

the next step

No 29 November 1982

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p

WOMEN

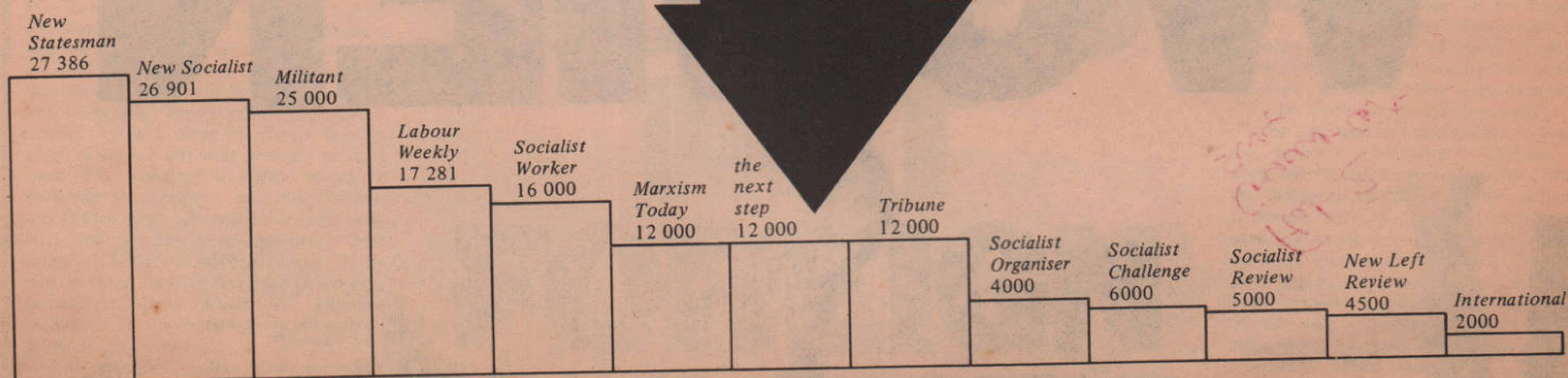


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Circulations of leading left newspapers and magazines, from the *New Socialist*, November/December 1982.

RCP activities in November

MANCHESTER

Remember the Manchester Martyrs!
Join Manchester Irish Freedom Movement in building for the demonstration
Join the fortnightly meetings for activists
Details from 01-274 3951.

LEEDS

Friday 12 November 12 noon—2.00pm
Smash the race checks!
Picket of the DHSS organised by Leeds Workers Against Racism, supported by Leeds Trades Council and local NHS unions.
DHSS, St Pauls St, Leeds 1.

Week of Action for Irish Freedom 15—21 November

Wednesday 17 November 7.30pm
Criminalisation of Irish freedom fighters and the PTA
Public meeting with a panel of speakers
Trades Council club, Saville Mount, Leeds 7.

Thursday 18 November 1.00pm
Defend Gerry McLochlainn!
No to criminalisation!
Open meeting
The Debating Chamber, Leeds University Union.

Plus all day showing of the Irish Freedom Movement video **No British Solution!**
The Union Building, Leeds University.

Sunday 21 November
Remember the Manchester Martyrs!
Join Leeds Irish Freedom Movement on the demonstration
Coaches leave at 10.00am Parkinson Steps, Leeds University Union and 10.15am Leeds Trades club. Details from 01-274 3951.

COVENTRY

Wednesday 10 November 7.30pm
Coventry Irish Freedom Movement public meeting
Remember the past! Fight for the future!
The Green Room, Stanton Social Club, 234 Stoney Stanton Road.

Sunday 21 November
Fight for Irish freedom!
Join Coventry Irish Freedom Movement on the **Manchester Martyrs demonstration**
Coaches leave at 10.45am. Cafe Paul Meadows, Coventry. For details phone 01-274 3951.

Coventry Workers Against Racism holds regular fortnightly meetings. For details phone 01-274 3951.

SHEFFIELD

The following RCP meetings take place in the *Mail Coach pub, West Street*
Thursday 4 November 7.30pm
The Irish War

Thursday 11 November 7.30pm
Real freedom: women's liberation and socialism
Thursday 25 November 7.30pm
What is the Soviet Union?

For details see *the next step* sellers.

Sheffield Workers Against Racism meets fortnightly. Next meetings Wednesday 3 November, 17 November, 1 December. For details see *the next step* sellers.

Sheffield Irish Freedom Movement is meeting on Wednesday 10 November, 24 November at 7.30pm
The Lion, The Wicker.

the next step is sold Monday—Thursday, 9—11.00am at West Street dole and every Saturday 11.00am—2.00pm on Fargate.

LONDON

Afia Begum must stay!
South and North London Workers Against Racism will be holding regular street meetings and meetings for activists against the deportation of Afia Begum. Details from 274 3951.

EAST LONDON

Wednesday 10 & 24 November 7.30pm
East London Workers Against Racism activist meetings. Join the discussion and help plan local work.
The Brady Centre, Hanbury Street, E1.

Saturday 27 November 11.00am—1.00pm
Hands off the John family! Police off our streets! Picket Stoke Newington police station.

CALLING ALL PTA VICTIMS!

The Irish Freedom Movement is compiling a dossier on the victimisation of Irish trade unionists in Britain. Anybody who has any details, please contact IFM, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

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the next step

Building the Revolutionary Communist Party

IN MAY 1981 the Revolutionary Communist Tendency became the Revolutionary Communist Party. The June issue of *the next step* commented that this was not merely a name change, but a major step forward in our political development: 'We have not yet built the revolutionary party but, in launching the Revolutionary Communist Party, we give notice that we are ready to assume responsibility for this historic mission'. The first national conference of the RCP was held in London at the end of October. It provided an opportunity to assess how far we have advanced towards the goals we adopted last year.

Some achievements

The conference carefully and critically reviewed every aspect of party activity over the past 16 months. A detailed discussion of past experience is essential in formulating realistic objectives for the future and for giving every supporter a sense of the party's strengths and weaknesses.

A consensus emerged that the RCP has made two unique achievements in the past period. We have made significant strides in the sphere of theory and programmatic development and have developed a system of tactics which allows revolutionaries to influence the outcome of key events in the class struggle.

Revolutionary theory has always been a top priority in the RCP tradition. A number of speakers at the conference noted that articles as far back as the first issue of *the next step* in November 1979 retain their force to this day. Our theory of crisis and imperialism allowed us to anticipate the present day trends towards war. While the left was busy looking for conflict between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries, *the next step* emphasised the growing rivalries within the imperialist camp. Recent disputes between the USA and the European powers over interest rates, steel and other imports and the Siberian gas pipeline confirm the drift of the major capitalist nations into conflict with one another.

The Malvinas war came as no surprise to the RCP — indeed it confirmed our previous analysis. We had long commented on the growing instability in the backward capitalist world resulting from the recession and the increasing tendency of the imperialist powers towards military intervention to secure their dominant position. Thus, while much of the British left dithered and vacillated, the RCP immediately came out with a clear stand, calling for the defeat of British imperialism.

No downturn for us

Our theory of reformism played an important part in preparing RCP supporters for the present crisis of trade unionism

and militancy. For the past four years we have been warning that the days of union militancy have gone and that workers needed a real alternative. A series of articles in *the next step* argued that times have changed and that narrow anti-Toryism was irrelevant to the needs of the working class. The shift in class relations meant that Margaret Thatcher could not be brought down by the sort of industrial action that removed Edward Heath a decade ago. The RCP's message was straightforward: to defeat the Tories workers had to first settle scores with the Labour Party.

This assessment of the state of the class struggle allowed RCP supporters to stay ahead of events. While many on the left complained about working class apathy or talked dismally about the 'downturn', the RCP relentlessly exposed the dead-end of Labourism. Where the left saw only demoralisation the RCP saw important opportunities. In one issue after another *the next step* argued that the crisis of the official labour movement opens doors for those seeking to popularise revolutionary politics.

A sound theoretical appreciation of changing class relations provided the RCP with the starting point for its system of strategy and tactics. The problem facing the RCP was to avoid the twin errors that have haunted the British left for at least 60 years. The left has generally operated as a pressure group on the Labour Party and the union bureaucracy. The left's close proximity to Labourism has meant that it has never managed to fight for an independent political alternative to Labour in the working class. Past attempts of isolated activists to operate outside the orbit of the Labour Party have inevitably failed because of an inability to go beyond passive commentary on events. The RCP set out to overcome these historic failures of the left.

RCP activity is based on two assumptions. First, we insist that it is necessary to retain full organisational and political independence to offer a comprehensive alternative to reformism. Second, we appreciate that it is not enough to declare revolutionary intentions and objectives — it is only through the experience of struggle that workers will come to respect the effectiveness of revolutionary communism. Hence the RCP sets out to fight for leadership in the here and now and not at some indefinite time in the distant future.

Our campaigns

The RCP has sponsored two successful campaigns — the Irish Freedom Movement and Workers Against Racism. Our work in these campaigns has shown that the application of revolutionary politics to important struggles can bring results. Through the IFM and WAR the RCP has

initiated struggles of national importance and drawn many more people into political activity, often for the first time. Our work has demonstrated that revolutionary communism works.

The campaigns are dominated by RCP politics. However, we maintain organisational flexibility so that anybody who supports the demands can participate. Thus, the campaigns have provided an important demonstration of class unity — many individuals and organisations have become actively involved. The difference between this unity and the spurious unity long peddled on the British left under the guise of 'united fronts' is critical. *For the first time we have built unity, not around the terms set out by the reformists, but around objectives which are consistent with revolutionary communism.*

The same principle of independent initiatives, combined with organisational flexibility based on inflexible working class politics, have also paid important dividends in industrial disputes. RCP comrades have played leading roles in a number of strikes, occupations and national industrial disputes. For the first time we have managed to build a network of supporters in the unions.

No time for complacency

The outgoing Political Committee warned conference that our past achievements should give no grounds for complacency. The RCP has still to build a solid base at workplaces, among the unemployed and in the local communities. Speaker after speaker warned that the methods of the past are not necessarily good enough for the leadership of the future. The opportunity for building a new proletarian leadership is there — but only if the RCP has clear answers to the doubts and confusions of thousands of active workers.

The main task of the RCP in the months ahead is to open up a dialogue with more and more active workers. To win these workers to the banner of revolution will require considerable party education. This cannot be education in an academic sense, but education based on the experience of struggle. Too many RCP supporters lack this experience and their immediate priority must be to learn, learn and learn from the class struggle.

The RCP still lacks authority in the working class. For a revolutionary party this is an intolerable state of affairs which can only be resolved through a clear orientation to winning the more class conscious workers to our side. The new Political Committee elected at conference is confident that the party has the foundation for embarking on this road — but only if the RCP can learn quickly and adjust its activity to the problems of the future. This is how the chair of the new Political Committee summed up the per-

spective emerging out of the conference:

'We have no option but to extend our base of support in the unions and in the working class. To do anything else would represent a step backwards. The time has come for a determined campaign to popularise revolutionary communist politics in industry.'

March with us

Decisions taken at conference affected every aspect of RCP work. Conference decided to extend the range of RCP propaganda and activities. The orientation towards industry will be complemented by the exciting prospect of organising, for the first time in a systematic way, against the oppression of women. The publication of *Real freedom*, a book expanding the party's approach to the question of women's liberation and socialism, signals the launch of a series of activities on the subject. This issue of *the next step* includes extracts from the book and outlines activity around a campaign for 'a woman's right to work'.

The conference also discussed *the next step*. Our immediate objective is to increase its size and circulation. Starting next issue *the next step* will be 24 pages. This will allow us to extend the range of topics we can cover and also enable us to establish a better balance between shorter topical reports and longer analytical articles. The steady increase in *the next step's* circulation through 1982 to the present level of 12 000 indicates both the growing readership and influence of our review and its potential to grow even faster. The target of 20 000 copies per issue by next autumn is a realistic one.

There was unanimous support for extending the party's national network. We intend to set up a number of new branches, starting with Liverpool. At the same time steps will be taken to establish and coordinate the work of supporter groups in the many towns where we are not yet in a position to set up fully working branches. There are still many readers who look upon *the next step* as their paper but who do not as yet feel that the RCP is their party. Our aim is to transform such people from being passive sympathisers into active supporters.

We appeal to our readers to join the struggle for revolutionary communism. We cannot give any guarantees about the future. But our record over the past two years proves that it is possible to build a new kind of working class movement. Through *the next step* we have shown that this is not only possible but necessary — that there is no option but to build our party in the here and now. We are realistic enough to know that this will not be an easy ride, but we are also convinced that for the first time in over 60 years we can confidently say that the future is ours.

OUR INSTRUMENT FOR CHANGE

The revolutionary party

In recent years debates about organisation have absorbed much of the energy of the British left. The discussion reached its high point last year over the left's constitutional reforms to democratise the Labour Party. This year the Labour right celebrated the triumph of 'democracy' in the party by voting to boot out the Militant Tendency. Unfortunately, the narrow tactical considerations which have motivated the recent discussions on organisation and party democracy have confused more than clarified the key issues. Frank Richards reviews the Marxist approach to the question of working class organisation and the revolutionary party.



British trade unionists on the march: the unions tend to reflect, rather than challenge, existing divisions in the working class

IN THE ABSTRACT everybody seems to be in favour of democracy and accountability. The Government wants to make the trade unions more democratic, the right wants to free the Labour Party from the tyranny of small cliques and the left wants to give the constituency activists a greater say in decision making. So who are the real democrats?

Their democracy and ours

The answer depends on your point of view, on the class interests that you represent. Every organisational proposal and every institutional reform aims to advance a definite purpose. The ruling class want to introduce secret voting and postal ballots in the unions. This, it claims, would allow everybody to participate and would prevent an unrepresentative minority from running the unions. These proposals to make the unions more 'democratic' in fact represent the interests of the establishment.

Secret voting at home fragments the working class. Whereas at a mass meeting workers hear the arguments of the union activists, at home the influence of the television and the newspapers prevails. This isolation and fragmentation is likely to favour a conservative outcome. Furthermore, the very fact that workers attend a mass meeting indicates a degree of involvement or commitment; meetings are generally only attended by the more militant workers. Postal ballots, on the other hand, involve everybody — from the most backward to the most active. Thus the weight of the conservative sections of the working class becomes greater under a postal ballot system.

The Labour left's campaign to 'democratise' the party is really an attempt to give greater power to the party activists. Labour Party activists tend to be more left-wing than ordinary party members or supporters. The Labour leadership responds by mobilising the union block votes to swamp the activists from the constituency parties. But neither side in the debate is any more democratic than the other. In 1981, the Labour left succeeded in using some union block votes to further its objectives. This year the same block votes swung right back behind the party leadership. What is at stake is not two different conceptions of democracy, but two conflicting interests.

The Labour Party represents the interests of the labour bureaucracy: the conception of democracy that prevails, therefore, is that of the party leadership. It is impossible to make the Labour Party accountable to working class interests because the party structure is designed to maintain the position of the labour bureaucracy. The way it works is straightforward. At the local constituency level there is complete democracy. The local party is free to propose whatever it wants. The party leadership however is not accountable to local activists — it answers to the trade union leaders and the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The party is organised to allow for a semblance of participation at the local level, while retaining power at the centre. The Labour Party is not a workers' party

but a bureaucrats' party. All the real debates take place among union and party officials behind closed doors.

The British left misses the point. The central focus of our discussion of methods of organisation should not be 'democracy' but the problem of building an organisation that really advances the interests of the working class.

Which working class?

The working class is divided into different industries, trades and grades, between men and women and black and white. Workers generally take action in isolated groups — as coal miners, Ford workers, women at Rulecan, black workers at Heathfield. They experience the class struggle from the point of view of the particular section of which they happen to be a member. The most basic forms of working class organisation, the trade unions, reflect these sectional experiences. Trade unions have a clearly defined purpose: to organise workers in workplaces along craft or industrial lines. Trade unions unite workers in a particular factory or industry to fight for the interests of their particular section of the proletariat. Thus, unions tend to reflect, rather than challenge, existing divisions in the working class.

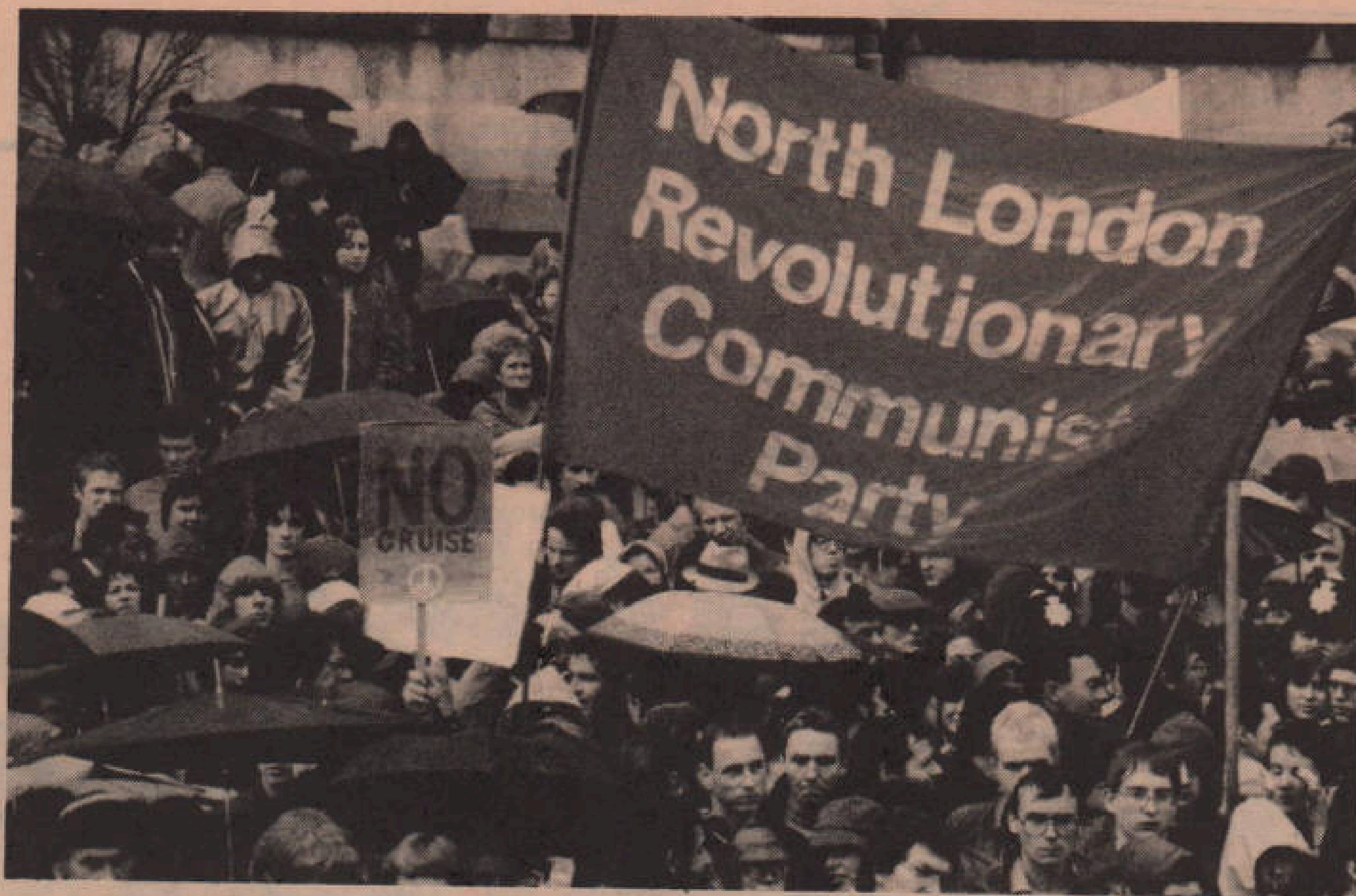
Many left-wing organisations understand the limitations of trade unions and seek to overcome the fragmentation of the working class by fighting for united action. One common call on the left is to 'generalise the struggle', that is, to spread militancy from active to inactive workers. Workers are exhorted to unite around the NHS workers or the miners to bring down the Tories. These attempts to forge a united struggle have a fatal flaw. 'Generalising the struggle' means attempting to create an artificial bond between different groups of workers, each with different partial experiences. It means attempting to unite the diverse isolated struggles of the working class. But the problem of disunity cannot be overcome by technical means. Proletarian unity is not the sum total of numerous partial experiences. Why should skilled workers unite with the unskilled? Why should racist workers link arms with black workers?

'Generalising the struggle' means generalising the struggle as it exists at present. The slogan implies that it is possible to build a movement on the foundations of the current narrow experiences of the working class. It avoids the problem that these partial experiences may conflict with each other; and it reduces the struggle for unity to the level of vacuous exhortation. The success of the Labour Party lies in its ability to speak for the working class as a coalition of interests. As long as workers respond from their immediate experiences the proletariat as a class will be too divided to challenge the labour bureaucrats and their institutions.

The revolutionary party

The revolutionary party does not seek to 'generalise the struggle'. The day to day struggles of the working class are the important raw material for social change. But spontaneous struggles can go in any direction. Compare the health workers with those in motors and steel. In the NHS dispute many workers have spontaneously demonstrated a positive sense of class solidarity. Many car and steel workers, on the other hand, have taken up the reactionary call for import controls. Rather than fight their own bosses in Britain, the workers have sided with their exploiters against foreign competition.

However, spontaneous struggles — no matter how militant — cannot on their own provide the basis for class unity. The outcome always depends on which political forces are able to exert political influence over the spontaneous movement. At present the influence of the labour bureaucracy ensures that the working class is directed towards moderate objectives. Thus the NHS dispute was diverted into a protracted series of half measures — inconclusive days of action and selective pickets. Inevitably much of the initial impetus behind the dispute was



The RCP protesting against the South Atlantic war: the revolutionary party must project an independent outlook on all the vital issues facing the working class

lost as enthusiasm and anger turned into frustration and demoralisation.

The revolutionary party aims to overcome the limits to spontaneity. It seeks to orient the spontaneous movement of the working class towards the struggle for state power. Every dispute contains the antagonism between labour and capital in an embryonic form. The goal of the revolutionary party is to make this antagonism tangible.

The revolutionary party is the organisational expression of the experience of the working class as a whole. It doesn't stand above or outside the working class, nor is it the representative of any particular section of the working class. At the same time it is not an organisation of the average worker. It is a party of workers whose outlook is moulded by the experience of the class as a whole and who can therefore be characterised as *class conscious*.

The revolutionary party must be clear about which section of the working class it is addressing. If the party were to concentrate on a dialogue with the average worker it would pull the most active section of the proletariat down to the level of the average. In other words, it would be the outlook of the average worker rather than that of the most class conscious that would determine the course of events. As a result the party might be more 'representative' of the working class, but it would not be able to fight for its interests.

The revolutionary party aims to organise workers around the highest level of class consciousness. In this sense it is a *vanguard* organisation — the party of the most conscious section of the proletariat. For many liberals and reformists, this conception of the vanguard party smacks of elitism and authoritarianism. This response evades the real question at stake — 'which class interests do you want to represent?' The vanguard party is not elitist but *selective*. It selects the most active workers and struggles to transform them into class conscious revolutionaries. It sets as its standard a highly developed consciousness, not because it is elitist but because this is the level of consciousness necessary to fight capital effectively. Those who want to dissolve the vanguard into the working masses want to take their lead from the average worker, and build their organisation on the basis of the partial experiences of the proletariat.

In fact the day to day experience of the labour movement shows the need for a vanguard party. In practice, active trade unionists do not take their lead from passive workers. Through a process of self-selection activists come together to initiate action. A minority of workers establish strike committees and picket lines, and almost spontaneously a leadership emerges. Strike action promotes further differentiation — some workers coalesce into a group of passive supporters, others stay at home, while still others scab. Union activists seek to involve the broadest possible layers in their struggle. But, at the end of the day, it is the effectiveness of the militant minority that

determines the outcome.

The revolutionary party begins with the militant minority but it doesn't stop there. Militancy must be fused with an understanding of the interests of the working class as a whole. Those who reject this approach in effect degrade class consciousness to the level of sectional outlook. The revolutionary party aims to change the sectional outlook into a conscious understanding of the class struggle.

The problem of consciousness

The party is nothing more than an organisational expression of class consciousness. The struggle for this consciousness is necessary because it doesn't emerge spontaneously; the divisions in the proletariat foster a fragmented outlook. The independent interests of the working class only become manifest in the course of a conscious struggle against capitalism. In other words, proletarian unity can only come about through a party that can independently work out a programme for the struggle for state power.

The working class needs a revolutionary party because the experience of day to day struggle is insufficient to show the way forward to a new kind of society. The bourgeoisie never had this problem. Before it became the dominant force in society capitalism had been developing within feudal society for centuries. The bourgeoisie saw what it wanted and it did not require a tremendous leap in consciousness to make a revolution to achieve it. Unfortunately, socialism cannot develop within capitalism — the bourgeois state must be destroyed before planned production can begin. Workers may know that there is something wrong with the system, but at best can only recognise the need for an alternative intuitively. However, a conscious rejection of what exists and a conscious desire for an alternative society is necessary to make it a reality. The revolutionary party seeks to provide a bridge between the battle against capitalism here and now and the society of the future.

Consciousness is neither a product of superior natural abilities nor of academic study. It develops out of the collective experience of struggle — an experience which the party assimilates, develops and tests in the light of new events. Many people object to the high level of discipline demanded by a vanguard party. These objections stem from a misunderstanding of the role of discipline in working class organisation.

Organisation is intimately related to political objectives. The Labour Party expects little commitment and exerts virtually no discipline over its members. This is not surprising for an organisation that prefers to keep its supporters passive and fears the active involvement of the masses. Many radical left organisations such as the International Marxist Group or the Socialist Workers Party expect a degree of commitment from their members. But this commitment stops short of turning the membership into professional revolutionaries. For most IMG or SWP supporters membership is one com-

mitment among others. This level of involvement and discipline is enough, given their limited ambitions. If you hope to reform the Labour Party (IMG), or aim to build a party of trade union militants (SWP), you need a degree of commitment, but not too much, lest it 'alienate' potential Labour Party or trade union recruits. Although the left's standards of organisation are loose and easy going, they are adequate for its political objectives.

Unlike the radical groups, the revolutionary party is out to change the world. Its objectives determine its form of organisation. Revolutionaries cannot seek to change the world without being prepared to change themselves. The party expects the highest level of discipline, not out of love for obedience, but to ensure that each member acquires the level of consciousness necessary to fight capitalism.

Today, many on the left denounce the so-called 'authoritarianism' of the party and pride themselves on being 'independent'. But what does their 'independence' mean? From a Marxist point of view being independent means celebrating individual experience. This defence of independence might endow individual experience with meaning but it does not take the class struggle forward one inch. Nor does it mean political independence — the Labour Party is a collection of independents with strong views. Labour's deputy leader Denis Healey is a truly 'independent' spirit — he can reject his party's policy on grounds of conscience. Real political independence from this society can only come through the experience of collective struggle, where the interaction between individual revolutionaries and the workers' movement transforms the consciousness of the proletariat.

The revolutionary party is the only instrument we have for breaking the domination of the bourgeoisie over the working class. It is an instrument which, through transforming the workers' movement, opens up the road to a new society.

The RCP

Is the RCP a revolutionary party? The answer depends on the extent to which organisation proves adequate to its objective. Undoubtedly the RCP represents an important step forward. Its ability to develop revolutionary theory and to lead struggles from a proletarian point of view are signs of its positive direction. The ideological level of its membership indicates a healthy development of its internal organisation.

But the RCP has a long way to go to claim the mantle of an effective vanguard party. Its experience of struggle is too narrow and its contact with the different sections of the working class is too restricted to evolve an effective programme of action. A revolutionary party must be able to assimilate the experience of the working class as a whole to give a coherent expression to class consciousness. The RCP can project struggles from the point of view of proletarian independence — but it lacks the experience to do this consistently on all the issues that face the working class. In the coming year the RCP must jump ahead of itself to find ways and means to reach new sections of workers. It needs this experience to forge a party which represents active workers all over the country.

The RCP is still too much a product of the traditions of the British labour movement. Our organisational achievements are only *relative* — they are still far from what's required for the struggle for a new society. Too many RCP supporters are complacent. They are satisfied with our theoretical achievements. They point to the Communist Party or the SWP or the IMG and inevitably feel proud to be in the RCP. They look at the flabbiness of the British left and congratulate themselves. This complacency must be rooted out. The measure we must use is not the theoretical philistinism of the British left or its organisational backwardness. That is much too easy. Our standards must not be less than those attained by the Bolsheviks. They were the first working class party to seize state power; we must be the next.

Building the Party...in Sheffield



SAVE OUR CLASS!

Sheffield is the base of the Revolutionary Communist Party's newest and fastest growing branch. Established less than a year ago, it has already doubled in size and built up a circle of regular sellers and readers of *the next step*. Through our active involvement in industrial and broader political issues, monthly sales of *the next step* in the city have climbed steadily towards the 2000 mark.

The recession came late to Sheffield, but when it came it hit hard. Last year, the level of unemployment in Sheffield passed the national average for the first time since the Second World War: it now stands at 15 per cent. More than 20 000

jobs have gone in the past three years. Sheffield is — or was — the steel city. Until recently a third of its male workforce worked in this industry, largely in the stainless, tool and high speed steel production, for which the city is famous. But the recession has led to a slump in demand resulting in closures and mass redundancies. Ten years ago there were 54 000 steel workers in Sheffield, now the number is below 19 000. Engineering and other manufacturing industry in Sheffield has been similarly, if less drastically, affected by the slump.

Our response to the collapse of industry in Sheffield is straightforward. Workers

have no alternative but to fight now to force the employers and their state — in Whitehall and the town hall — to maintain jobs and living standards whatever the cost. This is in stark contrast to the response of the dominant forces in the local labour movement. When we say 'Save our class', they say 'Save our steel'. Labourism is strong in Sheffield and its main function in the present crisis is to pretend that there is a way out for workers without fighting the bosses and the government. Indeed, local Labour leaders maintain that the only way out for workers is to fight alongside the employers to save their industry from

foreign competition. But Sheffield steel can only be 'saved' on the backs of Sheffield workers — through mass unemployment, wage cuts and the destruction of trade union rights.

The dead weight of the traditions of Labourism is the decisive factor in the current quiescence of Sheffield workers before a ferocious capitalist onslaught. The aim of the RCP in Sheffield is to challenge the fatal influence of Labour Party politics and to direct workers' anger and resentment into a coherent counter-attack on their real enemies — the British capitalist class.

The myth of the 'socialist republic'

EXCEPT FOR two brief episodes, Sheffield has had a Labour council since 1926. The council enjoys a high reputation, based on claiming credit for developments which have taken place while Labour was in office and the skilful exploitation of Sheffield's parochial pride. Thus the council basks in the reflected glory of better housing, schools and amenities, clean air zones and slum clearance programmes — developments which were common to every city in the Western world in the post-war period. However, until recently, the Sheffield council never made out much of a claim that its brand of cautious municipal managerialism was particularly 'socialist'.

Sheffield's left-wing image is some-

thing new. Its emergence corresponds to the rise of the Labour left in the 'seventies, with the influx of young, generally middle-class, state salaried activists. Many of these activists turned to carve out the first stage of their careers in local government before looking for parliamentary seats. Alongside Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight came Sheffield's council leader David Blunkett. Sheffield was proclaimed 'the socialist republic of South Yorkshire' by local senior NUPE official Ken Curran on 9 February 1980 and on May Day 1981 the Red Flag was run up the town hall flagpole. Not much else changed, however.

Like its 'gas and water' socialist forebears, today's radical council administration is fully committed to the principles of efficiency and sound capitalist accounting. Sheffield's left-wing council has taken the familiar left-wing Labour stand of staunchly refusing to cut services, while cutting working class living standards through rate rises instead. Labour manifestos constantly proclaim 'common-sense policies' and promise to cut waste and inefficiency. Last May's statement to the electorate warned ominously that the council will 'require full co-operation avoiding the selfish protection of narrow

interests rather than the best use of resources'. This means that saving money may mean the loss of union rights. It also promises to 'scrutinise' job vacancies — in other words, delay filling them, thus allowing the council to budget on a substantial permanent vacancy rate. Sheffield's radical councillors fully accept that the working class must make sacrifices to allow the Government to rationalise public spending: they just prefer 'socialist' cuts to Tory cuts.

The current pride of the socialist republic is its new £2 500 000 Employment Committee. Like similar bodies set up by the GLC and other Labour councils, this committee brings together, on the one hand, community activists, radical academics and feminists and on the other, junior trade union officials, often shop stewards and convenors recently made redundant or victimised. The aim of these Bennites and bureaucrats is not to fight redundancies, but in the words of the coordinator of the Sheffield committee to achieve 'more direct local democratic control over employment and to impose a greater degree of social planning upon the structural and technological changes that take place in Sheffield' (*New Statesman*, 27 August). In reality,

employment cannot be brought under 'democratic control' and society cannot be planned until capitalism and its state are destroyed. What do we do in the meantime?

The function of the Employment Committee is to offer illusory alternatives in the fight for jobs. It tries to make out that closures and mass redundancies are not in the bosses' long-term interests — what will happen when business looks up and the factories have already been bulldozed? But the bosses know they have no alternative. The Committee tries to persuade the ruling class that mass unemployment will cost it a fortune in dole money. The bosses will listen to that argument — and respond by cutting benefits for the unemployed even further. To workers the Employment Committee suggests the old illusions of 'alternative' products and workers' co-operatives. Instead of organising a mass fight for jobs, this quango wants to assemble little circles of workers to produce wrought iron fireplaces and tie-dyed T-shirts.

Demolishing the myth of the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire' will be a top priority for RCP supporters in Sheffield in coming months.

Alan Harding

Phoenix heading for the ashes

PHOENIX III is the British Steel Corporation's scheme for rationalising Sheffield's special steel forging industry. The plan is to merge the largest surviving private steel firm Firth Brown with BSC's River Don plant to form Sheffield Forgemasters, a company with equal public and private shares. River Don produces heavy forgings for defence and nuclear power projects; Firth Brown concentrates on forgings for the aerospace industry. Both have long been in difficulties: their combined workforces have shrunk from 13 000 in 1972 to 4500 today. The merger threatens at least another 1000 jobs.

Both factories are highly unionised. Many trade union militants have traditionally identified with the Communist Party and the Labour left. A look at the political traditions of the unions in these factories goes a long way to explain the lack of resistance to the Phoenix III plans.

In 1971 there were plans to shut down the River Don plant. The unions united with the city council, not to coordinate action to defend jobs, but to show that River Don could make a profit. Works convenor Ernest Welsh explained that 'the point of the campaign was not to disrupt production, but to prove that River Don could be made viable' (*Star*, 7 July 1971). The unions threatened to sit-in, but at the same time produced a detailed study to show that River Don was viable. BSC supremo Monty Finniston was so impressed that he ruled out closure and opted instead for a major rationalisation programme and 400 redundancies. The joint works committee were reported to be 'overjoyed'. Chairman Cliff Wright (now convenor) declared the result better than anyone had dared hope for. The committee endorsed the deal giving 'a full picture of the lengths to which the unions are prepared to go to co-operate' (*Morning Telegraph*, 8 December 1971).

At Firth Brown the unions' record is, if anything, even worse. The officials have collaborated in the steady run down of jobs. When, earlier this year, the company's position deteriorated sharply, the unions went into action to try to save the firm. They appealed first to the Tories and then to the Labour Party to help bale the company out. While they lobbied businessmen and politicians, the officials called off strike action. They offered to find volunteers for redundancy and even to accept wage cuts to stave off mass sackings. Their manoeuvres so demoralised the workforce that when it came to the crunch in February this year, and management imposed mass redundancies and the virtual destruction of shop floor organisation, workers refused to follow the shop stewards' recommendation for strike action. After years of betrayal, they had simply lost confidence in their leadership.

Now the River Don and Firth Brown workers are under attack again. The workplace union leaders, Cliff Wright at River Don and Jack Illingworth at Firth Brown, are talking militantly about 'confrontation' and 'taking the gloves off'. But they are still talking even louder about their commitment to saving the British steel industry - from the Tory Government and foreign competition. Their weak position is now bolstered up by the council and its Employment Committee which has produced a special *Save our steel* pamphlet, a desperate plea to management to seek an alternative way of restoring profitability in steel.

District organiser of the steel workers' union Peter Lightfoot indicated the scope of the bureaucrats' resistance to the cuts on the day they were announced:

'Management would have to prove that there was a need to get rid of every single

job that they wanted to axe. It's never a good day when there are cuts, but we could still have a company that could take on the world.' (*Morning Telegraph*, 21 August)

BSC management will clearly have no trouble convincing this sort of union leader that making Sheffield Forgemasters great will mean making Sheffield steelworkers much fewer and much poorer. Supporters of the next step will be fighting these pernicious arguments from the council chambers and union offices all the way to the factory floor. The spirit to fight the cutbacks is still there among the steelworkers. If it can be linked to an uncompromising class strategy, BSC's Phoenix III could still be consigned to the arc furnace.

Grant French

NHS: Fighting on two fronts

SUPPORTERS OF the next step have been in the forefront of the health workers' struggle in the Sheffield area. They have moved proposals for action, manned picket lines, and persuaded steelworkers and miners to take sympathetic action. Most importantly, they have been constantly fighting to win rank and file control of the industrial action. In Sheffield, as elsewhere, health workers have had to fight their own unions as well as fighting the Government.

The problem for militants in Sheffield has not been the big guns of the TUC in London, but the day to day activities of the local officials. Parading their radical sympathies, these officials put the blame on the TUC guidelines while using them to prevent workers' control of emergency cover. At every stage they have perpetuated divisions between nurses and ancillaries, NUPE and COHSE, and among different hospitals. They have been ready to organise isolated gestures of militancy, but not to coordinate so much action that their control would be threatened.

When the bureaucrats got worried, they did not hesitate to put the boot in. When workers at Lightwood mental handicap hospital voted for all-out action, the COHSE regional officer threatened no union support, no strike pay and no defence against victimisation. The officials have given management the green light to discipline activists. Ambulancemen and porters have been suspended and other workers sacked, nurses have been reported to their disciplinary council.

The bureaucrats' central concern has been to keep control of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee. In the early stages of the dispute they stayed on top by packing the meetings with full-timers and not allowing rank and file activists to speak. Later they used bureaucratic measures to block weekly calls for an indefinite all-out strike. However, even when some of the more militant shop stewards took over the committee and launched more aggressive tactics - coordinated action and flying pickets - they still hesitated to take the dispute out of the hands of the senior officials. A proposal for a national shop stewards' conference was initially lost when the officials argued it would be 'divisive', 'political' and 'anti-union'. Members of the Socialist Workers Party voted with the bureaucrats. The conference went ahead at a later date only as a result of a tactical blunder by the senior NUPE official.

As in other parts of the country, the bureaucrats' tactics of fragmenting and dragging out the dispute are taking their toll in Sheffield. Yet the health workers have displayed a tremendous resilience, a great openness to a revolutionary ap-

proach to trade union action and they remain undefeated. They could still win if they could break out of the strait-jacket imposed on them by the health service unions, at every level from Congress House to the local branch secretaries.

Kerry Dean

Free zone for racist attacks

APART FROM BEING 'nuclear-free', smoke-free and twinned to the Soviet city Donetsk in the cause of peace, Sheffield's radical council has recently declared the area 'an apartheid-free zone'. The city may lead the struggle against Cape apples, but as far as black people in Sheffield are concerned, it is also a free zone for racist attacks. The council likes making empty gestures, but when it comes to a real problem in its midst, it says little and does less.

In the past 12 months, 23 people have been attacked in separate incidents after leaving local mosques. In one raid on the Makki mosque a pig's head was hung up outside. More than 20 Asian taxi drivers have been assaulted - one so badly that he lost the sight in one eye. Asian restaurants have become open targets. When Ahmed Khan, a waiter at the Shazan restaurant tried to fight off 15 racist thugs, he was arrested by the police and charged with malicious wounding. The leader of the campaign to defend Ahmed Khan subsequently had his restaurant firebombed and narrowly escaped with his life. The police accused him of setting fire to his own restaurant to get the insurance money. They have not yet caught the racists.

The Labour council does not want to know about racist attacks. Black youths who organised a protest march against Ahmed Khan's prosecution approached council leader Blunkett for his support. They were asked to leave his office. When the plight of four black families living in a state of siege at Manor Top was revealed, the council's response was to move them off the estate. Local councillors and leaders of the tenants' association were afraid to challenge the racists in the area, so the blacks moved back into the ghetto. Perhaps Manor Top is not part of the apartheid-free zone?

Workers Against Racism has already moved into action in Sheffield. We played a major part in mobilising support for the demonstration for Ahmed Khan. And we have taken our campaign against racism onto estates such as Manor Top to

rally anti-racist workers and isolate the racists. The first results of our work has been to give a jolt to Sheffield's moribund reformist anti-racist committee. Their energies have been directed towards trying to isolate and undermine the growing influence of WAR. But as WAR grows, they may even start fighting racism for a change.

Bob Radcliffe

Will they fight on the buses?

THE PROUDEST boast of the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire' is its cheap bus fares. But how much longer will they last?

Of course, cheap bus fares have nothing to do with socialism. The cheap fares policy was devised after the establishment in 1974 of the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive. The aim of the Executive was to 'encourage and promote a properly integrated and efficient system of public passenger transport'. Cheap fares were popular with local businessmen - they needed to attract labour from a wide area. Low transport costs reduced pressure for higher wage settlements. They did not mind less pollution and traffic congestion. The council provided concessions to OAPs and a six per cent rates subsidy and proclaimed that the socialist millennium was at hand. This was indeed value for money.

Times, however, have changed. Just as employers no longer need so many workers, they are less concerned about transport costs. And they desperately need to cut council spending to ease their rates burden. The axes are out for the 'socialist' bus fares.

The council nearly gave in to the pressure last year. It was saved, not by its socialist principles, but by a judicial ruling that provincial transport executives did not have to follow the same ruling that finished Ken Livingstone's 'fares fair' experiment in London. This year looks like it could be the end as the council pursues its unswerving allegiance to capitalist rationality and finally decides to up the fares.

Cheap fares may not be socialist, but we will still fight to keep them. The policy is a good illustration of the Labour Party's attempts to present sound capitalist administration as socialist idealism and of the way the recession keeps blowing the gaff on Labour.

John Dowling



Campaigning against racism, building the party

AFTER THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS It's war as usual

As we have long predicted, James Prior's scheme for 'rolling devolution' has come to nothing. The October Assembly elections revealed only the degree of polarisation of society in the Six Counties and the extent of support for Sinn Féin. The only thing everybody could agree on was that devolution would not work — the idea was 'stone dead' according to Prior. However, while Prior looks to his own political future and British politicians calculate the price of winning the support of

the Social Democratic and Labour Party for some future cosmetic exercise, the military occupation continues.

The British bourgeoisie has not been unduly disturbed at the collapse of its face-saving initiative. The *Financial Times* summed up the ruling class view with characteristic candour:

'If one rules out British withdrawal from Ulster, as we do, the only conceivable alternative that has been put forward is the maintenance of Direct Rule more or less *sine die*.

The trouble with Direct Rule is that it offers no hope for the future. Its main achievement was once described by a previous Secretary of State as leading to an "acceptable level of violence" . . . Direct Rule is thus in many ways a euphemism for military rule.' (25 October)

Direct Rule is nothing but British rule through military terror. Britain can offer Ireland no hope for the future so it has turned the Six Counties into an enormous garrison in which 'an acceptable level of

violence' keeps British democracy safe from day to day.

The devolution fiasco confirms that the British state has no alternative to terror in Ireland. It confirms too that the Irish people have no alternative but to carry on the fight to free their country from British domination. It is our responsibility to expose the charades of British 'solutions' to the Irish War and give all possible support to the fight against British imperialism.

COMPARE TOM COCHRANE and Joe Donegan, both recently killed in the Irish War.

Cochrane was a sergeant in the Ulster Defence Regiment, a regiment of the British Army. He joined the force when it was set up in 1970 to bring the fiercely sectarian B-Specials under the direct control of the British Army. Under different names this Loyalist militia has maintained a rule of terror, particularly in the border areas where Cochrane lived and operated, for the past 70 years. At the time of his death Cochrane worked part-time for the Army and part-time in a local textiles factory. He was a member of the Protestant Church of Ireland. He carried a gun at all times: he was armed with a .38 pistol at the time of his abduction. He was shot by the South Armagh battalion of the IRA with which his forces have been in battle for the past 13 years.

Donegan was an unemployed joiner from the Falls Road area of Belfast. He was a member of no political or military organisation. He was a Catholic. He never carried any weapons and he was unarmed at the time of his abduction. He was bludgeoned to death by a Loyalist paramilitary gang and his body mutilated beyond recognition.

The British propaganda machine presents the deaths of these two men as equivalent and symmetrical, as another episode of 'tit for tat', 'sectarian' killings. But they are no such thing. Tom Cochrane was executed because he was an agent of the British state, a willing combatant in its war of attrition against the nationalist people of the Six Counties. He was killed because he was a soldier in



An unemployed Catholic

an enemy army, not because he was a Protestant. Joe Donegan was murdered because he was a Catholic in a country where that is a sign of disloyalty to the forces of occupation. The brutality of his murder provides an important insight into the mentality of the Loyalist paramilitaries. These organisations have always been closely linked to the security forces



A British soldier

of the British state in the Six Counties; their barbarism is the ultimate expression of British rule in Ireland.

The deaths of Cochrane and Donegan are significant not just because they have been made a major focus of attention in the British press in the aftermath of the Assembly elections. They are significant too because they are typical of a pattern

of war in the Six Counties. There are in reality two wars in one. There is a war between the armies of the republican movement (IRA, INLA) and the forces of the British state (Army, UDR, RUC, etc) — Cochrane was its victim. And there is another, silent war conducted by the Loyalist paramilitary agents of Britain against the nationalist community. Donegan is the latest of several hundred innocent victims of this dark side of British terror in Ireland.

It is bad enough that the bourgeois press can get away with popularising its 'tit for tat' nonsense among the British public. That the papers of the British left should take such notions at face value is an outrage. Both the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Revolutionary Party are notorious for their denunciations of IRA military attacks on the British state. But their cringing before British prejudices has gone even a stage further in response to the recent killings. *Socialist Worker* (30 October) joins the bourgeois press in condemning 'religious sectarianism' on both sides and *The News Line* (27 October) denounces the IRA for unleashing 'a sectarian military campaign'. Even to use the word 'sectarian' in relation to the republican movement betrays a total lack of understanding of the real dynamics of the Irish War. It is a cynical cop out from the vital task of challenging the prejudices and confusions of the British labour movement. Our aim must be to rally workers approval for the despatch of soldiers and UDR men and their angry condemnation of their own government over murders of Catholic non-combatants.

Remember the Manchester Martyrs

MANCHESTER MARTYRS COMMEMORATION DEMONSTRATION
Sunday 21 November, Manchester. Details 01-274 3951.



On 23 November 1867, three Irishmen — William Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien — were publicly hanged in New Bailey Street, Salford. Their crime? They freed two leaders of the Irish Republican Brotherhood from a prison van and, in the process, killed a policeman. The three were all Fenians and they have been remembered as the Manchester martyrs.

While the extent of working class support for the Irish liberation struggle has declined since the partition of the country, the pathological hatred of the British ruling class for Irish people remains unabated. It is characteristic of oppressors to depict as brutes those whom they brutalise: it gratifies their egos and eases their consciences. If any fault can be found with Irish freedom fighters over the past century, it is that they have been too soft and conciliatory in dealing with the British occupying forces. They have been even softer on the sort of animals they keep at home to whine and snap from the sewers of Fleet Street.



IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Political rights for Irish prisoners!

Over the past year the Irish Freedom Movement has supported or organised pickets and protests outside prisons at Wormwood Scrubs, Brixton, Wakefield, Winson Green, Gartree, Leicester, the Isle of Wight and elsewhere in solidarity with Irish political prisoners. More than 70 Irish people are currently incarcerated in British jails for political offences arising out of the Irish War.

Here Pat Roberts takes up the specific case of Sinn Féin's organiser in Wales Gerry McLochlainn, who was convicted of conspiracy to cause explosions and sentenced to six years' imprisonment (later commuted on appeal to four) last year. And Henrietta Miles looks at the plight of Irish prisoners in Britain.

For the right to study!

GERRY McLOCHLAINN, who is being held at Maidstone prison, has been refused a place as an extra-mural student in philosophy at the University of Kent. Students and members of staff are protesting at this blatant act of political discrimination and demanding his immediate admission. The Irish Freedom Movement is campaigning to extend the fight for Gerry's admission to other universities and colleges and to the National Union of Students' conference in December.

Gerry's application was supported by the Faculty earlier this year. He is a graduate of Aberystwyth University and was teaching in Ebbw Vale comprehensive school at the time of his arrest. Like all other successful applicants he expected to take up his course in the first week of October. Suddenly, without any explanation, the authorities vetoed his admission. For the authorities the fact that he was a member of Sinn Féin and a political prisoner was sufficient grounds to block his right to higher education. People who support the struggle for Irish self-determination are, it seems, not entitled to education. And the job of admissions authorities, it appears, is to act as political commissars.

Before his imprisonment Gerry was an active campaigner in the cause of Irish freedom in Britain. He organised the 1981 Bloody Sunday demonstration in Cardiff. He was also an active member of his union, the NUT. In an interview he gave to the *next step* while he was on remand, he made clear his view of the importance of Irish solidarity work in Britain:

'We see the struggle of the working class people of Britain as being the same as the anti-imperialist struggle of the Irish people. We don't see any division in that. We see Irish solidarity work as being important, not only in the support it gives our movement, but also because it will assist the struggle that British workers will have to wage against the British state.'

The decision of the University of Kent is a challenge to all anti-imperialist students and teachers. It is an attempt to extend the criminalisation of the republican movement and its political prisoners into the field of education.

Already the students' union at Kent has backed Gerry's demand for admission and students have picketed meetings of the senate and spray-painted slogans of support around the campus. Students at Sheffield Polytechnic have also pledged their backing for the campaign and motions and resolutions of support are pending in many universities and colleges. We appeal to all involved in higher education



Supporting the prisoners: Leicester prison. The next prison picket is at Wakefield prison on 7 November. Details from 01-274 3951.

ation to support the democratic rights of Irish political prisoners. Fight for Gerry McLochlainn's right to study!

For the right to repatriation!

ALL IRISH POLITICAL prisoners have a sort of special category status – it is called 'Category A'. This maximum security category is reserved for prisoners considered 'highly dangerous to the public or the state'; all Irish republicans automatically qualify. 'Category A' prisoners are kept in seven top security prisons and are closely watched and supervised at all times. This has not prevented a number of spectacular escapes, but it has ensured that Irish prisoners are held in terrible conditions.

Many Irish prisoners are given 'E' classification as well as 'A' status. This means they are forced to wear special clothing bearing bright yellow patches, have special guards and are allowed to see visitors only through plate glass windows. Virtually all Irish prisoners have spent long periods in solitary confinement in 'control units'. These were introduced by the then Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins in 1974. They have been used particularly to deal with republicans who refuse to conform to the prison regime. Some prisoners have been kept in this state of sensory deprivation and psychological pressure for prolonged periods. Eddie Byrne has spent a total of three and a half years in solitary; Paddy Hackett is now in permanent solitary.

Death in detention

Since the present war began five Irish prisoners of war have died in British jails.

Michael Gaughan died in June 1974 following force-feeding at Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight. The Sisters Dolours and Marian Price who also went on hunger strike at the time were transferred to Armagh jail in Ireland and given political status. They have yet to recover from their ordeal at the hands of the British state. First Marian and then Dolours were released in 1980 and 1981, so great was the authorities' fear of the reaction if they died in prison.

Frank Stagg died on hunger strike in February 1976 at Wakefield. His action was in protest against solitary confinement without heating or reading matter.

Noel Jenkinson, republican, socialist and trade union militant was found dead in his cell in October 1976. He was in the process of taking the authorities to the European Court of Human Rights after having been assaulted on several occasions and being subjected to six months in solitary confinement. The coroner refused an independent autopsy.

Sean O'Connell died in October 1977 of cancer, treated at Parkhurst with aspirin and alcohol rubs. His condition, which had been ignored by the prison authorities, was only diagnosed by an independent autopsy.

Guiseppe Conlon died in Wormwood Scrubs in January 1980. A chronic sufferer from tuberculosis he made the mistake of coming to England to find out why his son had been arrested in 1974. He became the fatal victim of the infamous 'Harlesden bomb factory' frame-up (see below).

The frame-ups

The Woolwich and Guildford Four were convicted of placing bombs in pubs frequented by British soldiers, killing seven people in 1974. The four were Gerry Conlon, Paul Hill, Patrick Armstrong and his English friend, 17 year old Carole Richardson. They were an unlikely Active Service Unit. Richardson and Armstrong lived in a squat, took drugs and were well known to the police. They were convicted, despite much contradictory evidence and alibis, largely on the strength of confessions extracted under duress.

In 1977 three IRA men (Eddie Butler, Joe O'Connell and Harry Duggan) arrested after the Balcombe Street siege, claimed responsibility for the bombings. They gave evidence of their involvement to the Appeal Court in October 1977. But the state has refused to re-open the case and the Guildford Four remain inside.

The Birmingham Six were convicted for the 1974 pub bombings in the city. The police arrested five Irishmen on their way to Ireland for the funeral of their friend, IRA man James McDade who blew himself up accidentally with his own bomb in Coventry. They picked up a sixth man in Birmingham. All were subjected to such brutal beatings that their subsequent court appearance led to an inquiry (ending in the usual whitewash). Statements and confessions extracted forcibly played a central part in their subsequent conviction and heavy sentencing. All have consistently maintained that they were

not responsible for the blasts.

The 'Harlesden bomb factory' is the most notorious of all the frame-ups. Ann Maguire, her husband Paddy, her two sons Vincent (16) and Sean (13) were at home with neighbour Pat O'Neill when the police raided their Harlesden home in December 1974. After a blaze of press publicity about 'Auntie Ann's Bomb Kitchen' they were all convicted on explosives charges in connection with the Woolwich and Guildford bombings and given long prison sentences. The decisive factor in the frame-up was that Gerry Conlon, one of the Guildford Four, was Ann Maguire's nephew – hence 'Auntie Ann'.

The only evidence for 'the bomb factory' was forensic tests which have since been discredited and are no longer used. All attempts to re-open the case have failed. Ann and Paddy Maguire are allowed to see one another only twice a year. Ann was a member of the local Conservative Association; Paddy was a former British soldier. Both had lived in England for many years and were not involved with the republican movement.

Why repatriation?

In English law there is a statutory obligation to accommodate prisoners as close to their homes as possible. However, Irish political prisoners, being special, are exempted from this provision. Home Secretary William Whitelaw says this is partly a punitive measure and partly to prevent prisoners from receiving a 'hero's welcome' in Ireland. The irony is that ordinary Irish criminals are allowed to transfer to jails in the Six Counties, but political prisoners are not. Maidstone POW Gerry McLochlainn summed up the situation recently:

'A year ago Britain's only defence against the massive international outcry about its murderous policy was that the hunger strikers would have to die because Britain would treat all prisoners equally. Yet now they actually treat political prisoners worse than rapists, armed robbers and murderers.'

Irish political prisoners have been to the fore in all the major prison protests and riots of the last few years – Hull 1976, Gartree 1978, Wormwood Scrubs 1980. They are now insisting on their right to repatriation as part of their claim for political recognition. They want repatriation not because they are ashamed about their actions, but because they are proud of them. They want repatriation, but will never submit to criminalisation, as Wormwood Scrubs inmate Paul Nomey explains:

'Whilst we all wish to be near our loved ones, the price for that luxury as we see it is too high. The price, the renouncing of our nationality, is unacceptable, as we have suffered so much already to establish that nationality and our comrades have given their lives in that aim. Whether we spend 20 years in prison in England or 20 years in prison in Ireland is irrelevant to us; what is relevant to us is that we never plead or apologise to people who have done their utmost to break us and criminalise our nation and our national aspirations... If we recount the crimes committed by the British against the Irish nation, the heinous crimes attributed to Irish Republicans fade into oblivion. No Irish Republican soldier has committed a crime. To demand, and strive for, our nation's independence is something we Irishmen are not ashamed of nor is it something for which we will apologise.'

The demand for repatriation must become a vital part of Irish solidarity work in Britain.

For a woman's

One woman who won

Brenda Clarke works for Eley-Kynoch, an armament manufacturing division of Imperial Metal Industries. For 14 years she was a gate-keeper outside the arms firm's 475-strong Birmingham plant; then she was fired — effectively because she was a woman and worked part-time. Now, however, she has got her job back. Henrietta Miles talked to her.

Why did you work part-time?

'I started when my two boys were small. I was doing at least 30 hours a week and it suited me. When my husband was made redundant that was another reason for hanging on to it.

How did you get the sack?

'Last spring management announced redundancies. They'd got rid of the odd part-timer before without any challenge from the union — we're all in the T&G, though it isn't a closed shop — so they tried to give 60 of the 75 part-timers who work here the push straight away. By the way, all the part-timers are women, and some of them had been here 17 years.

What did the union do?

'Well, you've got to remember that it took us women years even to get two representatives on the shop stewards' committee. A long time ago I used to be pretty active in the union, but when I tried to stand as a shop steward I was told I couldn't because I was part-time. When my dismissal came up it was the same story. The management asked for a formal agreement with the union that part-timers should be the first to go, and the convenor, Alan Care, went along with it. It was put to a mass meeting, and of course, being in a minority, us part-timers didn't have a chance. After the meeting a lot of men thought better of it because of the length of time many of the women had worked here. But the convenor stood in for the firm. When I went to him about it he said there was nothing he could do.

So what did you do?

'I couldn't accept it. If I'd just gone out of the gate feeling upset nothing would have happened. I was sure we had a case, so I wrote to the National Council for Civil Liberties in London for Anne Sedley's pamphlet on part-time workers. I read it, found that I had a case as I suspected, and phoned her up. She said I was right and went to the Equal Opportunities Commission who said they'd be prepared to pay my costs.

What happened next?

'This time last year 20 of us went to a tribunal. Sandra Powell won because she couldn't go full-time, but the rest of us lost because our kids were grown up and we were technically available for full-time work — even though we didn't want it. So we appealed. Eventually, it got down to 14 of us. Some of us had been out of work for 12 months and five had husbands who were out of work too. Things got so desperate that, to avoid losing my case, I took Eley up on an offer of temporary employment they gave me, even though I'm on a monthly contract and don't like the work (it's heavy and dangerous, because it involves loading powder into bullets).

What was the result of the appeal?

'We won. The judge ruled that it was unfair dismissal and gross sex discrimination — too right! It was a great victory, not only for me and 13 others, but for women everywhere. They'll have to pay us back wages too. But they can still appeal against the ruling, so we're on our guard.

What have you learned from the whole affair?

'I got more help from the NCCL and the EOC than from the union, although I'm still a member, of course. I thought the union was supposed to fight for us! The union needs educating — I've had letters from miles around from women in a similar position to me who've not been told by their union that they've got a case. It's interesting that the T&G has lots of agreements around the country that part-timers should be the first to go. Hopefully our victory will set a precedent and those agreements will be overturned.

Anything else?

'Yes. Women have to take on part-time work some time in their lives. We should be allowed to choose the hours that suit us. Instead, we're treated like second-class citizens — and not just by the bosses, but by the unions too.'

BOTH THE LABOUR movement and the women's movement have failed to win the full rights women deserve. Union leaders are more interested in recruiting women and keeping them under their control than in fighting sex discrimination. At best, the TUC ignores the specific oppression of women and campaigns for them simply as disadvantaged workers. Feminists, on the other hand, feel that the fight for women's rights stands above class relations — that it has no connection with the struggle against capitalism. Both movements supply a partial response to the problem and in the end both prove divisive. The unions mirror the sexual division of the working class and indeed often act to worsen it, while feminists make this division the whole basis of their strategy.

We need a new kind of movement that puts women's liberation at the centre of our anti-capitalist offensive. Fragmented responses to the oppression of women will only be avoided if the working class is forced to assume its responsibility for the emancipation of the female sex. In this sense a new women's movement must make it a priority to transform the narrow and often chauvinist outlook of male workers — not with abstract calls for unity with female workers, but by tactics which compel them to realise that their real class interests lie in being in the forefront of the campaign for women's liberation.

It all comes down to a job

Late last year we began a series of discussions with a group of revolutionary women in Manchester. Soon we had a number of opportunities to put the political insights we had gained from these discussions into practice. In the spring we fought for the jobs of 60 women workers made redundant by their company in nearby Runcorn. Over the summer we took part in the National Health Service dispute, which was mainly fought by low-paid women workers. We went on to organise against state moves to restrict the grounds on which abortion could be carried out. Then, in September, we circulated a survey/questionnaire to Manchester women to find out just how inadequate local nursery provision was; and, last month, we took action against the Rayner Report (see below). We also intervened in campaigns for black women like Afia Begum to have the deportation orders served upon them lifted.

Every one of our experiences revealed that the key issue facing women is their right to work. *Redundancies, cuts, low pay, lack of nursery and abortion facilities all prevent women from participating fully in social production, in social life.* What became clear was that a drive for a woman's right to work would allow us to present all aspects of women's oppression, not as isolated single issues, but as integral to the system we want to smash.

Engel's demand for the 'reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry', made in 1884, is still relevant today. Even in periods of capitalist expansion, when women are drawn into production in increasing numbers, they are given no right to work. Their employment is conditional on their individual ability to combine work outside the home with drudgery inside it. When the accumulation of capital falters and women are thrown out of their jobs, they therefore face special problems — even though these problems are generally seen as less serious than

More and more working class women are the home. We mark the publication of *Katonia and socialism*, and the beginning of by reproducing an edited version of the first account of the new offensive on women's work — one woman who won — Brenda Clarke of E

those faced by male workers. Because this is the case, it is crucial to campaign specifically for a woman's right to work.

Our starting point is the fight against women being given the sack. The bosses' increasing inability to provide women with the right to be exploited stands in sharp contrast to every woman worker's need for a livelihood. Of course, the general view that female unemployment is somehow secondary in significance to male joblessness makes the fight against female redundancies difficult to pursue. But as long as state statistics consistently underestimate the nature and extent of female unemployment, it will be necessary to point out that every woman between the age of 16 and 60 who is not in a full-time job is in fact unemployed. Part-time work, for instance, must be seen for what it is: simply a means for capitalists to exploit women systematically — without having to expand the number of full-time workers on their payrolls.

State statistics are not the only problem with female unemployment. Its true dimensions are missed by the media, the unions and by many women themselves. The belief that women's unemployment is not a grave social and personal problem is widespread. When young or skilled male workers have no jobs, both sides of industry worry about civil disorder, talents going to waste and loss of self-respect. But women? They always have a 'job' to be getting on with in the home.

If low-paid or part-time women workers lose their jobs it is not held to be such a tragedy as when, say, a male-operated steel mill shuts down. And when unions come out against all redundancies, they often fail to include part-time women workers among the workers whose interests they seek to defend.

Childcare and abortion

The demand for a woman's right to work has real relevance to women who have retained their jobs but who are on strike. In the current NHS dispute, for example, women make up the bulk of the militants. But many women health workers have rightly pointed to the difficulties they face in playing a full part on picket lines and in occupations. Lengthy strikes



right to work!

being pushed out of work and back into Marshall's *Real freedom: women's liberation* campaign for a woman's right to work, chapter. This special feature also includes rights on the dole and an interview with y-Kynoch.

are always hard for low-paid workers with family responsibilities. Mothers in particular are continually thwarted from attending meetings. When hospital workers in Manchester organised some limited creche facilities, the active involvement of women in the strike rose dramatically. No wonder that, when we stressed women's right to work in an address to a health workers' rally in Tameside, Manchester, we were heard with acclaim.

An index-linked minimum wage of £120 a week for all would be a step towards economic independence for women. But without proper childcare facilities, women will not feel really free to go out to work. As long as childcare remains a family matter, women will not enjoy the genuine right to work. And the ruling class knows this. Cynical as ever, it has ordered the DHSS to deny unemployment benefit to mothers who are not available for full-time work. Even though the percentage of claimants who fall into this category is small, the move has an important ideological effect. It forces mothers to find and pay for childcare at a time when neither the state nor the employers are prepared to foot the bill for it.

Our survey/questionnaire revealed that few women can rely on public or workplace nurseries: the vast majority depend on husbands, friends or relatives to get their children looked after. Many, too, prefer not to send their children to a nursery at all. Given the quality of most nurseries, plus the widely accepted view that mothers should stay with their children practically all the time, this is not surprising. But it does show how the fight for decent childcare centres is a key part of the fight for a woman's right to work.

The same goes for abortion facilities, hit as they now are by cuts, privatisation and ever-tightening legal constraints. The harder it is to get an abortion, the harder it is to stay in the job market. Our call for free abortion on demand emphasises two things: that the state, not individual women, must pay for abortions, and that abortion facilities must be extensive enough to allow every request for an

abortion to be granted at once. For this reason we oppose Britain's 1967 Abortion Act. It makes abortion available at the discretion of the medical profession, and therefore cannot fulfil women's real needs.

Special measures

The barriers to women's full participation in social production are tangible enough. But for the TUC and for the feminists, 'employer attitudes' are the problem. For them, the task is not to fight for a woman's right to work, but rather to persuade the bosses to supply more job opportunities for women. Positive discrimination in recruitment and promotion, equal opportunities clauses, ads featuring women and the elimination of 'sex bias' among personnel managers have all been advanced as ways of making the job market more open. But all this is just to scratch the surface, to do no more than express the middle class woman's perception of equality. Dwindling jobs, segregated employment and, above all, the way that capital consigns women to the kitchen and to the worst factory and office jobs around — objective facts like these — make the solutions proposed by the TUC and the feminists illusory.

In a number of instances, employers have positively discriminated in favour of women. In Liverpool, for instance, Marks & Spencer has found that more black women on the tills increases sales to the black community; while in Leeds a printer has discovered that taking on more women reduces labour turnover and keeps wage bills down. Positive discrimination helps capitalists more than it does women, so we reject it. Instead, we call for *special measures* for women — because women are *specifically oppressed*. Nursery and abortion facilities, protective legislation, maternity rights and training courses are essential if women are to be on equal terms with men. Anything the working class can do to improve women's position and ensure that they compete more effectively for jobs must be encouraged. But any improvements we win must be paid for by the capitalist class, the class which organises and profits from women's oppression. We oppose all solutions which ask the working class to pay for a better life for women by sacrificing jobs, hours or pay.

The way forward

Our programme of action for a woman's right to work is straightforward:

- opposition to all redundancies
- opposition to all cuts in social services
- for free 24-hour nurseries
- for free abortion on demand
- against all forms of discrimination (cohabitation rules, the Nationality Act) which deny women jobs, social services and civil rights.

This programme can defend women. But work around it can also relate to the aspirations for a better life that all workers share. Because it provides for a struggle which will be at the expense of the capitalist class alone, it can make for unity between male and female workers.

The struggle for a woman's right to work challenges the existing social system. It can only be realised fully in a communist society, in which childcare and private chores become part of social production. Yet every nursery kept open, every union meeting held during work hours, every part-time job paid at full-time rates will bring real freedom that much closer. Join us in the fight for a new world!

The fight on the dole queues

Last month the Department of Health and Social Security introduced a new form — UB 671 — in Britain's unemployment offices. It represents an attack on the working class as a whole, and particularly on working class women. Gail Daniels reports.

'The answers you give on the form should show:

- the widest range of jobs you can take
- the longest hours you can work
- the lowest rate of pay you require
- the farthest distance you are prepared to travel to work.'

So run the 'Notes to claimants' on UB 671. Nothing like getting straight to the point, is there? The aim is simple: to force claimants to do the loudest, most arduous, worst paid and most far-flung jobs around, and to stop those who refuse to debase themselves in this way from claiming benefit. For women claimants, however, UB 671 is even worse. Question 9 asks:

'Do you have any children or anyone else who needs your care during working hours? Yes/no.

'If "yes", will you be able to make arrangements for their care if you get a job? Yes/no.'

Once against the aim is simple: to deny benefit, on the grounds that they are not 'available' for work, to mothers of pre-school children and women who look after the old, sick and disabled.

Rayner hits women

UB 671 is the product of a report to the Government made by Sir Derek Rayner. He was specially seconded from Marks & Spencer — British capitalism's most illustrious chain store — for the job. Margaret Thatcher set up a committee around Rayner to investigate ways of cutting the cost of administering benefit. The aim was to see how benefit could be provided 'most efficiently and economically, and with the maximum value for money'. The committee's recommendations on *The payment of benefits to unemployed people* were published in November 1980. Laws enacting them were passed in October 1981. A pilot study of their effects was carried out in 19 dole offices in January of this year.

Rayner assumed that women with small children didn't really want to work, but had 'realised that claiming unemployment benefit was an easy source of money'. In his report, Rayner admitted that there was no evidence for this. But that didn't stop him making the throwaway remark that all women with young children should produce a letter from a 'responsible adult' to show that they had a childminder organised and were thus ready to go out to work.

It is a pity that the CPSA, the union whose members work behind the dole counters, has not shown the kind of brass neck Rayner has. Soon after the Rayner Report was published, CPSA Department of Employment regional group secretary Viv Lacey was arguing that there was nothing wrong with availability tests provided they were done in the 'constructive context' of Job Centres. Provided the tests were done in those modern high street shops where you're

offered little or no work, as opposed to those drab, backstreet barracks where you're offered little or no benefit, then that was OK by the CPSA. When the pilot Rayner scheme was about to be launched, the CPSA ordered co-operation with it; 'minimum', 'bare essentials' co-operation, of course, but co-operation all the same. Today, Job Centre workers are, themselves, about to be made redundant because, under Rayner, claimant registration at Job Centres is now voluntary rather than compulsory. Yet the unions still plead that a 'caring and effective public employment service', availability tests and all, is being 'destroyed' (Rayner: *attack on the unemployed*, CPSA/SCPS leaflet).



If the CPSA's response to Rayner is bad enough, that made by Women's Fightback is no better. WF, a feminist organisation in the Labour Party, which specialises in vacuous phrases with a 'socialist' ring to them, runs something called the 'Women's Campaign for Jobs'. The campaign's advice to women? 'Stand up and be counted'...by registering as unemployed and so finding their way into government statistics (see *Socialist Organiser*, 14 October). Great! The way forward for working class women without jobs is to gather rent book, pay slip, bank statement and bus fare and spend one morning a fortnight making sure they show up on the figures.

We're not available

The Rayner Report marks a major crackdown on the unemployed in general and unemployed women in particular. In the 'thirties, people stood up against this kind of thing. We have to do the same today.

Manchester Women's Right to Work Campaign has already begun the resistance that is necessary. On Monday 18 October, the day the availability tests came in, we held a 50-strong picket at Manchester's Aytoun Street benefit office. Many women with small children were there; so, in contrast to the leaders of the CPSA, were many rank and file CPSA workers. Yet the struggle is only just starting. There is a fight to be won, not just over availability to work, but also over cohabitation and national insurance payments, both of which the authorities use to deny women benefit. So let's get started on that fight now.

Real freedom

Women's liberation and socialism
Kate Marshall

Drawing on a mass of statistical evidence, Kate Marshall relates women's oppression today to capitalist society in crisis. *Real Freedom* is a frontal challenge to bourgeois reaction, reformism and traditional feminism. It points the way forward through the fight for 'a woman's right to work' to a working class strategy for women's liberation.

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Public rally to launch

Real freedom:

women's liberation and socialism and a campaign for a woman's right to work
Friends Meeting House, Euston Rd, London NW1
Friday 26 November at 7.00pm.

THE BREAK UP of the 13-year old coalition means the end of the post-war stability that made Germany the envy of bourgeois politicians the world over. Press commentaries on the demise of the coalition tend to overestimate the significance of Helmut Schmidt's charisma and authority. No doubt Schmidt's ability to mediate the conflicting pressures on his administration helped prolong its life. But the real credit for the protracted period of consensus must go to the steady expansion of West German capitalism.

The late onset of recession in Germany postponed the polarisation of society. Twenty-five years of economic growth and unprecedented prosperity for German workers meant that there was virtually no class pressure on the trade unions or the SPD. As a result both union bureaucrats and the SPD developed a remarkable degree of independence from the rank and file and became fully integrated into the state.

This process was underpinned by the legacy of fascism and the post-war partition of Germany. By 1949 the German labour movement had been utterly destroyed; its former leadership was replaced by a bureaucracy which was house-trained by American and British imperialism and imposed on a working class deeply traumatised by fascism and war, defeat and division and post-war migration.

The labour bureaucracy's lack of deep roots in the working class has become today a real problem for the SPD, the DGB (the German TUC) and for the ruling class. The eruption of radical middle class protest – and its influence in the ranks of the SPD – shows that the SPD has a very limited capacity to integrate social protest effectively. So far the challenge has been limited to incoherent radicalism among the middle class, while workers have remained politically inactive. Whether or not the SPD can control working class unrest once it takes off is the big question of the day.

During the long period of social democratic government, its links with the working class were weakened still further. Today only 40 per cent of West German workers are organised in trade unions – among the under-25s the proportion is only a quarter. The social composition of the SPD has shifted steadily towards the middle class: in 1952 half its members were manual workers – today the proportion is down to 20 per cent, while well over half the membership is made up by civil servants and other white collar workers, pensioners and students (see Gordon Smith, *Democracy in West Germany*, London 1979).

Modell Deutschland

Schmidt captured the era that has now drawn to a close in the phrase *Modell Deutschland*. Model Germany was built on a social contract between capital and labour. The bourgeoisie won working class acquiescence to falling real wages, increasing 'structural' unemployment and tighter work discipline in return for reforms in the social security system and a breakdown of rigid class bias in education, health care and other fields of social and cultural life. The model took shape from 1966 when the SPD entered government for the first time in the post-war period.

The SPD's ideas about state planning and wage policy were expanded in its 1959 *Godesburg Programme*. However, it was the party's ability to talk sense into the then fairly militant trade unions that impressed considerable sections of the bourgeoisie. In the summer of 1966 matters came to a head. Striking miners in the Ruhr surrounded the villa of the boss of the mining employers' federation, who emerged brandishing a pistol. Incidents such as this and the simultaneous growth of student protest indicated that the days of West Germany's post-war iron Chancellor Adenauer were numbered.

The SPD entered the corridors of power as smoothly as it departed there last month. Four FDP ministers resigned from the Christian Democrat-FDP coalition and the way was clear for the

THE MOULD CRUMBLES

Mass unemployment and economic decline have polarised German politics. After 16 years in office, Germany's Social Democrats are out in the cold. Voters have been deserting in droves from both the Social Democratic Party and its traditional coalition partner, the liberal Free Democratic Party. On the right, the Christian Democrats have made gains in almost every regional and local election during the past two years. To the left, a mass movement against US nuclear missiles has swept the country and turned, with the radical environmentalists of the 'Green' Party, to parliamentary politics. The German ruling class is now looking to the new Christian Democratic Chancellor Kohl to form a government that can overcome the crisis through a ruthless attack on the working class. German workers need an equally uncompromising red reply. Unfortunately, as their traditional party and many German radicals turn from yellow to green, they still lack a revolutionary alternative. Sabena Norton reports.



formation of the Big Coalition of Christian and Social Democrats. The Cabinet was an unlikely crew. It included as Chancellor former Nazi Kurt Georg Kiesinger and Franz Josef Strauss, the German equivalent of Enoch Powell, together with SPD radical Willy Brandt. The German bosses' house paper, *Der Volkswirt*, warmly welcomed the formation of the Big Coalition:

'It is the declared intention of the Federal Government to increase entrepreneurial profits, and the SPD is part of the outfit... This in itself is a historical event.' (24 February 1967)

The coalition's main achievement was to establish the *Konziertierte Aktion*, a forum for tripartite control of national pay rises. Inherited by the SPD-FDP coalition which took over in 1969, this forum did much to integrate the trade unions into the state and keep workers' wages in check through most of the 'seventies. With the exception of the 'hot summer' of 1973, when militant engineering workers sparked off a wave of unofficial strikes, the SPD and the trade union leadership kept tight control over the rank and file.

The break up

Modell Deutschland, however, could last only as long as the German bosses had room for manoeuvre. By 1981 the impending collapse of model Germany became apparent in the increasing turmoil in the FDP-SPD coalition Cabinet.

Irmgard Adam-Schwaetzer, an FDP *Bundestag* MP, summed up the predicament of the Government:

'The party differences were real enough, but in the past there was enough money for each side to get what it demanded. Now the crunch has come. Do we get out of the crisis by encouraging individuals to invest or do we let government spend yet more?' (*The Guardian*, 11 September 1982)

The coalition nearly collapsed over the 1982 budget in July 1981. Schmidt bought peace by agreeing to cuts of DM 3.16 billion in the form of drastic reductions in child benefits, medical services, war pensions and a freeze in civil service employment. However, under pressure from his party's left wing, the FDP's even more outrageous proposals, like cutting unemployment benefits and abolishing student grants, were rejected.

The deal stuck until July this year when an even more acrimonious haggle over the 1983 budget ushered in the coalition's terminal agony. Although this time the SPD conceded even harsher cuts, totalling DM10 billion, the FDP remained intransigent. Early in September, Count Lambsdorff produced the FDP's own budget – a catalogue of drastic cuts, including a 24 per cent reduction in unemployment benefits. Three weeks later the coalition was no more and the Christian Democrats formed an interim minority government under Helmut Kohl.

The new Chancellor's first public address included the statement that he

wanted 'above all to bring the situation back to normal' (*Die Welt*, 2 October 1982). Kohl's concern with restoring 'normality' is shared by bourgeois observers throughout Europe. At first sight, this preoccupation with West German stability seems strange. In many other countries governments change much more frequently and often in far more volatile circumstances. So why all the fuss?

First, West Germany is the most important pillar of the imperialist order in Western Europe. Instability here, if unchecked, could have serious repercussions elsewhere. Second, the greatest fear of the NATO chiefs is that the pressure of events will allow the left wing to take over the SPD. They are concerned that an alliance of radical reformists, trade union militants, disarmers and ecologists could provide a formidable challenge to the government and the Western alliance. Alternatively, the 'Greens' could destroy the FDP and hold the balance of power in the *Bundestag* after the general elections scheduled for March 1983. The result would be continuing governmental instability.

Right turn!

The next few months will show how far Kohl can go in implementing the drastic measures required by German capitalism. The right has come to power in difficult times, without the legitimacy conferred by a general election. The problem for Kohl and the German ruling class is to impose austerity as quickly as possible without provoking further social unrest. To do this the Christian Democrats must establish a climate of public opinion in which harsh attacks on sections of the working class and on radical forces are acceptable.

For the time being Kohl is playing it carefully. At its first Cabinet meeting the new coalition ministers agreed to take a five per cent cut in their salaries. Kohl announced that 'we will demand sacrifices from our fellow citizens' and explained that it would be a 'good thing for the Cabinet to set an example of its own'. Whether such theatricals will produce the desired right-wing consensus remains open to question.

The Cabinet revised some of the FDP's earlier drastic budget plans and agreed to a number of token hand-outs. Kohl pragmatically adopted an earlier SPD proposal for a special tax levy on high income earners, calculated to raise DM3 billion. At the same time, Kohl has asked the trade unions to implement a 'voluntary' six-month pay freeze. Even these tentative measures were sufficient to provoke widespread protest. Hundreds of thousands of trade unionists took to the streets on 23 October to protest against the new government's economic policies.

Kohl has a better weapon in playing the racist card. Here again he is merely stepping into the shoes of his predecessor. Before its demise the Schmidt regime had prepared legislation to stop the dependants of migrant workers from entering the country. Kohl is simply tightening the racist screw: he announced plans for 'repatriation'. Attacks on immigrant homes have become a regular feature of life in German society. In recent local elections in Kiel, a 'Stop foreigners' slate won nine per cent of the vote in working class districts.

The Kohl administration has launched an ideological offensive against immigrant workers. Right-wing interior minister Friedrich Zimmermann argues that racism is the response of 'German citizens' who 'find themselves in the minority, surrounded by people from an alien cultural background'. The message was clear – racism is a legitimate response of concerned German citizens.

Unless he is challenged Kohl's tactics may work. The way forward for German workers is clear enough: throw out the racist laws, stuff the pay freeze – and reject the SPD's attempt to take opportunity of its period in opposition to give itself a left face-lift. But, there are very few socialists who are prepared to fight along these lines. Most German left wingers have joined the 'Greens' on the meadows and in town halls, and turned their back on class politics.

Labour's new immigration policy IT'S STILL BRITONS FIRST

THE LABOUR PARTY'S record on immigration is summed up by the career of its Shadow Home Secretary, Roy Hattersley. In 1961 Roy was an 'Open Door' man, voting — in common with most Labour MPs — against the Tories' Immigration Act. By 1964 he had tuned into the views of his white constituents in Sparkbrook and it was time to make a confession:

'I now believe that unrestricted immigration can only produce additional problems... we must impose a test which tries to analyse which immigrants are most likely to be assimilated into our national life.' (House of Commons, 23 March 1964)

Today Roy Hattersley has changed his mind again. As he tours the country addressing black audiences he openly admits he was wrong to support the last two Labour Governments' immigration restrictions. But as he is quick to point out, this 'only goes to show the Labour Party is capable of change'.

Hattersley's closed door

The problem is that the more Labour's line on immigration changes, the more it stays the same. Take its latest effort, the new national executive document *Immigration: Labour's approach* (passed unanimously at 1982 Conference). It has been widely praised as a major breakthrough by the Labour left. Lambeth MP John Tilley exclaimed: 'At last Labour has a non-racist immigration policy... the numbers game is finally over for the Labour Party' (*Tribune*, 24 September 1982).

In fact, there is nothing new in the NEC document. If it talks less about numbers it is because primary immigration has all but ceased. All that remains to be done is to 'regularise' the status of those already here and sort out the problem of dependants. Here the Labour Party has a few minor differences with the Tories. It proposes to dismantle the 1971 Immigration Act (heard that one before?) and the 1981 Nationality Act (Labour drew it up!) and replace them with non-sexist, fair, humane legislation which 'respects family life' (hear that, Maggie?) and upholds 'our international obligations' (whatever they may be).

But don't get the wrong idea. The next

Everyone's doing it. George Wallace in Alabama. The Tories in Brighton. They're all looking for black votes.

But the Labour Party must take the prize for sheer cheek. Back in 1979 it was vying with Thatcher for the anti-immigrant vote. Three years later it is supposed to have a 'non-sexist non-racist immigration policy'. At least old Governor Wallace took 20 years to make the change from a rabid pro-segregationist into a champion of black equality.

Joan Phillips blows the cover on Labour's new anti-racist image — and on its fan-club, the Campaign Against Racist Laws.

Labour government is *not* going to abandon immigration controls. Hattersley has given his personal assurance on that (*The Times*, 28 August 1982). He emphasised that only those 'with a special connection with the UK... should be let in'. It will require a clever lawyer to sort out the difference between Hattersley's position and the Tories' insistence that citizenship should be based on patriality.

The Labour Party will not do away with immigration controls because it accepts the right of the capitalist state to police the movements of the working class. It would like the state to enforce its divisions among workers of different races and nationalities and its controls on them less harshly and more humanely. This is what the Labour Party means by 'socialist' or 'non-racist' immigration controls. But at a time of recession in what the NEC document accepts is 'a world of economic inequality', immigration controls are inevitably brutal. In a world where the advanced countries are largely populated by white people and the backward capitalist world predominantly by blacks, immigration controls are inevitably racist. Because Labour will never challenge the state and the system it upholds it will always go along with capitalist, racist immigration controls.

Put out an umbrella

So what is new about Labour's policy towards black people? Black voters could be forgiven for being a bit sceptical about the new-look party. This is something the Labour Party electoral machine is keenly aware of. That is why it has been sending out documents on 'Labour and the black electorate' to constituencies

with a high immigrant population, urging a more sensitive approach (such as inviting blacks to meetings). But the Labour Party has a problem — it cannot afford to go too far. After all, the fear of a 'white backlash' is always present. It still has not forgotten what happened to Patrick Gordon-Walker in the 1964 Smethwick election. The Tories beat him on a 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour' ticket. Try as he might, the Labour candidate could not convince the voters he was just as good a racist.

Still, the Labour Party has one way of getting around the problem — by getting the left to do the work. The Labour Party cannot afford to appear too 'pro-immigrant', but it can certainly make use of the services of its supporters on the British left. The Campaign Against Racist Laws fits the bill.

CARL is what is known as an umbrella organisation. That means it does not actually do anything. Nor, and this is the beauty of umbrella organisations, do its affiliated organisations have to do anything. Everybody just meets periodically (about once every two years); they all reaffirm their 'support for CARL' — and they all get off the hook quietly.

One thing everybody in CARL is agreed on, in spite of all their other differences, is the need for unity. And that means keeping quiet about the fact that the Labour Party's 'anti-racist' policy is just as racist as its predecessors.

At this year's conference on 23 October in London, the same crowd that last met nearly two years ago in Birmingham agreed to all the same things. They applauded the Labour Party's new immigration policy, agreed to hold a demonstration in March 1983

(two months after the Nationality Act comes into operation) and swapped leaflets. The Socialist Workers Party wanted a bit more workplace activity. The Communist Party was worried about going too fast. But there were no serious disagreements.

Smash all immigration controls!

Some may say we are unfair. Isn't something — even some minor improvements in the current immigration legislation — better than nothing? There are two good reasons why we resolutely say *no*, and fight to smash all immigration controls.

First, the more the left lends credibility to Labour's phoney anti-racism, the more black workers will be led up a blind alley. After decades of treating black candidates as an electoral liability, the Labour Party is now cynically changing its time. In areas with a high black vote it is suddenly in favour of black representation. Blacks are being used to sell the idea of a reformable Labour Party, often in very radical language. Najma Hafeez, a delegate from Selly Oak, Birmingham, told this year's Labour Party Conference that 'we're sick of being used as a voting fodder'. She then went on to move the resolution in support of the NEC's position on immigration. Brent's black woman councillor Merle Amory said she was fed up with Labour Party tokenism — but that blacks should nevertheless use tokenism for all it's worth. Black workers' experience tells them the Labour Party cannot serve their needs; Labour's black 'representatives' are being wheeled out to convince them otherwise.

Second, support — even very critical support — for Labour's 'non-racist' controls simply postpones the fight against racism in the working class. This is what lies behind all of CARL's talk about 'realistic' policies. CARL refuses to oppose *all* immigration controls, and talks a lot of legal mumbo-jumbo about natural justice, not because it really thinks its feeble reforms will change anything — but because it is not prepared to confront the racist arguments and the racists.

CARL has chosen the easy option — hide under an umbrella and pretend to fight racism. WAR has chosen a different course of action. It is more difficult, but it gets results.

Hot line to William Whitelaw

BASIL GWATIDZO knows all about 'ethnic monitoring' of claimants. He came to Britain from Zimbabwe in 1975, worked for three years on British Rail and then decided to study for entrance to Leeds University. In June this year he applied for supplementary benefit to tide his family over until his grant came through. The DHSS took one look at the colour of his skin, demanded to see his passport — and got straight onto the Home Office. The Home Office decided Basil 'should have no recourse to public funds' and promptly cut off his benefit, his grant — and the council cut off his electricity. His wife and three of his children were literally starved out of the country.

Like many black immigrants, Basil had no idea what he was letting himself in for when he went to sign on. He had always claimed British citizenship and assumed he could claim social security. Now he faces deportation, along with his other three children.

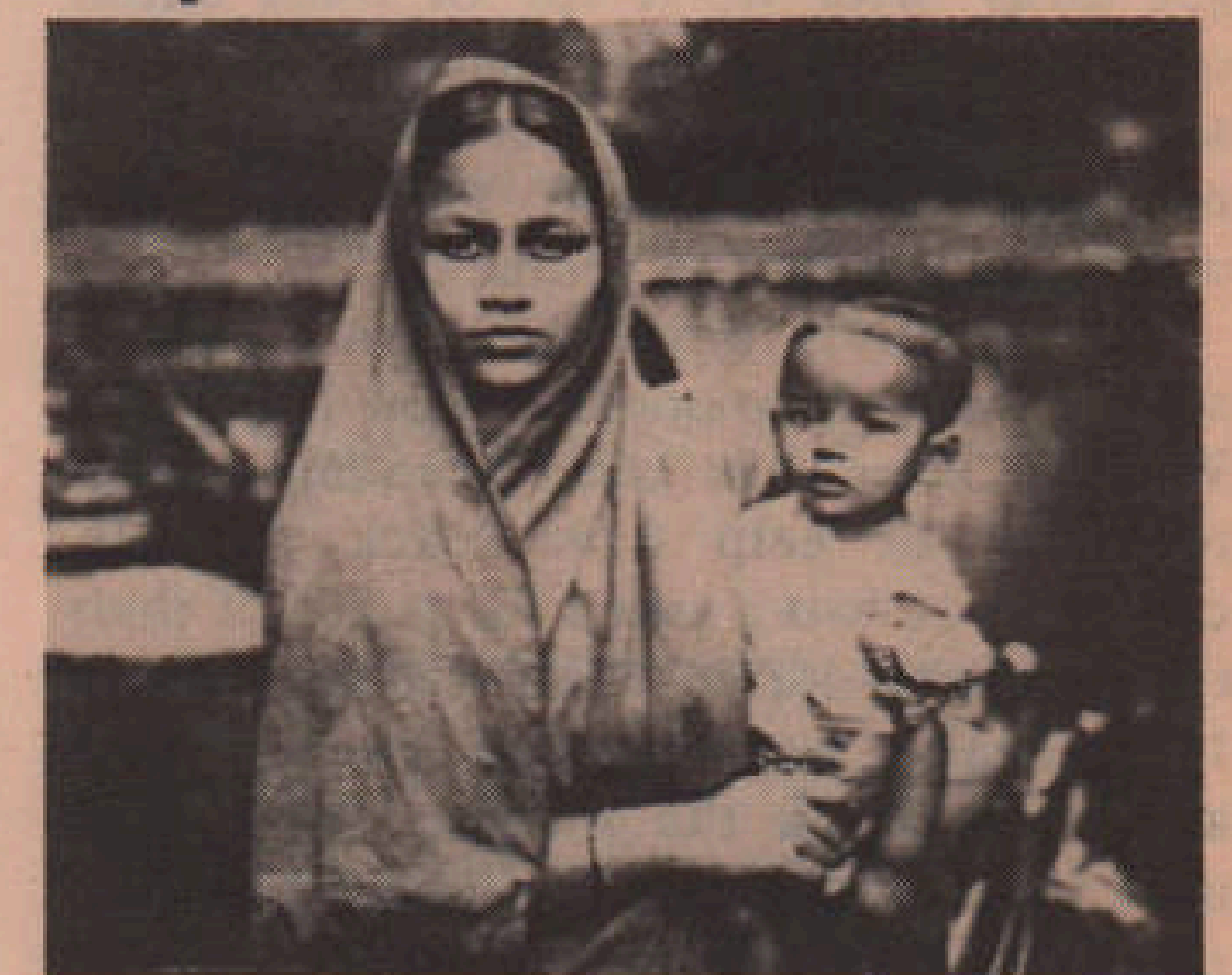
Leeds WAR has launched a militant campaign in his defence, which has already achieved a lot of success. Leeds University Students' Union is backing it and providing Basil with temporary financial help. Large pickets and meetings have been held. And the word is getting around Leeds that contrary to the DHSS' claims, they work hand in glove with the immigration authorities.

Afia Begum—No special case

THE DETAILS of Afia Begum's threatened deportation are so horrific that it is tempting to think the Home Office will be 'compassionate' in her case. She is being kicked out of Britain because her husband was killed in a fire in Brick Lane. She has no means of survival in Bangladesh.

But such details have not stopped the Home Office deporting thousands of black people in the past. And WAR is not relying on its benevolence now.

This month has seen a massive growth in our campaign to stop Afia's deportation. Packed out meetings in East London, an impressive Home Office picket and a demonstration inside Tower Hamlets council chambers which brought the proceedings to a halt — these are some of the ways we are building support. The campaign won wide backing from the local labour movement. Working class solidarity is the way to win this fight.



Demonstrate!

SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER

NO DEPORTATIONS
AFIA WILL STAY

Assemble 1.00pm

ITCHY PARK

(bottom of Brick Lane)

March to Bethnal Green Town Hall

Workers Against Racism Fighting the Labour Party...

BRIXTON

ON MONDAY 1 November 1000 police with bulldozers evicted a handful of Rastas from their homes on Railton Road, the heart of Brixton's front-line. This was the first stage of the cleaning-up operation planned by Lambeth's Tory council, with full backing from 'Red' Ted Knight and the local Labour group. Both parties agree with Brixton's police that there cannot be any 'no-go areas' in the borough. They are falling over each other to convince the electorate that they will 'stamp out crime' — which means driving young blacks off the streets of Brixton.

Unfortunately for the council, things did not go too smoothly. The Railton Road residents marched in force to the police station and then on to the town hall. Then, their local political 'representatives' barricaded themselves inside — and a militant demonstration began on the steps. Ted Knight and the Brixton 'community leaders' who had agreed to the demolition plans were denounced with particular venom.

Then it was back to the front-line. By nightfall two SPG vans had been overturned and several new premises had been squatted. By seven o'clock Brixton was saturated with police from 'instant response units' all over London, all sporting their new riot gear. Water cannons were being wheeled out and police dogs appeared on every corner. Once again, Brixton was burning.

The next day Ted Knight claimed he was 'shocked and surprised' at the use of massive police repression. He shouldn't have been. WAR has documentary evidence that he helped to draw up the eviction plans with Tory council leader Robin Pitt. The police blamed the angry response to their raid on outside white

agitators. Top Tory community relations councillor Ian Picton, the brains behind the evictions, singled out WAR activist Fran Eden as No 1 riot organiser.

The Newline, newspaper of the Workers Revolutionary Party, echoed the councillors and the police. In its front page article the following day, it covered up the role of the Labour Party and its leader — both have been loyally supported by *The Newline*. London's evening *Standard* was more candid:

'It was of course crucial to the whole operation that the decision to demolish the three houses had been made by the council with full agreement of the Labour opposition and community groups.'

The Newline went further, lying that placards waved outside the town hall demanding 'Out with Ted Knight now!' were the work of the RCP. In fact, they were made spontaneously by the evicted squatters. Like the police and the Tories,

the WRP blamed 'outside political groups' — specifically naming the RCP — for fomenting trouble. The WRP's subservience to Knight and the Labour group is exceeded only by its contempt for Brixton's blacks whom it presents as dupes of external forces.

The renewed rioting in Brixton shows what the local black people think about the bipartisan schemes of Knight and Pitt. They are not impressed by the promise of an 'Afro-Caribbean leisure centre' on the ruins of the front-line in the late 'eighties. They want homes, jobs and — above all — the police off their backs now. The local Labour Party has demonstrated conclusively that it cannot deliver the goods. It is as ready as the Tories to unleash the full force of police terror on Brixton's blacks. Our slogan remains what it was 18 months ago when South London Workers Against Racism was first formed: Police out of Brixton!

...fighting in the unions

LEEDS

Your money or your life

PATIENTS ARRIVING for treatment at Leeds General Infirmary on 1 October were surprised to see a sign outside stating 'Blacks queue here — have your passport and money ready'. All round Britain, it was not business as normal at hospital admissions desks. WAR supporters were out in force everywhere, letting people know that from now onwards blacks will be liable for up to £130 per day NHS charges.

Some patients were sceptical. They did not believe the Government would get away with it. A lot of local union officials complacently believed that the scheme would not go through — 'our members won't touch it'. They said WAR was exaggerating the problem.

We weren't. Since Norman Fowler's scheme came into operation on 1 October WAR's office has been inundated with requests for help from black patients, outraged at being asked for proof of their entitlement to free NHS treatment, and from health workers who want to take action to wreck the scheme. Shop stewards have told us that at some hospitals overseas patients are being asked for deposits of up to £1000 before they can get treatment. And everywhere it is the same story. The unions, specifically NALGO, are not opposing the scheme — except where they are under pressure from anti-racist workers.

Ever since the DHSS first mooted its plans to charge overseas patients, WAR has had to fight on two fronts. We have had to fight the Government and the civil servants who are intent on pushing the checks through. And we have also had to deal with the supposed critics of the

race checks — the unions and the race relations industry.

With friends like these

They all started out by saying the scheme should be opposed. But as it got nearer to 1 October, they qualified their opposition. The Commission for Racial Equality announced that it was not against the checks in themselves (after all, it supports ethnic monitoring), but was insistent that everyone, black and white, must be questioned. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants recommended, to prove that the DHSS is playing fair, that whites should demand to be questioned! It seems to have escaped the attention of these ladies and gentlemen that whites have nothing to fear from the DHSS's three-point questionnaire. It was not designed with them in mind.

Meanwhile, the main union involved in implementing the checks, NALGO, began to backtrack. It, too, discovered a positive side to the scheme. But it emphasised in its guidelines to branch secretaries that proper attention should be paid to staffing levels, grading and training for this very 'sensitive' work.

The hospital administrators have taken their cue from NALGO and its race relations advisors. For example, at the London Hospital, they have postponed implementing the checks until 1 November, to allow time for lengthy consultations and training exercises.

Because the union has only opposed the scheme on the grounds that it is 'uneconomic' or 'too bureaucratic' throughout its gestation period, it is now in no position to resist hospital administrators who are bending over backwards to meet their criticisms.

Down to us

Where does this leave the fight to wreck the checks? Exactly where we said it would. The only people who are serious about fighting the DHSS on this issue, and have the power to do it, are anti-racist workers in the NHS and their supporters. The union bureaucrats who claimed 'our members won't touch it' have neither given their members the arguments or the confidence to do battle with their

employers.

The leadership must come from elsewhere. WAR has succeeded where the unions have failed, by convincing militants in the NHS that the race checks are not a side issue — but a frontal attack on their class. In many areas we have made opposition to the race checks a central demand of NHS strike committees. Now we have to fight to make them stick.

LAMBETH

Kangaroo court

LAMBETH COUNCIL (the 'Equal Opportunities Employer') is at it again. Several months ago, they sacked black electrician Nesta Moodie for defending himself against a racist supervisor. Now they have found a black painter, Junior Linscott, to victimise.

Junior, who is in the building workers' union UCATT, was threatened with a screwdriver by a white shop steward — and hit him in self-defence. Later on, the steward apologised in front of two witnesses who signed written statements absolving Junior of any guilt. Yet it was Junior, not his attacker, who was hauled up before a council meeting. And, to his amazement, his convenor — who was conducting his defence — never called the two witnesses to give evidence. Junior was found guilty of gross misconduct and sacked.

The same convenor, Alf Sherwood, represented Nesta Moodie at his hearing. There are a lot of questions to be answered about why both workers were stitched up. WAR intends to get those answers and, as well as continuing to fight for Nesta's reinstatement, has now taken on Junior Linscott's case. We are determined to stop the unions tolerating this victimisation of black workers.

COVENTRY

Don't call us

SEVEN ASIAN workers at S&K Cash and Carry warehouse in Coventry have been on unofficial strike since 22 September. Their union, the TGWU, has refused official backing on the grounds that they should not have come out in the first place.

In fact, local TGWU official Dennis Adler agrees with management that the workers should have accepted a 'work-sharing' scheme that would have cut their wages (£1.40 per hour) practically to zero.

This is the second time round for S&K workers. Back in May they went on strike in support of workers in the firm's Birmingham warehouse, who were fighting for union recognition. The lack of official backing meant they never won it in Coventry, and a few months later were being threatened with redundancy.

The union's refusal to support its members has encouraged management to go in for the kill. Injunctions were immediately served on seven pickets, banning them from the premises. The picketing can only be maintained by outside support. Join WAR in campaigning for official recognition, and on the picket line. Rush financial support to: S&K Strike Fund, 88 King George's Road, Foleshill, Coventry.

NO APARTHEID IN THE NHS NO PASS LAWS ON THE DOLE

Fact-sheets for trade unionists that spell out what the race checks are all about, where they are happening and how to fight them.

10p each (50p for 20)
from WAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.

THE STRIKE at Heathfield began on 15 July. From the start it was more than an ordinary industrial dispute. Twenty-one black workers had been singled out, and locked out, by management when they imposed an overtime ban in support of their pay claim. Seventeen more workers — all of them black — came out in support.

Management was looking for a confrontation with this group of black workers. The main reason was that the blacks were the most militant members of the 180-strong workforce. Back in November 1980 they were instrumental in getting the factory unionised into the GMWU. When management tried to break the union by dispersing the black militants from the plywood department into different sections, they responded with a successful four-day strike and occupation.

Disastrous divisions

The racial divisions in the factory made the Heathfield bosses feel confident about victimising their black employees. These divisions have been skilfully cultivated over the years. All the skilled work goes to whites. Semi-skilled white workers get 30p an hour more than their black colleagues, for exactly the same work. The all-white print workers in SOGAT '82 were successfully co-opted onto a management-run 'works council' (one was rewarded by being appointed manager). Against this background, it was unlikely that the locked-out workers would receive much solidarity from inside the plant. The white workers think they have too much to lose.

In fact, the scabs at Heathfield are cutting their own throats. Sonoco Ltd — Heathfield's US-based parent company — is intent on cutting back its labour costs. In common with other workers on the Slough trading estate, many Heathfield employees could be out of a job very soon (the company lost £900 000 in 1981 alone). They have only to look over the road at Weston's biscuit factory to see the writing on the wall. Four hundred workers are being made redundant there at Christmas. Numerous 'To Let' signs around the trading estate are graphic indicators of hard times.

All that stands between the Heathfield workers and the dole queue is their collective strength — in short, their union. This is something the 38 black strikers have emphasised from the start. Time and again they have said 'We're fighting for everybody — if only the others would see it'. But they don't, and the scabbing has continued.

Loyalty betrayed

The Heathfield strikers are fiercely loyal trade unionists. They want the factory to be 100 per cent closed shop. But the GMWU does not deserve their loyalty. The way it has been conducting the dispute is a disgrace. For weeks the strikers were assured that the union was organising blacking of Heathfield's products and supplies. Everybody agreed that, given the problem of scabbing inside the plant, this was key to winning the strike. Yet week after week the lorries, from all over the country continued to roll in and out. Finally, the officials were forced to admit that the blacking was ineffectual.

The point is that they had not even tried. The transport firms that deliver and collect from Heathfield are not cowboy outfits. Most of the drivers are card-carrying TGWU members. Heathfield's main customers are huge concerns like Pirelli, British Telecom, BICC (the biggest cable makers in Britain) and AEI (part of GEC). Its main supplier of wood is TPT, again a very large enterprise. All the important firms are highly unionised. The GMWU is well placed to demand of the unions involved that their members immediately cease handling Heathfield's work. It has the strength to make the instructions stick.

But the GMWU has not done this. After a few ritual appeals for support, it has simply shrugged off responsibility, blaming other unions or 'apathy' for the absence of blacking. After considerable pressure from Workers Against Racism,

Heathfield Rhetoric and reality

The General and Municipal Workers Union is the third largest union in Britain. Many of its 800 000 members are black and the GMWU has an extensive anti-racist policy.

However, for 38 black GMWU members at the Heathfield cable drum factory in Slough, the union's anti-racist policy is not worth the paper it's written on. As Fran Eden shows, it is one thing to talk about good 'race relations' and 'equal opportunities', quite another to challenge the prejudices of the British labour movement and defend the rights of black workers.

SOGAT '82 was forced to declare itself in official dispute with Heathfield. But the GMWU has not applied any pressure to make sure SOGAT stops its members scabbing. It has not even disciplined its own (white) GMWU members at Heathfield for breaking picket lines every day.

"The union is letting us down. We need more people on the pickets. We need flying pickets round the country. The only people helping us are WAR."

(Abdul Islam, Heathfields strike committee)

The GMWU would like to help the Heathfield strikers. But helping them requires more than pious declarations. It demands taking on the racist prejudices of other GMWU workers, SOGAT printers, TGWU drivers and other trade unionists and swinging them into action behind their black brothers and sisters. The GMWU is incapable of doing this, so, from the start, the union officials have been looking for a way out. The more this became clear to the strikers, the more they looked to Workers Against Racism for support. WAR can win support for the Heathfield workers because it is prepared to stand up and speak out against racism in the labour movement. The GMWU, with all its power and influence, could only manage to send one official regularly to the picket line. WAR sends dozens of pickets. It brings

trade unionists down to the picket line. And it goes out with the strikers to factories around the country to build support.

Labour Party to the rescue

The GMWU has not been slow to see the dangers. After doing nothing for two months, the officials suddenly became very busy in September. They could see the picket lines swelling and getting more effective. Scab trucks were being turned around and the strike was starting to get out of their control.

The response was predictable. The union announced it was taking the dispute to the government conciliation and arbitration service ACAS. Local Labour MP Joan Lester was wheeled in to act as a mediator. She succeeded in getting management to sit down and talk, but things did not go smoothly. Manage-

"This is a very difficult dispute to win. The Asians are divided amongst themselves. The only people who can solve it are ACAS."

(Joan Lester, Labour MP, Eton and Slough)

ment's offer — to reinstate only the workers they wanted — was so unacceptable that the union side had to reject it. Management then promptly withdrew from the talks.

But the bureaucrats did not give up. Their next recommendation was to take the dispute to an industrial tribunal, on

the grounds of unfair dismissal. Meanwhile, the strikers were receiving heavy hints about official recognition being withdrawn if they did not behave. When the police began to pick off one picket after another, and got the local magistrates to ban them from the picket line as a condition of bail, the GMWU turned a blind eye. The official union solicitor did not even challenge the magistrates' ruling in court.

Token talk

Why has the GMWU apparently gone out of its way to lose the Heathfield dispute? On the face of it, we might expect something different. Although its general secretary, David Basnett, is a notorious right winger he also sits on numerous TUC race relations advisory bodies. The GMWU, more than many other unions, is extremely sensitive to accusations of racism. It runs 'racial awareness' courses for shop stewards and holds conferences on equal opportunities. Its large black membership has become an important asset at a time when trade union membership generally is plummeting. It would seem that the last thing the GMWU should be doing, even in its own narrow self-interest, is allowing the Heathfield workers to go down to defeat.

But it is not so easy for the GMWU to save face. Winning a strike like that at Heathfield means translating the union's anti-racist rhetoric into reality. It means confronting the following problems:

- scabs who treat the strikers to a daily torrent of racist abuse (one SOGAT steward said 'You can't call that lot trade unionists')
- local racists who have daubed 'Wogs out' graffiti on the forecourt and intimidated the strikers' families in their homes
- workers in the firms that deal with Heathfield who are not giving active support.

At the best of times, union officials are not inclined to challenge scabs. They are highly reluctant to take any action (like secondary picketing of scab firms) which breaks the law. But in the case of the Heathfield strike this reluctance has become paralysis. The GMWU would rather call off the strike than mount an effective campaign in the labour movement on behalf of the 38 black Heathfield workers.

The way to win

They have not been able to call it off. The guts and determination of the strikers has so far seen to that. But, as winter sets in on the picket line in Slough, the workers face two stark alternatives. They can let the strike drag on and on, hoping against hope that the union will begin to act. Or they can take matters into their own hands. That means

- putting pickets on any firm whose workers refuse to black Heathfield's work
- rejecting any further moves to use ACAS or industrial tribunals to resolve the dispute
- mobilising nationwide for a series of mass pickets to challenge the ban on effective picketing
- refusing to return to work until — every worker is unconditionally reinstated and compensated for loss of pay — the GMWU is recognised as a closed shop
- the union's original wage demand is met in full.

"I am with you in spirit and solidarity. Don't give up."

(Jayaben Desai, Grunwick strike leader)

The black workers at Heathfield have fought long and hard for their trade union rights. To win them requires not just a struggle against a ruthless employer but also a fight against a union which will not go beyond token anti-racist gestures. The Heathfield strike confirms the urgent priority of transforming our unions into organisations that will fight for all workers — black as well as white.



- JOIN THE MASS PICKETS EVERY THURSDAY 7am — 7pm at Heathfield Ltd, Western Road, Slough Trading Estate, Slough. Transport from London. Phone 01-274 3951.
- DEFEND EFFECTIVE PICKETING. Six WAR supporters have been charged with criminal damage and other serious offences, and banned from the picket line. Send donations to WAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.
- SUPPORT THE STRIKE COMMITTEE. Send donations and messages of support to Heathfield Strike Committee, 105 Greenford Avenue, London W7.



THE SCARGILL FACTOR

ARTHUR SCARGILL is the man the gutter press loves to hate. London's evening *Standard* recently sneered at him as the epitome of 'the arrogant riff-raff who these days scramble to the top of trade unions'. In September Tory back-bench MP Delwyn Williams looked forward to his 'early imprisonment'. At the same time, Scargill is the hero of the left. He has given his personal backing to all the left's great causes — nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from Europe and Tony Benn. And he advocates strikes and 'direct action', not only in defence of miners' jobs and wages, but also in protest against Tory Employment Secretary Norman Tebbit's anti-trade union laws, on behalf of the nurses and in any other deserving cause.

Walking on thin ice

Arthur Scargill, however, is not as strong as he looks and likes to present himself. The militant traditions of the miners in recent years are not in fact his personal creation, but the result of the key position of coal in the British economy. In the 'seventies the rising costs of alternative sources of energy gave a boost to the long declining coalfields. The upturn in the coal industry provided some scope for miners to improve their pay and conditions, through the strikes of 1972 and 1974. The deepening recession of the 'eighties has reduced the demand for energy and accelerated the decline of British coal mining. There is now no room for the National Coal Board to obey the harsh laws of capitalist accounting and pay more wages to the miners. Indeed, the accountants dictate more closures, job losses and wage cuts. This is the context for Scargill's recent activities.

The writing was already on the wall in 1981. Then, a year before Scargill was elected NUM president by a huge majority, the union linked up with the NCB to force the Government to invest more in British coal and to stave off pit closures. This display of militancy was greeted at the time as a victory by many miners and left wingers, but it marked the end of an era of collaboration between the NUM and the NCB. Since then 14 of the 23 reprieved pits have been shut down and 20 000 miners' jobs have disappeared. This year the NCB's new chairman Norman Siddall has been forced to push ahead in the attack on miners' living standards. When wage negotiations opened in June they closed again in three minutes flat. Scargill had no alternative but to turn to strengthen his position by rallying the support of rank and file miners.

As we go to press the miners have just voted *against* taking strike action over wages and pit closures. The ballot result is a rebuff for National Union of Mineworkers president Arthur Scargill who toured the coalfields appealing for a massive vote for industrial action. Mick Hume looks behind Scargill's militant rhetoric at the cynical manoeuvres that have paved the way for this setback to the miners.

Scargill's problems have been compounded by the deterioration of his relations with his fellow labour bureaucrats. Not only has the NCB refused to adopt a conciliatory approach, but Scargill's militant rhetoric has alienated support within the TUC and the Labour Party. The reorganisation of the TUC General Council, approved at this year's Congress, means that the NUM will lose one of its seats on the labour movement's top body. Scargill, himself, has had to bargain hard to get on to the TUC's most influential committees. As a result of the double-dealing of former railway workers' leader Sid Weighell at the Labour Party Conference, Scargill's man Eric Clarke lost his place on Labour's national executive. For the first time in living memory, the NUM has no representative on Labour's ruling committee. Scargill was outraged — especially as he had gone along with his executive's decision to back the witchhunt against the Militant Tendency as a gesture of appeasement to the right.

Power plays

Scargill has moved on a variety of fronts to shore up his position. He has tightened his bureaucratic grip within his own union; he has tried to broaden his popular support by backing the nurses; and, most importantly of all, he launched the campaign for strike action against closures and for wage rises.

The NUM is a loose federation of 20 area unions — too loose for Scargill's liking. Under the familiar banner of making the union more 'democratic' he pushed through a series of measures at this year's conference to strengthen his presidential control. Smaller areas have been merged and the craft and white collar sections brought under central direction. Scargill's aim is to break the coalition of the smaller areas and the more right-wing elements that have long blocked the advance of the left-dominated regions of South Wales, Scotland and Yorkshire.

Scargill also has designs on the miners' pension fund. He has conducted a cam-

paign denouncing the investment of the money overseas and demanding that miners' savings be invested in British industry, especially in the British coal industry. Apart from its rank chauvinism (and its alarming notion of what would make a sound bourgeois investment), Scargill's campaign has another danger for British miners. His real motive is to transfer control over the pension fund to the union trustees — that is, to Scargill and his ally, Scottish miners' leader Mick McGahey, among others. Scargill reckons that the multi-million pound pension fund would provide a solid foundation for his centralising ambitions. These financial dealings are crucial to Scargill's plans to build a new NUM empire in Sheffield, and to his relations with the city's radical council.

The NHS dispute provided Scargill with an opportunity to widen his public appeal. In common with other TUC leaders, he promised to go to prison in defiance of Tory legal restrictions on trade union solidarity action. Fortunately for them, nobody called their bluff. In fact, Scargill took few chances — he made sure that the miners' actions were called at a local level, not by the national leadership. He wanted enough miners out to make a token gesture, but not enough to challenge the Government. As he made clear to an industrial relations conference, called by the organisation of British bosses, the CBI, a few days before the September day of action, Scargill did not want working class direct action outside the bureaucrats' control. He feared 'elements, perhaps outside the trade union movement, who would use the opportunity to take advantage of a rapidly worsening political situation' (*Financial Times*, 18 September).

Alternative collaboration

The ending of the NUM's special relationship with the NCB is a consequence of the recession in coal, not any change in the political outlook of the union leadership. Like his predecessor, Joe Gormley, Scargill is totally committed to the

British coal industry. He may demand the abolition of the House of Lords while Gormley sits in it, but both want to save the British coal industry from foreign imports and nuclear power. Scargill launched the current pay campaign, not first and foremost because the miners need the money, but because 'a viable coal industry has to be attractive to labour'.

The NCB's annual sales have dropped by five million tons since 1979 and coal mining now soaks up one third of all subsidies to nationalised industries. The message from management is clear — the only way to save the British coal industry is through raising productivity, closing unprofitable pits, drastically reducing the number of miners and forcing down their wages. Scargill's answer sounds militant but in reality simply ducks the real conflict of interests between the miners and the Government. His call for strike action is not based on a refusal to gear miners' living standards to the profitability of the NCB, but on an alternative calculation of how the best interests of the employers should be pursued. Scargill reckons that, with higher government subsidies and restrictions on coal imports, the NCB could open 40 new pits, increase output to 200m tons a year and concede a 30 per cent plus wage claim.

Unfortunately for Scargill, most miners find his calculations incomprehensible and have little confidence in his alternative boardroom schemes. Hence, Scargill has been obliged to link the pay campaign to a much more direct threat to miners' jobs — the proposed programme of pit closures. Despite the NUM's atrocious record of defending its members' jobs (37 000 gone since 1975), Scargill has used the fear of further closures to win more support for his limited opposition to the NCB offensive.

Unfortunately for the miners, although many are increasingly suspicious of Scargill's empty posturing, few are yet prepared to reject his political strategy. Scargill's militancy indicates no break with the NUM tradition of collaboration with the NCB, simply a concern to re-establish it on different terms. The depth of the recession of British coal means that those terms will be very unfavourable for the miners. The miners still have the strength to force the Government to pay up. But they will succeed only if they take a firm stand on their own class interests and reject Scargill's cynical attempts to reconcile their needs and his commitment to the British coal industry.

THE LABOUR PARTY WITHOUT MILITANT

Labour still needs a left wing

OVER THE PAST couple of years the leaders of the trade unions and the parliamentary party have concentrated their efforts on re-establishing control over the Labour Party. Their aim is to turn it into a vehicle capable of carrying them back into the corridors of power. Their model is the Labour Party of the 'thirties. After the major defeat of 1931 the trade union bureaucrats moved in and stabilised the party under their control.



Foot: rehabilitated in the media but still no working class appeal

They turned it into an effective machine for pushing them to power during the Second World War. After the advances of the left around Tony Benn since the 'seventies, today's union leaders have been working hard to restore their grip in the hope of making an early return to their previous high station in the affairs of state.

Lambs to the slaughter

In recent months the efforts of the bureaucrats have been rewarded with some success. Top TUC fixer David Basnett has sorted out the party's finances and set up a £2.5m fighting fund — largely from union coffers — for the forthcoming general election. As the *Financial Times* commented after the meeting that decided on the election fund, 'implicit throughout yesterday's meeting was the unions' view that the party would not deserve financial support unless it put its own house in order' (5 July). The unions brought in veteran backroom wheeler-dealer Jim Mortimer to run the machine as general secretary of the party. Then came the purge of the left on the National Executive Committee at this year's party conference. With a little double dealing from NUR leader Sid Weighell (which later cost him his job) the right-wing union leaders provided the Labour leader with a solid majority. A decade of left-wing domination came to an abrupt end, and at the first meeting of the new NEC the right took over control of the key subcommittees from the left.

The most publicised manifestation of the new power of the right was of course the vote, by an overwhelming majority, to expel the Militant Tendency. Virtually all the big unions backed expulsion. Militant became important in the Labour Party not because of its politics or its influence, but because it was used by the bourgeoisie as a sort of test of the loyalty of the Labour leadership. It was a case of 'If you really love Britain, you will make a token sacrifice'. Thus, Militant became Labour's sacrificial lamb. In itself it is a harmless creature, a pathetic victim of circumstances way beyond its control. But just as Labour's leaders are loyal to the British state, Militant is loyal to Labour's leaders. It can be relied upon to go meekly to the slaughter.

The Labour leadership can easily suppress the Militant Tendency. It can present itself to the British ruling class as the alternative party of government. But to be an alternative party of government, Labour must also be able to connect with the aspirations of the working class, so that it can play its mediating role effectively. In today's recession this contradiction is proving virtually insuperable for the Labour Party. Without a left wing capable of relating to the working class Labour could not even attempt to overcome this problem. That is why, Militant Tendency or no Militant Tendency, the Labour Party needs a left wing.

However, the alternative party of government cannot be just a well-oiled machine — it must have policies. Here the right heads straight for a quagmire. The only Labour policy that really interests the ruling class is an incomes policy. That is a policy for holding down workers' wages that only a Labour government could get workers to accept. The trouble for the right is that the working class has been here too many times before — most recently under the last Labour Government's Social Contract which is still a bitter memory for many workers. This year's TUC voted to block even discussion about incomes policy under a future Labour government between the TUC and the Labour Party. To keep everybody happy it also voted to endorse a document approving 'an economic assessment' (a new euphemism for incomes policy) to be made as the basis for wage deals between the unions and a future Labour government. This sort of bureaucratic solution does nothing to remove the basic conflict. The Labour bureaucracy needs to offer an incomes policy as its claim to power; but an incomes policy can only work if the bureaucrats can deliver workers' acquiescence to wage controls. At the moment they cannot guarantee this.

Measuring success

Discussions about issues such as jobs and wages are painful for the bureaucracy because they bring the tensions in its position to the fore. Hence the Labour Party conference, concerned above all to project a display of pre-election unity, steered clear of these issues. Everybody much preferred to talk about the threat of nuclear war and the need to campaign against it. At one time this was a preoccupation of the left; now the right, too, has discovered that this is a harmless diversion it can use to its advantage. However, rhetoric about cruise and Armageddon may go down well at Labour Party conferences, but it has little appeal to workers threatened by mass unemployment and falling wages.



Benn: head down now; eyes on the long term

This illustrates a broader problem for the bureaucracy — its inability to relate to the real concerns of working class people.

Indeed, the recent success of the right is in many ways an indication of the weakness of the Labour Party. The right

has won a push-over victory over the left because of the lack of working class pressure on the party. And the ascendancy of the right only compounds the problems. As it looks for approval in the pages of the bourgeois press, the party's working class base continues to crumble further. Healey and Hattersley, Shore and Silkin may impress Fleet Street, but they have little appeal to trade union militants, working class socialists, the unemployed, women or blacks.

Labour's by-election victories at Northfield and Peckham at the end of October provide a measure of the leadership's problems. Labour won in two traditional safe Labour seats — in one by a whisker from the Tories who captured it at the 1979 General Election, and in the other by a much reduced majority. For the Labour leadership this was a victory of sorts. It followed closely on the party conference which was generally well received by the media. 'Labour trying hard, could do better' was the bourgeois verdict and pundits worked to rehabilitate Labour's leader. Labour's subsequent success can be assessed from the standpoint of six months ago when it could have easily lost both seats. Such limited criteria indicate the serious plight of the Labour Party. The fact that Labour won two safe seats and avoided a humiliation is indeed a victory for the party these days.



Harman: soft left, in soft focus; could win Peckham, but not a general election

Left in retreat

The political problem that both by-elections exposed was Labour's lack of an active base in the working class areas of the big cities. The precariousness of the position of the labour bureaucracy was underlined on the day after the by-elections when it became clear that workers in the coalfields and at BL had rejected their unions' recommendations for industrial action. It is all very well for the union barons to rule the machine and draw up fine policies for bourgeois approval. But without working class support the Labour Party is nothing — and to win working class support the Labour Party needs a left wing.

Labour's hopes for the future lie with the left, but the left is floundering. For the past three years it has devoted its energies to trying to manipulate the party machine to its advantage. This was

always a project destined for failure and at Blackpool last month it came to an abrupt halt as the right put its foot down. Tony Benn, the patron of all these manoeuvres, kept his head down, except to join the vacuous unity gabbling when appearances demanded it. The best he could manage as a diversionary tactic was to relaunch the campaign to democratise the House of Lords. This has run in the Labour Party more times than Bill Boakes has stood in by-elections, with identical consequences for the constitution of the nation.

Up and coming Bennite Reg Race tried harder but to no greater effect. His attempt to split the Tribune group and set up an alternative faction of 20 'hard left' MPs overestimated the hardness of his colleagues. The soft rot had extended so far that, on the appointed day, only four hard men could be mustered — Dennis Skinner, Martin Flannery, Bob Cryer and Race himself. All Race wanted to do was to win back the NEC, link up with constituency and trade union activists and with CND and the women's movement, and to democratise the Parliamentary Labour Party. But the MPs of the Labour left are so remote from any real working class constituency that they have no confidence in their ability to become a campaigning left-wing



Race: trying hard to be hard — and to find an audience

force. In reality all the people Race wants to link up are already linked up: they constitute a shrinking circle of largely middle class activists who are currently taking refuge in the employment committees and women's committees proliferating under the auspices of radical Labour councils.

Strike while they're down

For the time being the Labour left is in retreat, but this cannot last indefinitely. The crisis of British capitalism demands that the labour bureaucracy produce a left wing that can accommodate working class pressure in conditions of intensifying class conflict. Whether the reformist left will re-group inside or outside the Labour Party remains open to doubt, but re-group it must if the labour bureaucracy is to sustain its mediating role in society.

The crisis of the Labour left and the continuing stagnation of British Labourism provide a vital opportunity to forge a revolutionary alternative. While the rest of the left devotes its energies to helping the Labour Party to re-establish its links with the working class, we aim to block this process. A Labour Party with a dynamic left wing would be an even greater danger to the working class than the present right-wing dominated rump. We have to make sure it never happens.

Keith Thompson

Sexist ads



Adam and Eve: a study of the portrayal of women in advertising, carried out for the Equal Opportunities Commission by the Marketing Consultancy and Research Services of the University of Lancaster Department of Marketing, April 1982, pp41, free from the EOC.

'THIS ADVERT DEGRADES/offends/insults/exploits women' stickers can be found on billboards everywhere. The feminist offensive against sexist advertisements is sometimes humorous, sometimes silly, but it is always a blow against the symptom rather than the cause. Women are exploited when they produce the commodities featured in the advert; they are oppressed when they spend their lives cleaning the flat with *Flash*, cooking *Findus* fish fingers and putting *Pampers* nappies on the baby.

Adverts that most often get the sticker-treatment are those which use women's bodies to encourage men to buy cars or camera magazines, or imply that apparently independent women really just crave for a man (the female archer who is *Lovable* underneath). Feminists also object to the more mundane ads featuring the stereotyped mum who always chooses *Stork* or *Persil* because a male voice recommends it. These critiques miss the point when they target specific images. All adverts and TV programmes, children's books and women's magazines aimed at a mass public are anti-working class, racist, anti-gay and portray women as inferior. All reflect a stylised, but approximately realistic, picture of everyday life under capitalism and women's role in it. Of course, the images are not strictly accurate: the happy family comprising male breadwinner, housewife and two school age children is not the statistical norm, but the image reflects what most workers recognise as something they have or could experience. And while few women spend all day making themselves as 'sexy' as possible, most women want to be more attractive to men. Adverts only reflect what the majority aspire to or consider desirable, because their purpose is to sell products. You can't expect admen to challenge the stereotypes or to fight sexism. If, however, some of the cruder images fail to sell products then they are dispensable. This is what the EOC report reveals:

'By showing that a more adventurous and less circumscribed presentation of women in advertising may actually sell better than some of the well-worn stereotypes, this study suggests that there need be no conflict of interests between those whose job it is to sell, and those who seek to further equality of opportunity in our society.'

Over the past 30 years women have become an increasingly important market. Manufacturers have tried to devise adverts that persuade women to buy their products. As a result they are unlikely to devise adverts that the bulk of their audience find insulting or offensive. The EOC report, like the report the Advertising Standards Association produced recently in response to a deluge of feminists complaining about sexist ads, rebuffs the feminist critique by pointing out this obvious fact. The EOC report comments:

'The term "offensive" was regarded as too extreme for certain judges, who believed that an advertisement could not be regarded as being significant enough to cause them a feeling of offence. They preferred to use the term "dislike" instead.'

The images used may not be universal. After all, some women share their housework, live in communes, are lesbians or dress in non-feminine clothes. But even in refusing to accept the stereotypes for themselves, these women

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cannot opt out of their own oppression. Changing the content of advertisements or changing our lifestyle does nothing to alleviate our oppression.

Capitalism can exist without blatantly chauvinist adverts. The report reviews the effectiveness of 'a more adventurous and less circumscribed presentation of women'. Like the 'sophisticated' image of the *Daily Mail* (saunas every Saturday) woman, the housewife who puts up the *Contour* wall covering on her own and the bather who uses *Camay* 'to please herself'. All these got high marks for portraying women as 'modern' and 'liberated'. But more importantly they all got higher 'buy-scores' than the old-fashioned adverts.

Kate Marshall

Eco-hypocrite

Rudolf Bahro, *Socialism and survival*, Heretic Books, 1982, pp168, pbk £3.50.

WHEN THE EAST German authorities got to hear about his lengthy reform-minded tract, *The alternative in Eastern Europe*, Rudolf Bahro found himself sentenced to seven years' gaol. Yet he remains a socialist. That is to his credit. This book is not.

After his release (he served two years of his term), Bahro crossed over to West Germany. Since then he has become a leading light in that country's 'Green' Party. The Greens are best known for their environmentalist ideas in general and their opposition to nuclear reactors in particular; and, since they won eight per cent of the vote in this autumn's Land elections in Hesse, they have garnered quite a bit of popular support. Bahro's new book therefore gives us a chance to look at the politics of this movement.

Turning the clock back

Bahro codifies the prejudices of the more youthful, self-indulgent sectors of the European petit bourgeoisie. In this he is, perhaps, more successful even than his friend and ally E P Thompson, guru of the European peace movement. For Bahro, man's problems go further than destructive, high-technology arms production: they revolve around ecologically destructive, high technology production itself. Proclaiming himself a socialist, Bahro argues that we will never get socialism so long as we have industrialisation. Industrialisation damages the environment and exhausts the earth's natural resources. Without a healthy environment and without natural resources, socialism is impossible. Therefore what is at issue is not the struggle of one class against another, but the struggle of all classes against industrialisation. We are up against an 'exterminism' broader than that brought about by the use of Cruise or Pershing: we are up against the whole fabric of civilisation in 'the North' (as opposed to 'the South' - categories popularised by Brandt).

Bahro means business. He calls for 'a kind of general strike against expansion'. 'We must', he says, 'gradually paralyse everything that goes in the old direction: military installations and motorways, nuclear power stations and airports, chemical factories and big hospitals, supermarkets and education works'. He wants a 'mass mobilisation for reforms with a revolutionary content' - namely, 'co-operative arrangements of production and living' and cuts in personal consumption. And, on this road, 'we must throw out all dogmatic ballast' while remembering that 'nothing could stand more in the way than traditional left sectarianism'.

In Bahro we find a theoretical framework for all the currents that show up on a CND demo. We have not just people against the Bomb, but people against nuclear energy, and people who suddenly become highly 'dogmatic' and intolerant when confronted with Leninist politics and organisation. People who rejoice in painting their faces with woad or in making their own pots and raffia baskets; people into acupuncture and out-of-tune guitars. To provide a framework for all this - that is quite an achievement! How sad, though, that a victim of Stalinism like Bahro can identify with a 'broad', 'democratic' movement so closely associated with the Stalinists.

Progress = industrialisation

Bahro's argument can be dealt with briefly. Of course, capital's unrelenting drive to accumulate lays waste man's habitat and strips it of its riches - and so does the bureaucratic unplanned chaos of the Eastern bloc. But this is an argument against these two social systems, not against industrialisation. Without the further development of industrialisation, we will never be in a position to undo the havoc man has caused nature. It is the inability of 'the North' to industrialise its way round environmental disaster that supplies us with a central argument for smashing the bourgeois state and the apparatuses of Stalinist rule.

This brings us to a second point. It's all very well to go on about how awful 'Northern' industrialisation is - but in those parts of the capitalist world made backward by the ravages of imperialism, industrialisation is what millions of workers and peasants yearn for. Are those workers and peasants unwitting dupes of the 'North's' obsession with material wealth? We think not. If Bahro wants to reject those fruits of industrialisation which he has enjoyed for nearly 50 years, that is up to him. But it is an astonishing arrogance to demand that peoples devastated by famine and disease follow suit.

The same goes for Bahro and his demands of the working class in the 'North'. One of his most famous statements is that 'the abolition of at least half the work now performed in the industrialised countries must take unquestioned precedence over the demand for full employment'. Tell that to West Germany's 1.8 million jobless, Mr Bahro! Tell them that they don't need "big hospitals, supermarkets and education works"!

This review was edited with the help of a word processor. Presumably Rudolf Bahro objects to this: after all, word processors come cased in a derivative of oil (plastic), absorb energy (through the mains), use up wood (through their paper output) and cause litter (ditto). But Rudolf Bahro is published in *New Socialist* and given glowing interviews in London's *Time Out* - and both these magazines cause untold ecological nastiness. Our position is consistent: we think socialism is nuclear energy and word processors plus Soviet power. Bahro, by contrast, thinks socialism is about having your cake and eating it.

Paul Foster

Plastic bullets

Tony Gifford, *Death on the streets of Derry*, NCCL, Nottingham, 1982, pp22 £0.75.

EVER SINCE their introduction into England in the 1981 summer riots in Toxteth, plastic

bullets have become a topic of considerable controversy. Indeed, it has become fashionable to denounce this particular weapon. The latest voice to join the chorus of condemnation is that of Liberal peer Tony Gifford of the National Council of Civil Liberties. Unfortunately *Death on the streets of Derry* is not really about British oppression of Ireland. The pamphlet is about potential threats to civil rights in England.

Gifford spells out his preoccupations in his introduction: the issue of plastic bullets has become 'all the more pressing because of events in Great Britain in the summer of 1981'. The rest of the pamphlet outlines the horrific experience of plastic bullets in the Six Counties of Ireland. However, it never once mentions that there is a war going on there for national liberation. Indeed, Gifford details events in Ireland as if he were discussing the problems of inner city areas in England. The specificity of national oppression is completely lost:

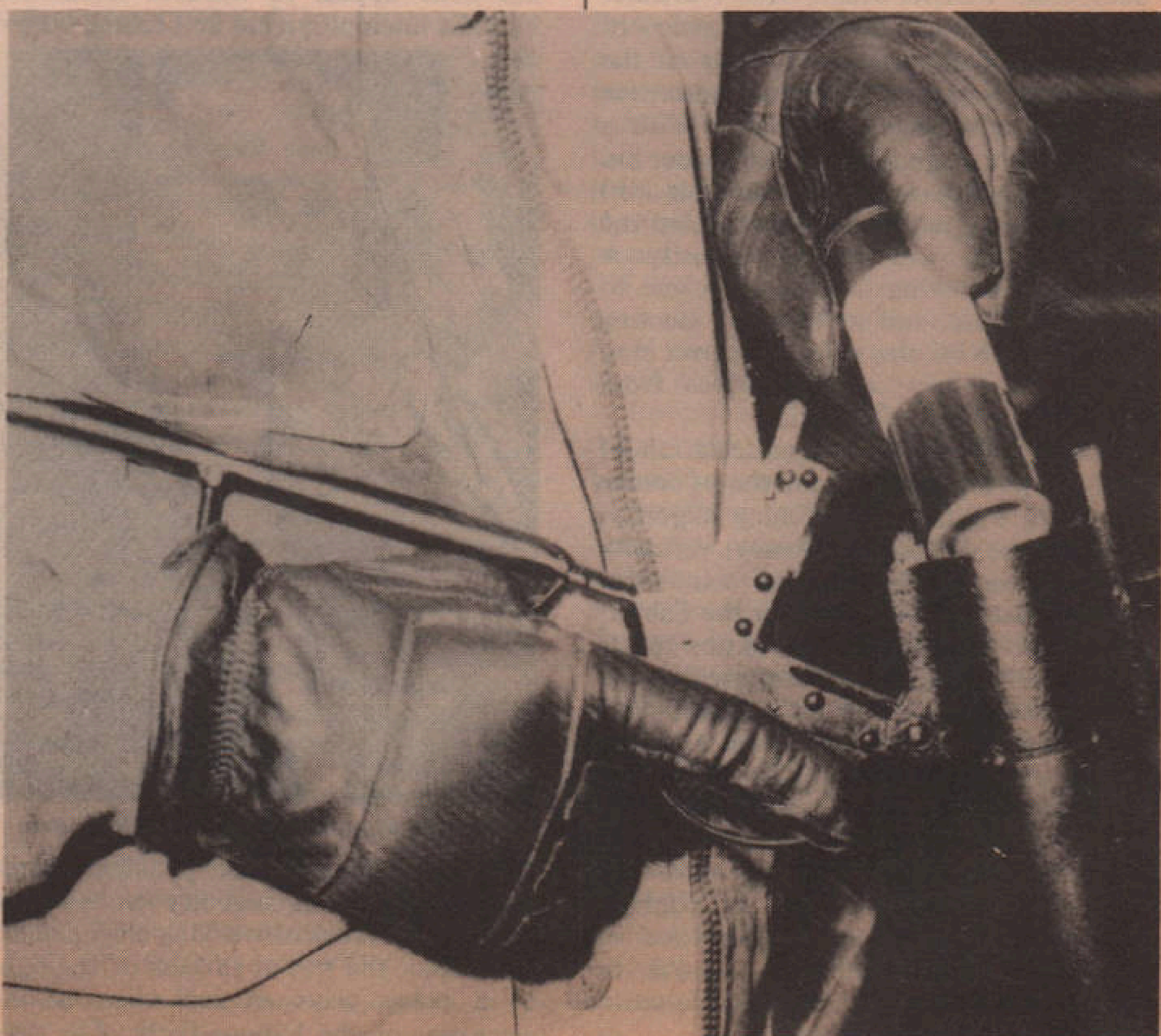
'This is not the place for a full examination of how to deal with riots. British and Irish experience alike tells us that a society can only avoid communal disorder by dealing with the grievances which inflame and alienate the community.'

But why is there constant 'communal disorder' and systematic repression in Ireland? Gifford ignores this question and treats the use of plastic bullets as though it was simply an isolated and misguided policy. Thus he describes the tragic murder of an Irish youth 'as an example of what happens when security forces treat discontented civilians as the enemy'. He concludes that 'the manoeuvres which have been analysed would be more appropriate to a battle against a foreign army, than to the policing of a local community'. In fact, the British troops have always treated the nationalist population in the Six Counties as the 'enemy'. Only an incorrigible English liberal could remain blind to the fact that a war against a 'foreign army' has been going on for the past 13 years. And only an idiot could imagine that the troops are 'meant to be serving' that nationalist community.

The NCCL would like to forget about the Irish war and get down to discussing how best to police local communities. It has no real arguments against the use of plastic bullets in Derry because it recognises the legitimacy of the British presence in Ireland. It can only quibble about the means used to enforce Britain's domination of Ireland.

Death on the streets of Derry manipulates the horrors of plastic bullets for its own ends. It trivialises systematic imperialist oppression and presents incidents of British terror against the Irish people as incidental mistakes that can be eliminated. We condemn plastic bullets and every other weapon in the armoury of British imperialism used to deny the national independence of Ireland. At the same time we denounce the NCCL's cynical attempt to use the murder of Irish youth to bolster its campaign for civil rights in England.

Frank Richards



WETZEL'S FOLLIES

I work on the London Underground and I'm writing to let your readers know about developments on London Transport since March, when the Law Lords' decision reversed the Labour GLC's 'Fares Fair' policy and doubled the fares. Remember that the policy was declared illegal because it was 'uneconomic'? Well, now the Tories are prepared to accept a 25 per cent fare cut. This isn't being contradictory if you look at the changes that have taken place over the past six months.

Back in March the Tories were refusing to allow more cash for London Transport because little was being done to cut costs and increase productivity. Now that Labour's grovelling before the Law Lords has been followed up with some good business measures, transport minister David Howell can have a change of heart. In May the GLC pulled in another capitalist to help them with their 'socialist planning'. Dr Keith Bright, ex-Huntley & Palmer chief executive, is now the overpaid chairman of LT. According to David Wetzal, reformist bus and tube buffoon on the GLC, Bright, who cut his old firm's workforce by 20 per cent, was the 'ideal man for the job'. And so he was. As the summer progressed, the attacks on services and conditions of work really began to hit hard.

On 4 September 580 buses were withdrawn from service. This will have a dramatic effect on jobs in engineering, maintenance and future recruitment on the buses. In September too, the same tube schedules that workers rejected with a 10-day strike in June were introduced, this time with backing from the unions.

The GLC transport chief now makes only too clear Labour's real concerns. London's evening *Standard* recorded Wetzal's recent philosophical breakthroughs on socialism and transport: 'Rather than trying to reduce fares as a social need for pensioners, we will now be asking what sort of transport planning is needed for London' (7 October). And their answer is: one that the bosses are prepared to put up with, one that employs many fewer workers. The proposed £300m investment for the Central Line proves that LT has a future. But the plan to introduce unmanned trains also proves that the future of underground workers is at risk.

LT workers have no choice but to fight back. It's not only our jobs, but also our wages that are in for cuts unless we do. First we have to tell Wetzal where to get off.

Paul S
London

TORTURE IN ITALY

Repression characterises all bourgeois societies and, when necessary, the state is always ready to extend it by militarising all social spheres. This has already happened in Ireland, and recently in Italy too. Italy's 'democratic' state now holds 3500 political prisoners and systematically practises every form of physical and psychological torture against them. Earlier this year, for example, a special clause called Article 90 was added to the prison regulations so as to permit the mental destruction of those in gaol by total isolation. It specifies solitary confinement, one visit every two months, an hour in the open air once a week, and the suspension of all correspondence, media, books and parcels. Things have now got so bad in Italy's prisons that even the state has had to arrest a few of the most notoriously brutal police and carabinieri for their foul deeds.

The class character of this repression is clear. What is important for the bourgeoisie is the ending of all forms of class conflict and the creation of a consensus against 'terrorism'. Every comrade on trial is accused of being a 'terrorist'. The strategy of the bourgeoisie is one of criminalising all opponents on the basis of a suspicion that derives solely from their political position. The laws passed and repression enacted follow from this.

There is no possibility of understanding the profound significance of torture in Italy unless we grasp the nature of the power bloc which constitutes the Italian state: that is, the complete unanimity between Christian Democracy and the Communist Party. It is vital to understand the reactionary and anti-proletarian

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character of the PCI line. Indeed, it is true to say that the PCI has even distanced itself from the Government's mild reprisals against torturers who have 'gone too far'. It demands extra 'proof' before being willing to call what it terms 'dramatic interrogations' by their proper name - torture. In the factories, too, it now denounces workers who refuse to inform on 'terrorists' as terrorists themselves.

Recently Tony Negri, a leader of the resistance against the Government, was hauled in front of a court on trumped-up charges of 'armed insurrection against the state'. The repression has not ended: Negri deserves our solidarity, especially as his trial has been

postponed so that he can languish in prison for yet more months. With this letter, I want to launch an appeal to all comrades in order to smash the wall of silence and *omerta*. To slam the practice of torture and to denounce the Leftist parties which support the murderers is an imperative for the movement - outside Italy as well as inside it. To remain silent is to make oneself complicit in the torture. Anybody interested in organising a meeting or giving money for the prisoners, should contact me at the address below.

LB
c/o BM Mattoid
London WC1N 3XX



NOT THE DEVIL'S GRANDMOTHER

Millions of people across Europe and North America have been mobilised against nuclear weapons. James Wood is quite right to warn that this powerful movement must not be hijacked by pro-imperialist forces and converted into a current for better and more conventional arms ('The alternative war game', *the next step*, No 28, October 1982). His exposure of the likes of Kaldor, Smith and Cook is the transition belt for these ideals into the CND and peace movement is apt and timely.

However, we have to counter their pernicious view with more serious arguments than James Wood develops. He says that nuclear weapons are not *qualitatively* worse than conventional ones. Of course, it is true, that to be killed by a nuclear or a conventional bomb is...to be killed. It is also the case that *both* types of weaponry produce long-term effects - this is especially the case if you add on to the 'conventional' list chemical and biological devices. But the development of nuclear weapons was both scientifically and militarily a qualitative one.

Such weapons mark a radical break with past methods of warfare simply because of the capacity of one device to destroy whole cities and whole areas of countries at once. It may well be trite, but none the less, it is true that a generalised nuclear war could rapidly - and we are speaking of hours rather than days - so devastate our planet as to make life either insupportable or to throw civilisation backwards. The quantity of destruction and the character of the long-term effects clearly mark off nuclear weapons from conventional ones.

The capacity to destroy the planet in this way is a qualitative difference, which faces human beings today compared to that which

faced the generations of 1914 or 1939. Whether the imperialists are likely to go for the nuclear option is of course a question of political judgement. The fact remains that if they did, the consequences are unfortunately very stark. The millions who march against the prospect of such a holocaust are justified. The question which faces revolutionary Marxists is how to relate to this movement and win it over to a class struggle perspective of organising to deal a death blow to imperialism, which is the cause of the arms race and its consequent nuclear danger. James Wood's positions are neither scientific nor will they cut any ice with the peace campaigners.

To intervene in CND we have to recognise it for what it is. It is not, as James seems to think, a body like a political party with a 'defence' policy drafted by Mary Kaldor. Far from being of this type, it is in fact a very heterogeneous single issue coalition. It is not politically animated, at present, by any political current. This is not to say that many of its self-appointed spokespersons do not try to push it along certain lines, towards pacifism, social democracy, Stalinism, etc. But the essential fact to grasp is that CND and the peace movement around the world generally, is composed of very young people, the vast majority new to politics, but aware of the fate humanity faces if taken over the brink to nuclear catastrophe. Revolutionaries have to be firmly integrated into such movement to make sure that they can give leadership to this youth - first, in making clear the real origins of this situation, and second, in drawing them into political work which can ensure them of a future - through the establishment of workers' power and socialism. To stand outside of this process

is to miss very big opportunities for party-building.

James may well object that to become part of CND is not merely to join the ranks of rebellious youth, but to make common cause with Mary Kaldor as well. That's quite true. But the building of a mass and popular movement against nuclear weapons is a progressive development in the class struggle, and so will inevitably attract into it elements who will try to head off the potential of the movement, in exactly the same ways as it will attract revolutionaries who will try to consciously develop its anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist dynamic. There is no question that CND and mass demonstrations organised by other coalitions in other countries are seriously weakening NATO. Because of this, there will be tremendous ideological campaigns to prevent the crystallisation of thorough-going anti-imperialism amongst the advanced guard of youth and workers that has been thrown up. Revolutionary Marxists must therefore redouble their efforts. Making an alliance with Mary Kaldor on the single issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament may be distasteful, but she can hardly be compared to Lenin's 'devil's grandmother'. We have to build the movement of which she is a part, precisely to destroy her influence and increase the weight of revolutionary Marxism.

To stand back will leave the field clear for her and others to assist various factions of the international ruling class who *will* try and use it for their own ends. We have to ensure that this does not happen.

John Strawson
South London

James Wood replies:

John Strawson argues that nuclear weapons are qualitatively different from conventional ones because of the 'quantity of destruction' and the character of their 'long-term effects'. The destructive capacity of nuclear weapons is not in dispute. But what conclusions are we to draw from this? For Marxists it simply confirms the point that the more society develops technology and learns to control nature, the more it also develops the capacity to destroy. But as Marxists, we don't blame technology or a particular weapon for threatening the world with destruction. We blame capitalism.

Those who concentrate on the special features of nuclear weapons do so for a purpose. Their goal is to prove that the struggle against nuclear weapons overrides any other considerations - the weapons themselves are 'the problem'. They discover the origin of the drive towards war, in technology, not in society. Their counterposition of nuclear to conventional weapons is all the more justification for our counterposition of a class to a classless approach to war. The war drive will not be stopped by the typical CND view of nuclear war as a problem for humanity rather than the working class.

Perhaps our correspondent or others could indicate how nuclear weapons have changed the traditional Marxist approach to the threat of war - one that sees disarmament as the outcome of the struggle of the working class against capitalism? For us, the only thing that has changed is that it is so much more urgent to build an anti-militarist movement.

On CND, our differences are not about whether to intervene or not, but how. John Strawson is right - the peace movement has attracted many young people new to politics. It is therefore important for revolutionaries to open up a dialogue with them; it doesn't mean that CND as such is 'a progressive development in the class struggle'. John should not worry that it 'will inevitably attract...elements who will try to head off the potential of the movement'. This is hardly a problem for the future - it has already happened. From the very beginning the leadership of CND was determined to pursue activities that could unite conflicting class interests rather than polarise them. Witness their attitude to Britain's war against Argentina.

The growing opposition to war is a positive development. Yet a movement designed to reconcile these anti-war aspirations with capitalist society is reactionary. One last point: it is imperialist rivalries, not CND, that have weakened NATO. Disputes about steel or the Siberian gas pipeline project show the tensions within the imperialist camp. The peace movement, through its strident anti-Americanism, has played a useful part in *strengthening one side in this dispute, Europe*. The peace movement, whatever its intentions, has become the servant of European imperialism.

THE CALL FOR import controls is the ideal demand for the trade union leaders. It allows them to present a militant defence of their members' interests — without ever challenging the employers and their system. Squeezed between the Tories and mass unemployment, the top union officials desperately need some way to bolster their declining status. Import controls seem to provide a way out for the more vulnerable sectors of British industry; they seem to offer workers a means of saving jobs through safeguarding their employers' markets. Import controls have been high on the TUC agenda for a decade. The TUC leaders are pushing them enthusiastically in response to the latest downturn in the fortunes of British manufacturing.

The 'Alternative Britain' illusions

The trade union leaders always try to present their policies as being not only in their members' interests, but also in the national interest. The bureaucrats are concerned at all costs to disguise and deny any conflict of interests between workers and employers. When employers launch wholesale attacks on jobs, wages and working conditions, the union leaders respond more in sorrow than in anger. They do not urge workers to fight back. Their strategy is always to try to persuade management and the Government that mass redundancies and wage cuts are not really in the firm's best interests, or in the wider interests of the nation. And they try to persuade workers to restrict their actions to pressing management to pursue an alternative, more rational course.

The trouble is that it is only the workers who follow the union leaders' advice. Instead of fighting their employers for every job, some workers join with them to try to find ways of solving the company's problems through more or better investment — and through appeals to the Government to curb foreign competition. Thus, Vauxhall workers have backed calls from the leadership of the TGWU for bans on the imports of the Corsa from Spain and the Astra from Germany. Workers at BL want curbs on Japanese competition. Steel workers and textile workers have approved their leaders' increasingly strident appeals for quotas to restrict imports from overseas. Dockers and boilermakers have gone along with union complaints about the increasing proportion of British ships now built abroad, complaints which reached a head over Cunard's plan to build the successor to the Atlantic Conveyor in the Far East.

The trade union leaders do not criticise British bosses for attacking the working class, but for being unpatriotic and irrational. But there is nothing irrational about the employers' approach to the recession. They are worried about foreign competition and many manufacturers would like to restrict it, but they would like even more to cut the living standards of their own workforces.

Waving the flag

Capitalists are pragmatic about protectionism. However, all British manufacturers are agreed on the need to confront the growing competition and falling demand caused by recession through raising productivity, shaking out labour, driving down wages and weakening trade union organisation. There is some disagreement among businessmen over trade policy. Different views on protectionism correspond to the different market positions of various industrial sectors. British car makers have lost more than half the home market to foreign imports in the last decade — they are keen on government-imposed controls. Manufacturers of telecommunications equipment have fared much better, both at home and abroad. They are keen on keeping international trade as free as possible, to facilitate their export business. The Government holds the ring and looks to the interests of British capitalists as a class.

The clamour for protectionist measures among industrialists and backbenchers has risen steadily in recent months. Yet, in general, the Govern-

ment has firmly resisted it. The climate of recession and the ruthless competition to which it exposes certain sectors of industry has meant that the Government has been forced to take some measures to protect British firms. But the Government is very resistant to imposing extensive tariff barriers, because the heavily export-dependent British economy would come off worst in any trade war.

While the British capitalist class as a whole rejects the TUC's advice, it welcomes the good faith in which it is offered. The capitalists are not patriotic — their only concern is to make profit. But they heartily welcome the patriotic sentiments of the unions and use them to their own advantage. There were few issues which united Michael Edwards and the BL shop stewards during his term as BL boss, but support for import controls was a crucial one. Indeed, Edwards promoted a 'Buy British' campaign alongside the car unions' campaign to keep out Japanese imports. Edwards exploited the union's chauvinism to cement their commitment to restore BL to profitability. Once they accepted the goal of salvaging BL's profit margins as their own, the shop stewards were in no position to resist the mass redundancies, wage cuts and loss of union rights that were necessary to achieve it. It is a bitter irony that a new 'Jobs for Britain' campaign against car imports has recently been launched — its organiser is Gordon Lee, a redundant BL convenor from Coventry.

Enough is too much

The BL experience confirms that the working class has nothing to gain from the call for import controls. The demand is part of a strategy which unites workers with employers in the cause of profit-

ability. It leads workers on to a slippery slope which begins from the acceptance that their livelihoods depend on the viability of their employers' products and ends with the acceptance of redundancy notices.

The trade union leaders never learn. Their 'alternative' strategy for capitalist revival has already paved the way for thousands and hundreds of thousands of redundancies. In a way they accept this. Steel workers' leader Bill Sirs is always saying that his union has been 'reasonable' and 'co-operative' in endorsing past rationalisation programmes in the British Steel Corporation. What he means is that the union leadership has accepted mass redundancies and other setbacks with only token resistance because it accepted that this was the only way to make BSC viable. When BSC boss Ian McGregor announced his latest series of job losses, Sirs could only echo the current keynote slogan of the trade union bureaucracy: 'Enough is enough'. But enough is never enough for the capitalists until profits are flowing freely again; BSC clearly has much further to go. And there is no such thing as enough of a sacrifice for workers to make in their living standards to help their employer out: enough is always too much.

Now 'enough is enough' Sirs is campaigning for import controls with renewed vigour to stave off impending major closures. So desperate have the remaining steel workers become, that they are responding more positively than ever before to their union's chauvinist lead. In steel — as in other industries — workers are increasingly considering industrial action to enforce import controls.

Direct action for disaster

The call for direct action to keep out

foreign imports comes from the more radical trade union officials and their allies on the left wing of the Labour Party. Officials in the steel workers' union have already extended their union's national policy to include bans on workers parking foreign cars in plant car parks. At a recent 'Save our Steel' meeting in Sheffield, Labour Party and trade union speakers called for a steel embargo to be imposed by dockers, lorry drivers and railway workers. Similarly, leaders of the TGWU have threatened to call on union members on the docks and in road haulage to block Vauxhall imports.

Some workers who are uneasy about the general call for import controls because of its national, class collaborationist character, back the idea of import controls imposed by trade unionists as a genuine working class alternative. This is indeed how the strategy is presented by left-wing union leaders like Arthur Scargill and Moss Evans. The fact that it is supported by members of the Labour Party, the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party gives it wider credibility. But this more militant import controls strategy is even more dangerous than the TUC's moderate approach.

The fact that militant tactics — blacking, picketing, boycotts — are used to keep out foreign imports does not change the political character of the activity. It means only that tactics traditionally used by workers against employers are used by workers on behalf of their own employers against foreign capitalists. The basic class collaboration at the heart of the import controls strategy is unchanged — it is simply pursued more militantly. This radical approach to import controls is more dangerous because it's more effective in drawing workers into action behind the programme of the bureaucracy. It means that workers will go down the same slippery slope, but faster.

Workers of the world — unite!

As well as uniting workers with their own bosses, the call for import controls divides workers of different countries from one another. British unions urge their members to save their jobs at the expense of workers in the USA, Europe and the backward capitalist world. And of course, the labour bureaucracy in other countries responds to the recession in a similar way. The result is that instead of pulling together to take on the capitalists, workers become even more fragmented as in every country they identify more strongly with their own capitalist class. It is a scandal that in every European country, the official labour movement is in the lead in chauvinist drives towards trade war. This prefigures the role the bureaucrats can be relied on to play as protectionist rivalries turn into military conflicts.

The recession reveals that the capitalist system can only survive through a ruthless offensive against the working class. The working class can have only one real alternative strategy. That is to fight to force the capitalists and their state to maintain every worker's livelihood — and when they fail, to carry the fight through to the establishment of a system that can guarantee decent living standards for all. To the trade union bureaucrats and those who would follow their import controls strategy, we make three points:

● **Don't duck the fight!** It's no use pretending that the capitalists don't need to attack workers and that workers should pursue illusory alternatives rather than fight back. For them there is no alternative, and they know it. It's time we recognised it too.

● **Fight the right enemy!** Our enemy is not foreign goods; it's not even primarily foreign capitalists; least of all is it foreign workers. Our enemy is British capitalism.

● **Fight together!** The working class cannot be united around calls to save particular companies, particular sectors of industry or British manufacturing industry in general. Workers can only be united around an uncompromising defence of their own class interest in maintaining jobs and living standards. That means throwing out the nationalist claptrap and taking on the British capitalists.