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next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency

THE EMPLOYERS' OTHER OFFENSIVE

THE BRITISH RULING CLASS is determined to survive the havoc that's spreading throughout the capitalist system. It's prepared to forget about free market philosophy when it comes to competing with its imperialist rivals. That's why a number of leading capitalists have been telling Thatcher to provide state assistance to British exporters. In an economic war the ruling class will take every measure to protect its position.

But the bosses have to do more than this to survive. They have to obtain substantial support for what they're doing from the British working class. To wage an effective economic war abroad they must win the propaganda war at home.

In recent months the capitalist class has used every opportunity to peddle its nationalist message. This summer's blockade of Channel ports by striking French fishermen, which left hundreds of 'plucky' tourists stranded, came as a godsend. Now, like its American counterpart, the British bourgeoisie had its 'hostages'. British diplomats promptly expressed the Government's 'deep concern' at the situation. The Iranian student protest in Grosvenor Square was also good for a few chauvinist headlines as the press barons made the most of 'Britain's outrage' at the mobs who had insulted the nation's hospitality.

While the eightieth birthday of the Queen Mother provided an occasion to display the friendly side of British patriotism, the bourgeoisie was busy at work beating the war drums. Even the tiny New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) could not escape the imperialist propaganda machine: 'The calm and fortitude of a British major and a French colonel, standing shoulder to shoulder before a frenzied crowd of natives saved the island from bloodshed', said *The Daily Telegraph*. It continued: 'Stopping only feet from three ranks of wide-eyed chanting natives, clad only in loincloths and penis-gourds, they refused to be intimidated by taunts and insults' (31 July 1980). Subtle, that.

The ruling class recognises the importance of consolidating its ideological grip over all sections of British society. And chauvinist propaganda is the best weapon it has for stabilising class relations. While nationalism cannot eliminate the class struggle, strong identification with the British nation restricts its scope. A national consensus on foreign affairs, immigration, industrial strategy, and on social and cultural matters limits the threat that strikes present to the bosses. The 'foreign threat' becomes a powerful instrument for resolving the conflict between labour and capital in the interest of Britain.

Nationalist politics have taken deep root in the working class movement. Unconvinced? Then just witness the number of important conflicts which are pursued from a patriotic point of view. Whenever workers lose their jobs, the trade union leaders call the capitalists unpatriotic for running down British industry and the bosses accuse the unions of holding the nation to ransom. Given that the entire debate is conducted on the terrain of nationalism it is not surprising that the bosses get their way. The ruling class has managed to portray trade union action as a threat to the national interest and succeeded in putting the labour movement on the defensive.

Chauvinism right and left

The TUC and the Labour Party are active proponents of imperialist politics. When the labour bureaucrats organise discussions with the CBI they do so in the name of stopping *Britain's* 'de-industrialisation'. When they attack rank and file action and seek to contain spontaneous struggles they do so for the sake of the nation. When the TUC opposes public sector cuts it points out the harm such cuts will do to 'our' health, 'our' education and so on. Things have gone so far that the biggest insult they can hurl at a recalcitrant employer is that he doesn't invest here.

But it isn't just the right wing of the labour bureaucracy that propagates pro-imperialist politics. The 'lefts' are just as vociferous in their defence of the nation. Thus, when Tony Benn denounced the Tory's spring budget, he could think of nothing more fitting than to call it an act of 'economic treachery' (*The Times*, 29 February 1980). No wonder that, in their much-publicised manifesto, three right-wing Labourites – Shirley Williams, David Owen and William Rodgers – were able to present themselves as concerned internationalists and denounce the left for its chauvinism.

When militancy is married to patriotism

The working class is not spontaneously chauvinist. However, pro-imperialist political traditions and the flag-waving hysteria currently preached by the labour leadership have strongly affected the thinking of the working class. That's why class activity often takes a nationalist form. The reactionary influence of the labour leadership is shown by the way it has managed to convince militant car-workers to protest against foreign imports and direct working class housewives disgusted with inflation away from hating capitalism and towards hating the EEC instead.

Today, militancy and a chauvinist outlook often exist side by side. The gravity of this problem is all too clear to any class-conscious worker. Even the TUC has recently been forced to recognise the consequences of its nationalist policies – the National Front's infiltration of the unions. The TUC's Race Relations Advisory Committee has noted that one faction of the NF 'has developed a new policy of open activity within the unions, of being good trade unionists, even to the extent of siding, where appropriate, with militant factions to struggle against redundancies, fight for better wages etc' (*Race Relations: TUC policy review*, unpublished document, July 1980).

Fascism poses no real threat to the working class at present. The real threat is Labourism – the politics that determine all the day-to-day actions of the labour movement. As long as Labourism remains dominant the employers will win their ideological offensive. Workers will be defenceless against imperialist propaganda and the labour movement will end up cutting its own throat.

Put class interests first!

The bosses attack us not because they are unpatriotic but because they are true to the capitalist class. Workers must match and exceed the employers' determination in looking after their own class interests. We must turn the chauvinist tide back at them. Foreigners are not our enemies; our enemies are the British capitalist class and all its hangers-on. That's why we say:

You can stuff your national interest and your racist propaganda. The only sacrifices that workers are prepared to make are the sacrifices necessary to rid us of the capitalist system.

INSIDE

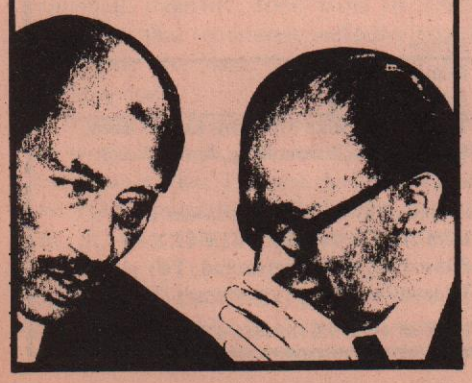
Poland – our position 3

Ireland: British soviets, Charter 80, Bringing the War to Brighton, Blackpool... 4

Five pages of unemployment 6

ELWAR action 12

Stop Filipino deportations! 13



A knife in the back of the Palestinians

THE JOINT STATEMENT on the Middle East, issued at the Venice Summit of the nine EEC countries this summer, declared that any future peace negotiations must involve the Palestine Liberation Organisation. It condemned Israel's recent decision to build more settlements on the occupied West Bank of the river Jordan. Menachem Begin, leader of Israel's Likud coalition government, compared the statement with Chamberlain's surrender in Munich prior to the Second World War. He dubbed the PLO the 'Arab SS' and stressed that 'this murderous organisation' had resolved 'to liquidate the Zionist entity politically, economically, militarily, culturally and ideologically' (*Financial Times*, 16 June 1980). At the same time, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Fahd is 'nearing the end of his pro-American tether'; in a recent appeal for Arab unity he paid lip-service to the Palestinian cause and pledged a holy war (Jihad) against the Israeli state (*The Times*, 15 August 1980).

So what lies behind this new statement of EEC policy? What effect will it have on President Carter's Camp David peace agreement? How do European and American interests clash in the Middle East? These are some of the questions we take up in this article.

Processed peace

Two groups are centrally concerned to see a rapid solution to the Palestinian problem: the imperialists and the ruling regimes in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and other Arab nations. The imperialists because at a time of capitalist crisis, they must have stability in this oil rich region. The bourgeois Arab leaders, because they know only too well that while the Palestinian question remains unresolved, the entire

continued on page 2

Palestinians...

continued from page 1

region will remain unstable. The founding of Israel in 1948 and its subsequent expansion have left hundreds of thousands of Palestinians stateless. Refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon will continue to spawn thousands of guerrillas prepared to wage the struggle for Palestinian self-determination. If Arab backing is withdrawn, there is every chance that these guerrillas will turn their guns on their hosts. That's why every Arab ruler remains committed to some kind of Palestinian state.

The first serious attempts to impose a permanent peace agreement came in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. During the following two years US Secretary Henry Kissinger shuttled between Cairo and Tel Aviv to secure agreements for ending the hostilities. 1977 saw Egypt's President Anwar Sadat's infamous visit to Jerusalem. The end result of all these manoeuvres: the Camp David treaty, signed in March 1979. It provided for full withdrawal of Israel from occupied Egyptian territories over a three year period, the exchange of ambassadors, full normalisation of relations and a vague formula for discussing Palestinian demands for a state on the West Bank and Gaza strip – lands seized from Egypt and Jordan in 1967.

For the Palestinians, Sadat's trip to Jerusalem and the subsequent peace treaty were no 'sell-out'. The sell-out took place many years ago; not a single Arab regime has stood by the Palestinians consistently. In 1970 Egypt's Abdul Nasser signed the Rogers Plan, a document similar to Camp David. This was made obsolete when Jordan's King Hussein wiped out thousands of the guerrillas fighting Israel in what became known as 'Black September'. The record of the Steadfastness Front, the countries which reject Camp David, is no better. Its leading member Syria sent 20 000 troops and 300 tanks into Lebanon in June 1976 to help crush the coalition of Palestinian and Moslem leftist forces which threatened stability in the region.

Sadat had sound reasons for a compromise with Israel. He regained control of Egyptian territories in Sinai without firing a shot. More important, the period of peace allowed Egypt's leader to begin to tackle some of the domestic economic problems which had led to widespread food riots in 1977. The real beneficiary, of course, was Israel. It had successfully neutralised its largest and militarily strongest Arab adversary without conceding any commitment to withdraw from the West Bank. Although Israel's defence spending continues to rise (it now stands at 25 per cent of Gross National Product), the Camp David deal has given the state more leeway to deal with economic chaos and the rate of inflation which is presently more than 100 per cent a year.

While Carter fumbles. . .

The conciliatory relationship between Israel and Egypt explains the diverging attitudes of the imperialists to the Palestinians. As early as 1973 Japan decided to give tacit recognition to the PLO. This move came in the wake of the threatened Arab oil boycott which would have spelt disaster for the Japanese economy. The USA is bound by a 1975 agreement with Israel not to recognise the PLO until it renounces all claims to 'Israeli' territory. The recent EEC Summit has shown that European leaders see no way forward through Camp David and no longer respect the right of the USA to police the Middle East. They are moving into the political vacuum created by the fact that President Carter cannot risk any more foreign policy blunders in an election year.

While the USA is committed to back Egypt, Japan and the EEC hope to win favour with Arab leaders who, for reasons of their own, oppose Camp David. For the USA there is no immediate economic need to retract from Camp David to pacify Arab leaders: it relies for only 15 per cent of its oil supplies on the Middle East. For Japan and the EEC, however, moving towards the rest of the Arab world makes good capitalist sense: their economies depend heavily on trade with and raw materials from the Middle East. Open support for a discredited and isolated Egypt might provoke an Arab oil boycott and this they cannot afford. Western Europe imports 60 per cent of its oil from the Persian Gulf; Japan 80 per cent.

Apart from the general importance of the Middle East for the EEC, most European countries have strong links with individual oil-producing nations. Italy not only relies on the Middle East for two-thirds of its energy needs; it also has a contract to build 11 warships for Iraq. In exchange for at least one-third of its annual oil requirements, France has arms contracts with Iraq presently valued at more than £1 billion. Germany's main oil supplier Saudi Arabia is providing the Bonn Finance Ministry with direct credit of more than DM 3 billion (£750 million) this year alone. King Khaled's recent visit to Bonn, and Chancellor Schmidt's conspicuous refusal to accept Israeli invitations to visit Tel Aviv, indicate where German priorities in the Middle East lie:

> 'When asked to define what their national interests are in the Middle East, German officials and Social Democrats fail to mention Israel at all. Instead they talk of Germany's twofold reliance on Middle East oil and markets for German industrial and consumer goods.' (*New Statesman*, 18 July 1980)

Britain, too, is firmly tied to Arab countries. Last year exports to Saudi Arabia totalled £894 million, making it the largest market for Britain outside the West. This year, sales are expected to top £1000 million. Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington's cringing apologies to the Saudi regime after the screening of 'Death of a Princess' show just how important these markets are. In the next few years Saudi Arabia, whose third five year plan is budgeted at £250 billion, could become one of the largest export markets for British goods in the world.

. . .the EEC makes its move

Almost as soon as the Camp David treaty was signed, Europe began its moves aimed at incorporating the Palestinians in discussions. In June 1979 EEC Ministers criticised Israel's aggressive West Bank settlement policy. In July PLO leader Yasser Arafat was invited to Vienna for talks with Austria's Chancellor Dr Bruno Kreisky and German Socialist Party leader Willy Brandt. Soon afterwards France began making discreet inquiries about the possibility of setting up a ministerial conference between the Nine and moderate Arab oil producers.

Momentum continued to gather behind the PLO. Even in the American camp there was disquiet. US ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young was sacked for holding 'unofficial' discussions with PLO representative in New York Zahedi Labib Terzi. Arafat's visit to Spain and Portugal in September brought considerable diplomatic success. Michael O'Kennedy, President of the EEC Council of Ministers, put forward the EEC position to the United Nations General Assembly. His statement – the first to make specific reference to the PLO – proposed that 'within the framework set by a peace settlement' the Palestinians should be allowed 'to exercise their rights to determine their own future as a people'. Official contacts between the EEC and the PLO soon followed.

This change in European policy had nothing to do with concern for the Palestinian people:

> 'In the last resort. . .oil must be the weightiest element behind the pronounced West European shift. Spain's reception of Mr Arafat was almost certainly part of the cold calculation to ensure that it receives oil and gas supplies.' (*Financial Times*, 14 November 1979)

Neither has it anything to do with any significant change in attitude to the existence of Israel. Palestinian and Israeli rights are seen as mutually exclusive. The European countries are trying to force the PLO to accept the right of Israel to exist behind secure and defined borders, in exchange for an Israeli agreement to the formation of a West Bank state. Britain in particular canvassed the idea of reaffirming UN Resolution 242 which only recognises the Palestinians as 'refugees' and supplementing it with a clause calling for self-determination in the context of a negotiated settlement. The latest EEC declaration follows exactly this line of thinking.

Israel in the wilderness?

America has responded strongly to its European competitors muscling into the Middle East. In June President Carter issued a blunt threat to veto any European initiative on Palestinian self-determination in the UN Security Council if this meant undermining the Camp David peace mediation. Subtracting a little for electioneering rhetoric, the *Financial Times* saw this as 'a sign that the USA takes seriously the frustration in Europe, which has no role in the peace talks but has a great stake in Middle East stability and oil security' (2 June 1980).

American policymakers know full well that Israeli insistence on pursuing its settlement policy, and decrees like one which recently reaffirmed Jerusalem as the undivided capital city of Israel, make any solution more and more elusive. The USA's dilemma is captured by the *International Herald Tribune*. It argues that the Camp David impasse will only be overcome if Palestinians (it does not mention the PLO) are brought into negotiations, and if Israel has a new government. At the same time it is hostile to European meddling. It urges Israel to halt all settlement on the West Bank but complains that 'no such gesture is likely, however, if irrelevant European "initiatives" and UN manoeuvres drive the Israeli people into sullen alliance with their extremists' (26 May 1980).

The pleas for a 'new government' in Israel expose the real problem: Israel is becoming a burden to America's post-Iran foreign policy. For White House strategists the fall of the Shah has placed the other Arab regimes in the frontline against 'communism and anarchy'. The 'northern tier' – Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan – is now the main political axis in the region, surpassing in importance the Arab-Israeli conflict. Today, as the USA is seeking to restore amicable relations with the Arab countries, Israel is becoming more and more of an embarrassment. Just how far the USA can pull away from its support for Israel, however, remains to be seen. One thing is certain. The USA will have to move with the tide or risk being thrown back way behind its rivals.

British workers must resist imperialist rivalries in the Middle East. At the same time opposition must be mounted against any settlement for Palestine which stops short of the complete destruction of the Zionist state. The very existence of Israel has acted to divide the Middle East into warring factions. Diplomatic negotiations and the manoeuvres of the Arab ruling class will not bring about the liberation of Palestine. 'Autonomy', 'limited self-government' and the charade of the 'peace process' hold nothing for the people of the Middle East. Expose the imperialist manoeuvres and support the struggle of the Palestinian people!

Nick Jenkins

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Contents

Editorial
The Polish dilemma 3
Imperialism
A knife in the back of the Palestinians 1
Ireland
1920: How Labour rode out the storm 4
Charter 80: A bad British joke 5
Change TUC Irish policy! 5
Unemployment
The reasons why 6
Unemployment statistics 7
Young, gifted. . .but black 8
Immigration controls mean redundancies 8
Patronising the young unemployed 9
Divide and rule at Warrington 9
Import controls and the CP 10
Lucas: voluntary redundancy 10
TUC is redundant 11
Racism
The Daily Mirror *and ELWAR* 11
The battle for workers' defence 12
Stop Filipino deportations! 13
Labour movement
The fight at Dagenham 16
Letters 14
RCT
Activities in September and October 14

Editor
Frank Richards
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Tony Allen, Mike Freeman, Kevin Green, Nick Jenkins, Fenna King, James Wood.

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THE POLISH DILEMMA

THE POLISH BUREAUCRACY has suffered an important defeat at the hands of the proletariat. The working class has forced the bureaucracy to accept many of its demands, including the recognition of a free trade union movement. The workers' recent gains remain in the balance as a new prime minister strives to stabilise the regime.

Why is the bureaucracy so weak?

The Polish state is the creation of the Soviet army. After the Second World War the Stalinist bureaucracy overthrew capitalist relations in Poland and set up a regime in its own image. The new regime lacked any popular support; its survival depended on coercion and the regimentation of Polish society.

Although the bureaucracy destroyed capitalism the social relations it established were not much of an improvement. The new bureaucratically administered economy lacked any dynamism. The bureaucracy could not plan the economy without the co-operation of the Polish working class. Because the Stalinist bureaucracy dared not permit the establishment of institutions of proletarian democracy it never obtained that co-operation.

The economic strategy of the Polish bureaucracy relied on massive investments in heavy industry. Together with the transfer of labour from agriculture to industry this investment temporarily produced high growth rates. But that was as far as bureaucratic planning could go. The Polish economy grew quickly, but this growth was achieved not through raising the productivity of labour but through massive investments made at the expense of consumption. Bureaucratic control could not raise productivity in either agriculture or industry. Nor could it develop the forces of production through the introduction of new technology. Inevitably, this form of industrialisation exacerbated tensions in Polish society. The allocation of resources into heavy industry demanded the sacrifice of working class living standards.

The working class riots in 1956 showed how tenuous the bureaucracy's hold over Polish society was. In response to this traumatic experience the bureaucracy came up with two solutions – economic reforms and a political compromise with Polish nationalism.

Economic reform

Only workers' democracy can ensure the rational distribution of labour-time between the different sectors of the economy. This course of action was unacceptable to the bureaucracy. Its problem was how to develop a mechanism for distributing resources in the most efficient way possible. The solution was to introduce incentives for increasing output and efficiency and to improve the economy by obtaining Western technology and credit.

These economic reforms had little effect. Incentives could only have worked if a capitalist market had been introduced. This was a step that the bureaucracy could not take without jeopardising its political power. The Polish economy remained stagnant; food riots in 1970 indicated that economic reforms could not meet the basic aspirations of the working class.

During the period 1969-75 the capitalist world became interested in the East European market. This was the miracle that the Polish bureaucracy had been waiting for. It was able to improve economic conditions by importing Western technology and consumer goods. Between 1970 and 1974 Poland achieved a veritable boom based on imported technology and Western credit. During these years real wages went up by 25 per cent, while national income increased by a third.

Although this real increase in living standards created a measure of political stability, the Polish 'miracle' was short-lived. Every increase in living standards was matched by an increase in Poland's foreign debt. By 1975 growing consumption of food and the stagnation of agriculture turned Poland from a food exporter into a food importer. Over the next two years Poland spent $2000 million on imported food. Today Poland's foreign debt to the capitalist world stands at $20 billion.

Since 1975 the Polish bureaucracy has sought to solve its debt problem by attacking the living standards of the working class. But every time the government has tried to raise prices to reduce consumption it has been forced to back down by the workers' angry response.

Political 'reforms'

Alongside economic reforms the bureaucracy also tried to win new political allies. Its immediate response to the 1956 unrest was to reorganise agriculture along the lines of small-scale private farming. To win the acquiescence of the peasantry the bureaucracy encouraged a resurgence of petty commodity production. It also encouraged nationalism. Throughout the 'sixties Polish nationalism and anti-semitism flourished. The Polish Communist Party took every opportunity to demonstrate its patriotic credentials, even launching an officially sponsored campaign against Jews.

Most important of all was the understanding the bureaucracy established with the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was given official sanction and a privileged position by the bureaucracy. In return it has played an important role in containing unrest. During the 1956 and 1970 disturbances, for example, Cardinal Wyszynski appealed for calm. Similarly this summer the Church was instrumental in limiting the scope of strike action.

Encouraging nationalism and Catholicism has not solved the bureaucracy's problems. Indeed this strategy has strengthened reactionary pro-capitalist forces which are hostile to the bureaucracy itself. The bureaucracy has only managed to weaken Poland's secular tradition by giving Catholicism a new lease of life. Today the Catholic Church is more powerful than it was in the inter-war period.

KOR, ROPCiO and Catholicism

The Stalinist bureaucracy has not been able to contain working class action. Since 1956, the regime has been shaken to its foundations by the working class on four separate occasions. This pressure on the bureaucracy has protected the intelligentsia and the petit bourgeoisie from severe repression by the state. According to Western commentators the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) defended workers from bureaucratic reprisals. In reality KOR could not have existed without the strong Polish working class.

The forces of reaction are also well organised. In March 1977 this strand of opposition to the bureaucracy formed the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO). Led by such luminaries as a pre-war general and a former head of the old Christian Democratic Party, ROPCiO has utilised the patriotic tradition of the Polish state for its own ends. Reactionary forces backed by the Church have been busy organising in all spheres of social and cultural life. In late 1977 for example the Polish Committee for the Defence of Life and Family launched a campaign to abolish the country's liberal abortion laws. The church and right wing political groups have been forced to speak out on behalf of the working class because they realise that their existence depends on working class pressure on the bureaucracy.

Where does the working class stand? Decades of brutal oppression by a bureaucracy acting in the name of Marxism has discredited communism among workers. At the same time nationalist ideology and Catholicism exert widespread influence on the labour movement. The bureaucracy has liquidated independent class politics in the proletariat and strengthened the power of nationalism and religion. As a result Polish workers fighting for their class interests often do so under the influence of petit-bourgeois policies.

The more advanced sections of the working class are influenced by narrow trade unionism. Left-wing social-democrats around KOR have campaigned to limit the scope of workers' struggles. KOR is the dominant reformist trend in the Polish labour movement.

Politics and 'free trade unions'

All the important opposition tendencies are united on one important issue – the working class must not issue a political challenge to the regime lest it should provoke a Soviet invasion. The threat of Russian intervention has been used by the Polish bureaucracy as a strong ideological weapon to contain the working class.

At present KOR represents the most dangerous tendency in the working class. KOR seeks to advance the interests of workers along strict trade union lines. As Jacek Kuron, its principal leader stated: 'Unless we Poles organise ourselves and stick to purely economic demands, catastrophe could become inevitable' (*Le Monde*, 20 August 1980). This theme was repeated by strike leader Lech Walesa when he stated: 'I am a trade unionist. Politics do not interest me' (*Le Monde*, 27 August 1980).

KOR's economistic approach opens the way for reactionary forces to extend their influence in the working class. Why? Because trade unionism will not make workers immune to the political ideas that prevail in Polish society. In the absence of proletarian politics the nationalist trends will become the dominant force in the trade union movement. Whether KOR likes it or not the working class will always formulate political demands. The question is, what will be their class content?

The strike movement in the Baltic coast reveals the dangers that lie ahead. In Gdansk the workers formulated their economic demands. Inevitably, though, they found it necessary to involve 'experts' to assist their negotiations with the bureaucracy. The intellectuals who were called in to aid workers in the last stage of negotiations were all sympathisers of the petit-bourgeois Catholic movement. 'Experts' such as Tadeusz Kowalik, a bourgeois economist, Bodhan Cywinski, a Catholic activist and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a nationalist journalist were all happy to see workers restrict their demands to economic issues. They were pleased because they knew that in the absence of a proletarian alternative their petit-bourgeois politics would prevail.

The focus of workers' demands has been the issue of independent, free trade unions. Because it creates the organisational basis for working class politics this is a demand that all revolutionaries must support. However, trade unions on their own provide no answers for the Polish working class. The problem facing Polish workers is political power not wage bargaining. What's the use of a wage rise when most essential commodities are in short supply? Workers need to control production to ensure a more efficient development of the productive forces and the evolution of a planned economy.

Every opposition group supports free trade unions because it sees in these organisations a powerful instrument for advancing its own interests. The Catholic Church and the reactionary nationalists want to flourish on the backs of the Polish working class. In effect the 'keep politics out of the working class' brigade subordinates the proletariat to the nationalist opposition forces.

What next?

Polish revolutionaries face a real dilemma. Decades of bureaucratic oppression have destroyed communism as a living force in the Polish working class. Its most advanced sections have sought refuge in narrow trade unionism while the mass of workers follow the lead of nationalist politicians. There exists no organised vanguard that can point out the contradiction between workers' interests and the pro-capitalist politics of the nationalist forces.

Although as yet there is no conscious expression of pro-capitalist sentiment within the working class, restorationist forces are gaining ground every day. Communism is too discredited to develop as the political focus for the anti-bureaucratic forces in the immediate future. For many class conscious workers the alternative appears to be the continuation of bureaucratic oppression or the strengthening of reactionary nationalist forces.

What should revolutionaries do? The first priority is to strengthen the anti-bureaucratic forces. Class conscious workers have every interest in the overthrow of the Polish regime, for as long as the bureaucracy exists communism will stand discredited and nationalism will flourish. Revolutionary communists must not draw back from this struggle even if in the short run the nationalist forces gain the upper hand.

The working class has to fight against the bureaucracy. This is the only way to expose the reactionary role of the Church and Polish nationalism and re-establish communism as working class politics.

Class conscious workers must challenge the programme of KOR and condemn this organisation's call for 'realism'. The best guarantee against a Russian invasion is not economic demands but proletarian politics. The potential for united action among the East European and Soviet working class is considerable. Already workers throughout Eastern Europe have drawn inspiration from the actions of the Polish proletariat. A ruthless struggle against nationalism will ensure that Polish workers will win the solidarity of workers throughout the region. This is the only realistic policy for class conscious workers to follow. It is the only way to deal with the threat from the Soviet bureaucracy.

There is tremendous potential for working class revolution in Eastern Europe. But there are major obstacles. Polish workers must not allow their fear of reactionary nationalist forces throw them off the course of the anti-bureaucratic struggle. Their task is to transform the opposition movement into one that is dominated by a proletarian outlook. There are no guarantees that revolutionaries will prevail in the short run – but in the long run they will have set off a chain-reaction that no-one will be able to resist.

Sixty years ago this month sections of the British working class, organised in Councils of Action, pressed the leadership of the labour movement to oppose British policy in Ireland. Below we look at the outcome. We report too (on page 5) on the way Tameside Trades Council is spearheading the attack on the pro-imperialist stand of the labour bureaucracy on the Irish War today.

The radical left has, for the most part, maintained a sectarian hostility to Tameside Trades Council. We review its latest alternative – Charter 80.

1920: How Labour rode out the storm

The Councils of Action were set up by British workers in 1920 to defend the Russian Revolution against imperialism. The most militant workers sought to widen the Councils' activity to challenge British domination over Ireland. The militants were ready to take on the British government (and its allies abroad) but they were unable to overcome the reactionary influence of the leadership of the official labour movement.

WHEN BRITISH CAPITALISM came to the end of its First World War it was in crisis. Unemployment was widespread and sections of the working class, disgusted with the imperialist carnage, began to identify more with their class allies abroad than with their class enemies at home. In particular, many workers saw the Russian Revolution of October 1917 as an example of what could and should be done to end the sufferings of the masses. So when the conquests of that revolution came under attack by Britain, labour movement anger ran high.

'Hands off Russia'

British imperialism provided support for any force that was prepared to destroy the new Soviet Republic. This counter-revolutionary policy provoked spontaneous opposition in the British working class. In May 1920 dockworkers in East London refused to load arms into the *Jolly George*, a ship bound for Poland – from where the reactionary White Army was organising an attack against the new workers' state.

Later in the summer, when the threat of British intervention became more acute, workers went a step further. All over the country they established Councils of Action to resist imperialist initiatives in Russia. By September between three and four hundred such Councils were in existence. Their object: to prevent British intervention against the Russian Revolution; their tactics: direct action like the boycott of the *Jolly George*.

The leadership of the official labour movement was anxious to keep the Councils of Action under its control. The chiefs of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Labour's National Executive and the TUC got together and set up a 15-man National Council. In the chair they put dockers' union boss Ernest Bevin, then at an early stage of his long and reactionary career. His job was to procrastinate and discourage industrial action.

Hands off Ireland!

Many local Councils of Action were not content to restrict their activities to Russia. There already existed a strong current of hostility to British domination of Ireland in the labour movement: throughout 1920 the Tan War – so called after Britain's notorious Black and Tan soldiers – provoked intense opposition to government policy among militant workers. Now the Councils of Action moved to take up the call for Irish freedom.

The Merthyr Tydfil Council of Action in South Wales was one of the most vigorous. In September 1920 it sent a circular to other local councils emphasising that the struggles of the unemployed, of the Soviet Union and of the Irish were linked: all three threatened 'the existence of the capitalist system of production' (S White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*).

In all, 70 Councils of Action backed the call for the National Council to extend its activities to include agitation and action against the War in Ireland. Reports of bloody 'reprisals' conducted by the Black and Tans against Irish people, of the starvation of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, in Brixton jail and of the hanging of a young medical student Kevin Barry for republican activities ensured that support for Irish self-determination remained a major issue for British socialists towards the end of 1920. The North East District Council of Action in Newcastle, for instance, demanded that the National Council convene a national conference of local councils of action and extend its mandate to include Ireland and the withdrawal of British troops overseas. More than 70 local councils endorsed this demand, and others wrote directly to the National Council. But the labour bureaucrats dragged their feet.

Labour Party politics

The Labour leaders directed Council of Action policy on Russia away from industrial boycotts into diplomacy. They refused to make Ireland an issue for the movement, referring dissident local councils to other Labour Party bodies such as the Commission of Inquiry then in progress (see *Ireland's victory means Britain's defeat*, Revolutionary Communist Pamphlets No 7, 1980). However the final triumph of the bureaucrats lay not in imposing their moderate tactics on the militants but in dictating the *politics* of Council of Action campaigns.

The official labour movement justified its opposition to intervention in Russia, not on the grounds of sympathy for Bolshevism, but in the name of pacifism and financial expediency. The bureaucrats appealed to popular war weariness after the carnage of 1914-1918 and to fears of conscription. They pointed out that money spent on a new war would be better spent on housing.

The leaders of the labour movement argued that British interests would be best served by recognising Soviet Russia and extending trade. This was a view which prevailed in bourgeois circles too. The labour bureaucracy's protests at British intervention in Russia was thus not motivated by anti-imperialist politics but by a concern that British imperialism pursue the course that would bring the most benefits in the long term. This was the outlook that pervaded the Councils of Action.

On Ireland the labour bureaucracy adopted a similar approach. It opposed military oppression because it was expensive, ineffective and, internationally, an embarrassment to Britain. Official Labour Party policy called for a British political initiative to bring the War to an end and devolve some governmental powers to Ireland. The Labour leadership supported 'self-determination' for Ireland only insofar as this was consistent with the maintenance of the British Empire.

The Labour leadership took it upon itself to 'educate' the rank and file in the facts of life. Every call for action was met with the response: 'be realistic'. This was how one bureaucrat on the National Council dismissed the call for direct action from Lancashire early in 1921:

> 'It will be interesting to know what the real opinion of your rank and file in Leigh is regarding a "Down Tools" policy on Ireland, or even on Russia at the present moment. I do venture to suggest that while feeling was strong in August last when open warfare and the possible re-imposition of conscription seemed imminent, there is nothing like the same feeling in existence now: that is obvious to anyone who knows the facts, and unfortunately the National Movements have to be governed by facts and not by theories.' (Letter to E Ward, 4 February 1921)

A movement disarmed

By the end of 1920 the Councils of Action became inactive; in 1921 they faded away. They did not seriously disrupt Britain's plans for Ireland. Indeed the Partition of Ireland *won almost unanimous backing from the working class.*

Cynical bourgeois commentators have used the collapse of the Councils to 'prove' that anti-imperialist sentiment did not exist in the working class. But the Councils of Action would never have been formed without widespread solidarity with the Russian Revolution; the call for extension of their activities to include Ireland showed the strength of workers' opposition to British domination.

The labour bureaucrats were forced to endorse the Councils of Action because of the depth of anti-imperialist feeling in the working class. However, they were able to dominate the movement politically and so contain it. Militants at local level could not challenge the reformist politics with which the Labour leaders imbued the Councils of Action. Even veteran Clydeside anti-imperialist John Maclean was affected by the reactionary views of the labour bureaucracy. As secretary of the Glasgow unemployed committee he demanded self-determination for Ireland 'as a further means of increasing trade and employment'.

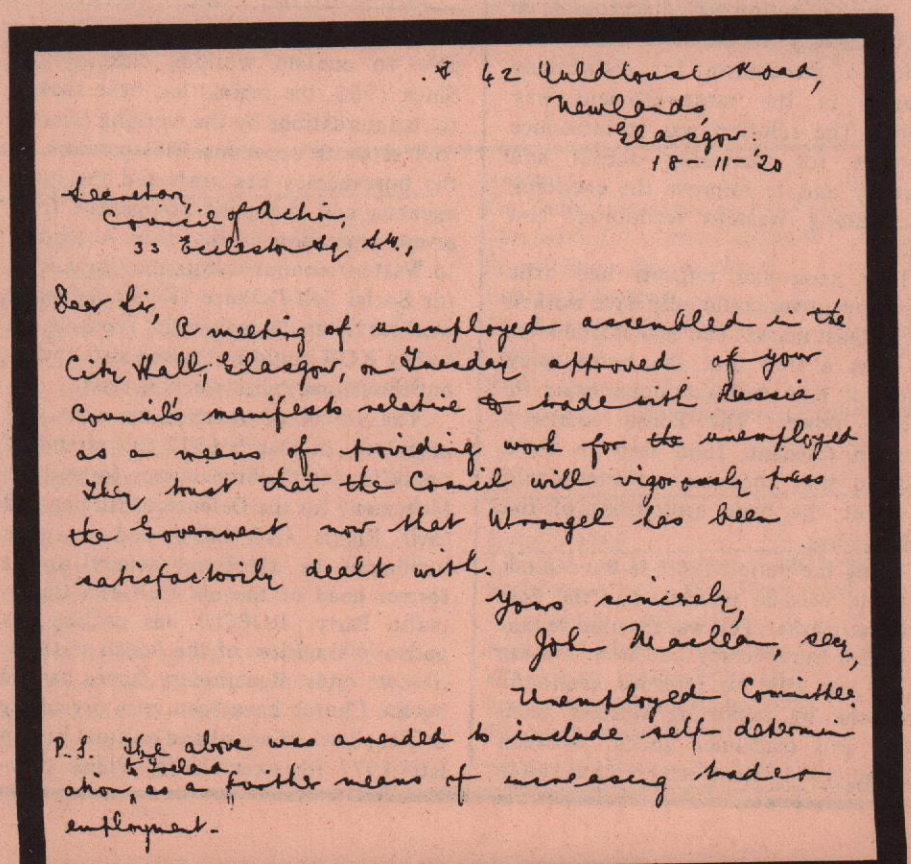
Unemployment in capitalist society can only be fought by fighting against the capitalist system; appeals for a different national trade policy only obscure and weaken this focus. Maclean's adaptation to the politics of the bureaucracy on the crucial issues of Russia and Ireland exemplified the reasons why the Councils of Action met the fate they did. The leadership of the rank and file lacked the political independence to mobilise workers against the policy of the labour bureaucracy. As a result the labour leadership was able to defuse the anti-imperialist potential of the British working class. The Labour Party got its way.

Down with Labourism!

Today the RCT sees no reason to make overtures to the Labour Party over Ireland. Indeed, Labour's current 'campaigns' on Ireland are just as, if not more, reactionary in content as those of the Labour Party of 1920 and 1921. The Labour Committee on Prison Conditions in Northern Ireland, the Labour Committee on Ireland, and all the other bodies that enjoy Labour support – the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland, Charter 80, and the forthcoming demonstration in November – only seek to reform imperialist oppression in Ireland.

The Councils of Action provide inspiration for anti-imperialists today. But they also provide a warning! Unless a struggle is waged against the labour leadership the anti-imperialist potential of the working class will not be realised. Tameside Trades Council has shown how it can start to be realised and how the TUC and Labour Party will react to this. Remember the demise of the Councils of Action – kick Labour Party politics out of the working class movement!

Kate Marshall



42 Guildhouse Road,
Newlands,
Glasgow.
10-11-'20

Secretary,
Council of Action,
33 Bedford Sq. WC1.

Dear Sir,
A meeting of unemployed assembled in the City Hall, Glasgow, on Tuesday approved of your Council's manifesto relative to trade with Russia as a means of providing work for the unemployed. They trust that the Council will vigorously press the Government now that Wrangel has been satisfactorily dealt with.

Yours sincerely,
John Maclean, Secy,
Unemployed Committee.

P.S. The above was amended to include self-determination for Ireland as a further means of increasing trade & employment.

A bad British joke

The sad record of the British left on the Irish War is well known to readers of the next step. Throughout the last 11 years, the left has avoided the crucial question of the imperialist war against the Irish people. Instead it has publicised secondary questions such as the brutal consequences of the War and the unfairness of British rule. Charter 80 is the latest stunt designed to appeal to liberal sentiment rather than working class interests.

Liberals of the world unite!

'Liberals of every hue are rightly outraged at the imprisonment of political dissidents in the Soviet Union. The Tories make as much political capital out of their plight as they can. But when it comes to Ireland, they not only remain silent, but are themselves implicated in the perpetuation of gross inhumanity.'
(*Socialist Worker*, 9 August 1980)

'Yes, liberals are rather indifferent to Ireland' reasons *Socialist Worker*. But what, it wonders, if liberals didn't have to worry about the *war of national liberation* being waged against their own British state – what if they just had to worry about 'dissidents' languishing in British prisons, rather than anti-imperialist fighters? Just imagine – human rights and dissidents; the war in Ireland turned into a human interest story. Surely, *Socialist Worker* feels, the liberals will buy that?

And so the SWP created Charter 80. In June 1980 a leaflet was written. This was what the world was informed:

'Dear friend,

In view of the international concern for human rights, and the struggle of "political dissidents" throughout the world, it is vital that we examine the position of Irish "dissidents" who are held as prisoners as a result of the current political conflict in Northern Ireland.'
(*Charter 80: Human rights for Irish political prisoners*)

Charter 80's message was delicate. Everybody who backed it knew that the non-existent 'international concern for human rights' it invoked was merely a phase for Washington's propaganda offensive against the Soviet Union. 'Irish "dissidents" ' was OK too – a good way of obscuring the fact that the inhabitants of Armagh and the H-Blocks are prisoners of war. And 'the current political conflict in Northern Ireland' – what a nice touch, what a nice way of describing Britain's war of oppression. All in all, a very palatable presentation.

A sick joke

the next step has no reason to go along with this reactionary charade. But for any genuine anti-imperialist who is still taken in by this campaign, a number of points should be stated.

Charter 80 wants Irish political prisoners to achieve five goals:

1) The right to wear their own clothes
2) The right to refrain from prison work
3) The right to free association amongst themselves
4) The right to organise their own educational and recreational facilities, and receive one visit, one letter and one parcel a week
5) The right to full remission of sentences.

Charter 80 explicitly rejects the struggle of Irish prisoners for prisoner of war status. Charter 80 does not support the right of the Irish people to determine their future. This campaign does not oppose British imperialism – indeed it never mentions the word. Anything that will offend an earnest anti-Soviet liberal Charter 80 rules out of court.

The SWP knows this and justifies its reaction by stating that this is what the Irish people want: 'Charter 80, Human Rights for Irish Political Prisoners, supports and campaigns for the demands raised by the prisoners themselves' (*Socialist Worker*, 9 August 1980). This is plain dishonest. If an Irish prisoner is regularly beaten up and simply demands that all beatings cease, that is understandable. But for socialists in Britain to stop at demanding an end to the beatings and say that that's what prisoners want is nothing but a cynical cover-up for their failure to support the struggle for national liberation. *Charter 80 uses the plight of the prisoners for its own opportunist ends.*

Charter 80's dishonesty does not end there. *The 'demands raised by the prisoners themselves' include that for prisoner of war status and for freedom for Ireland. Charter 80 refuses to mention these* – let alone agree to them. A fine tribute to the prisoners' heroism!

Charter 80 and its pals

The energy and resources that the SWP has devoted to Charter 80 stand in sharp contrast to its passivity regarding the disaffiliation of Tameside Trades Council. In recent months the SWP leadership has done everything to ignore Tameside and to discourage its membership from actively supporting the campaign for reaffiliation.

This is not surprising. The politics of Tameside Trades Council are directed towards the British working class, the only class that has an interest in the defeat of British imperialism. That's why this campaign is anti-imperialist in the real sense of the term. It gives full support for the national liberation struggle and establishes clear opposition to the British state – something that doesn't go down too well with the Hampstead and Islington set.

The politics of the SWP, on the other hand, are directed towards the liberals and other fine fellows. In looking for respectability once again, the SWP has forgotten the interests of the British working class and the Irish people.

Who's the extremist now?

The *Morning Star* fully supports Charter 80. That's why we weren't surprised by its reaction to the call made in the 12 August edition of the *Daily Mirror* for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. This is what it said:

'Yesterday the *Daily Mirror* repeated its call for the British government to announce a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland "and let the people there decide their own future". A good sentiment but one which leaves a lot else unsaid.' (*Morning Star*, 13 August 1980)

Like the SWP, the *Star* backs the 'sentiment' of self-determination for the Irish. But it's quite clear what it means by this: 'we have never been stupid enough to think that a British withdrawal means simply getting out the British troops'.

Get it? Withdrawal doesn't mean getting the troops out. In fact, to believe that withdrawal means withdrawal is 'stupid'.

In their desperate attempts to appeal to the British public the left wing groups adapt more and more to popular prejudices. The Communist Party ends up accusing the bourgeois press of being extremist.

Pat Roberts

Bringing the War to Brighton...

CHANGE TUC IRISH POLICY!

ONLY ONE demonstration disrupted the torpor of this year's Trades Union Congress at Brighton. Over 100 supporters of Tameside Trades Council marched through the town to the conference where they held a lively protest and lobby. Representatives of some of the scores of trade union branches and trades councils that have upheld Tameside's stand against the TUC came to protest: some brought their banners. (For the background to Tameside's disaffiliation from the TUC see *the next step*, No 4).

The lobby of the TUC and the fringe meeting that followed emphasised Tameside's political threat to Len Murray and the rest: its unconditional support for the national liberation struggle in Ireland and its call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. The fringe meeting was attended by around 60 people, including several TUC delegates. Tameside Trades Council secretary Dave Hallsworth insisted on the value of the slogan 'Bring the War to Britain' in indicating an unequivocal working class stand on the Irish War.

Speaking for the RCT, Mike Freeman said that the Tameside disaffiliation had shown where the TUC really stood on Ireland. The widespread support for Tameside in the labour movement showed the potential for a direct challenge to the official trade union movement's Irish policy of a Bill of Rights and a 'Better Life for All'. Now we have to carry forward the work begun by Tameside to transform labour movement policy on the Irish War. This will be the central focus of the Smash the PTA Campaign in the coming months.

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.
Rates: £1 individual
£5 trades council or organisation
£10 national organisation

... and Blackpool

1 October: **SPTAC lobby of Labour Party conference; public meeting** in evening – 7.30pm at Blackpool Hotel & Guesthouse Association, 87a Coronation St. Speakers: Sabena Norton (RCT), Dave Hallsworth.



Nottingham TOM tells it like it is

An article entitled 'ultra-leftism' published in the latest bulletin put out by Nottingham TOM explains clearly why the radical left has reacted so strongly against the RCT's slogan 'Bring the War to Britain':

'The "Bring the War to Britain" slogan certainly is provocative. So again is any slogan which takes a firm anti-imperialist position. But the only reason it has been called "ultra-left" is because the left is moving so far to the right.'

Perhaps other TOM supporters would like to comment.

SOCIALIST PRESS ★
weekly paper of the Workers Socialist League

In need of an interpreter

A resolution calling for the 'immediate reaffiliation of Tameside Trades Council to the TUC' was carried 19 votes to 8 at Hull Trades Council. So far, so good. Unfortunately the supporters of *Socialist Press* chose to 'support' Tameside by arguing that the slogan 'Bring the War to Britain' was 'dangerous': it was, they said, 'open to misinterpretation' (*Socialist Press*, 6 August 1980).

Just what 'misinterpretation' *Socialist Press* fears is not stated. What's the problem, comrades? Don't tell us that the slogan could be read as a repudiation of the armed struggle against British imperialism. Don't tell us that it fails to express unambiguous defence of Irish freedom fighters and uncompromising hostility to Labour Party policy on Ireland.

The RCT has no fear of being misunderstood. The National Front, the TUC and the Labour, Communist and New Communist Parties all got the message loud and clear and took no time to denounce the slogan.

FIVE PAGES ON

UNEMPLOYMENT

Two million on the dole. Ten years ago it would have been unthinkable; even five years ago it would have been dismissed as an extremist fantasy. Now it's the central sombre reality of British society in crisis. The economic experts dispute the causes of the recession and argue over the solutions, but on one thing they are agreed: unemployment will stay above the two million mark for the foreseeable future.

The British ruling class needs unemployment. To survive the recession it needs to rationalise production, drive down wages and force people to work harder in worse conditions. Employers are fearful of the social instability that mass unemployment might cause but they know no other way to save their profits. And for them it's so far so good: they are amazed how little resistance their offensive on the working class has encountered.

For that the bourgeoisie can thank the leadership of the labour movement. James Callaghan and Len Murray put the survival of British industry first: they have no alternative but to acquiesce to the lengthening dole queues that this demands. Labour Party and trade union leaders can only rail against the callous and inhuman style of the Tory Government. They cannot fight to defend jobs.

In this five page special feature on unemployment we look at the problem from the viewpoint of the working class. On this page we look at their superficial explanations of the crisis and show what really lies behind inflation, high interest rates and the other features of the economy today. On page 7 we enter the shady world of unemployment figures. The centre pages deal with the divisions in the working class that unemployment deepens – and the divisive strategy of the TUC bureaucrats.

Two ways of coping with the recession have gained widespread popularity in the labour movement over the last few years. One is the call for import controls popularised by the Communist Party. Another is schemes of 'alternative production' such as that pioneered by shop stewards at Lucas Aerospace. On page 10 we review caustically the CP's latest apology for its chauvinist policies. And we examine recent developments at Lucas where the union officials' concern to devise ways of maintaining the viability of the firm has led first to acceptance of voluntary redundancy and then to more redundancies, plant closures and the recent acceptance of a cut in real wages.

Our conclusion is simple. Every job must be fought for. That struggle begins with the fight against all the policies of the official labour movement that tie workers' employment to the viability of the company and the national economy.

THE REASONS WHY

'You're pricing yourselves out of a job', the Government tells us – and the worst part of it is that Thatcher & Co are winning the argument. Union after union is settling for wage increases of only 10 per cent or so, in conditions when workers need twice that just to get by. Below, we look at how to retaliate.

WHAT THE TORIES SAY is this. Everybody knows that if you ask too much money for something you've got to sell, you won't find a market for it. Well, that's what workers are doing right now. They're asking for too much. So they find people won't employ them. Result: two million on the dole.

'Common sense', therefore, shows that it is the workers themselves who are responsible for today's levels of unemployment. Politically this means that every demand for higher wages will only make matters worse for workers. The Tories contend that attempts to defend living standards act against workers' interests – that the best way to stay at work is to accept a cut in pay.

But it's not just the Tories who use this logic. The Labour Party does too, and Margaret Thatcher knows it. This is how she crushed Jim Callaghan in the Commons debate on unemployment on 22 July:

> 'I recognise he is concerned, as I am concerned, about the increase in unemployment over this 14 month period. I must remind him that this is not the largest increase in unemployment between a May of one year and July of the next year. The largest increase in unemployment came between May 1975 and July 1976 when unemployment rose by 613,000 or 72 per cent.
>
> Shortly after that, Mr Callaghan went to the Labour Party conference and said simply and unequivocally: "Unemployment is caused by paying ourselves more than the value of goods produced". That was true then; it is true now.' (Loud Conservative cheers.)

Indeed, just seven weeks before, Callaghan himself told the special Labour Party conference that he wanted 'a more direct relationship between wages and productivity' (*The Times*, 2 June 1980) – that is, he wanted to 'reduce unemployment' by paying workers what he considered they were worth and nothing more.

Alright, so Callaghan wants us to make sacrifices. That's no surprise. But what has the Labour left got to say? Nothing! The only time it raised its voice in the parliamentary discussion on the jobless was to cheer Tory MP Nicholas Winterton when he made a call for selective import controls. Otherwise it was completely silent.

The Labour left cannot combat Thatcher's view that higher wages lead to unemployment. *Tribune* says nothing about the matter. Nowadays it doesn't even bother to try the old line that higher wages stimulate demand for the products of industry and so benefit the economy. Instead, it moans on about the bill 'the taxpayer' has to foot to maintain the unemployed. This spurs Thatcher on in her drive to deny strikers social security benefits and to force the jobless to do 'voluntary' work ('£5,350 million: the yearly cost of 2 million workers on the dole', *Tribune*, 18 July 1980).

Both Tory and Labour parties say: tighten your belts or lose your livelihoods. The RCT rejects this. We say that workers must fight by any means necessary to *improve* their living standards. And, unlike the radical left, we are able to show how to begin this process by destroying the influence of capitalist ideas on the shop floor. We can do this because we have a scientific, working class view of the relation between wages and unemployment based on *Marx's theory of the capitalist crisis*.

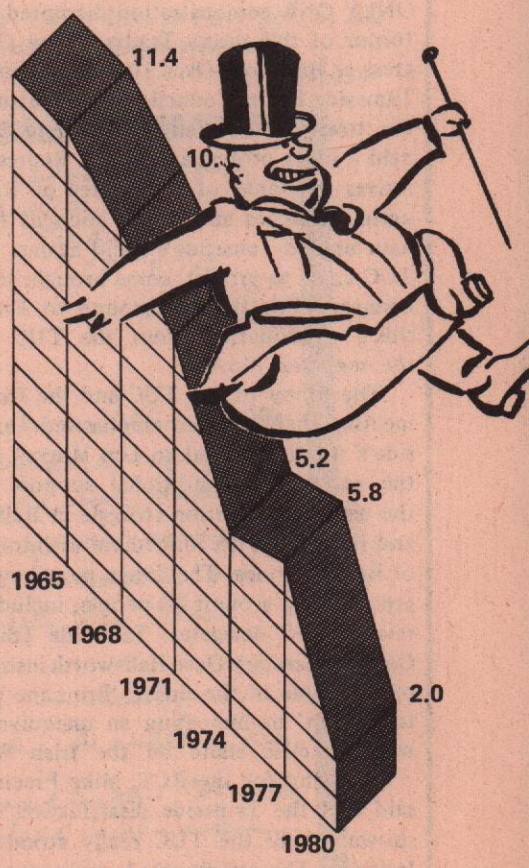
A bankrupt system

Capitalism has to go on raising productivity to survive. As Thatcher says of the recession, 'It is no earthly good looking for some miracle formula. There is not any except increasing productivity' (*The Times*, 23 July 1980). The *snag* about capitalism is that the system by which the ruling class economically exploits the working class makes each increase in productivity harder to achieve than the last.

To raise productivity is, obvious enough, to automate production. That requires replacing workers with machines. But machines cannot produce profit; only workers do that. Raising productivity therefore means exploiting fewer workers for a given outlay of capital – it means a lower rate of profit. And a lower rate of profit ensures that it's all the more difficult to finance further investment in machinery. The apparatus grinds to a halt: productivity cannot be pushed up.

There is a tendency intrinsic to capitalism for the rate of profit to fall. It is *intrinsic* because it is a direct expression of the fact that capitalism is production for profit. It is also intrinsic in the sense that every contemporary economic phenomenon is merely a symptom of it:

- what the bosses experience as the *rate of return on investment* declines with the falling rate of profit (see graph; *Financial Times*, 2 August 1980). Manufacturing output in the first half of this year was 4.5 per cent lower than in 1979 (*British Business*, 22 August 1980)
- the *export of capital* soars, as investors send their money to more profitable investment sites abroad. Last year private direct investment overseas shot up to a record total of £2.8 billion (*Economic Trends*, June 1980)
- *inflation* rates tend to rise as profit rates fall. Faced with tighter profit margins, every capitalist tries to raise his prices to avoid profits disappearing altogether. Record inflation reflects record low profitability
- the *money supply* has to expand to allow those higher prices to be realised. Even super-monetarist Chancellor Howe could not stop it growing by an unprecedented five per cent in July and a further three per cent in August, making his annual growth rate target of between seven and 11 per cent look unreachable. Cutting the money supply may reduce inflation, but it will make the crisis all the more apparent
- *bankruptcies* multiply as firms fail to make ends meet. Company liquidations are now running at the rate of 120 a week, higher than at any time since 1945 (*Financial Weekly*, 18 July 1980). Strapped for cash, surviving companies seek more *bank loans* – now running at about £3 billion a year (*Sunday Times*, 11 August 1980). *Interest rates* will stay high as long as companies still rush to the



Behind unemployment – the falling rate of profit.

banks for cash

● the *pound* rises against other currencies as money-capital pours into British banks from abroad to take advantage of high interest rates. The prices of foreign goods makes them more attractive to British buyers; *import penetration* of the British market increases. The success of Japanese cars against British ones is the most topical example of this: it reflects the fact that the profitability of the British car industry is too low to enable it to afford investment in advanced production processes (robots)

● the *Public Sector Borrowing Requirement* remains uncontrolled. As the rate of profit falls, private industry cannot bear the burden of taxation on its profits. Less revenue is available to fund spending by local authorities and nationalised industries as the economy contracts. The Government imposes *cash limits* on state expenditure, but finds town halls exceeding them and state corporation chiefs protesting them (witness the 'bitterness' of resigned Post Office and BSC chairmen Barlow and Villiers, as well as the cap-in-hand antics of the Coal Board's Ezra and BL's Edwardes). The PSBR for 1980/81 looks set to exceed the Government's forecast figure of £8.4 billion by £1 billion or so.

As this brief survey of its effects shows, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall is, as Marx observed, 'the most important law of modern political economy'. How does it explain what's happening to unemployment and wages – and what about the link between the two?

It's us or them

Low profitability leads to low investment, which in turn leads to fewer new jobs. More than that: as capital accumulation on a world scale slows down – because the rate of profit falls globally – markets contract. 'Investment' thus moves from the expansion of productive capacity to *rationalisation* and *plant closures*, so adding to the redundancies caused by companies going into receivership. At the same time, such enterprises that can afford it *buy in new technology* to cut production costs and save on wage bills, so shedding more labour. This is what the dispute at *The Observer* was all about.

Now, the rate of profit falls quite independently of whether wages rise. But if the bosses can depress workers' wages they will – it will help them restore profitability. Unemployment helps them in this, for it disciplines those workers who are able to hang onto their jobs into accepting lower pay. Nor does it stop there. As a remarkably candid centrepage article in the *Financial Times* recently made clear, unemployment in the West Midlands has not only forced 20 000 Talbot workers to take a miserable eight per cent rise; management at BL Longbridge is now in a position to shift labour from track to track at will ('West Midlands bosses find they have the upper hand', *Financial Times*, 9 July 1980).

The biggest rise any worker can expect today will be nothing compared with the extra work expected of him. Wage rises do not precipitate the crisis: the bosses only concede them when they can squeeze higher productivity and more surplus-value out of our labour. Workers are not pricing themselves out of a job. It is capital, the employers and their state that are compelling workers to take home less money in their pay packets and putting people out of work.

In 1980 the maintenance of workers' jobs and living standards involves a struggle against the capitalist system itself. It requires a ruthless exposure of the class collaborators of the Labour Party and all the villains who spread Thatcher's 'miracle formula' of higher productivity among the trade unions. Now more than ever the best form of defence is attack.

unemployment

The big lie

UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

'Figures on unemployment', says the Department of Employment's monthly Gazette, now 'attract attention that is matched by few other statistical series issued by the Government' (May 1980). It's not hard to see why; scratch the surface and it's also not that hard to see how the Government fiddles the statistics for the jobless – just as it tampers with the figures for the Retail Price Index.

You don't count

To be registered as unemployed, a worker has both to sign on *and* be judged 'capable' of and 'available' for work (*Gazette*). Given that signing on usually means queueing for hours in decrepit old buildings, it's not surprising that nearly a third of a million people don't bother to. Most of them would get little more than a few pounds if they did. Why? They're women – women whose welfare entitlement is 'negligible' (*Gazette*, May 1980).

What about the capability/availability criterion? It looks like it's about to be applied more ruthlessly. At present, the Government disqualifies 7000 workers a year from benefit because they have refused jobs 'without good cause'. Those workers can still stay registered as unemployed – but the Government has this question 'under review'. So if you turn down a job with lousy pay and conditions you may soon be deemed 'incapable' or 'unavailable' and thus disappear from the register.

Even if you do get on the register, you may not show up in the jobless total. If you can only find part-time work, if you've been laid off by your employer, if you're ill or injured through being driven too hard at work, if you're a student unable to find a holiday job – or if employers won't take you on because you're severely disabled – you're a 'special case': you're not unemployed 'in the ordinarily understood sense' (*Gazette*). You join the 35 000 part-time women workers and 65 000 others who fall into this category.

As the crisis intensifies, more and more women will be forced to take part-time jobs (see 'Danger for women at work', *the next step*, No 5, June/July 1980). Lay-offs will rise as overcapacity grows. So will industrial diseases and accidents as the bosses drop health and safety measures and attempt to force through speed-up. Holiday jobs for students will vanish. And employers will be even less willing to recruit the handicapped when able-bodied workers are two a penny. So we can expect that sub-total of 100 000 'special case' workers to increase.

Total so far: 300 000 (unregistered) + 100 000 (registered, but not unemployed as far as the government is concerned) = 400 000.

Have you been adjusted?

The chicanery doesn't end there. Another trick is to 'adjust' the unemployment figures to exclude school leavers – always a bugbear for bourgeois economists when the summer term ends.

Now, the *minimum* level of school leaver unemployment is reached every spring. In March, for instance, it was 31 800 (*Gazette*, July 1980). So adjusting the unemployment figures for school leavers *automatically* knocks 30 000 off the records. But when the Government adjusted them in July, it got rid of no less than 300 000. Not bad! And useful, too, as more and more youngsters leaving school are denied jobs.

Total so far: 400 000 adults + 30 000 young people = 430 000.

The missing million

As if this wasn't enough, genuine unemployment is masked by the effects of the Government's much-trumpeted Job Creation Programme, Temporary Employment Subsidy and Small Firms Employment Subsidy. These keep workers off the streets by giving them low-paid, shaky jobs where unionisation is almost impossible. For workers they're a con: for the Government they keep the numbers unemployed down by another 200 000 (*Gazette*).

Still not satisfied? Then remember the workers who've been put on short-time. In May employers representing 111 000 workers applied for state hand-outs under the Government's Temporary Short-Time Working Compensation Scheme. Yes, 111 000 – and that doesn't include the thousands of workers who are on short-time but whose employers haven't used the Scheme.

Grand total: 430 000 unregistered adults, registered but 'special case' adults and school leavers + 200 000 workers on Government-distributed peanuts + 111 000 workers on short-time = *741 000*. And that's a minimum: turn March's 30 000 school leavers into July's 300 000 and *the number of people in Britain who have no job to speak of or no job at all, but who don't appear in the unemployment statistics, is one million.*

Is it all a big conspiracy? Not really: the missing million is missing because of the class nature of capitalist accounting, not because of a few bureaucrats with crooked calculators. Nor are the official figures merely a Conservative estimate, for Labour was just as good at cooking the books when it was in power.

The real point about the missing million is that it isn't just passed over in the ledgers of the bourgeoisie. The official labour movement passes it over too. Part-time women workers, the disabled, school leavers, the isolated and disorganised 'under-employed' – they get no backing from the TUC. *We must give them our support*. By fighting for their jobs, wages and conditions, workers still in employment will be doing themselves a favour. They will be building unity in the working class: something which the labour bureaucracy talks about, but which only independent politics can provide.

RACAL
Profits vs jobs

EARLY IN AUGUST Racal Electronics announced that its small boat radar systems factory in Battersea would have to close with the loss of 200 jobs. Another 150 marine radar jobs would also have to go at its New Malden plant.

Is Racal in trouble? Not at all. In the last 10 years Racal shares have risen by more than 2000 per cent – faster than any other British company (*Management Today*, June 1980). With a turnover of £260m, Racal is one of the 10 most profitable firms in Britain (*Business Week*, 18 August 1980).

In fact Racal is so successful that it was able, for a cool £100m, to buy up one of its biggest rivals – Decca – in February this year. And it just so happens that Decca used to run the two factories that will be sending 350 more workers to the dole queues this autumn. It doesn't matter that Racal turned in £60m-worth of profits last year: Decca isn't pulling its weight, so Decca workers will have to suffer. As Racal's chairman and managing director Ernest T Harrison OBE put it in the Racal group's annual report:

'The biggest task confronting us is at Racal-Decca where everyone is working extremely hard to restore this company to its former greatness. . . .but the fact remains that recent years have shown a marked deterioration in the performance of Decca.'

The world recession means that high company profits are no guarantee of workers' livelihoods. Profit or loss, it's always workers vs bosses to save jobs.

Young, gifted ...but black

AS UNEMPLOYMENT RISES blacks are hit harder than most. At Unemployment Benefit Offices and Jobcentres in all of Britain's major cities, more and more young black people are signing on and looking for work. In May, 285 of the 540 16 to 18 year olds registered as unemployed in Lambeth, South London, were black. That's more than half of all unemployed youths in the area, whereas blacks account for roughly a quarter of Lambeth's population (*The Times*, 18 July 1980). A recent survey conducted in Wolverhampton, Manchester and Liverpool showed that, despite the fact that two-thirds of blacks had some qualification on leaving school compared with only one-third of white school leavers, young blacks spent nearly half their time out of work, compared with 27 per cent for whites (*The Times*, 11 August 1980).

These figures provide only part of the picture. Comparison of census figures with the officially registered unemployed shows that, much more than whites, West Indians and Asians simply don't bother to sign on to get their paltry social security money. Black unemployment is far higher than Her Majesty's Central Statistical Office suggests.

The most rapid increase in black unemployment has taken place over the last year. From May 1979 to May this year it rose by 26 per cent compared with a 16 per cent increase in total unemployment. This is a direct result of the latest downturn in the British economy. In the two years before February 1979 ethnic minority youth unemployment fell by 7.5 per cent, from 19 300 to 17 900. This drop, however, was only temporary. It happened for two reasons. First, employers whose businesses were given a respite by the upturn in economic activity took on young blacks – at lower wages than unionised workers, and safe in the knowledge that blacks could be laid off again with ease when things got worse. Second, the decrease was brought about by the recruitment of young blacks to Manpower Services Commission special projects, 'self-help organisations' and 'work experience' schemes. These usually last for up to one year; then you're back on the dole. This is exactly what happened in the last 12 months.

As the recession has tightened its grip on the economy, so have hundreds of black workers lost their jobs. In Bradford, for example, the decline in the textile industry has decimated the town's black night shifts. One mill after another has dismissed its predominantly Asian workforce. Where cuts have been successfully implemented it's often the blacks who go first.

With this summer's school leavers thrown into the pool of unemployed workers, unemployed blacks and black school leavers have even less of a chance to find work. Most have little prospect of working for months, even years, to come. In Lambeth, for example, there were 855 young people registered as unemployed in June, 65 per cent more than a year ago. They are chasing after 135 registered vacancies, 30 per cent down on last year.

Slavery days

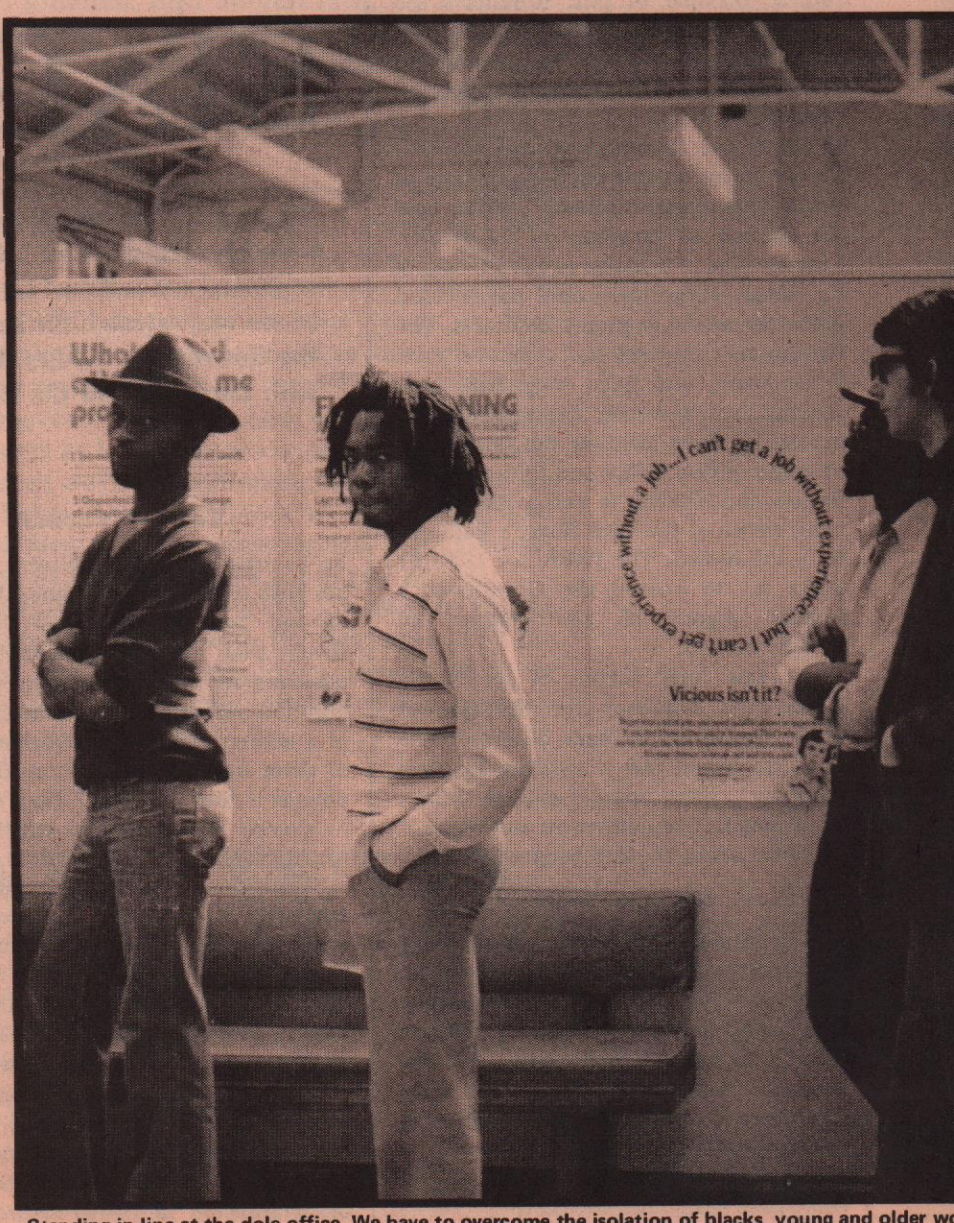
In line with the bourgeoisie's attempts to blame the working class for rising unemployment, it has recently renewed the ideological offensive against black youth. Black youngsters are without a job, the story goes, not because they face systematic and widespread discrimination from employers, or because the industries they have traditionally found work in have now collapsed, but because they're too proud or too lazy. *The Times* recently reported a survey of Low Hill, Wolverhampton; here, it claimed,

> 'the ambitions of young blacks were less realistic given the job market, although quite reasonable given their qualifications. Unlike the Low Hill whites, few were willing to accept any job, and not one was prepared to work for "any pay above the dole". Most said they wanted at least £35 to £40 a week.' (11 August 1980)

If young blacks only want work which is 'reasonable given their qualifications', if they refuse to be shoved into jobs with appalling conditions and 'any pay above the dole', then we support them 100 per cent. Forcing the unemployed into low paid jobs, slave labour in hospitals and 'community service' is a central part of the ruling class offensive. It is used to weaken and divide the working class. It must be resisted by the labour movement as a whole.

Still, refusing to take a poorly paid job is only a short term solution. The enormous pressure of two million unemployed is a powerful lever on the working class. If it is to be fought effectively, the strongest and best organised sections of the labour movement must begin to defend the most vulnerable.

photo: the next step



Standing in line at the dole office. We have to overcome the isolation of blacks, young and older wo

IMMIGRATION CONTROLS MEAN REDUNDANCIES

THE TRADE UNION movement's toleration of immigration controls helps employers force through redundancies. This is how it worked at the Edmonton Main Gas factory, where police, out to catch illegal immigrants, arrested a large number of black workers in a major 'fishing' raid. One of the Ghanaians who was picked up and later deported explained to *the next step*:

> 'A week before the raid, management announced that a number of redundancies were on the cards. The next thing we heard was that we should come to the Personnel Office the next Friday and bring our clocking cards with us. They told us there was going to be a "wage adjustment". When we got there, the police were waiting for us. The company personnel records on us and the Department of Immigration files were spread out on the desk in front of us. Two other blokes on the night shift were dragged out of bed at home and their houses were ransacked by the immigration officials. There's no doubt about it: they were trying to get rid of us first, without having to pay us redundancy money.'

Despite the fact that all the workers were paid-up members of the National Union of Domestic Appliance and General Metal Workers, the union and other shopfloor workers did little to oppose this attack. But the blacks were not the only victims. Within weeks management announced that 200-300 of the remaining factory workers were going to be made redundant.

Workers' acquiescence to immigration raids and deportations allows employers to exploit the division between black and white workers in their onslaught on the working class as a whole.

School-leavers and TUC 'training' schem

Patronising the young

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT is on the up. Fast. And the bourgeoisie is worried about it.

On 10 July, a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, a research body representing 24 of the world's wealthiest capitalist nations) came out forecasting a youth unemployment rate of 14 per cent for Britain in 1981 – almost twice what it was last year. For the USA the prediction was higher still: 16 per cent. And the OECD didn't stop there. Noting that two out of every five teenage women in Italy and France were already out of work, it warned that jobless levels among young people in the Western world were likely to constitute 'a serious social problem' as the recession worsened.

That same day, Shadow Chancellor Denis Healey attacked the Tories for destroying jobs for school leavers. Ever anxious to alert the ruling class when 'it goes too far', the Labour leader followed Enoch Powell in raising the spectre of St Paul's, Bristol, and warned that youths without jobs were 'a time-bomb ticking at the heart of Britain'.

On 30 July a report by the government-run Manpower Services Commission estimated that by January 1982 nearly half a million young people would be jobless. It also observed that 20 000 of the 60 000 young people finishing training courses and 'work experience' schemes under its Youth Opportunities Programme fail to get jobs – yet it called on the state to double the funds made available to the programme to more than £200m a year.

For young people things look bleak. On Merseyside students with A-levels can't get jobs, and 10 per cent of the youth have been unemployed for more than a year. In Sheffield hundreds queued in the street for a single shop assistant's post. In Wales youth unemployment is running at 20 per cent.

Vocational training is, by Continental standards, appalling (in Belgium, for example, 96 per cent of boys and girls receive some kind of post-school training). At several thousand pounds a throw, apprenticeships are too pricey for British industry to afford (there are only 120 000 apprentices in Britain, compared with West Germany's 1.6 million). And the few jobs that are available are lousy ones: a recent study by a bourgeois sociologist of 700 young people in the Midlands and London cited 'boredom', 'dislike of superiors' and 'dissatisfaction with pay' as some of the major reasons why 16 to 20 year-olds leave the jobs they do get (*The Times*, 4 August 1980).

Yet, though they are faced with enormous problems, young people can

Divide and rule at Warrington

Isolated sections of the working class have become easy targets for the employers. But when the ruling class takes advantage of sectional, sexual and racial divisions, it is not just youth and blacks who suffer. Workers in Warrington have been finding out just how these divisons can stifle the resistance of the whole working class.

Soon they'll even stop making vodka in Warrington

Not long ago Warrington was a prosperous new town. Lodged between Manchester and Liverpool, it provided jobs for many unemployed workers from the surrounding cities. But, with the recession, prosperity has become a thing of the past. Out of a population of 90 000 there are 7000 registered unemployed – now joined by 2000 school leavers. Since April, announcements of redundancies, lay-offs and short-time working have become a weekly occurrence. In June and July alone, 3000 workers were put on a three or four day week.

The generation game

With so many out of work the town's employers are confident. Their mouthpiece, the *Warrington Guardian*, sums up the coercive approach they are now adopting. Recently, for example, it argued against travel subsidies to young unemployed. Why? Because 'to hand out subsidies to young people does not really help them at all if it has the effect of stifling initiative':

> 'It is no sufference for a fit, able bodied, young person to walk, jog or cycle to work. Unlike car travel, there can be a sense of accomplishment in so doing.' (1 August 1980)

Naturally, the one area where the bosses encourage 'initiative' is in breaking up workplace organisation. Often management replaces old staff with unemployed young workers. Inexperienced youth will generally work for less, and they've no experience of trade unionism. In this way the wage bill can be reduced and union organisation weakened. And the large pool of unemployed youth is always there, a consistent threat to those still in work.

Divisions, divisions

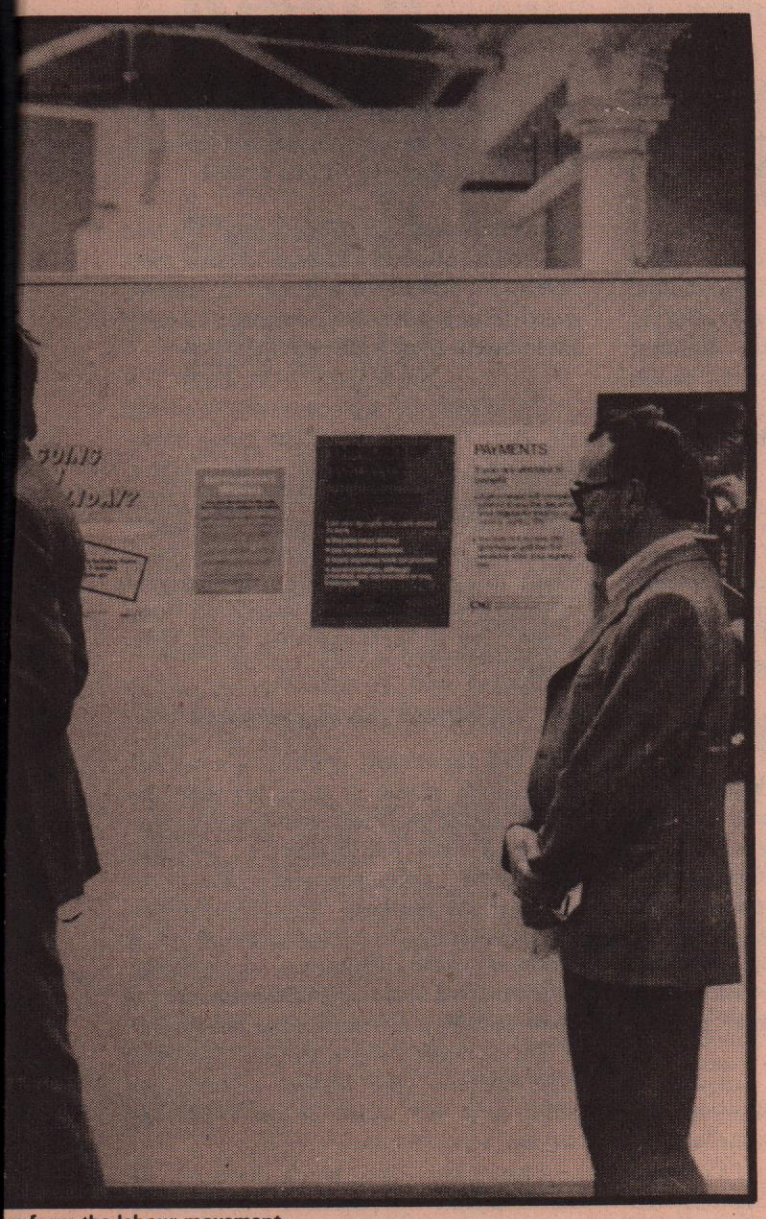
At Peter Stubbs Welding, management had little trouble in dealing with the APEX white collar workers' pay claim. First it ignored the claim for six months; then it offered a 14 per cent rise. When the APEX workers walked out in disgust the employer acted swiftly to isolate them from the rest of the workforce.

APEX members have been on strike since May and still the other unions in the factory give them no support. Delivery vans rarely observe the picket line, always offering the excuse that the strikers are 'only' white collar workers and that they're 'women'. The bosses have a good laugh when they see workers fighting it out among themselves.

With the workforce divided management has all the initiative. Take the wiredrawers' shop steward who attempted to build support for the strikers within Stubbs. He organised collections and forced the trades council to start blacking. Not surprisingly he was suspended for two weeks and eventually sacked. He has joined the growing number of unemployed militants who can't work because the Warrington employers have blacklisted them.

Another example: local officials of the TGWU and AUEW are too busy running a campaign against a proposed new Japanese-owned factory in the area to fight unemployment.

Chauvinist politics of all kinds debilitate the Warrington working class. In recent weeks RCT supporters there have taken up the battle for jobs. Their message: to defend our interests we have to attack the capitalist system and the chauvinist politics that extend the bosses' grip over our future.



...rs from the labour movement.

...es

...unemployed

expect little help from the trade unions. This is another fact the bourgeoisie has noticed. As the OECD puts it: 'the competitive position of young people in the labour market is significantly weaker than that of other age groups' – that is, young people are isolated from the organisations of the labour movement. Even *The Guardian* has been moved to comment on this:

> 'Since the last economic recession, which began in 1973, the trade unions (and nowhere more than in Britain) have traded concessions on the hiring of apprentices and other young workers – dressed up as "productivity bargaining" – to finance wage awards. Many trade unions have simply washed their hands of any responsibility for the lengthening dole queue of teenagers.' (11 July 1980)

Most trade unions were set up to defend their members against all-comers. Not only to get the best terms for their members' exploitation by the bosses, but to act against the threat of cheaper labour – against immigrants, women and children. As far as sectionalism goes, the unions haven't changed since their formation. *Trade unions cannot protect youth from the barbarities of the capitalist crisis*. While socialists in the trade union movement must fight for the unionisation of unemployed youth, they must continually expose the labour bureaucracy's attempts to patronise young people with 'encouragement', 'advice' and 'guidance' about the *entirely bourgeois* 'principles' of official trade unionism.

'Youth Opportunities' – bureaucrats' opportunities

The labour bureaucracy is making these attempts in earnest, as a glance at a TUC pamphlet on youth unemployment, *A chance would be a fine thing*, shows.

A chance... is little more than an advertisement for the Manpower Services Commission and its Youth Opportunities Programme. As Len Murray makes clear in his introduction, the Programme 'is getting the encouragement of the trade union Movement – and not from the sidelines: trade union representatives up and down the country are working on the Programme's Area Boards with representatives of other organisations, and with the MSC, to ensure that the Programme succeeds'. Indeed, as the pamphlet makes clear, even CBI representatives on the MSC *wanted* unions to help manage the Programme.

It's not difficult to see why. The employers are well aware that the TUC has the interests of British capitalism at heart: its plea for more apprenticeships, for instance, is made 'to guard against the nation being short of skilled workers in the future' (*A chance...*). *The bosses want the TUC's local apparatchiks to take the class collaborationist politics of Congress House to young people. They and the TUC are both agreed that the state's 'Youth Opportunities' programme is an excellent vehicle for this.*

Of course the language the TUC and the MSC use to describe the content of the Programme is pedagogical, not political. The MSC says its training courses include 'life-skills instruction' aimed at improving the ability to 'cope with adult life' (*Special Programmes, special needs*, MSC/Commission for Racial Equality, October 1979); the TUC says that 'work experience' schemes lead to 'greater maturity, self-reliance and self-esteem'. But all this is just rubbish. First, the Programme is nothing but an insult to young workers. With only unemployment to look forward to, acquiring 'life skills' will do little to benefit them. 'Self-esteem'? Tell that to the lucky ones on £20 a week; tell them how that differs from Thatcher's campaign to get the young unemployed to do 'voluntary' community work. Second, and more important, all the talk about 'coping with adult society', 'greater maturity' and 'self-reliance' is just another way of saying that youth will be taught to conform to the standards of capitalist society. What all the Government/CBI/TUC initiatives on youth unemployment have in common is the message: *don't* be violent, *don't* abuse the police, *don't* listen to those extremists, *do* go 'by the proper channels'.

The TUC is particularly worried about this last item. It wants young people on MSC schemes to 'enhance their understanding of unions as important and positive forces within our industrial society'. It wants union workplace representatives on MSC courses to 'keep a general eye on the welfare' of the young people on them. And it wants young people 'to take part informally in union activities', but thinks that for unions to insist on membership for young people on 'work experience' courses would be 'unhelpful' (*A chance...*).

Support such as the TUC, the Labour Party and the Communist Party give to the Youth Opportunities Programme is support for the programme of the bourgeoisie – a programme to dampen down unrest among the young unemployed by offering them a few sops. The struggle to win young workers to socialism can only begin if that programme is rejected. No more fake 'training' schemes for youth! Young workers need jobs with pay that gives them a proper standard of living! Full trade union rights for the young unemployed!

Import controls: another way of saying yes to redundancies

WHEN A FACTORY in a small town closes down the need for working class unity is obvious. Witness the opposition of workers in Consett to the closure of the local British Steel plant. Workers living in the same community know each other and understand that redundancies in one plant will throw hundreds on the dole, creating more competition among their ranks for fewer jobs, weaken the unions in other factories and strengthen the hand of the employers.

But when a company with plants throughout Britain closes down one of its operations, this kind of opposition doesn't arise so immediately. It's easy for management and for the union bureaucrats to tell BL workers in Coventry that the closure of a factory in Liverpool is none of their business. Confronted with the choice of 'your job or theirs', class solidarity can often come second.

When workers in other countries are involved the bosses can use international divisions in the working class to good effect. The fear of unemployment can push workers to line up with their bosses against workers abroad. This is exactly what has happened for more than a decade in the British textile industry. For many textile workers the *problem* is cheap imports produced by low paid Asian workers and the *solution* is import controls. Instead of putting defence of the working class first, many have united with their employers to fight foreign competition. As a result they have lost sight of their class interests and made the viability of the textile industry their main concern. It is no longer *us* and *them* but 'we' (that is, workers *and* bosses) against 'the foreigners'. As one despairing textile worker told *the next step*: 'there's no way we can compete against imports from Hong Kong and Taiwan'.

Workers have paid a terrible price for supporting the textile industry against foreign competition. Since 1970, the bosses have forced through 357 000 redundancies in textiles and another 28 000 in hosiery and knitwear – all, of course, in the interests of British industry.

Who bears the responsibility for this state of affairs? The role of the union leaders is well known. They have placed the future of textile workers in the hands of employers. But more important still is the role of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). This organisation has sought to present the chauvinist call for import controls as a progressive working class measure. In a recent article in *Comment* (16 August), CPGB member Pete James develops this line of reasoning to its inevitable – and disgusting – conclusion. He gives a number of reasons to show why British workers shouldn't worry about what happens to workers elsewhere.

Four good Stalinist reasons why foreign workers should lose their jobs

● **'Firstly, wages in the third world make it impossible for British industry to compete.'**

According to James capitalist competition is really competition between low- and high-paid workers. The bosses, of course, love this stupid argument. And they will draw out the CPGB's logic to the full. 'Yes, we can't compete against those low wages, therefore we must lower the wages of British workers in order to compete'. Thank you, Mr James.

● **'Secondly, imports from the third world rarely benefit the local population, they benefit either a wealthy elite or return in profits to wealthy capitalist nations. Hong Kong still has no health service, old age pension, or unemployment pay. . .and is still embarrassed by pictures of child labour.'**

James is upset that imports from Hong Kong do not benefit the 'local population'. Can it be otherwise? Is there one capitalist nation whose exports benefit the local population? Or is he merely saying that, since the people of Hong Kong live in such miserable conditions anyway, it doesn't matter if they lose their jobs?

● **'Thirdly, it can be argued that countries such as Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, the largest clothing and textile producers, should not be considered in the same way as the desperately poor countries, such as Bangladesh, and to give them the same status as the poorest nations prevents more consideration from being given to those poorest countries.'**

The 'wealthy elite' in Hong Kong may be embarrassed by pictures of child labour, but our friend James isn't, all of a sudden. He can forget about them. Instead, the CPGB will do its international duty and give 'more consideration' to the 'poorest' nations. No doubt it will make a free donation of unsold copies of the *Morning Star* to Oxfam.

● **'Lastly, it is not in the interests of any economy to become dependent on one industry, and an export one at that.'**

Do you understand, Hong Kong? It's not in your interest to depend on 'one industry'. The CPGB will fight for import controls and will make sure that you have no industry at all to depend on.

To clinch the argument once and for all, Pete James notes: 'The Hong Kong people are not the customers for the low price clothing made in Hong Kong, they often have to buy more expensive imported clothing'. Now we know – cheap Hong Kong clothes are worn by low-paid British workers and the people of Hong Kong have to make do with Savile Row suits!

Kick out the chauvinists!

The call for import controls is a call for workers to throw in their lot with the bosses and forget their own class interests. It gives the bourgeoisie a powerful ideological weapon with which to paralyse the working class. It transforms the question of redundancies from a *political* issue requiring a political solution, to a *technical* matter that can be dealt with by a different trade policy. But it is even more dangerous than that. Our class enemies (the bosses) become our allies and our class brothers (foreign workers) become our enemies.

Chauvinists like James have to be isolated. Like the priests of old, who told the oppressed to 'resign yourself to your suffering', they tell us to make our peace with the system. Let the bosses worry about imports. We need all our energy to fight for jobs.

THE LOGIC OF 'VOLUNTARY' REDUNDANCY

Lucas Industries is the British motor industry's main supplier of parts. And the British motor industry is in trouble. So, like the company's other divisions, Lucas Electrical is pressing for redundancies. Here's how it's going about it.

ON 4 JUNE, Lucas Electrical announced plans for reducing its workforce from 18 000 to 15 000. To start implementing them, it offered voluntary redundancy to anybody who wanted it. By most standards, severance pay looked generous: £1200 above the legal minimum, with top rates getting on for £5000.

Soon enough Lucas was flooded with almost 1000 requests for voluntary redundancy. Sensing the way these had strengthened their position the bosses went on the offensive.

First, they forced 15 000 Lucas workers to accept a 10 per cent 'non-negotiable' wage rise. Then, in early September, they turned the screws a bit more and announced that 10 000 workers were to be laid off for an 'extended period'. Management added that naturally 'further redundancies could not be ruled out'.

Instead of fighting the employers, the AUEW and TGWU, the main unions on the Joint Shop Stewards Committee (JSSC) at Lucas Electrical, made one concession after another. They concluded an 'understanding' with the employers on the need for more 'job flexibility', and on the need for further discussions about (1) how to 'redeploy' workers within the Lucas Group, and (2) how to 'eliminate' 1000 white-collar jobs (*Birmingham Post*, 18 July 1980). And what did all these compromises achieve? Threats of further redundancies.

Why the debacle? It wasn't the fault of the rank and file. Nor was it even the fault of the workers who asked for their cards. They knew the union officials wouldn't defend them – so they took the easy option. As the local *Birmingham Post* put it:

> 'Some fear that if they do not leave their jobs voluntarily, they will be made compulsorily redundant and face much more competition for the few jobs available elsewhere.' (12 June 1980)

It's the union officials who are selling Lucas workers' jobs down the river. And it's their *politics* which ensure this.

Full-timers in the Midlands make the maintenance of their members' jobs conditional on company profitability. If they believe that the company in question is doing alright, they see a 'case' for doing something about workers' livelihoods. As Birmingham AUEW Divisional Organiser Bill Jordan said at the time the Lucas Electrical union/management 'understanding' was concluded: 'I think the resources of Lucas are such that jobs could be created' (*Birmingham Post*, 18 July 1980). But if the company in question was actually doing badly, would he put up a fight?

Lucas is doing badly. It may have big 'resources', as Jordan suggests; but that isn't the point. A global turnover of £1 billion is no help at all if you just can't find buyers for all those headlamps you've piled up.

In fact the trade union bureaucracy is well aware of this – at Lucas and throughout British industry. It's worldly and realistic enough to know that business isn't too hot these days. So it puts workers' jobs on the line, because that's the only way it can see things getting going again.

We look at the question of jobs differently. We're worldly and realistic enough to know that money's tight for the capitalists. But we know more than that: we know that it's going to *go on* getting tighter – that capitalism has an *in-built* tendency to drive itself to collapse. We therefore take the longer, more far-sighted view. We point out that every concession to the employers made now will lead to more later. We refuse to have workers' jobs linked to the viability (or otherwise) of the firm. We campaign against all redundancies and especially voluntary ones. We down tools in the factories when workers behind desks are threatened with the sack.

At Lucas Electrical, management has got the kind of politics to set about doing what it wants to do in earnest. All workers need, at Lucas and elsewhere, is the kind of politics which will let *them* do what they want to do – defend jobs – in earnest. It's up to socialists to provide those politics.

TUC is redundant

Keep it safe, keep it official

Trade union leaders have developed a safe formula for fighting redundancies. In Congress House they pass militant-sounding resolutions and make rousing speeches. On the ground, union officials wheel and deal to achieve a satisfactory compromise – that is, minimise job losses and minimise loss of face for the full-timers. Thousands of jobs have been sold this way.

The TUC's campaign against unemployment – part of the 'Campaign for Economic and Social Advance' – is a typical Congress House operation. It is no more than a public relations package. First, the TUC proposes a national conference on unemployment at the end of the year. Second, it plans to hold a number of 'regional events'. The format is the one used so effectively to diffuse workers' anger on the 14 May 'Day of Action'. We can expect the same desultory results because, once again, everything will be left up to the regions.

Well, almost everything:

'The General Council will there be undertaking a national Campaign of regional activities on the issue of unemployment. While many of these activities will be planned and carried out at regional and local level, they must fall within the framework of Congress policy, and the Campaign will continue to be under the firm control and leadership of the General Council.' ('Campaign for Economic and Social Advance', *Statement by the TUC General Council*, **July 1980)**

You bet! The campaign will be under 'the firm control' of the TUC. This is what the campaign is all about. The TUC wants to ensure that things don't get out of hand and that it can maintain its hold over the struggle against redundancies.

For the bureaucrats this approach makes a lot of sense. That's because any serious fight against redundancies will have to be directed against the TUC too. The sensible and realistic policies of the TUC are sensible and realistic only from the capitalist point of view. That's why the TUC is on the wrong side in the battle to defend working class jobs and living standards.

No challenge at all

The SWP's Right to Work march to the Tory Party Conference in Brighton promises a lively Tory-bashing jamboree. The SWP is prepared to postpone the struggle against the most immediate enemy, the current leadership of the labour movement, and direct the anger of youth at an easier target – the Tories. Numerous Labour MPs and union bureaucrats keen to demonstrate their concern with the plight of the unemployed, but who take thoroughly reactionary positions on every single political question, are sponsoring the march in an attempt to be seen to be doing something.

Any struggle for the right to work should be supported. But no struggle will be effective if it fails to pose a political challenge to the existing leadership of the working class.

The Right to Work Campaign has nothing to offer to workers on the shop floor. Militants searching for political alternatives to the TUC's programme of economic nationalism will have to look elsewhere. Their time will be better spent fighting Labour's politics than demonstrating against the Tories.

As advertised in the Daily Mirror

EAST LONDON WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

DAILY MIRROR, *Thursday, 21 August 1980*

Freedom from fear

IN THE thirties it was the Jews. Now it is Pakistanis who are the victims of racial violence in London's East End in a wave of thuggery and intimidation.

Many are even afraid to go out to work, as yesterday's report by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Manpower Services Commission showed.

They have good reason for their fear.

Scarcely a week passes without another racial attack. On women and children as well as men. Sometimes in broad daylight.

They are attacked on the streets and in their homes. Air guns are fired at them. They are beaten up. Blazing rags are pushed through their letter boxes. The windows of their shops and clubs are smashed.

Mirror Comment

The danger is that coloured communities and their white sympathisers will take the law into their own hands.

Attack

They are convinced that the police do too little, too late to protect them.

But if vigilante squads start to roam the streets, it will be a disaster for race relations and public order.

By their actions, the police must convince the communities under attack that they are determined to uphold the words of Lord Salmon, spoken 20 years ago when jailing young racialist thugs:

"Everyone, irrespective of the colour of their skins, is entitled to walk through our streets in peace with their heads erect and free from fear."

'Cool it'! The *Mirror* reflects the fears of the Labour leaders.

The *Daily Mirror*, leading Fleet Street supporter of the Labour Party, has heard about racist violence in East London, and about ELWAR. For the *Mirror* the danger is not the racist thugs that roam the streets of East London: *'The danger is that coloured communities and their white sympathisers will take the law into their own hands'*.

Over the past year ELWAR has urged workers to take matters into their own hands. ELWAR argued that fighting racist attacks could not be left to the racist police. We pointed out that workers had to defend black people now and not in the future. In numerous discussions throughout East London we said that workers could not act as an independent force unless they took measures to fight racism. ELWAR's activity has begun to pay off. For the first time the organisational and political framework for fighting racism on a *day to day* basis has been established. A swift response to a couple of racist attacks has had positive results. In Plaistow a group of racist thugs who have been harassing local Asian families have been physically discouraged from pursuing their activities. They now confine themselves to making obscene phone calls.

But that's not all. The very fact that anti-racists were organised and prepared to take action on the streets has terrified the local labour leadership. Labour councillors and MPs have come out from the woodwork. They too want to fight racism – their way. That's why they have been going around 'deploring' racist attacks but warning black people to beware of extremists and promising to take the matter up through the 'correct' channels. Like the *Daily Mirror*, the local Labour politicians want the judiciary to handle the issue.

ELWAR supporters have not been ignoring the judiciary either. Regular pickets of the courts have brought attention to the racist character of British 'justice'. This isn't difficult. Everybody can see that racist thugs get off with a mild reprimand or a light sentence while black militants who defend themselves receive long prison sentences. Indeed it is only Labour politicians and the *Daily Mirror* who still persist in placing their faith in the 'impartial' courts.

Only the beginning

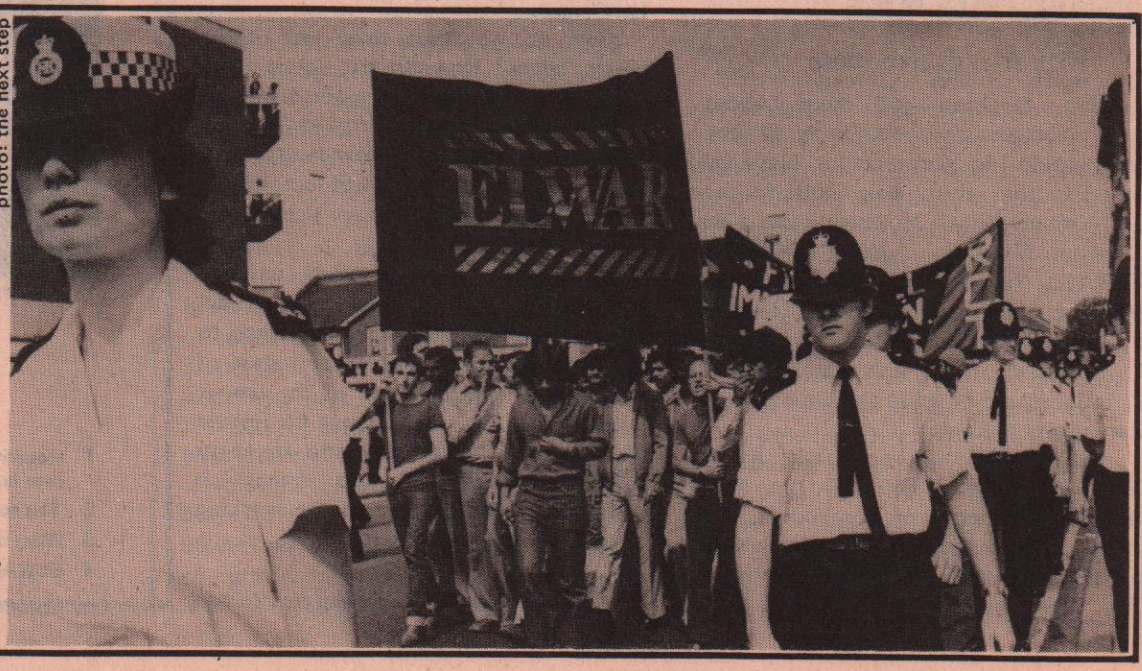
During the past months a number of workers have signed up to join ELWAR. This shows that finally people are beginning to see that racism can be fought not in words but on the streets. One young Asian garment worker said: 'My parents told me not to get mixed up with a bunch of communists. But if communists do what ELWAR does then maybe I should become one'. The same point was emphasised by a town hall employee who recently left the Labour Party. 'What a change. Until recently we fought racism on paper. We passed resolutions and circulated petitions. But ELWAR is really fighting racism – not just physical defence but also taking the anti-racist message into the labour movement'.

But much more needs to be done if the fears of the *Daily Mirror* are to be realised. More resources are needed to respond effectively to racist attacks. More volunteers are needed to man telephones, more cars are needed to come to the aid of victims of racist attacks quickly. There are too many trade union branches where ELWAR's arguments have not been raised and too many shop stewards' committees that have not discussed how they could participate in workers' defence.

We ask our East London readers to take the next step and join ELWAR. Take part in the struggle against racism and become an ELWAR supporter.

Write to:
ELWAR,
c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street,
London E8
or phone: 01-274 3951

photo: the next step



ELWAR steps out on the Newham protest march over the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig.

THE BATTLE FOR WORKERS' DEFENCE

In East London attacks on blacks are multiplying. East London Workers Against Racism is doing something about them. The Labour Party isn't. So ELWAR is also doing something about the Labour Party.

CONTRAST THESE TWO SCENES early one summer evening in Newham, East London.

● On a Canning Town housing estate, outside the home of Abdul Latif, an unemployed garment worker from Pakistan, a gang of white racist thugs is gathering. It isn't the first time, so they know the routine. They may shout racist abuse. They may pick up stones and hurl them through Latif's windows. They may stroll to a phone box, call Latif up and threaten him, his wife or his children. They may challenge him directly with a broken bottle or a crowbar; they may shove a brick in his wife's face.

Or they may simply break up and go. One of them may join another gang smashing up an Asian's car, as happened to Devendra Patel's car in High Street North, Newham, in August. Another may help break into an Asian shop and turn it over, an almost weekly occurrence in Newham and Barking. And another may go that bit further – may take out a knife and murder somebody. That's what four white racists did, in broad daylight on Newham High Street in July, to Aktar Ali Baig, a 27 year old Pakistani man. That's what another three white racists tried to do, just a few days after, to an Asian Post Office worker near Barking station.

● Meanwhile, outside East Ham Town Hall, Nigel Spearing, Labour MP for Newham South (Latif's constituency) plus Ron Leighton, Reg Prentice's 'left-wing' successor as MP for Newham North East, are adjusting their ties and straightening their jackets as they await the arrival of Timothy Raison, Tory Minister of State for Home Affairs. Raison has been despatched by William Whitelaw as the result of a meeting the Home Secretary had with Leighton. Raison's stated mission: to conduct a 'talk-in' and 'walk-about' around the local community. His real mission: to defuse the unrest among East London Asians that has erupted over the murder of Aktar Ali Baig.

With friends like these. . .

Spearing, Leighton and their Labour Party colleagues had been doing all they can to help. In the wake of big local demonstrations about Baig, built for by the Newham Youth Movement and East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR), Newham's Labour council had put more police on the streets. That led to scores of arrests of blacks and plenty of beatings-up in the police station too. All in the name of what the council calls 'community policing'.

Latif himself had previously learnt about 'community policing' the hard way. After months of complaints, the police condescended to pay him a visit and find out what he was troubled by. They turned up to find Latif in a fight with the skinheads – so they arrested him and let the racists go scot free.

Latif's experience isn't the exception, it's the rule. He found out that he couldn't look to the police for help. The Labour Party? He's being finding out about them for four years now. For *four years* he has attended the 'surgery' of the Right Honourable Nigel Spearing MP and made repeated pleas for assistance. To no avail. The local Community Relations Council? It's done nothing either.

How we fight

The only body that is taking up Latif's case is ELWAR.

Some days before Raison's expedition, we held a mass picket of Spearing's offices to expose his inactivity. Result – after four years' silence: a letter to Latif condemning the picket and offering assistance – *provided* Latif went through 'the correct channels'.

ELWAR was there with 40 people on the day Raison made his journey to the Town Hall. It denounced by name two of the local Labour Party councillors who 'had talks' with him – Amarjit 'I'm a Labour councillor, not a representative of the Asian community' Singh and John 'I support the Anti-Nazi League (pity it's not around in Newham)' McCauley.

ELWAR supporters made speeches as well. They pointed out how, by blaming the problems of British capitalism on foreign imports and foreign immigrants, Labour makes racism respectable. And they heckled all the Labour councillors as they accompanied Raison on his 'fact finding tour' round Newham.

ELWAR has been backing political defence of blacks with physical defence. It's been doing over the skinheads who terrorise Latif and his family. The strategy's working, too: the thugs are now forced to get together in phone boxes – where they continue to make threatening calls – instead of outside Latif's gate.

How do we force them out of the phone boxes? How do we isolate them altogether? We need more forces at our disposal. *We need more support from the organised trade union movement.* We're beginning to get it – at local factories, in particular branches – but we need more. *Help us* if you can.

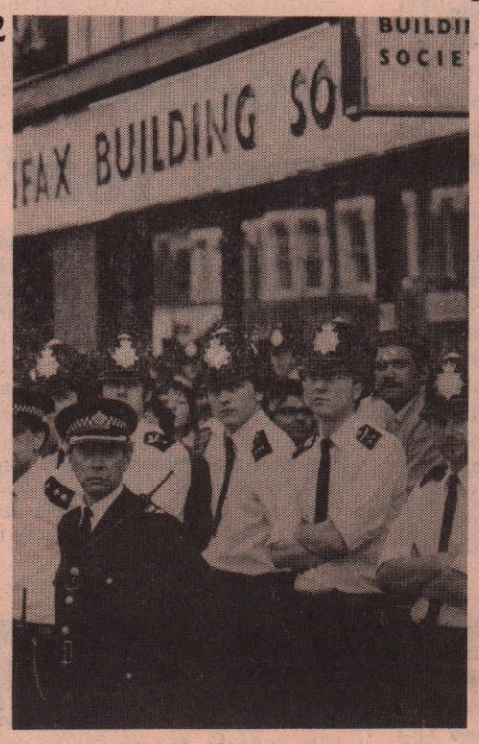
Every time a white trade unionist turns up to defend blacks like Abdul Latif he does himself a favour. He gets to see, first hand, the reactionary nature of 'community policing' and of the labour bureaucracy. That strengthens his resolve back at the picket line and in every industrial dispute. 'Workers' defence' is just that – the defence of the working class. Join us in building it.

Maggie Pearson

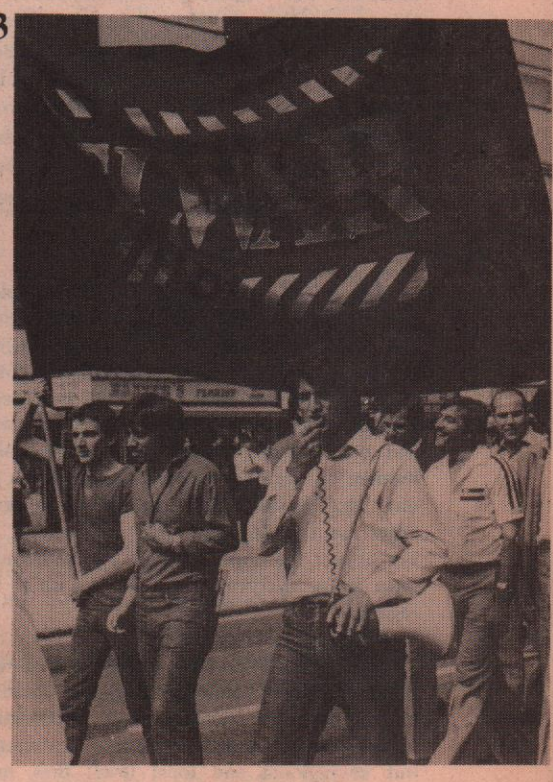
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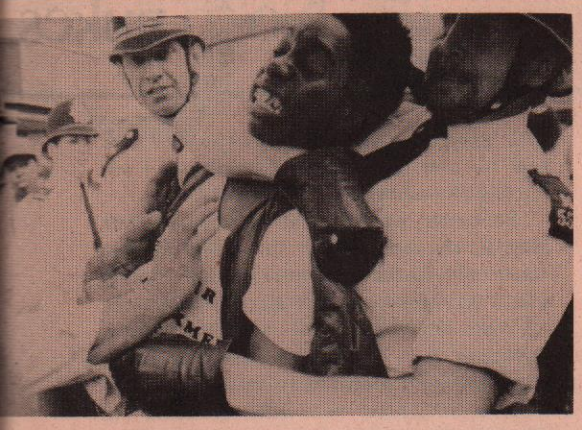
photos: the next step

1 Hostility from all directions as the police harass the Newham Youth Movement demonstration over another racist murder in East London.

2 The spot where Aktar Ali Baig was killed. There were no police there that day.

3 What do we want? Workers' defence! When do we want it? Now!

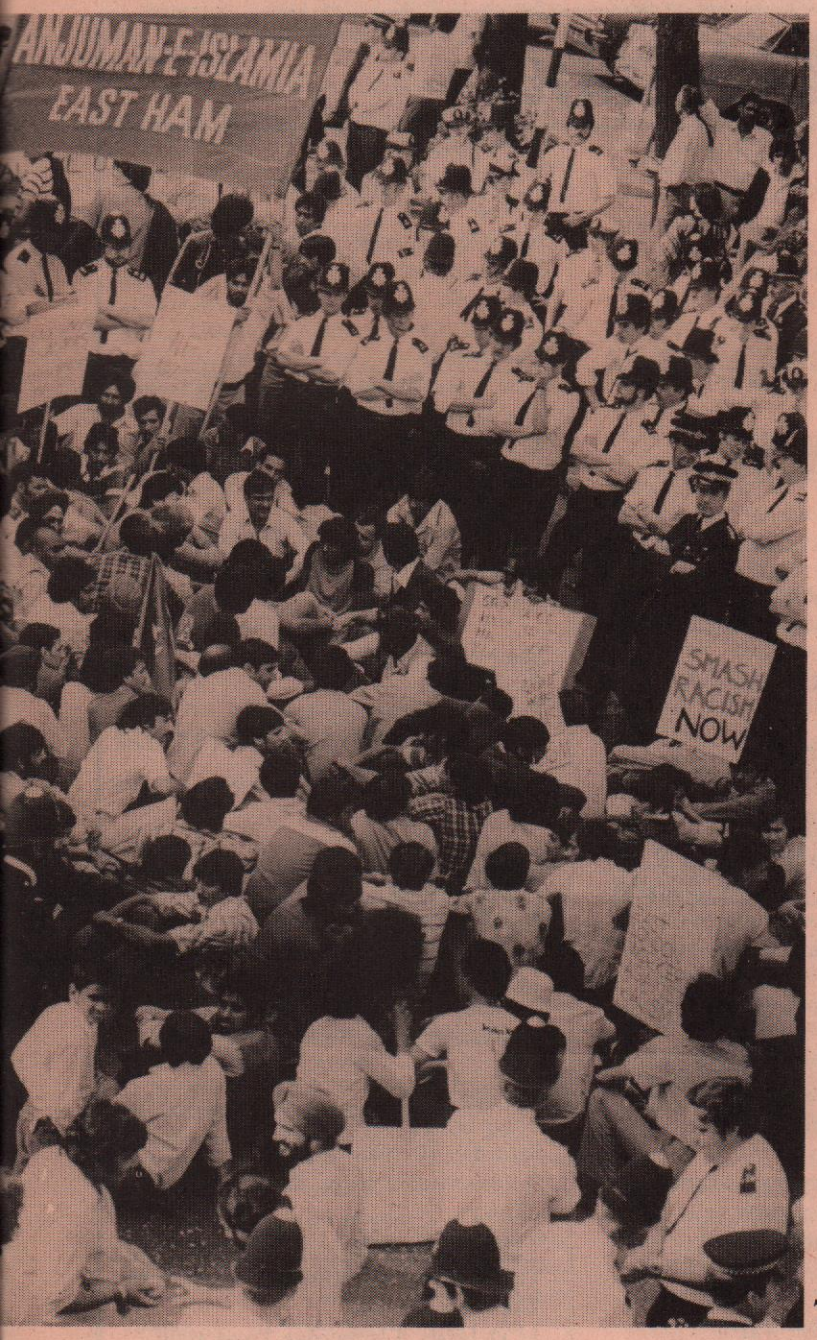
4 ELWAR speaks. Our message: the labour movement must defend blacks against racist attacks.



5



6



7

No fingerprints on this neck. ELWAR is helping with the defence of those arrested on the demo.

RCT banners spell out our opposition to immigration controls at the rally in Plashet Park.

Sick of police provocation, Asian youths refuse to budge. The struggle for workers' defence on the streets of East London goes on.

Stop Filipino deportations!

Some trade unionists are beginning to take the defence of immigrant workers seriously. We reprint here the bulletin of the City and Hackney Health District Joint Shop Stewards Committee. The bulletin's call for active resistance to deportations is the only answer to the Government's disgusting attack on Filipino women. It is the only one that can defend all workers against state repression.

Why are some workers illegal?

Hospital workers who aren't white could easily find themselves branded as illegal next week, next month or next year. In recent weeks more than 30 Filipino workers in Inner London hospitals alone have been told to pack up and leave Britain.

Immigration controls and trade unionists

Immigration controls aren't just about keeping workers out. They're also a way of controlling and sometimes expelling people who are already working here. Immigration laws aren't designed to keep rich tourists and businessmen out of Britain but to restrict the movement of the working class. They give the state power to attack sections of the labour movement at will.

Immigrant workers live in fear of being branded as 'illegal'. And, once they are branded as such, it's up to *them* to prove that they're not here illegally – so the House of Lords has just ruled. Anyway they have no recourse to the courts: they can be deported or imprisoned on the decision of a Home Office official. Last year 1035 immigrants, including a number of NHS workers, were held in prison on the say-so of a Home Office official.

The example of Filipino hospital workers illustrates how the system works. Filipino trade unionists became illegal when the Home Office decided they were in breach of immigration laws. They were declared guilty of entering the country by deception because they had failed to declare they had children in the Philippines. The fact that nobody asked them if they had children before they came to Britain is irrelevant as far as the Home Office is concerned. Next time immigrant workers will be declared 'illegal' because they failed to declare that their uncles had bad eyesight.

Are immigration laws arbitrary?

No. They're specially drawn up to work in this discriminatory way. If you're black you could be 'illegal'. Anybody who's worked in the NHS knows of cases of Asian women being denied treatment because they failed to produce their passports. Anybody who's worked in the social services knows that management plays all kinds of tricks to make sure that black people get less welfare benefit than they're entitled to. In East London, many Asians making complaints to the police about racist assaults have found that the law was more interested in their legal status than in the violence they suffered.

Britain's Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit keeps details on tens of thousands of 'suspected illegal immigrants'. And, just to make sure that *all* black workers are watched, the Home Office keeps a confidential register on immigrants. In effect immigration legislation has provided the legal framework for turning black people into second-class citizens.

Immigration controls are a threat not only to black people, but to the entire labour movement. To see why, let's look at what happened when the police raided Main Gas Appliances Ltd for 'illegal immigrants' and took away tens of black workers to be detained and deported.

A couple of months prior to the raid the management of Main Gas announced that a third of the 900-strong workforce would be made redundant. Management was well aware that the raid would take place and saw it as a useful contribution to pushing redundancies through. Naturally, it refused to pay the 'illegal workers' their redundancy money.

Immigration laws divide workers into 'legals' and 'illegals'. They fix it so that one section of the labour movement is continually under suspicion. They also fix it so racism becomes the duty of every law-abiding citizen.

Every hospital worker is legal!

We must oppose every attempt by the state to interfere in the affairs of the union. We must also oppose any attempt by the state to victimise any NUPE member just because he or she is 'illegal'.

A number of NUPE officials have spoken out in defence of the Filipino women. This is to their credit and to the credit of the union. Unfortunately petitions and appeals seldom work. We can't turn some hospital workers into special cases when so many black workers are under attack. We can't leave the fate of Filipino workers to the mercy of the likes of Timothy Raison, Minister of State responsible for immigration. This was how he responded to pleas on behalf of the Filipino women:

> 'The Government is determined to take a firm line on illegal immigration, and unless there are very substantial reasons for not doing so, it will be our practice to send away people who are found to be here illegally. The reasons which have been advanced in favour of giving women domestic workers specially favourable treatment are, in my view, quite insufficient'.

We musn't let the future of health service workers depend on efforts to mollify Raison or anybody else in government. The power of reason will not prevail on those determined to attack the labour movement.

Deportations can only be fought if they are actively *resisted*.

We haven't much time to stop the deportations. At UCH, though, NUPE has shown the way by taking up the defence of several of its Filipino women members and by making plans to extend its action. Now shop stewards in other hospitals should organise meetings, discuss the implications of these racist attacks on NUPE members and argue for industrial action to stop the deportations. Selective action aimed at private wards can provide an important impetus to the struggle. Funds should be collected to assist the Filipino women and a major campaign in the media should be launched on their behalf.

Letters



Defiant Derry

Lifted in Belfast





No to nukes,

The IRSP
A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

Since the formation of the Irish Republican Socialist Party our organisation has been subjected to constant harassment, frequent early morning raids, and the assassination of several activists including our first and last chairpersons, Seamus Costello and Miriam Daly. A catalogue of such repression could easily fill several volumes. From our office window here in the Bogside I can see the spot where 18 year old IRSP member Colin McNutt was assassinated, and at the other end of the block where 21 year old Denis Heaney breathed his last after a similar SAS operation. The multi-story flats are in easy view where thirteen Derry men and youths were gunned down by the 1st Paras on Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972 during a peaceful civil rights march against internment without charge or trial. Between here and the distant skyline is the city cemetery where over one hundred other victims of British imperialism lie, which include women and children, all neighbours, few of whom were strangers to us all. Every street here in the Bogside has its tragic story to tell. Every family has at least one relative or friend who has been tortured, incarcerated or murdered. Few, if any, have been left unaffected by the current war for national liberation and socialism.

Our own premises, James Connolly House, the local head office of the IRSP, was purchased early in 1977 with the aim of establishing a permanent base for the party, and in addition as a resource for the local working class community in the Bogside. Throughout the spring and summer of that year our comrades and supporters gave generously of their time and energy in the carrying out of structural changes, plastering and painting etc. During this period, work was regularly interrupted by the occupation forces, some of the voluntary workers being verbally abused and detained under Section 2 of the Emergency Provisions Act, which permits being held for up to 72 hours. On 7 July 1978 our premises were officially opened by the daughter of James Connolly who was executed by a British firing squad in 1916. Dr Nora Connolly O'Brien was then in her eighty-second year and was warmly received by local trade unionists and community bodies. Unknown to Dr O'Brien the official opening had been almost cancelled, for less than a week previously a strong force of British troops smashed their way into the premises by the rear entrance, and engaged in what local journalists described as 'an orgy of wanton destruction for some four hours'. The end result were windows smashed and removed completely, holes kicked in the walls or ceilings battered with rifle butts, fireplaces ripped from the walls, floorboards torn up, and the very staircase was left in a wrecked condition. There can be no doubt that the aim of this raid was to discourage the work in hand and most certainly delay completion. The opposite however was the result. Local tradespeople volunteered their services and worked long into the night. A carpet salesperson donated carpet for the downstairs bookshop and people's advice centre. Local publicans made donations of refreshments, and with this type of splendid help the official opening went ahead and will be long remembered by those who attended and met Dr O'Brien.

Since then the bookshop on the ground floor has offered an educational resource to the local community and visitors to the city with hundreds of titles on its shelves. Hundreds of foreign visitors annually visit the premises. The People's Advice Centre handles some 20 cases per day, and buses to the prisons and Long Kesh Concentration Camp are daily organised from our office. In addition a small print shop meets the need for frequent leafletings and postering. The combined work of James Connolly House is catered for by one employee who has become a target for regular repression, having to put up with at least two raids daily and frequent questioning of patrons. Its telephone never seems to stop ringing, Derry 67654 being on the lips of every young man or woman who is unfortunate enough to be detained under Sections 2 or 12 (7 days) of the Emergency Provisions Act. This constant 'attention' by the Brits has helped put 8 Chamberlain Street on the map and James Connolly House has become a symbol of determined resistance to imperialism.

The Manager
James Connolly House
Derry

British Justice In Ireland

On the evening of Friday 8 August I attended and addressed an open air public meeting in the Markets area of Belfast on the issue of Political Status. The event was closely monitored by the army whose presence was never far in the background. Immediately after the meeting two members of the IRSP and I were arrested by the army. This was 9.00pm approximately. We were taken to an army barracks where we were kept for over an hour. During this time I was forcibly photographed – which is illegal.

Following our release at 10.15pm we were immediately rearrested by the RUC. We were taken to Castlereagh interrogation centre, where we were held until Monday afternoon, 12.30pm under Section 2 of the Emergency Provisions Act. During this time I was held in solitary confinement in a windowless cell. No exercise or contact with other prisoners was allowed. In protest against my detention I remained on hunger strike throughout my stay.

I was interviewed five times during the two and a half days of my detention. During the course of these interrogations numerous threats of physical violence were made. I was told that evidence might be given that I had verbally admitted membership of the INLA which would result on my being held on remand in Long Kesh for six months. It was threatened that I would be dropped in a loyalist area where I would be torn apart limb by limb. I was also warned that details about me would be sent to squaddies in Colchester, which is a garrison town. Threats were also made that on my return to Britain I would be detained for seven days and subsequently deported to S Ireland. Also I was fingerprinted and again photographed.

My experience is a small indication of the treatment which the army and RUC mete out to the Irish people continuously. It points to the necessity of the immediate withdrawal of the army and the smashing of the sectarian NI Statelet.

Francis Barry
Colchester

RCT activities in September and October

Public meeting

POLAND

Speaker: Frank Richards

3 October 1980, 7.30pm
Holborn Library Hall,
32/38 Theobalds Road, London WC1

COURSE ON MARX'S CAPITAL TEN LECTURES

This course is designed to make *Capital* accessible to those who are just embarking on a study of Marxist theory. The aim is to equip participants with an understanding of Marx's method and the concepts he uses to explain capitalist social relations.

Frank Richards, editor of *Revolutionary Communist Papers*, will be running the course.

For further information and course outline contact
BM RCT, London WC1V 6XX or
phone 01-274 3951.

Lectures will be weekly, starting Tuesday 7 October.

Course fee £10. Make cheques/postal orders payable to RCT Association.

LONDON

for more information ring 01-274 3951

CENTRAL LONDON

Autumn series of fortnightly **forums** on *Ireland*
Wednesdays, 7.30pm
University of London Union,
Malet Street, WC1
(tube: Goodge St/Warren St)

- 1 October:
  The Labour Party and Ireland: 1920-80
  Speaker: Rob Knight
- 15 October:
  Protestant and Catholic Unity: will it ever happen?
  Speaker: Kevin Green

SOUTH LONDON

the next step
South London supporters group
Stockwell Hall, Stockwell Park Estate,
Stockwell Park Rd, nr Rumsey Rd, SW9

- 8 October:
  The Labour Party in Lambeth: can it defend the working class?
  Speaker: Alex Farrell
- 22 October:
  The fight against redundancies and unemployment
  Speaker: Fenna King
- 5 November:
  How to fight 'sus' and police harassment
  Speaker: Russell Osborne

Regular **sales**
Saturday morning (11am)
Battersea market
Balham market
Balham tube
Brixton tube (also Friday 5.15pm)
Elephant and Castle shopping centre (also Friday 5.15pm)

EAST LONDON

Public meetings

- 2 October:
  Redundancy, speed-ups, short-time working – stop the sell-out at Ford
  Speaker: Mike Freeman
  East Ham Labour Hall, 241 High Street North, E12, 7.30pm
- 29 October:
  The Irish War: whose side are you on?
  Speaker: Phil Murphy
  East Ham Town Hall, High Street South, E6, 7.30pm

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)

Weekly street meetings
Saturdays, 10.30am – 12 noon
Stratford market shopping precinct
Ridley Road market, Hackney
Queens Road market, Upton Park
High Street North, East Ham

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

Public meeting

- 25 September:
  Redundancies, public spending cuts, anti-union laws: how to begin the fightback?
  Speakers: Frank Richards; local trade unionists
  Milton Hall, Deansgate,
  Manchester, 7.30pm

WEEK OF ACTION ON IRELAND AT MANCHESTER POLYTECHNIC, 7-11 OCTOBER

- 7 October:
  3 showings of 'The Creggan',
  12.15, 1.15, 5.30.
  6.30 Life in a British colony; the Six Counties
  Speakers invited: Marie Mulholland, Francis Barry (recently held in Castlereagh; see letter above)
- 8 October:
  Ireland, Zimbabwe, Iran: imperialism in crisis; the way forward
  Speaker: Alan Harding
  7.30pm
- 9 October:
  How to end the Irish War – open debate
  Speakers invited from CPGB, SWP, TOM, Labour Club
  7.30pm
- 10 October:
  The British labour movement and Ireland
  Speakers: Keith Tompson, Dave Hallsworth (Tameside Trades Council), Nottingham TOM
  7.30pm
- 11 October
  Social with Irish music
  8pm – late

All to be held at Manchester Polytechnic, Aytoun Street site. See RCT bookstall for details.

Irish forums
First in a series of six fortnightly forums on *Ireland*

- 30 October:
  The Leninist position on the national question
  The Pack Horse pub, Deansgate
  (nr British Rail station), 7.30pm

Manchester regular **sales**
Friday 4pm – 4.45pm,
Piccadilly Gdns, opp Lewis's
Tuesday and Thursday 10am – 12 noon
Aytoun Street dole office

Warrington
Public meeting

- 9 October:
  The fight for jobs: where are the leaders?
  Co-op Hall, Winwick Road,
  Warrington, 7.30pm

Regular **sales**
Thursday 12 noon – 1.30pm
Saturday 10.30am – 1.00pm
Golden Square devpt, Sankey Street

TODMORDEN

Todmorden Trades Council conference: The crisis and you
11 October, Todmorden Town Hall,
10am – 5.00pm
Sessions include:
Unemployment and the cuts
How to fight for jobs
Racism and fascism
The Irish War
Credentials from:
John Williams
21 Gledhill Road
Todmorden, Lancs



yes to Wright? Not us!

Dear Comrades,
I am afraid that my immediate reaction to the 'critique' of the SWP pamphlet '*Workers' power not nuclear power*' in *the next step* No 6 was to ask 'Is this Marxism?'

To paraphrase you: because nuclear-induced cancer affects people of all classes, opposition to it (and, it appears, to nuclear missiles, also) becomes a 'classless' diversion. What utter rot! On this logic, the horrors of the First imperialist World War, by killing members of all classes (yes, bourgeois officers WERE killed), turn opposition to imperialist war into a 'classless diversion' also!

Let's look at the class positions that a 'principled' opposition to 'anti-Nukes' puts the RCT into.

Who backs nuclear power? Thatcher, the ruling class establishment, the reactionary Clive Jenkins and most of the union bureaucrats (with the possible exception of the NUM, and for totally sectional reasons). And, of course, the RCT!

It is not even that the RCT opposes nuclear power *under capitalism*, as do the CPGB; no, merely a diversion for working class action. Who's crossing class barriers now, comrades?

How about some hard facts? Nuclear waste can endure (unlike carbon monoxide, or coal dust), and produce carcinogenic radiation, for up to 200 000 YEARS. So far, there is no known way of safely containing it. Waste dumped *now*, even if socialism can develop safe waste disposal, is quite capable of rotting the bodies of our socialist descendants.

Opposing nuclear power NOW is the only way of preventing massive 'fall-out' problems in the future.

Nuclear power NOW *is* opposed to workers' power. To quote from 'secret' Cabinet minutes: 'a nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity production from the dangers of disruption by coal miners or transport workers'.

Now, whilst it is well within the realm of possibility that a workers' socialist society could develop a safe nuke (for instance, by nuclear fusion), we in the ANC/SWP have never denied this. But, by calling the struggle against nukes NOW a diversion, your comrade (J Wood) is merely showing his ignorance of (a) the role that nuclear power plays in the political/military complex of the capitalist state; and (b) the the role anti-Nukes has played, and continues to play, in the development of working class consciousness.

Remember – the ruling class don't have waste trains in their back gardens; the working class don't have nuclear shelters!

T J Anon
Treasurer
South West London Anti Nuclear Campaign

Comrades,
Seeing as the last issue of *the next step* seemed to be entirely devoted to an attack on the policies of the SWP, and did also carry a rather confusing letter by an unnamed SWP member on the idea of fusion between us and the RCT, I thought I would write to try to put a few things straight as I see it. We will take your main arguments one by one.

Firstly, over the issue of nuclear power and the pamphlet by Mike Simons. This was a completely slanderous review, full of annoying half-truths and misguided interpretations. It seems to me that the extracts from our literature you *leave out* are perhaps more significant than those you actually put in. You say, for instance, that we are 'spreading classless individualism in the labour movement...' simply because the pamphlet points out the dangers inherent in the Nuclear power system. True, these dangers would affect everyone. So what? It is a very important factor that needs to be pointed out. But we are *not*, by any stretch of the RCT's imagination, taking a 'classless' stance. Why did you not mention the part of the pamphlet entitled 'Cancer isn't the only danger' which deals with 'nuclear imperialism' and with 'The threat to workers' rights'? The pamphlet also goes on to expose the treachery of the Labour Government, and in particular Tony Benn.

Okay, what do you accuse us of next? Oh yes, our 'un-Marxist' analysis of what life will be like under socialism. This really is a joke. Mike Simons stated that we oppose Nuclear energy because it is a 'ruthless, centralised operation...that seeks power at whatever cost to those who work in it....' According to the RCT, this is going against Marx and Lenin, because a proletarian revolution would also be 'centralised'. Yes, but *democratic* centralism! Democratic centralism wouldn't be 'ruthless' and it certainly wouldn't 'seek power at whatever cost to those who work in it'. Economic power would be centralised, but of course there would be a vast de-centralisation of power, into regional councils of worker-delegates, etc, that do not exist under capitalism.

Your arguments are very hollow, and it seems you just make them for the sake of it. As for your comments on how, under socialism, nuclear energy could somehow be made 'safe', well they are just too naive and ridiculous to contemplate. As for the anti-nuclear movement, and our part in the fight against nuclear weapons, the SWP is, quite simply, *not* compromising it's revolutionary socialist standpoint. At a recent anti-nuclear rally in Luton, I spoke on behalf of the SWP. I shared the platform with members of the Labour Party, Liberal Party and the CP. I used the opportunity, much to their dismay, to show up the reformists. As socialists, we see the fight against nuclear weapons as part of the fight against capitalism, but we will not isolate ourselves from the mass movement. That does not mean we bury our politics.

I will now move on to your attack on the 'Engineer's Charter'. When Charter says 'We can't afford the luxury of a long debate and our own Charter candidate...' you go on to declare that the SWP therefore sees working class politics as a luxury. No. If we did, would we be producing the paper, or building a rank and file organisation in the first place? We are not big enough or strong enough to call ourselves the revolutionary alternative. The RCT certainly can't. To stand our own candidate would be suicide. To abstain from voting, as you suggest, would be equally stupid. What would be the result of an abstention? Terry Duffy would be returned to office, amalgamation with Chapple's EETPU would take place, the union would be firmly under the grip of the right wing. That would be a curious contribution to the cause of 'revolution in the AUEW', would it not, comrades? If there is an inch of difference between Duffy and Wright, with the state of the trade union movement today, we have no choice but to take that inch! With Wright in office, we can take the opportunity to put him and his Broad Left politics on the spot, and expose him for what he is.

Over the question of Russia and Eastern Europe, we do indeed regard them as state-capitalist. Not because '...economic and political power is centralised' but because the driving force behind production there is, without a doubt, accumulation of capital, gained through the ruthless exploitation of the working masses. Tell me, do you regard Poland, Czechoslovakia etc as 'deformed workers' states', even though there has never been any self-emancipation of the working class there? Or did the Russian bureaucracy do it all for them? If so, this puts a whole new face on Marxism, does it not?

We *are* building the revolutionary alternative to Labourism, but we do not see the only way to do it through political purism. The Labour Party's hold over the labour movement has to be smashed, but that does not mean there should be no united activity over certain issues that we can come together over in a limited way, ie the cuts, the anti-union laws, the fight for a woman's right to choose over abortion etc. We know that it is we who shall win the arguments in that activity. United activity can give us a bigger audience. As far as I am concerned, there is no question of fusion with the RCT, or any other similar political sects. If working class people seriously want to build the revolutionary alternative, equipped with the correct tactics and programme for winning support, they will eventually join the SWP, I am sure.

Fraternally,
Keith Copley
LUTON SWP

James Wood writes:
Comrade T. J. states that 'Nuclear power NOW *is* opposed to workers' power'. True. Today, nuclear power like all forms of power – including the state – is organised along capitalist lines. Capital will use every instrument at its disposal to maintain its domination. So why isolate nuclear power as a particular threat to the working class? Why reduce social and political domination to one of its *technical* manifestations?

The answer is simple: technical problems such as nuclear energy or the pollution of the environment obscure conflicting class interests and appeal to the anxieties and fears of the individual. Comrade Keith Copley objects to the accusation that the SWP's approach spreads 'classless individualism in the labour movement'. But if he and his organisation are so concerned with the class struggle, then why devote so much space espousing the virtues of alternative forms of energy? The SWP's time would be better spent arguing for an alternative society, not for an alternative energy policy under capitalism. But Keith Copley's fear of isolation from 'the mass movement' leads him to forget that the character and objectives of the anti-nuclear movement are not anti-capitalist.

Thatcher and the ruling class back nuclear power – so we should be against it. This is the simplistic argument of the SWP. Our approach is determined by what is objectively in the interest of the working class, not as a reaction to ruling class policy. The RCT does not 'back' nuclear power as such. What we say is this: we are not in the business to advise a capitalist government on its energy policy. We expect that every state policy will be directed against the interests of the working class. Nowhere in the article did we say that nuclear energy could be made safe under socialism (though we can't exclude the possibility). What we did say is that only a workers' state can determine whether it is more or less safe than other technologies.

Comparing nuclear power with an imperialist war is not very useful. Opposition to nuclear power *obscures* class interests; but opposition to imperialist war *heightens* them. Why? We oppose imperialist war not because people get killed, but because it provides the means for increasing the power of capital over the working class. Indeed we are not opposed to war as such, but argue that an imperialist war be turned into a civil war directed against the capitalist system. This is why we support wars of national liberation, too.

Why is the SWP so worried about the centralised power of the working class? Any future British workers' state will have to be highly centralised if it is to survive imperialist attack. The dictatorship of the proletariat will concentrate all power at its disposal and direct it against the bourgeoisie. It is interesting that Keith Copley uses workers' democracy and decentralisation interchangeably. The form that workers' democracy will take will be decided by the working class. But this fear of centralised power – be it technological or political – that the SWP comrades express reveals the pre-occupations of the concerned individual, not of a working class revolutionary.

Elections in the AUEW

In his comments on the AUEW election, Keith Copley is again first and foremost driven by the fear of isolation from the 'mass movement'. 'We are not yet big enough or strong enough to call ourselves the revolutionary alternative', he says. But will there ever be a revolutionary alternative if you go on choosing the 'lesser evil'? Our starting point should be the interests of the working class, not the size of our organisation.

The road of the lesser evil leads the SWP to canvass for a candidate who supports import controls and incomes policy. Does the SWP think that these policies offer an alternative to Duffy? Does the SWP believe that Bob Wright will be able to defend the interests of the AUEW rank and file?

For the RCT the problem is not isolation from some mass movement, but building a workers' movement based on class politics. This is why we have to fight Wright just as much as Duffy. Nothing will change unless AUEW workers begin to see that there is a viable alternative to the politics of the Broad Left. The sooner we begin to take on the reformist bureaucrats the faster will a revolutionary alternative be created.

JOIN THE ECONOMY DRIVE

continued from page 16

How can they oppose the National Front's call for 'British jobs for British workers' or the redundancy axe that falls first and heaviest on blacks?

Down with Stalinism!

In Communist Party politics British industry comes first, workers' interests a poor second and blacks scarcely make an appearance. This Stalinist strategy spells disaster for workers in Ford and elsewhere. The 4000 redundancies that BL announced in August show what is in store for Ford workers if the Broad Left is left unchallenged.

It's no good looking, as 'rank and file' groups like the Ford Workers Combine do, to the *organisational* traditions of the 'sixties. Then Ford, like the rest of the British motor industry, was expanding: militant shop floor organisation could win steady advances in pay and conditions. Stalinist shop stewards could tie workers' livelihoods to the welfare of the company and get away with it. But the recession has put an end to the boom conditions that allowed the rank and file to build up its strength. Now the survival of the company depends on driving down wages and wearing down trade union defences of jobs and conditions. CP politics leave workers defenceless.

Ford workers have never lacked the ability to organise or the determination to fight their employers. Their problem has been, time and again , the *political direction* of their militant actions by trade union leaders at both national and plant level. What Ford workers need today is a political approach which breaks decisively with the class collaboration of the past. They need a strategy which puts the interests of Ford workers, black and white, before the commercial viability of the company.
That means:

* no redundancies of any description -- voluntary, white collar, compulsory
* if necessary, industrial action to save jobs
* no more 'casual labour'
* full pay during lay-offs and short-time work, not the 80 per cent for 20 weeks agreed by the NJNC
* no responsibility for the company's commercial performance. Wage claims to be based on our needs, not their profit figures
* no to calls for controls on component/car imports or capital exports. For solidarity action when workers at subsidiaries abroad come under attack
* down tools on every incident of racist abuse from managers and supervisors. For an immediate campaign to improve conditions in the Paint, Trim and Assembly plant
* support East London Workers Against Racism. Shut down Dagenham the next time there's a racist killing in East London. Organise trade union defence of black families harassed by the National Front and racist gangs.

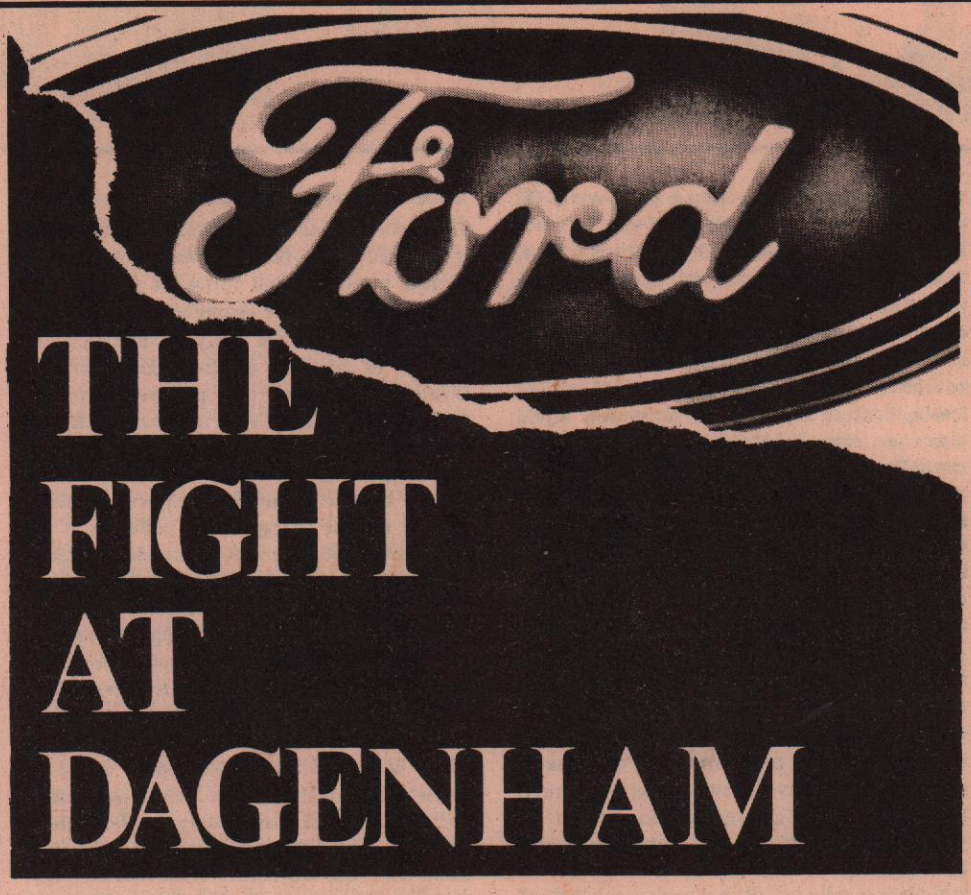
The struggle against Ford management's present offensive and its apologists on the NJNC and in the CP is only just beginning. At Dagenham, supporters of the RCT are trying to build that struggle. Come to the meeting we're holding about Ford and show you're willing to build it too. *Judith Harrison*

RCT East London branch

PUBLIC MEETING

2 October
Redundancy, speed-ups, short-time working – stop the sell-out at Ford

Speaker: Mike Freeman
East Ham Labour Hall,
241 High St North, E12 7.30pm



THE FIGHT AT DAGENHAM

Ford (UK) sells more British cars than anybody else. But, like every other car firm in Britain, it's having to hammer its employees to survive. And it's getting plenty of help in this – from trade union full-timers and from the Communist Party. Below, we show how this situation has come about, and how it can be reversed.

THEY'RE SUFFERING, the workers at Ford Dagenham. They returned from their holidays in August to meet:

- short-time work
- 6000 lay-offs – out of a total workforce of 26 000
- 1300 'voluntary' redundancies. All younger workers to get a miserly one week's pay for each year they've been at Ford; many older workers to lose their pension money
- more and more transfers into the Paint, Trim and Assembly plant, widely known at Dagenham as 'one step away from the dole queue'
- renewed attempts at cutting tea-break and wash-up times
- more employer pressure to introduce a new 'double-day' shift system
- more pressure to drop the demand for a shorter working week and take 'personal vacation days' (dates to be decided by management) instead
- open management flouting of collective bargaining procedures enshrined in the hallowed 'Blue Book' of Ford's 20-union National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC).

But the workers at Dagenham aren't just suffering at the hands of their bosses. They're suffering at the hands of their union leaders too. NJNC secretary Jack Whyman isn't bothered about the redundancies: he's just annoyed at the 'lack of consultation' about them. As for organising a nationwide fightback against Ford UK management's offensive, the trade union representatives on the NJNC haven't got a clue. Bureaucrats representing different factories are busy squabbling over the little money that remains in Ford's lay-off pay kitty – no way to build unity between Dagenham and Basildon (200 redundancies), Halewood (400) and other Ford production centres in Britain. And the NJNC's forthcoming wage claim, traditionally a 'pace-setter' for the rest of British industry, will barely keep pace with inflation.

Dagenham workers are suffering alright. But why? Why is management putting the screws on so hard – and why are the unions so powerless to resist? To find out, let's look at Ford's commercial position and the unions' political position.

'The Japanese will kill us'

With subsidiaries in 18 countries and sales outlets in 200, the Ford Motor Company is number two to General Motors, the largest vehicle manufacturer in the world. But it's in trouble, and could well be edged out of second place to the Japanese. Last year Ford of America, Ford UK's parent company, lost a billion dollars; this year it could lose nearly twice that. Half its workers have been laid off. The reason? One in every five cars Americans buy is Japanese-made. For the first time in history, Japan is set to build more cars than the USA – two million more. Its car industry is that much more competitive than America's.

Japan's car industry is also much more competitive than Europe's. And Ford of Europe vice-president Bill Hayden is well aware of it. Charged with making up in profits what his trans-Atlantic colleagues have made in losses, Hayden has announced a survival plan. Within three years he plans to introduce 500 robots onto Ford of Europe lines – at the expense of thousands of jobs. The alternative, he says, is simple: 'the Japanese will kill us' (*Financial Times*, 20 August 1980).

It's not surprising that Ford UK is the main focus for Hayden's rationalisations. Ford UK is Ford Europe's biggest base and is main supplier to the British market, the third largest market in Europe. Ford bosses have high expectations for their UK operation.

To start with, they want 40 per cent less disputes. They want to raise output from only 300 000 cars last year, to the full-capacity figure of half a million. They want to be rid of demarcation lines on the shop floor. They want speed-up. And, above all, they want redundancies. As they recently reminded workers, 'if Ford of Britain operated to Japanese standards, it would have 36 000 employees instead of 76 000' (*Ford News*, 13 June 1980).

That's the sort of 'productivity' Ford UK now needs to stave off Japanese competition. It's the sort of productivity Ford UK requires if it is to begin 'world car' production with the new Escort. And it's the sort of productivity Ford UK will have to achieve if it is to fit into the Ford Motor Company's broader scheme of things: fewer and smaller models, with common parts made at a variety of international locations.

Ford UK's record profits last year just weren't record enough. Changes must be made – and if Ford workers' present leaders have anything to do with it, they *will* be made. Their history shows this.

The fruits of participation

Ever since they got union recognition in 1944, Ford workers have had to meet a concerted effort to break the power of their organisation. Even in the boom years of the 'fifties and 'sixties, management tried to smash the shop stewards' movement at Ford. It victimised a whole series of militants, dismissing Johnny ('the bell-ringer') McLoughlin in 1957, Bill Francis in 1962 and most of the company's shop stewards committee in 1963.

Many of the men Ford management threw out were members and supporters of the Communist Party. They often led workers to take more aggressive action than that proposed by national union leaders. Ford refused to negotiate with them: it would only discuss with officials. But Ford was eventually forced to change tactics; it realised that not recognising unofficial bodies meant leaving them in control on the shop floor. From 1969 on, the unspoken motto of Ford management was 'if you can't beat them, get 'em to join you'. In other words, get them involved in 'participation'.

'Participation' meant bringing lay union members onto the NJNC. It meant putting convenors on it. It meant giving plant-level Joint Works Committees more 'responsibility' in negotiations. Gradually, the shop stewards at Ford became acquainted with the management's problems. Gradually, too, they started trying to fix them – with management solutions.

By the mid 'seventies the international motor industry was in recession. Lay-offs at Dagenham were leading to violent scenes, the workers putting up barricades in their struggle for full pay 'work or no work'. National trade union leaders supported by the CP's Broad Left in the unions – Hugh Scanlon (AUEW) and Jack Jones (TGWU) – were urging people back to work in the interests of 'their' company. And CP officials at Dagenham like Body Plant convenor Dan Connor and River Plant convenor Bernie Passingham were helping to make the top bureaucrats' directives palatable to an angry rank and file.

Moss Evans, Jones' successor at the top of the TGWU, advised Ford workers in 1975 that 'disruptive action will not persuade people to buy cars'. CP convenors passed the message on, and, although there were some bitter disputes in the mid 'seventies, workers increasingly took it to heart. As the international motor industry has plunged into crisis, so militant action has declined: there have been no major strikes at Ford since 1978. The union pay claim for 1979 was tied strictly to what company profitability allowed (it was, Dagenham official Ron Todd stressed, 'socially responsible'). Tamed by participation, worried by the threat of further redundancies, the bureaucrats on the NJNC are in no mood today to initiate a stoppage over the bosses' current offensive.

Ford UK – Communist Party GB

The bureaucrats' answer to the crisis is a chauvinist campaign to direct workers *away* from challenging the employers and *toward* attacking the motor industries of other nations. CP members at Ford have been particularly vigorous in this; indeed Connor recently collected no less than 4000 signatures to a petition asking Len Murray to press for import controls on foreign cars and components.

He needn't have bothered. Murray is already convinced of the case for import controls. *And so is Ford management.* Ford Motor Company chairman Philip Caldwell has publicly attacked Japanese exporters for taking advantage of Britain's open market in cars. More important, every issue of management's one free handout to workers, *Ford News*, warns of 'the Japanese threat' and proclaims 'the absolute necessity to achieve concrete and effective cost savings' in the face of it. *By telling workers that the Japanese, not the capitalists, are their adversary, CP trade unionists do Ford management a real favour. They help prepare workers to make the 'concrete and effective savings' that the capitalist crisis demands.*

In a recent issue of the CP's *Comment*, Dan Connor, his assistant convenor Sid Harraway and Stalinist student leader turned Stalinist Ford worker Steve Hart give what they call 'a socialist case' for import controls (19 July 1980). They argue that stopping Spain from exporting Fiestas to Britain and getting Ford to invest more in components manufacture in Britain is progressive: 'What we're talking about is controlling multinationals and controlling capitalism' (Hart). But trying to block exports from other Ford subsidiaries makes international solidarity among Ford workers impossible. The call for import controls offers management a 'controlling' hand to play off one country's workforce against another's. One example: Spanish Fiesta production has been transferred to other plants in Europe to break the militancy of workers at the Valencia plant. The CP can only lament that the Fiesta went to Germany and not to Britain. Any hope of international co-operation of Ford workers *against* Ford management is ruled out.

As for appealing for an end to Ford's export of capital out of Britain, it only begs the question 'what would induce Ford to invest here?' Answer: more 'controlling' of the workers at Dagenham, more labour discipline, the prospect of higher profits.

The call for controls on commodity imports is a call for Ford Dagenham workers to fight their brothers in Valencia, Amsterdam, Cologne and Genk. The call for controls on capital export is a call for Ford Dagenham workers to put in longer hours and harder work for less pay. More than that: given the nature of the workforce at Dagenham, the call for 'a genuine British Motor Company, making a British car. . .tailored to British needs' (Connor) is a *chauvinist* call.

Conveyor-belt racism

For over half a century Ford has deliberately built plants and recruited workers in areas where immigrant labour is freely available. It takes advantage of black workers by forcing them to slave long hours in the worst jobs for low wages. And it takes advantage of their isolation from the official labour movement.

Thousands of Ford workers in Holland are immigrants. At Cologne 90 per cent of production-line operatives are from outside West Germany. Dagenham is no exception to the pattern. Most foremen, supervisory staff and technicians are white; most workers in lower positions are black. Overall, blacks make up 60 per cent of the workforce.

There is, of course, not a word about all this in what our three Ford Stalinists say. But, in a discussion of the CP's industrial work at Ford, Hart makes an interesting point:

> 'In some places, communists do tend to act as super trade unionists in the Party, bringing trade unionism to the Party. But in Ford we tend to work the other way – making a political trade union movement. *For instance on racism, all our members were running round selling ANL badges.*' (our emphasis)

But while CP members were running round selling Anti-Nazi League badges they were selling out Ford's black workers. The CP is always out to defend British institutions – British democracy against alien German ideologies, the British motor industry against the Japs. No wonder it is incapable of defending blacks against another British institution – racism. No wonder that CP trade unionists at Dagenham have refused to mount a battle against racism on the shop floor and have done nothing to improve the conditions of black workers. The CP calls for 'a British car tailored to British needs'.

continued on page 15