ready to make this move. In an editorial reply to Benn's latest appeal to the SWP to join up, *Socialist Worker* declared, almost apologetically: 'we still believe that the fight for socialism can be conducted most effectively on the picket line' (our emphasis, 19 July 1980). The difference is one of time and place not politics.

We do not reject the Labour Party because of its parliamentarianism. An activist Labour Party along the lines Hain outlines would be an even greater danger to the working class than the present moribund bureaucracy. Participation in Parliament is a tactic which revolutionaries have always been prepared to adopt according to circumstances: we do not exclude it in principle. Nor do we reject Labour simply because of its record, disgusting though it is. We condemn the Labour Party because Labour Party politics, right and left, subordinate the working class to the interests of the British bourgeoisie. Labour's lager will never refresh the working class movement. It stupefies instead of stimulating; it lacks a punch but it carries a terrible hangover.

Mike Freeman

Letters

Playing with words



Unity with the SWP?



Playing with words

Dear comrades,
Your review of the feminist publication *Beyond the fragments* ('Labour movement in fragments', the next step, No5) was great. It's about time someone exposed the far left for its adulation of feminism and its total failure to relate to working class women.

We look forward to an article on the way feminists try to fight male chauvinism by changing the English vocabulary. Chairperson, spokesperson, and firefighters must be some of the greatest blows that the left has struck against women's oppression. Linguists of the world unite! Learning a foreign language is easier than making a revolution.

Helen Monteith
Pat Evans
West Bromwich

Too abstract?

Looking at *the next step* No 5, page 2, I consider that it is incorrect to make the call for 'a single union for each industry'. It is true that there are too many unions in this country and the bosses can play on the sectionalism that arises from this. But a link-up between unions will not necessarily prevent this.

In some instances militants would not call for a merger. The mooted EETPU/AUEW amalgamation would certainly bring two million workers together in one union, but the fairly democratic structure of the AUEW would disappear as it has been made clear that the new union would be run along the notoriously undemocratic lines of the EETPU.

Do you call for 'a single union for each industry' or its equivalent in local and national government? If so, it would be very dangerous. It is manifestly absurd that ordinary workers should be in the same union as managers who supervise, discipline and sack them and are also implementing the cuts. Management throughout the civil service have imposed suspension notices on CPSA members taking industrial

action over cuts and pay. Many of these management toadies are members of the SCPS - a TUC affiliated union. I don't want them in my union!

Union mergers would not necessarily avert such occurrences as the Isle of Grain dispute. The thorny question of differentials will not disappear merely by unions merging; this and other causes of divisions will merely become intra-union rather than inter-union disputes.

Revolutionaries should not oppose union amalgamations in instances where such mergers are in the interests of the working class. But the call made in *Ins 5* is too abstract. At a time when the EETPU/AUEW merger - which is only in the interests of the bureaucrats and bosses - is a clear possibility, it is wrong to make such a demand which is very vague and could detract militant workers from the otherwise excellent ideas put forward in the article.

Patrick Foster
London SE5

Criticism misplaced

The establishment of industry-wide unions and strike committees will not in itself overcome sectionalism. We make this call to indicate the necessity to transform the unions. At present the capitalists are able to negotiate with one union at a time. In negotiations they take every opportunity to foster divisions in the workforce. The struggle of the working class is continually undermined by sectionalism. Although this is not merely an organisational problem, full-time trade union bureaucrats can exert more control if the shopfloor is divided organisationally. Industry-wide unions and factory committees allow for greater rank and file control and facilitate the participation of the workforce.

Naturally, industry-wide unions are no panacea for the problems facing our class. But in a struggle to transform the ideological traditions and organisation of the labour movement they can become an important lever in broadening the political horizon of the working class. In each industry the struggle to

transform the unions will take a different form. We don't give blanket support to union mergers - and certainly not where they would only serve the interest of bureaucratic manipulation.

Your fear of a single union in local and national government is misplaced. Victimisation of militants by management personnel can only be overcome by ridding the unions of them altogether. How managers organise themselves is their business.

Unity with SWP?

I read a few issues of *the next step*, listened to RCT members' arguments at *Marxism in the 'eighties* and talked to quite a few of your comrades. I agree with many of the things you say. It seems to me that many of our differences - say over the Anti-Nazi League or Charter 80 - are simply tactical.

I think that the time of RCT comrades would be better spent if your organisation were to link up with the SWP. Your separation has the most negative results. Firstly, you spend so much time slagging off the SWP. If you were inside our organisation your skills and experience could be used as part of a constructive debate over the direction of the SWP. Secondly, because you have only a few hundred members it is difficult for you to put any of your ideas into practice. The end result is that nothing ever comes of them.

I feel that you should seriously consider working much more closely with the SWP with a view to joining us. After all, what we have in common far outweighs our differences.

(name and address supplied)

Join the RCT!

For the SWP the 'self-activity' of the working class is all. Programmatic and political issues are not very important; political debate is 'sectarian' and criticism 'slagging off'. Thus many SWP

members will agree that one of their organisations' basic theoretical positions - the Permanent Arms Economy - is a load of rubbish. Some will express serious reservations about 'state capitalism'. But, they say with a shrug of the shoulders - 'so what?'

For the RCT the problem is that the 'self-activity' of the working class in Britain today takes place under clear political guidance - that of the Labour Party and the trade union leaders. It is also informed by a definite political outlook: reformism. Our objective is to break that leadership, transform that outlook and build a working class alternative. Our strongest weapon in that struggle is Marxism, and in particular the Marxist theory of crisis, which points the way forward for the working class in today's recession. What would we have to gain from unity with an organisation which rejects Marxist theory on all the important questions facing the labour movement? On the origin of the crisis, the nature of imperialism, the Soviet Union, women's oppression and many other issues the SWP simply reflects radical bourgeois opinion. The revisionism of the SWP means that for all its talk about action it cannot provide an alternative to Labourism.

Our tactical differences with the SWP follow from our basic political disagreements. Take the Labour Party. The SWP called for a vote for Labour in the general election and now bolsters that party up by pursuing narrow anti-Toryism. The RCT called on workers not to vote Labour and now continues to put the struggle against Labourism to the fore. Only tactical differences perhaps, but differences that reflect two profoundly opposed approaches to the dominant political traditions of the British labour movement.

Our correspondent, like many SWP members, draws the wrong conclusions from his agreement with RCT politics. He should have the courage of his convictions and work with the RCT. Why stay in a declining radical left group when you can join a growing revolutionary organisation?

RCT activities in August

LONDON

for more information ring (01)274 3951
Series of fortnightly forums on *Ireland*
Wednesdays, 7.30pm

University of London Union, Malet Street
(tube: Goodge Street/Warren Street)

● 30 July Bring the War to Britain!
Speaker: Alex Farrell

Roebuck Pub, Tottenham Court Road
(tube: Goodge Street/Warren Street)

● 13 August The American anti-war movement and Ireland
Speaker: James Wood

● 27 August The Algerian struggle against French imperialism
Speaker: Kevin Green

Smash the PTA Campaign

for affiliations and information write to SPTAC, BM RCT, London WC1V 6XX
Affiliate your trade union branch, trades council, shop stewards' committee or student union to SPTAC.

An affiliation gives you:

- latest information about arrests under the PTA
- details of our pickets and demonstrations
- a regular newsletter on the Irish War, Irish prisoners in Britain and anti-imperialist work in Britain.

Rates: £1 individual

£5 trades council or organisation
£10 national organisation

SOUTH LONDON

Regular sales

Friday afternoon (5.15pm)

● Stockwell tube

Saturday morning (11am)

● Battersea market

● Balham market

Friday afternoon and Saturday morning

● Balham tube

● Brixton tube

● Elephant and Castle tube

EAST LONDON

Weekly discussions of *the next step* and

local, national and international events

Thursdays, 7.30pm,

Hackney Labour and Trades Union Hall,
96 Dalston Lane, Hackney E8

(British Rail: Dalston Junction. Bus: 277)

East London Workers Against Racism

write to

Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, E8

● defence against fascist and police

attacks

● resistance to redundancies

● opposition to passport raids and deportations

Weekly street meetings

Saturdays, 10.30am - 12 noon

● Stratford market shopping precinct

● Ridley Road market, Hackney

● Whitechapel and Watney Street,

near Whitechapel tube

● Queens Road market, Upton Park

Weekly street sales of the next step

Sundays, 9.30am onwards, Brick Lane
(tube: Aldgate East)

THE NORTH WEST

for more information write to
RCT, Box 33,
164-66 Corn Exchange Building,
Hanging Ditch, Manchester M4 3BD

Smash the PTA Campaign - North West Committee

Meetings

'Lobby the TUC - Defend Tameside Trades Council'

Speakers from SPTAC and Tameside Trades Council

● Liverpool 12 August, AUEW Hall
46-48 Mount Pleasant
7.30pm

● Bradford 19 August, Textile Hall
Social Club, Westgate
7.30pm

● Preston 26 August, Bottom Room
Windsor Castle
Egan Street, 7.30pm

● Manchester 2 September
Whalley Hotel
Whithington Rd/Upper

Chorlton Rd, Moss Side
7.30pm

Warrington

Regular meetings. Ask the next step
sellers for time and place.

● 31 July Who needs the Labour
Party?

● 14 August What's happened to the
steel industry?

● 21 August Why we're fighting
the Irish War
in Britain

● 28 August Blacks must not pay
the price for the
capitalist crisis

● 18 September Youth on the dole:
up against the Tories
and the Labour Party

Regular sales

● Manchester Friday 4 - 4.45
Piccadilly Gardens
opp Lewis's

● Liverpool Saturday 10.30 - 12.30
Church St
shopping precinct

● Warrington Thursday 12 - 1.30
Saturday 10.30 - 1.00
Golden Square devpt
Sankey St

We also hold regular sales at dole offices,
housing estates and factories in all these
areas. Details from the address above.

The struggle in South Africa

PARTY OR TRADE UNION?

The Militant tendency is a parasitic organisation. In Britain, Militant portrays Clause 4 of the 1918 Constitution as a socialist testament of the Labour Party to justify its accommodation with Labourism. In South Africa, Militant upholds the 1955 Freedom Charter as an anti-capitalist document to validate its adaptation to the Stalinist politics of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. In both countries the Militant method of building within the existing organisations of the working class helps to strengthen the grip of reformism.

We examined the role of Militant in the British labour movement in the next step No 3 (March 1980). Here we look at Militant in South Africa.

IN RECENT MONTHS the Militant tendency has been holding meetings to publicise a new pamphlet on South Africa entitled *The workers' movement, SACTU and the ANC - a struggle for Marxist policies*. It contains a number of documents written by Robert Petersen, the editor of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) paper *Workers' Unity*, and his supporters. Petersen and three others were expelled from the African National Congress (ANC) in late 1979; the pamphlet focuses on the political issues surrounding this move. The pamphlet does make a number of statements that no Marxist could disagree with. It explains, for example, that the profitability of South African capital can be restored only by attacking the working class. Again, the pamphlet states that 'neither economic gains, nor national liberation, nor democracy, can be secured for the black workers on the basis of capitalism, but only through an uninterrupted struggle to overthrow capitalism and begin the building of socialism'. But it is one thing to repeat the essentials of Marx's critique of political economy and of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution; it is quite another to apply them to the real struggles of the South African working class. For when we look beyond the pamphlet's unexceptionable generalities we find Militant opportunism at its worst.

The party's over

In their Introduction, the authors proclaim that they will continue to struggle for their ideas within the ranks of the ANC, SACTU and the South African Communist Party (SACP). This, despite the fact that the leaderships of all three organisations are, as the authors themselves point out, 'opposed to a socialist programme', being of the view that it is possible to achieve national liberation 'on the basis of capitalism'.

What is it, we are left to ask, that politically distinguishes the leaderships of these three bodies from their memberships? No direct answer is given. But we do learn two things. First, that when the Foreword was written the authors felt they were the victims of an offensive led by 'well-known members' of the SACP, but believed that the leadership of the SACP had 'the undoubted capacity to prevent such right-wing and anti-working class activities'. Second, that four months later the leadership was itself to blame:

'One political faction within the ANC - comprising the middle-class right wing and

leadership of the SACP - having gained positions of decisive power within the ANC-in-exile, is now using those positions bureaucratically to begin to eliminate from the ANC those who struggle for Marxist policies.' (pp 74-5, emphasis in the original)

Why was this position only adopted when it was? Why adopt it at all? Again no answers are given.

The puzzle doesn't end there. In their protest letter, the authors say:

'Our political differences with the SACP - essentially differences with its bureaucratic leadership rather than with the comrades of its rank and file - run very deep. But nevertheless we stand for the right of the SACP to organise within the ANC and SACTU, to advance its own ideas, perspectives and programme and to compete democratically for positions of leadership and influence.'

'That same right must be extended to all revolutionary tendencies basing themselves on the struggle of the oppressed workers...'

This is odd. Not just because of the fact that the SACP controls the ANC (as the letter notes), not just because it controls SACTU too, not just because the existence of other 'revolutionary tendencies' is nowhere proven, but because the letter defends the SACP's right to organise within the ANC and SACTU, having remarked that the SACP's theory of the South African revolution 'spells disaster for the working class' a mere three paragraphs before.

When we go back three pages, however, we discover a detailed - if inadvertent - apology for this spineless liberalism. There the authors denounce their suspension from the ANC, a 'broad combination of oppressed people with different class interests', by challenging its right to 'dictate' to SACTU. They then go on to pursue their point more broadly:

'Indeed, even between a workers' party and a trade union, there ought to remain a relationship of autonomy. Revolutionary political parties... while fighting democratically for their ideas, policies and influence within the trade unions, ought never to attempt bureaucratically or by manipulation to subordinate the trade unions to their command.'

We can ignore the words 'bureaucratically' and 'by manipulation'. They are just there to woo the unsuspecting. The point is that the authors are against *any and all* subordination of unions to the party. They want 'autonomy' for the unions, just as they want the SACP to have the 'right to organise' within them. In other words, *they don't want a revolutionary party at all*. As Trotsky put it:

'Those who, in principle, oppose trade union autonomy to the leadership of the Communist Party, oppose thereby - whether they want to or not - the most backward proletarian section to the vanguard of the working class, the struggle for immediate demands to the struggle for the complete liberation of the workers, reformism to Communism, opportunism to revolutionary Marxism.' (*Communism and syndicalism*, 1929)

The unions will do

The authors' error on the relation between the party and the unions is not a new one. Lenin had cause to polemicise against those who made it in his day - the Economists.

In *What is to be done?* (1902), Lenin took issue with the Economists for thinking that workers could gain a revolutionary outlook *spontaneously*. He argued that the spontaneous struggles of the workers, though a positive factor, were conducted on the terrain of bourgeois politics. To exaggerate their significance - or that of the trade unions - was to belittle the role of the revolutionary party. It is this that the authors do time and again.

We learn from the passage from *Workers' Unity*, No 1, that blacks have begun 'by their actions' to answer the question 'What is the way forward?', and that the task now is to 'build up the organised strength of the working class'. The pamphlet maintains that the 'most urgent' question facing the workers' movement is how to fight the Wiehahn-Riekert attempts to shackle the trade unions. In 'Resisting the Wiehahn-Riekert attacks' we are informed that the working class was 'strengthened' during South Africa's post-war boom, that it is even stronger now, and that the 'most vitally important task' is to build SACTU 'as a genuine, independent, underground trade union organisation'.

True, workers have already begun to create underground networks on their own initiative (p21), yet, as the memorandum says, SACTU's 'historic task' remains the same: 'to fill with a revolutionary content the idea of working-class independence in the trade union field' (p32). The memorandum continues that the 'harsh experience' of the movement 'especially since the 'fifties', has 'schooled' the best workers in the lesson that the struggle is for revolution, not reform (p33). The spontaneous forms of organisation developed in the mass movement 'are afflicted by inevitable limitations' (p37), but SACTU must still 'generalise' the workers' 'life experience' of factory, township, mine and farm to its 'necessary political conclusions' (p48). Answers to the questions of how to fight reformist tendencies in the unions and of how to oppose the petit-bourgeois nationalist politics of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and their influence on the Natal unions 'can only be found in the field of practice' (p51, emphasis in the original).

This doesn't exhaust all the comrades' mistakes. We are informed that, in strengthening the revolutionary forces, 'the single most important factor is the organisation and unity of the working class,' a unity 'arising from struggle' (p35, emphasis in the original). And just to

stress their faith in spontaneity, the authors state that 'every worker who has taken part in effective strike action knows the logic of democratic centralism at first hand'.

There is one simple message in all this. *The workers know it all*. Trade unions, not the Leninist party, will free the masses from oppression.

Bowing to spontaneity

We have just noticed in passing that the authors believe that the struggle against the petit-bourgeois nationalism of Buthelezi can 'only' be won 'in the field of practice'. They make this 'practical' point so as to downplay the importance of political struggle. The fulsome praise they lavish on the working class has the same purpose too. Take this passage from the pamphlet:

'The Wiehahn-Riekert strategy probes the working class with a knife, testing out points of weakness where new lines of division can be cut. Their central aim is to separate the "settled" workers (those with Section 10 rights) from the migrants by promising some concessions to the settled workers. This aims to isolate the migrant workers... It is a cynical manoeuvre to try and reopen the scars of the division which emerged among the African workers for a short time in Soweto and Cape Town in 1976, and which were healed as the struggle developed.' (Our emphasis)

Now, anybody familiar with the Soweto uprising knows that the division between migrant workers and settled workers that emerged there was 'healed' not spontaneously, not 'as the struggle developed', but by Buthelezi. Buthelezi rallied the workers together by appealing, not to their common class interests, but to their 'racial unity'. And without a revolutionary party Buthelezi will win out 'in the field of practice' time and again. For behind Buthelezi lies bourgeois ideology and organisation, against which spontaneity has no chance.

The authors' underestimation of the political obstacles facing the workers' movement makes them incapable of answering the question they themselves raise: how have the reformists managed to maintain a grip on the black workers' unions in today's 'revolutionary times'? The answer is not at all what they suggest - that 'the regime picks off the best elements among the leaders and officials, thus clearing the way for those whose inclination is to bend the unions to the will of the bosses' (*Workers' Unity*, No 5, quoted in the pamphlet). No, the reformists maintain a grip on the trade unions because all they have to cope with is the spontaneous actions of the working class. As long as the workers' struggle is restricted to the trade union sphere, the working class will be unable to fight for its class interests. Happily for the reformists the SACP has made sure that it is restricted like this - by ensuring that the proletariat has no special role to play in the movement for national liberation.

Just as SACTU simply tells the working class to get on and fight the bosses, so the ANC instructs the liberation movement to go for the achievement of a few democratic rights. Through its front organisations, the SACP separates the fight against South African capitalism from the fight against apartheid. As a result the reformists dominate the trade unions, while petit-bourgeois nationalism dominates the liberation struggle.

The way to combine the economic struggle with the battle for national liberation is to build a revolutionary working class party. Such a party can only be constructed through a resolute fight against the SACP. Yet the authors offer no political alternative to the SACP. Indeed, Militant's faith in spontaneity leads it inexorably towards Stalinism: the SACP is the arena in which Petersen's group wants to conduct its activities. So much for the 'struggle for Marxist policies'.

Charles Longford

SOUTH AFRICA ERUPTS

As the next step goes to press first reports are coming in of a new series of disturbances in South Africa. On 24 July more than 2500 black workers joined strikes and boycotts in Soweto, a million and a half strong African township 14 miles south west of Johannesburg. Johannesburg itself is threatened by a total breakdown of transport and refuse collection. Thousands of school children took to the streets to step up their school boycott, stoning cars and a delivery van. South Africa is witnessing the greatest upsurge of opposition since the upheaval which culminated in the slaughter of over 500 Africans in Soweto in June 1976.

The growing mass movement

In the last year, opposition to the South African regime has embraced every section of the oppressed. Black and coloured students, the settled black workers of Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg and the Cape area and the mainly unorganised and vulnerable migrants have all played a part.

The most decisive factor in the latest phase of the struggle has been the industrial militancy of black workers. Workers have struck many times over pay claims in the past. A recent strike in support of a dismissed nationalist leader was a significant new development. Thozamile Botha, a worker at Ford's Port Elizabeth plant, was sacked for allegedly spending too much time on local community affairs. His victimisation sparked off a strike which was led by the Port Elizabeth Civic Organisation, of which he is a leading member. Ford was forced to reinstate Botha after a series of mass meetings and a consumer boycott. The determined fight of the black workforce sent the employers reeling and

became a major subject for discussion in the business press. This united response in defence of a dismissed worker was just as disturbing for the bourgeoisie as the fact that the Ford workers completely bypassed their traditional union, the United Auto and Rubber Workers Union. The union's moderate stand compromised it in the eyes of shop floor militants.

In November 1979 a strike and consumer boycott at Fatti's & Moni's, a company producing pasta and flour in the Western Cape area, was finally successful after seven months' struggle. The employers had to reinstate 78 workers fired during the dispute for union recognition. All the staff who had walked out in support of their workmates won back their jobs.

Militancy spread rapidly as workers saw the results an aggressive struggle could bring. In May this year, 800 workers struck for higher wages at Kromco, an apple packing factory in the Cape. In the past they had been weakly organised and easily divided along racial lines. This time

they resisted the employers' attempts to play off black against coloured. They won a 50 per cent increase, a guarantee that all workers involved in the dispute — including 40 black migrant labourers who had been detained by the police — would be reinstated, and a commitment to honour future contracts.

By mid 1980 industrial unrest spread into South Africa's core industries — cars, energy, mining — and the public sector. 8500 carworkers struck in the Eastern Cape. At Volkswagen 3500 workers won a 33 per cent pay rise and secured a closed shop agreement. At the nearby Goodyear Tyre plant 600 more ignored the 'advice' from their union which called their demand for a 200 per cent increase 'ridiculous'. On 16 July 18 000 construction workers at the state-owned SASOL oil-from-coal conversion plants II and III rioted and killed two whites in protest against the murder of a black worker. They were also angry at the presence of the South African army in the plants, which was brought in following the ANC sabotage at the first SASOL plant. (Troops have become an everyday aspect of factory life.)

This spate of militancy has forced South African capitalists to think hard about their response. Some, such as Harry Oppenheimer's Anglo American Corporation, are doing well enough at present to be able to grant small wage rises. Anglo recently conceded rises in the black minimum starting salary of between 15 and 28 per cent. Employers desperately want to avoid any disruption in production while the present gold market boom continues and profits are looking good.

Other capitalists have resorted to more traditional solutions and scored some successes. There has recently been a whole string of dismissals of black workers: 600 who had been involved in a three day strike in late July at the De Beers Finsch Diamond Mine near Kimberley; 250 from

a milling plant in Uitenhage and 30 at a steel plant in Johannesburg who protested against the sacking of a member of their works committee. Some employers used the hundreds of laws restricting the political and civil rights of migrants to expel workers involved in strikes. Thus 40 migrants who took part in a strike and boycott against the Table Bay Cold Storage Company in Cape Town, which had refused to recognise a unregistered trade union, were arrested and shipped off to the Transkei Homeland.

Everything at stake

The struggles of the last six months are taking a similar form to those of 1976 — industrial strikes, school and consumer boycotts. There is, though, a crucial difference. In 1976 the South African economy was in the throes of a deep crisis. Today, compared to the other imperialist nations, it is experiencing a temporary boom. The rapid rise in gold prices has stimulated economic growth and given the South African ruling class some freedom to manoeuvre. It intends to use this period of temporary prosperity to deepen the divisions between settled and migrant workers and to weaken the opposition of a section of the black population to apartheid by granting some concessions. This is the strategy contained in the recent Wiehahn-Riekert reports. (For a more detailed assessment see 'South Africa: boom for whom?', *the next step*, No 5, and 'Unions under apartheid', *the next step*, No 1.)

The ability of the black and coloured workers to resist this strategy depends entirely on the emergence of a political organisation which bases its approach 100 per cent on the interests of the working class. The coming months will be crucial for the South African working class movement.

(see discussion article, page 15)

Revolutionary Communist
Tendency
International Conference
'Imperialism in the 'eighties'
5,6,7 September 1980

IMPERIALISM UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

'Imperialism (imperializ'm). 1858 [f. IMPERIAL a. + -ISM.] 1. The rule of an emperor, esp. when despotic. 2. The principle or spirit of empire; advocacy of imperial interests 1881.'

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

'Hence we are living in a peculiar epoch of world colonial policy, which is most closely connected with the "latest stage in the development of capitalism", with finance capital. For this reason, it is essential first of all to deal in greater detail with the facts, in order to ascertain as exactly as possible what distinguishes this epoch from those preceding it, and what the present situation is. In the first place, two questions of fact arise here: is an "intensification of colonial policy, a sharpening of the struggle for colonies, observed precisely in the epoch of finance capital? And how, in this respect, is the world divided in the present time?" V I Lenin, *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* (1917)

Unlike the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Marxists understand imperialism as the highest stage of capitalist development, an era in which capitalism condemns the mass of people to poverty and denies their political rights. The Revolutionary Communist Tendency's three-day conference on 'Imperialism in the 'eighties' starts from where Lenin left off. Each of the conference sessions will examine the present division of the world, the relationship of backward capitalist countries to the imperialist nations and the rivalry between the different imperialist powers.

Fifty years of stagnation and revision-

ism in the Marxist movement have left their mark. The 'theorists' who claim that imperialism no longer exists are legion. Others have argued that backward capitalist countries like Brazil, South Korea and Iran could themselves become imperialist. What's the real answer? What are the limits to development in these countries? What is the impact of the present world crisis on their economies?

We have already invited a number of speakers — both from Britain and abroad — who will be putting forward views different from those of the RCT. This conference will be a forum where the fundamental theoretical issues facing the international working class can be clarified.

There is, of course, little point in doing

this unless we draw out the political consequences of a revolutionary approach. Central to all the discussion at the conference will be the impact of pro-imperial views on the labour movement and how they can be combatted. The Labour Party's 'positive colonialism', its support for imperialism with a human face, has often been discussed in RCT literature. We hope to explain why it has such a pernicious hold over sections of the working class. We will outline our strategy for destroying it.

For details of the conference, a reading list and to register write to:

Helen Swift
BM RCT
London WC1V 6XX



Register now!

Fee:

All three days: £5 prepaid, £6.50 at the door

Part time attendance: £2.50 per day, £1.00 per session

Registration at ULU,

Friday, 5 September, 9.30am

Sessions will include:

- Imperialism — the current phase
- British imperialism and Ireland
- South Africa — the recent developments
- Iran — where is the Khomeini regime heading?
- Zimbabwe — who won?
- Debate on the theory of imperialism
- Imperialism and Eastern Europe
- Afghanistan
- The Palestinian question — what price settlement?
- Racism, immigrant workers and imperialism
- Inter-imperialist rivalries in the EEC
- Turkey — on the brink
- US imperialism and Central America and many more...

Venue:

Friday/Saturday

University of London Union (ULU)

Malet Street, London WC1

(tube: Goodge Street/Warren Street)

Sunday

Colombo Street Sports Centre and John

Marshall Hall, Colombo Street, SE1

(tube: Waterloo)

the next step