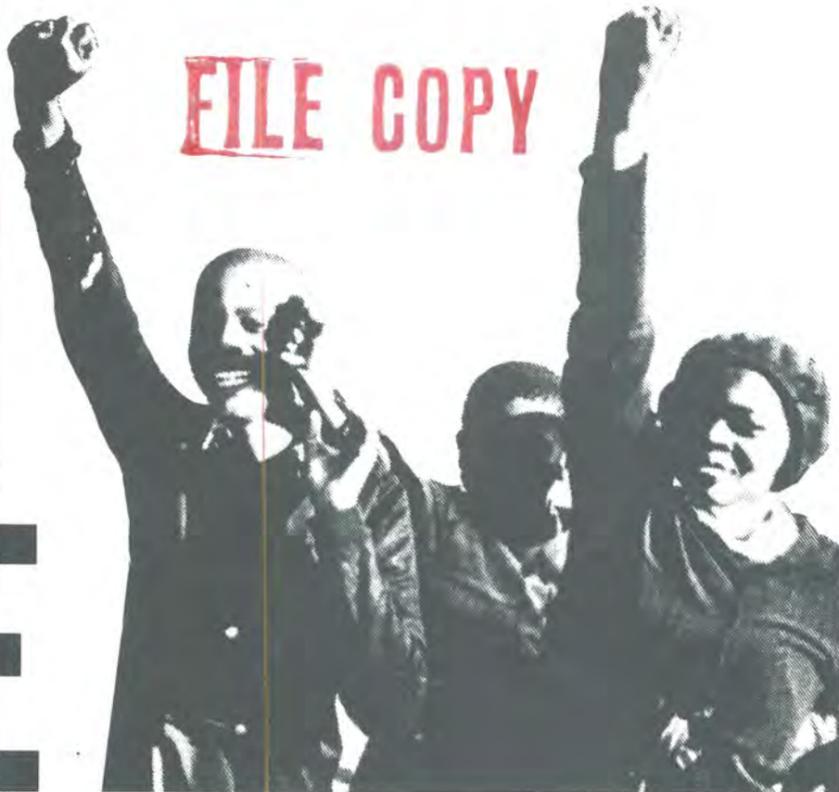


# workers power

30p/10p strikers

Monthly paper of the Workers Power group

FILE COPY



# SMASH THE APARTHEID STATE!

THE APARTHEID REGIME in South Africa is engaged in a bloody war against the black masses. Day by day the repression and the carnage being carried out by this regime is intensifying. Peaceful demonstrations by the black masses, like the recent one to Nelson Mandela's prison, are attacked by the racist state's armed police and troops. Townships are placed under military occupation. School-children are rounded up and arrested by the hundred.

Yet the tear gas, the shot-guns, the rubber bullets, the dogs and the rhino whips of the racist thugs have not stamped out the black rebellion. Every demonstration provides fresh evidence of the black masses' heroic determination to fight for their rights, to risk their lives at the hands of Botha's thugs.

It is a sign of the fear that the regime feels that it resorts to ever more desperate measures of repression. Virtually every day sees further reports of blacks shot dead on the streets. Thousands have been arrested under the State of Emergency. This allows detainees to be held, sealed from all outside contact for 13 days. Many just released have been tortured by their interrogators seeking the "ringleaders" of the unrest. It is even a crime to disclose that someone has been detained, if the Minister for "Law and Order" has not already done so!

## WHITEWASH

Of course the world media that is reporting the crisis is only spotlighting something which is fundamental to the filthy South African regime. Indeed the same media tries to whitewash that regime at the same time with glossy tales of Zola Budd. The Apartheid regime can only survive and prosper on the basis of continuous and brutal repression of the black majority. The enormous prosperity of white South Africa is based on cheap black labour. The battery of repressive laws and measures of the Apartheid system is designed to keep it that way.

Under the "homeland" system, which allocates whites (15% of the population) 87% of the land, black workers struggling for better pay and conditions can be deported back to the poverty stricken areas designated for blacks. Influx control, the Pass laws, the bulldozing of whole townships, the murder and torture of trade unionists and political activists, and the regular use of troops to shoot and terrorise strikers are some of the other measures regularly

used to maintain the super-profits extracted by the capitalists from the black labour force.

The fact that despite these conditions black workers have not only forced the government to give limited legality to their new unions but also taken a leading role in the struggle against repression is a tribute to their tenacity. British workers should hail their courage and support their struggle.

## OUR DUTY

Denis McShane described, in a book on the South African unions, how the National Chairman of the General Workers Union lives:

"The room in which Johnson Mpukumpa, a migrant worker who works in a small metal factory lives, is about 4 metres by 3 metres. He has shared it for 16 years with another migrant worker. He sees his wife and four children who live in the Transkei at Easter and Christmas and sends most of the 80 Rands a week (£26) he earns to them. 'Every worker would like to stay with his family, but many cannot. So it is the duty of the union to take up issues like influx control' said Mpukumpa". It is the duty of every British trade unionist to take up the struggle against the open support that the British government gives to maintain the rotten Pretoria regime intact.

The financial press has been full of stories recently about how British and American firms, as well as banks, are reducing their commitment to South Africa. They certainly are, but not out of compassion, nor out of any desire to change the Apartheid system which is the basis of their profits. They are doing so out of fear for their investments. Britain is still the largest investor in the Apartheid state with £5 billion worth out of the £12 billion direct foreign investment in South Africa. (The USA is the next biggest investor).

British banks are crucial in bolstering the South African government through loans. It is little wonder that the financial crisis in South Africa led Dr Gerhard



Apartheid's vicious dogs guard British economic interests; BP amongst them

de Kock, the Central Bank Governor to run straight to Leigh-Pemberton, Governor of the Bank of England for help. Pemberton obligingly arranged an immediate conference with the big commercial bank heads to deal with South Africa's problems. And no wonder. As *The Economist* recently pointed out, in 1983 the rate of return (profit) for South African mining was 25% compared with 14% in the rest of the world, 18% in manufacturing compared to 13% elsewhere. Investment in racism, and the spilling of the black masses blood that goes with it, means big money for these profiteering sharks.

As black workers, with growing confidence, take on their bosses and the rise of the mass struggle sometimes appears unstoppable, the capitalists begin to get the jitters. They reduce their "exposure", look for safer, more stable repressive regimes to invest in. This is why in the US opposition to Apartheid is suddenly fashionable in Congress, why multi-millionaire Edward Kennedy is suddenly a champion of South African blacks.

Not only are these bourgeois politicians under pressure from their outraged black constituents but they are worried that Botha's repressive machinery can no longer hold the line. Others like Thatcher and Reagan prefer to stick with Botha. They believe that their aid can save the racist state

yet. Neither wing in the imperialist camp has any interest in dismantling Apartheid. They fear that this would open the way to revolution in South Africa and thus be an enormous blow to their super-profits.

That is why to focus all solidarity efforts on pressuring these governments into taking "sanctions" against South Africa, as many Anti-apartheid campaigners do, would be a diversion from the real needs of the struggle. Even more of a diversion would be to rely on the United Nations to enforce its sanctions. Despite a supposed 'oil embargo', South Africa continues to receive 74 tanker loads of 225,000 tons each year.

## DIRECT ACTION

Chris Dlamini, President of FOSATU, made the point in a recent interview that, "the reason South Africa is so strong is the support it gets from the West" (*Tribune*, 30th August 1985). It is up to the rank and file of the trade union and labour movement to undermine and smash this support by direct action - now. This means fighting for:

■ A total and immediate embargo on trade with South Africa - stop all movements of oil, arms

and related supplies. Follow the example of the Southampton dockers. For action at the ports to block all trade with South Africa.

■ The blocking of all financial and commercial links - stop all loans and aid to South Africa. For a moratorium on all new investment. Fight for trade union action in the banks and civil service to block all financial and diplomatic transactions with the Apartheid regimes. Cut all telephone, telex, mail and travel links with South Africa. For the workers themselves to decide what exceptions might need to be made to aid the struggle in South Africa.

■ Build joint union committees - these are needed at every level of the trade union movement to organise and coordinate such actions, monitor any attempt to trade with South Africa, etc. Force the bosses to open the books on their collaboration with Apartheid. Not "consumer boycotts" but trade union action against Apartheid products - follow and extend the example of the IDATU workers in Dublin. Campaign in the wider labour movement especially drawing black workers and black organisations into the struggle.

■ The national trade unions to support and fight for these actions and to send material aid to the workers in struggle - campaign for the release of all trade union and political activists held by the regime. Develop direct links at all levels with unions in struggle. Fight for sympathetic strike action against repression.

■ Break all diplomatic links with the Apartheid regime - kick out the ambassadors of Apartheid and hand the embassies to the representatives of the liberation movements. Break all sporting and cultural links.

Through these measures workers in Britain can play their part in supporting the heroic struggle of their black brothers and sisters, and hasten the downfall of the Apartheid system.

Down with Botha!

Down with Apartheid!

For workers' action to break all links with the racist state!

# FOR WORKERS' ACTION TO BREAK THE LINKS!

# DON'T BE FOOLED BY BOSSES' BALLOTS

THE BRITISH LABOUR Movement is in the midst of its conference season. But the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party conference will not be drawing up a balance sheet of the last years of struggle with the Tories and preparing for the next round of attacks. Far from it.

The TUC will not be discussing the betrayal of the miners. Neither will it scrutinise the campaign of empty posturing over the defence of trade union rights at GCHQ or the almost total failure of the union leadership to stand up to the anti-union laws.

The trade union bosses and parliamentary gas bags do not want their records to be put up for inspection. Kinnock wants to keep his record under wraps. So too do Willis and the General Council. Their labours secured from Downing Street the worst terms the NUM had ever been offered during its year of strike action!

## WEMBLEY

The heroes of the left have put up no struggle to change this course either. Behind the bluff and bluster about standing by the Wembley decisions against taking money for ballots lies the brutal truth that nearly all the unions are now set on obeying the anti-trade union laws and conducting ballots just as Mrs Thatcher ordered.

The union leaders are making a tremendous fuss about their great 'victories' in the political fund ballots. They know that in the ballot they have discovered a very useful weapon of bureaucratic control. It is a vital instrument for controlling their own militants at rank and file level.

The ballot allows the officials to talk militant whilst stringing out any conflict situation. In the

victory and confirm or replace their leaders. Only a democratically conducted mass meeting can do this. It can elect a committee of those willing and able to lead the strike.

All this is workers' democracy - a democracy that is based on the active participation of the voters and the full accountability and potential recall and replacement of their leaders. It is thus a fighting democracy.

The great mistake of the NUM leadership was to fail to replace the bosses' ballot with workers' democracy. In doing this they handed MacGregor and Thatcher a weapon against which the indirect and distant democracy of the NUM delegate conference was not a sufficient counter.

Workers, like those in threatened collieries or the railway guards must not be held back from struggling until a vote has been taken.

When the bosses attack, those attacked must respond immediately. The picket line calling for solidarity is rightly regarded as sacred by all good trade unionists. What is involved here is leadership - showing that fellow workers are determined to fight back.

When workers fail to join a strike they often do so, not because they are convinced that the boss is right, but because they fear they cannot win. Picketing starts a process of convincing the waverers not at first by intimidation, but by persuasion. A mass



Willis, Kinnock, Todd and friends planting the seeds of future defeats.

In particular this means setting out to build 'broad democratic alliances' with middle class pressure groups, 'liberal' police chiefs, Tory and Alliance politicians as well as the statutory bishops and clergymen who can bind the alliances together.

All of this means that strikes or clashes with the government must be kept to a minimum. Not only do they upset public opinion. They also threaten unity with those who would scab or stab you in the back. Eventually the drive to win public opinion will bear fruit in the form of a Labour Government. Nothing must be done to hamper its electoral prospects. That is why the TUC chiefs are so desperate to stop themselves and more crucially, the Labour Party, being saddled with a commitment to reinstate the sacked miners, release the imprisoned and reimburse the NUM. Would this not hamper Labour's popularity at election time?

It may seem there is little difference between all this and the 'New Realism' of 1983 which was much criticised by the present architects of TUC policy. But there is one very important difference. Graham, Duffy and Chapple were open and brazen. To that extent they alerted the rank and file to the dangers of sell out and betrayal. The latest dose of 'realism' comes in a rather different packaging. It has been fought for and articulated by what the Communist Party calls the 'New Left'.

Since the last stages of the miners' strike *Marxism Today* and *Focus* have been fervently pushing their 'New Left Realism'. They have lashed out against outmoded Scargillism and Bennism and offered their services to Kinnock and Willis. From the pens and lips of George Bolton, Hywel Francis and Kim Howell have come repeated calls to turn away from the methods of class struggle and towards the pursuit

of public opinion and broader alliances.

The latest in this long series comes from leading Broad Left AUEW executive member Jimmy Airlie. In the 29th August issue of *Focus Airlie* sneers at "all the heroes" of the miners' strike. "It's my view that it couldn't be won on a picket line" he says. "Violence" alienated the "wider support in the community" that the NUM needed. "I'm no romantic, I'm not an adventurer" the Stalinist bureaucrat continues. He has guarded praise for Jimmy Knapp for calling a ballot - unlike the NUM.

Echoing Knapp's approach he indulges in a flight of rhetoric. "Give me an overwhelming vote in a secret ballot and I have the moral ascendancy over the employer, and when we do, that legislation will be ashes in the employers mouth".

A careful reader will note that our Jimmy has to be given an overwhelming vote in a ballot. They would also note that even then its purpose is to give "moral ascendancy" over the employer. The "overwhelming" vote is a means of avoiding conflict and showdown.

With these tactics we can guess all too well who will be eating dirt. It won't be Ian MacGregor, the BR management or union busting press barons like Robert Maxwell. It will be any workers who accept the line that it is better to suffer two or three more years of Tory attack, turn the other cheek and win public sympathy so as to guarantee the return of a Labour government. It will be any workers who allow the trade union chiefs to tighten their bureaucratic control over the unions and turn them into humble passive instruments of Thatcher and Kinnock.

The fate of the NUM's victimised militants and the 50 threatened pits cannot be left to 'public opinion'. Neither will 'public opinion' stop the next round of anti-union laws which

are likely to include further restrictions on the right to strike including banning strikes in essential services.

The employers mean very serious business. Vauxhall and the other car bosses are launching a fight to secure no-strike deals with the unions. Other bosses will follow suit. But if the latest bunch of 'realists' have their way the only opposition they will meet is from officials who will try to dress up 'no-strike clauses' in a different language to that used by the EETPU.

The swing to the right by the left trade union bureaucracy - and its clamp down on rank and file initiative - must be vigorously resisted. The Tories are trying to cram a massive onslaught into their remaining years in office. The TUC chiefs will let them have it all their own way. The months since the miners' strike have seen workers prepared to defend their living standards, rights and jobs. From Post Office workers to social security workers, from railway workers to occupying shipyard workers, the evidence is there that an important section of workers want to fight the Tories. It is the officials who want to avoid a showdown and who are tightening the screws in the unions to keep struggle to a minimum.

Rank and file militants must organise themselves in every union. Either the Broad Lefts will be transformed into democratic independent rank and file movements or they will shrivel and die as fan clubs for the likes of Jimmy Knapp. Active rank and file miners must take the lead in linking up with all those groups of militants in the rail, in the docks, in the car plants, in the schools and offices who helped them in the Great Strike. They must carry the message of rank and file organisation to every section under attack.

## REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

Inseparable from all of this is the need to understand the politics that lie behind the betrayals and retreats. The politics of sell out and retreat are reformist politics of a Labour or Stalinist variety. To understand the bosses' strategy and win the arguments for a correct struggle against them needs an alternative revolutionary communist politics.

The task is for the best, most clear sighted militants to master these politics and set to work to build a new working class party with them. That work is not separate from the struggle in the unions and the Labour Party. The struggle to build a new party must be waged in the thick of each and every fight.

British capitalism is in deep crisis. It is about to enter yet another world recession in the next year. The working class has and will again mount resistance struggles as the bosses try to unload the cost of their crisis onto us. All of this will shake 'the business as usual' trade unionism and Labourism of the last 40 years or more to its very foundations. It opens up the very real possibility of building a revolutionary party that can lead the working class in a revolution which can rid us of Thatcher and her class for good.

By Dave Stocking



Mass meetings - workers answer to ballots

meantime the bosses are under no obligation to ballot anyone about sacking 'their' workers, refusing wage increases or recognising union bargaining rights. The employers are left free to take whatever punitive actions against the workforce they see fit, whilst the media pumps out its poison and other union leaders deliver dire warnings about being unable to deliver solidarity action.

Not surprisingly a no-strike vote is the most likely outcome, given the isolation of the secret ballot. Then the 'left' official can turn to the militants and blame the 'backward members' for the absence of action.

The ballot is thus not only a weapon of the bosses and the government but also of the union bureaucrats. The miners were dead right to reject the bosses' ballot in 1984. No decision on action should be taken in the isolation and secrecy of the polling booth. Strike action is by its nature collective.

It necessitates enormous risks and sacrifices. Every worker who considers taking it wants to know at the moment the decision is taken whether their workmates are similarly determined to fight. They must be able to hear, see and question those who will lead them into battle. They want to be able to discuss tactics for

In *Workers Power* No.73 we inadvertently published two pictures, of Hilda Kean and Hackney JSSC, by John Chapman without crediting him. We apologise for this production error.

meeting and a vote are usually necessary to win a strong and firm majority for action - especially for solidarity action, where workers do not feel themselves to be directly or immediately threatened. Thereafter the picket line becomes the expression of the majority against a scab minority. From this point moral and physical coercion of the scabs becomes paramount.

## PUBLIC OPINION

In the wake of the miners' strike the trade union bureaucracy is trying to tighten its grip on the working class and teach it the lessons it wants to be learnt from that struggle. Most importantly it wants the trade union movement to embark on a campaign to rally 'public opinion' to its side. And this means the trade unions doing nothing to offend 'public opinion'.

The unions should obey the law and hold ballots because law breaking alienates public opinion and holding ballots will make the unions look democratic for public opinion.

They should give up 'out of date' tactics like mass picketing which will only lead to violence and make the unions unpopular.

'Old fashioned' appeals to union and class solidarity should now give way to campaigns to court public opinion.



After persuasion - coercion

# DRIVE OUT THE SUPER SCABS

HAVING TAKEN ALL the time and all the funds they needed, Lynk, Prendergast and Toon are about to formally establish their own separate scab miners' union. If they succeed on any significant scale the entire NUM will have suffered a major blow. From their base in the Notts coalfield they will reach out and push forward with their plans to break the NUM. They will be able to prevent the miners ever mounting effective national action against the NCB.

Not everything is going the scab leaders' way. In Notts they did not dare risk balloting to leave the NUM. That would have required a 70% majority. Instead they opted to ballot on amalgamating with the Durham scab outfit the Colliery Trades and Allied Craftsmen. Opinion soundings in the Notts coalfield suggest they still can't guarantee to poll the 50% they need to pull that one off. Toon has not proved too successful in delivering the goods either. Over 700 South Derbyshire miners enthusiastically attended a NUM rally addressed by Scargill. Despite scab reinforcements brought in from Wales and Kent the South Derbyshire miners may yet reject the split proposals.

## PATCHY RESPONSE

Outside their chosen front line coalfields Lynk and Prendergast's allies are having patchy success. The Leicestershire August Council agreed to ballot on a split but did not come up with any recommendation as to how Leicestershire should vote. Jack Jones has not got the courage to risk his office and pension on a split.

In Warwickshire the splitters have been isolated as a hardened scab minority except at the intended super-pit at Daw Mill. So far the scab organisers have also been isolated in Staffordshire.

All this shows that the scab leaders can be defeated. Their gains can be minimised. What is important now is that the campaign to defeat them should not be based on a series of shoddy deals with scab officials which will effectively prevent the NUM functioning as a fighting and national union in the future.

In the present climate of 'unity' and 'bridge building' it is vital that militant miners do not lose sight of the need to act deci-



Super scabs crawling to work at Bilston Glen

sively against those in the NUM's ranks who helped Thatcher and the NCB to victory in the Great Strike. The Union must strengthen itself by ridding its ranks of the small and conscious groups of hardened scabs who worked for the defeat of their class from day one of the strike. In practice this should mean decisive national and area action to expel all union officials who scabbed on the strike, or members who organised against the strike from the outset. Lynk, Prendergast, Jones, Toon and their henchmen in the branches, must be expelled. In doing this the NUM will serve notice to all miners and the NCB that it is a union of struggle and that it will not tolerate open agents of the bosses using its offices to further their cause.

Such action should have been taken long ago. But it is no less necessary now as a result. Failure to act earlier gave Lynk and Prendergast all the time they needed to do their dirty business inside the NUM. If expulsion is not immediate now then it will give Lynk's allies and agents ample time to work for them in the future. Every branch and area must expel their own hardened and organised scabs. They know who they are. They must act now to prevent them spreading their poison.

While the NUM has every interest in driving out the scab organisers it has no interest in artificially swelling the ranks of the new scab union. In the most solid

areas like Doncaster, Barnsley, South Wales and Kent those who scabbed knew precisely whose side they were working for. Their branches must exclude them from the union for ever. All super-scabs must also be excluded in the areas that were weaker or that collapsed. But in these areas, like Lancashire, North Derbyshire, Scotland, the North East, North Yorkshire and eventually South Yorkshire, there were those who scabbed because they were beaten back to work as the strike failed to break out of its isolation. In the scab areas themselves the national leadership allowed their area leadership the chance to lead many members to scab. In Notts, for example, the dithering misleadership of Chadburn and Richardson sold the pass to the scab organisers. The failure to call for a national strike from the start allowed the Notts area to ballot themselves out of the action.

The NUM has no interest in driving those who were misled - or those who proved weaker than the heroic active minority who held the strike together - into Lynk and Prendergast's arms. To do so would immeasurably strengthen Thatcher and MacGregor. There were many crucial points during and after the strike when the threat of expulsion should have been used to discipline those who considered themselves loyal to the NUM and isolate the hardened scabs. The failure to do so by the leadership further

strengthened Lynk's hand. But now the key is to maximise the number of miners who can be taken out of the clutches of the new Spencerites. In those branches where the strike collapsed this means keeping in the NUM's ranks all except those who organised the scabbing or who narked to the police or NCB on their return. In the scab areas it means actively campaigning to win the vast majority to stay in a union that will fight.

These are the tactics that can isolate and drive out the poison of company unionism. They involve no concessions to the architects of betrayal or the federalism and regionalism that has always weakened the miners union. They mean a fight to oust the treacherous leaders.

The national leadership's campaign is working in the opposite direction. At first they tried to keep Lynk, Toon and Prendergast in the union. When that failed they looked for new allies amongst the scab officials to lead their campaign for them. The Communist Party who believe that all scabs should be kept in the NUM in the interest of a spurious 'unity' are enthusiastic arguers for this disastrous policy. In Notts the campaign has been put in the hands of Chadburn and Richardson who opened the door to the scab unionists. In South Derbyshire all hopes are now being pinned on Toon's henchman Richards who actively scabbed on the strike. In Leicestershire the campaign has handed leadership to one T. Tracey who has the dubious credentials of



NUM members in South Derbyshire - scabs who can be stopped from joining Lynk

having refused to cross an NUM picket line on the relatively rare occasions that one was put on his pit.

This means that leadership in these areas is being left with those who betrayed. It means that the heroic minorities in these areas are being brushed under the carpet - they are the ones who are fit to lead and not the likes of Chadburn, Richards and Tracey. All the signs are that the national officials are also making major concessions to keep these characters as the front for their campaign. Sid Vincent, for example, has appeased his own scab organisers by declaring that the national rule changes don't apply in Lancashire. Richards and Tracey have been wooed with promises that the very regional autonomy which they used to undermine the strike will not be tampered with. Unless militants organise to put a stop to such deals and to fight for a new leadership composed of tried and tested strikers they will find their hands tied in the battles that lie ahead. They must organise to make sure that it is they and not bureaucratic diplomacy that decides who is in the union and who leads it.

## STRENGTHENED NUM

The fight against Lynk and Prendergast must be used to strengthen the union and oust those who have paved the way for the split. It is a tragedy that Lynk and Prendergast have been allowed to choose the time of their own departure. Now we must make sure that they take all that is poisonous with them so that the NUM can be strengthened for the battles ahead. ■

THE FIRST NATIONAL Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) Conference in August attracted over 500 women, mainly wives and girlfriends of miners. But it failed to deal at all with the vital task of planning the way forward for the local women's groups. Given the declining state of these groups as more and more women drift back into the isolation of the home, this was a crucial opportunity criminally wasted.

Most delegates came to the conference angry that the joint planning meeting for it had ruled that no votes, and therefore no democratic decisions, would be taken. Faced with a call from South Wales delegate, Kath Jones, for a change in the agenda to allow more discussion to take place and a call by Midlands women for voting rights the platform tried to brush the matter aside. Anne Lilburn, the President of WAPC, ruled against these calls.

## BUREAUCRATISATION

This piece of brazen bureaucratism was met by uproar from the delegates. Chants of "We want a conference, not a rally" and "We want a vote", rang around the hall. To regain control of the unprecedented outburst of justified anger, Lilburn promised that the South Wales proposal

# Women's Conference - a wasted opportunity

would get taken after her opening remarks. When the proposal was put to the conference it was passed by a big majority. Most women thought that they had won the right to vote. After the break they were soon disabused of that.

During the break the organising committee - dominated by the ex-Officio officers like Betty Heathfield, Anne Scargill and Jean McCrindle - called area delegates together and browbeat them into submission. They were carpeted for having caused an uproar and for discrediting the WAPC in front of the press. Democracy, for these aspiring bureaucrats, is something to be ashamed of.

In the committee only the two Midlands' delegates spoke out in favour of voting on decisions at the conference. When the conference reconvened it was faced by a platform of all the delegates

to be told that "voting was off". While many women regarded this as a farce, and some heckled from the floor, stunned resignation set in.

The purpose of this bureaucratism is precisely to turn WAPC into a tame auxiliary outfit. The leadership do not have a perspective of building it into a fighting working class women's movement. Their perspective, as reflected in the committee's draft proposals and supported by 3 of the 4 resolutions from the areas before the conference, is for a passive "support group". They add to this a campaign, inspired by the Broad Left within the NUM, of education. By education they mean courses at the Broad Left influenced Northern College for selected women earmarked as safe or likely material for the leadership of the campaign. Such a perspective offers no course of action for the thousands of women who had become involved in political

life during the strike.

By contrast the resolution put forward, though not allowed to be voted on, by Hatfield Main Women's Support Group, did argue for a shift in the activities, priorities and orientation of the movement. It argued for a fighting movement based on the urgent need to help rebuild the NUM and re-galvanise the militant miners and women for the fightback.

The delegate from Hatfield, Bridget Thomson, spoke of the need "to be part of building a new national strike....responding to any fightback against the NCB". She castigated the misleadership of WAPC which was leaving the groups to die in the villages.

Conference was not given the chance to debate properly, let alone vote on, these vital issues. Instead it was treated to a collection of congratulatory speeches from McGahey, Heathfield and Scargill. Scargill's

speech was greeted with ironic laughter when he compared the women to the suffragettes fighting for the "right to vote".

A black woman from the South African trade unions spoke movingly of the present struggle. She was given a tremendous ovation and promises of support for the impending NUM strike in South Africa. But even this highlight could not blot out the sad fact that this conference was a bureaucratically wasted chance to rebuild the women's support movement.

## TORY ATTACKS

Militant women in WAPC must not allow this setback to demoralise them. Thatcher's attacks are continuing. Working class women face them daily. Militants within WAPC must begin to organise themselves to try and effectively challenge the hold of the non-elected clique who are turning the WAPC into a miners' officials' wives movement. The first step in this must be to attend the area meetings currently being held and argue for immediate action in support of any miners in struggle, for the co-ordination of activities to resist Thatcher's attacks on other workers with other working class women and, last but not least, a real democratic conference for women. ■

# LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN

AT THE END of July Edinburgh Council took itself out of the firing line in the rate-capping battle by setting a legal rate. Only Liverpool and Lambeth remain in any way in the fight, though neither without having dented their shields. Lambeth set a legal rate on July 3rd, whilst Liverpool set a rate involving a 9% increase.

With the Labour Councils' rate-capping strategy in tatters, it was little wonder that the stewards at the London Bridge conference, held on July 31st, met in a sombre atmosphere.

London Bridge was set up towards the end of last year in response to the threat of rate-capping. It was formed as a cross-London Shop Stewards' Committee for local authority workers. Its potential strength was that it could provide a cross-London forum within which to co-ordinate the unions' response to the attack on jobs and services represented by the Rates Act. However, the dominant forces in London Bridge - stewards close to the 'left' councillors - ensured that this potential strength was never realised in practice.

## NO INDEPENDENCE

London Bridge never established its independence from the London Labour Groups. It always fully endorsed the Labour Groups' "no rate" strategy. This effectively reduced the town hall unions to the role of lobbying fodder outside the town halls.

London Bridge's complete lack of independence from the Labour Group is illustrated by the fact that despite a long list of "trigger events" to which London Bridge was committed to respond with "all-out strike action sit-ins and occupations", the setting of a legal rate was never included in the list, despite the fact that it was the one most likely to go off. Why?

To have had the setting of a legal rate as a trigger event would have radically altered the relationship between the local Joint Shop Stewards' Committees (JSSCs) and the councils' Labour Group. It would have made quite clear that union support for the Labour Councils would only be conditional - conditional upon the Labour Groups' clear refusal to comply with the Rates Act. It would have put the Labour Groups under intense pressure to stand firm and remain outside the law. It would have provided an immediate mobilising focus for the unions. It would have ensured that the unions took the offensive in concert, as the Labour Groups fell week by week throughout April/ May, provoking a confrontation not only between the unions and Labour traitors, but between the unions and government. As it was, the Labour Groups fell one by one, whilst the local JSSCs and London Bridge sat on their hands. Instead, London Bridge's triggers - basically cuts in jobs and services and legal action against Councillors - were so defined as to be only likely to happen after the first round of the struggle had been lost, that is at the stage when the Councillors had sold out or when the government felt strong enough to pick off individual councils.

Faced with various trigger events in 1985, London Bridge was in fact paralysed. It had not resolved the crucial question of whether to take selective action or all-out strike action. The original policy statement of October 17th 1984 states quite clearly that the response to the trigger events should be "all-out action, sit-ins and occupations". This was reaffirmed at the Shop Stewards' Conference this year on March 19th.

Despite this reaffirmation of the policy of "all-out strike action"

the policy was never allowed by the Chair (Jim O'Brien) and the other leaders of London Bridge, to be taken seriously. Certainly those who do not agree with it feel no obligation to argue for it with their membership, and they continue to argue against it at every meeting where the issue is

## HEADS IN THE SAND

raised. As a result, whenever any major event erupts which threatens to set off a trigger, London Bridge was thrown into turmoil over how to respond.

On April 23rd the District Auditor wrote to Councillors of the 5 London Boroughs still refusing to set a rate - Camden, Greenwich, Islington, Lambeth and Southwark. In spite of the fact that one of the clear London Bridge triggers was now threatening to happen in 5 London Boroughs, the leadership chose rather to bury their heads in the sand.

Instead of resurrecting their own paper policy of all-out action or mobilising around an alternative programme of action, most of the stewards sat back whilst the problem of surcharge was solved for them by the Labour Groups' capitulation to the Rates Act by setting legal rates throughout April and May.

Even now, with Liverpool and Lambeth Councillors still facing the threat of surcharge, nothing is being done to mobilise for the policy of "all-out" strike action. If anything, the policy has been watered down. The minutes of the meeting of July 18th talked of "strikes, court lobbies and publicity events at and after the issue of surcharge certificates." Only in the case of Liverpool running out of money is "widespread strike action" mentioned.

The absence of accountability in London Bridge allowed the leadership to mislead the struggle. Delegates felt no responsibility to fight for policies agreed on in London Bridge amongst their JSSCs or their rank and file members.

In Lambeth JSSC for example, some stewards used the pretext that 'the members would not support it' as the reason for failing to take the policy of all out action back to the members and arguing for it. The debate on all-out action was therefore had only in some branches (both in Lambeth and elsewhere). A similar debacle occurred in Hackney last spring. When the Hackney councillors were faced with possible surcharge - a trigger event - stewards who had not put strike action to their members, used the excuse that the members would not fight to avoid taking any effective action.

## UNDEMOCRATIC

The situation is made worse by the fact that voting delegates at London Bridge are not elected directly by the 'rank and file'. Not only do individual stewards at JSSC level not always reflect accurately the views of their members, but each JSSC can only elect 3 voting delegates to London Bridge. Thus not every union is directly represented, with the result that large sections of the council workforce across London have no direct links with London Bridge at all. Both the JSSCs and London Bridge have to be radically transformed. An essential ingredient must be to turn them into genuine delegate-based bodies, clearly accountable to the membership, committed to winning the arguments with the rank and file, giving leadership to the rank and file, and being accountable to the rank and file.

At the same time a strategy for fighting the cuts that the Rates Act will oblige Labour Councils to make needs to be hammered out. Failure to do this will mean allowing Labour Councils to get away with imposing com-

pulsory redundancies and reductions in services.

Many of the criticisms voiced by Workers Power at the July conference found a resonance amongst shop stewards critical of London Bridge's strategy to date, and serious about learning the lessons of the past year. From the rate-capping workshop came the recognition of the need for a changed relationship between the Labour Groups and the unions, and of the need for the unions to take the initiative. Also included in the proposals was that the unions should demand that Labour Groups set budgets necessary to meet the needs of the working class communities. This was recognised to be a much better focus for both the unions and the communities than a simple "no rate" strategy.

From the trade union organisation workshop came the clear criticism that London Bridge was not reaching the branches or shop floors. There was also criticism that JSSCs were divorced from the membership. All this means that the London Bridge leadership will be under some pressure to change course and open London Bridge up. This is already reflected in the decision made after the conference to open London Bridge up to health workers, teachers, firemen and transport workers, as well as tenants associations representatives.

The impending abolition of the GLC, with the attendant attacks on jobs, the continuing privatisation offensive and the willingness to surrender to Tory legislation by the bulk of the Labour Councils all make the building of union based rank and file resistance crucial. London Bridge, in the months ahead, will have to be judged on how far it is able or willing to mobilise that resistance and organise strike action against any councils that cut. ■



Ted Knight addressing London Bridge rally

John Chapman

# VOTE TOCHER BUT ORGANISE THE RANK AND FILE

THIS MONTH THE elections in the AUEW for the successor to Terry Duffy commence. Duffy's term of office has seen an unprecedented move to the right in the AUEW. Along with Boyd and later Gavin Laird and with the EETPU as a model Duffy has been busy fashioning the union into a tame, bosses' house union.

The latest move in this process was the leadership's acceptance of government money for ballots. This was in complete defiance of TUC policy, and of policy decided by the AUEW's own National Committee. Duffy felt confident enough to breach TUC policy because he knew that the Willis style "new realism" that has triumphed in the TUC since the miners' strike meant no action would be taken. He judged correctly. GMBATU have put forward a compromise that will allow the AUEW to get away with its defiance of policy. It has merely been asked not to be naughty in the future.

The other disturbing element of Duffy's rule has been the introduction of no-strike deals between the AUEW and employers. The clearest example of this has been at the Nissan factory in Tyne and Wear. This deal, which has been signed but the details of which have not been released to AUEW members, ties the AUEW to Japanese style company unionism.

If either Bill Jordan or Gerry Russell, the right's main candidates, are elected this month to replace Duffy, then this move towards company unionism will proceed apace. Jordan has declared himself in favour of more Nissan



Photo and layout by the Engineering Gazette

style agreements. His election address has the call for a "prosperous" industry - not better pay for engineers - as a priority. He favours an undemocratic merger with the EETPU and APEX and, as a member of the right wing "Mainstream Group" shares platforms with the arch miner scab Roy Lynk.

John Tocher, the candidate of the Broad Left, has declared against no-strike deals. In the Broad Left paper, *Engineering Gazette*, he has denounced the

"disgusting rate" of pay suffered by many engineers. A vote for Tocher is a must for all engineers who want to arrest the present right-wing developments. But such a vote can only be a start.

The last Broad Left President, Hugh Scanlon, exposed all the dangers of seeing the election of a "left" leader as the answer to the union's problems. "Our Hughie" went on to renege on his promises and eventually collaborated with Labour in the savaging of engineers' pay during the Social Contract years. Scanlon's period of office demoralised militants and paved the way for Duffy.

Tocher's election will certainly provide militants with greater leeway in fighting to change course in the AUEW. But, unless Tocher himself is made accountable then the AUEW will only enjoy a stay of execution, it will not be saved. Only a radical transformation of the AUEW can save it from a slide into company unionism. That is why we say vote Tocher, but build a fighting rank and file movement committed to such a thorough-going transformation.

## A PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The key elements of a programme for such a transformation are:

- \* Rebuild the AUEW branches as factory branches meeting in work time with no loss of pay.
- \* For shop stewards' committees in every plant; for District Committees to be made up of shop stewards; for monthly meetings of all shop stewards in a district.
- \* For the annual election of all officials; for all officials to be accountable, recallable and paid

the industry's average wage.

\* Scrap the postal ballot; all elections and key discussions to be taken by mass meetings with voting by a show of hands.

\* Break the block vote; for voting in the TUC and Labour Party on a proportional basis to reflect differences in the union in accordance with their support at annual conference; all delegates to be elected from the branches.

\* For the amalgamation of the AUEW on a democratic basis; no merger with the EETPU as proposed by Duffy.

\* Fight the capitalist offensive - no redundancies, cut the hours not the jobs; for workers' control of manning levels, hiring, firing, speed of work and hours worked; open the books of the companies to workers' inspection; nationalise the entire engineering industry under workers' control and with no loss of pay; for the automatic recognition of all strikes as official; for occupations to fight closures.

\* For annual national wage negotiations on the Minimum Time Rate to be brought back; for a 1% rise for every 1% rise in the cost of living as calculated by committees of workers and housewives.

\* For real equality for women engineers - equal pay for equal work; open the union to women workers with places for women reserved on all committees in the union; for a democratic fighting women's section. ■

by Pete Leydon

# SWP TRIES THE UNITY TACK



## UNITE TO BEAT THE RIGHT

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS Party has been pursuing a new line ever since May. An open letter unveiled their proposal for unity with the Militant. Socialist Worker announced that, "We and yourselves are the two biggest groupings on the left of the labour movement. We believe there is a basis for working together to build a viable socialist alternative".

The SWP backed this up with a unity appeal to all socialists to come together in a socialist alternative to Kinnock's Labour Party. Given the SWP's recent aloofness from any joint actions with these organisations, these moves came as a surprise to many on the left. They have doubtless confused or disturbed many of the SWP's members used to other turns. In reality, however, they tell us little more than that the SWP's leadership is desperate to find a cure for their own stagnation. They have reached for a new life line with their characteristic impressionism and lack of principle.

### DECLINING INFLUENCE

Immediately after the strike the SWP leaders hoped their chance had come again. They had been going through a long lean spell. Militant had grown in the 1980's while the SWP had shrunk. Their influence had declined considerably particularly in industry. Attempts to blame all this on an 'objective' downturn in the class struggle and to retreat to the 'small is beautiful' world of workplace trade unionism received a mighty bashing at the hands of the miners' strike. They had some hopes that the predominantly left bourgeois miners' support milieu would send recruits their way as they learnt the lessons of the strike according to SWP guru Tony Cliff.

### UNSCRUPULOUS PROPOSALS

In March they were awaiting for an influx, claiming "There are lessons to be learnt from the strike. But not those of the Eurocommunists on the one hand, or the Militant on the other" and that "the failure of the strike must cast a question mark over Militant's strategy which centres on securing a left leadership in the unions." (Socialist Worker Review, March 1985). Yet within two months they were proposing a joint organisation to the self same Militant!

The SWP's proposals are a mass of confusion and unscrupulousness. Firstly there is no political - that is programmatic - basis for the proposals for unity. Chris Harman was later to say, "Of course, in such a united organisation there would be differences of opinion on many matters, but they would be argued out democratically as we fought together against the Tories and the right wing inside the movement" (SW 29.6.85). And precisely what would these differences be? Anyone with eyes to see knows that the SWP and Militant do not agree on the possibility of a peaceful road to socialism led by a Labour Government dominated by Militant MP's. Militant regularly announce their belief that "an entirely peaceful transformation is possible in Britain". The SWP do not agree.

Militant and the SWP have serious differences on work in the unions which turned the last BLOC conference into a bear garden feud between Militant inspired left office seekers and the cabbage patch unofficialdom of the SWP.

Militant are not in favour of the slogan 'Troops out of Ireland, Now'. Socialist Worker has tended to support this slogan (except when the Troops were sent in in the first place). Militant happens to think that the USSR is a degenerated form of workers' state. The SWP think it is a form of capitalism. No serious project for unity could be mooted unless these - and many other - major political differences were clarified and overcome. Yet the SWP leaders lightmindedly offer to argue out their fundamental differences after the united organisation has been formed.

### CURRY FAVOUR

The logic of the open letter has been that the SWP has had to back pedal on its political criticisms of Militant in order to give its unity proposals a modicum of credibility. Socialist Worker Review in June contained an article that accused Militant of being part of an "attempt to dupe workers and spread illusions about the parliamentary road to socialism" (Should Socialists Be In the Labour Party?). In this they were right. But what are so called revolutionaries doing proposing unity with those who dupe the working class with the most pernicious illusions? And what chance do they think their approaches have if they deliver such attacks on the Militant. Little wonder then that the next copy of the Review went out of its way to curry favour with the Militant by attacking Socialist Action for "snide gratuitous attacks on Militant over black sections, women, the Civil Service unions and the miners" (SW Review July/August 1985).

In reality the only area of political agreement that the SWP ask the Militant to accept is that they should take their place with



Tony Cliff points hopefully to unity with the Militant

the SWP outside the Labour Party. While the SWP claim to have 'understood' Militant's argument for working in the Labour Party in the past they now argue that the situation has changed and that the Militant and other 'good socialists' in the Labour Party should come on out and join with the SWP in a "visible revolutionary alternative." because "...now, with the Tories on the offensive and the Labour Party galloping to the right, there is a new situation". The Kinnockite witch hunt means those being witch hunted should clear out quick! While claiming to stand with those who resist Kinnock the SWP have nothing to propose other than that Kinnock should be left to rule his roost. The SWP's syndicalist fetish of ruling out work in the Labour Party under all circumstances today, hands an easy victory to the class traitors and bureaucrats in an important area of class struggle.

The SWP's 'principle' of not working in the Labour Party is no less shallow, one sided and useless than the mirror opposite fetish of the entrists who say only work in the Labour Party can lead to the creation of a revolutionary party.

### ABSURD ARGUMENT

Talk of a 'new situation' cannot disguise the absurdity of the SWP's argument. The Militant leadership is wedded to its Labour Party work. If the SWP's proposal were a united front proposal for a common struggle it in fact asks the Militant leaders to give up their politics as a prerequisite for united action. As a united front proposal it is therefore guaranteed to fail. As a proposal for a new party it lacks not only political principle but even a footing in reality given who it is being addressed to.

There is a simple explanation for the SWP's unprincipled wooing of Militant. The SWP have run out of ideas about where to go next. The miners' strike convinced them that a number of 'good socialists' make up what they used to call the 'swamp'. They expect some of them to be revolted by the right wing drift in the Labour Party and its increasingly repress-

ive regime. They expect strains within Militant as the witch hunt takes its toll in the Labour Party. In this context the SWP have no programme and strategy for reversing the Right Wing's gains, stopping the retreat, and organising the militant minority for struggle. It is evidence of its own bankruptcy that it delivers a call for these elements to join the SWP and has to disguise it as a unity call. It could give it no other political content. The SWP leaders do not really expect the Militant to bite but hope their cynical unity call can repair their tattered image with those they once spurned. Chris Harman made this all too clear when he argued that even if Militant did not respond, "the fact that Socialist Worker has called for unity can attract people who, increasingly see the need for open opposition to Kinnock and the right" (SW 29.6.85).

### BLINKERED BONEHEADS

The bone headed Militant editorial board have refused to recognise the Open Letter's existence. Well they might. In their own blinkered way they can only see the attacks that are raining down on them as signs of their own success. A recent analysis of the politics behind the witch hunt argued that "Despite the present retrenchment, the Labour Party will continue to move to the left", predicting that "Inexorably, with the growing crisis of capitalism the ranks of the Labour Party will shift to the left, with Militant gaining support all the time".

### NO WHITEWASHES

Tensions will be set up in their ranks as reality and predictions clash more and more. Those young activists organised by Militant must be won by joint actions in the class struggle and merciless criticism and exposure of Militant's politics. The Socialist Worker Party's cheap skate unity bid offers neither. It dodges a united struggle and it whitewashes the right-wing politics of the Militant. ■

By Dave Hughes

# WITCH HUNT IN WALES

LAST JULY THE Labour Party Wales Executive expelled one of its elected members, Chris Peace. It did this on the grounds that he was a member of Militant and therefore not eligible to attend Executive meetings.

That this expulsion was both unconstitutional and undemocratic (Peace topped the poll in the election to the Executive at the May Labour Party Wales Conference) did not worry its prime architects, Roy Powell MP and George Wright, Welsh Regional Secretary of the T&G. They are out to step up the witch-hunt against party activists in Wales.

Chris Peace has chosen to fight his expulsion virtually exclusively on its unconstitutional nature. While this is necessary it is not sufficient. The Labour Party National Agent, David Hughes, far from admonishing witch-finder generals Powell and Wright has already advised them on how to constitutionally expel Peace if they have evidence of his being a "member of Militant Tendency". This should delight George Wright, who has taken the care to produce a 17 page dossier outlining Peace's involvement with Militant.

### OPEN CAMPAIGN NEEDED

What is needed to fight this and other expulsions in Wales is an open political campaign which asserts the rights of all socialist tendencies to exist inside the Labour Party. Unfortunately the campaign set up by Militant themselves to fight Peace's expulsion, the Welsh Labour Unity Campaign, has set as its goals "an end to witch hunts and for a united campaigning Labour Party capable of ensuring a Labour victory at the next election" (our emphasis).

For Militant to seek unity with the right-wing witch hunters is to throw in the towel before the fight against expulsions has even begun. The logic of this Unity Campaign can only be that Chris Peace will retire gracefully from the affray in the interests of not rocking the boat of Labour's electoral chances, or fail to politically challenge the right wing on the basis of defending his right to be a Militant supporter.

### DEFEND ALL SOCIALISTS

Rank and file activists throughout the Labour Party must campaign for Peace's reinstatement and demand that the NEC reprimand Wright and Powell for their actions. Activists in Wales should give the Welsh Labour Unity Campaign support, but only to the degree that it supports the right of all socialists to exist in the Labour Party and defends that right openly rather than keeping quiet in the interests of returning a Kinnock-led Labour Government which would silence the voice of all left-wing opposition. ■

By Jon Lewis and Pete Ashley  
Cardiff North CLP

# APPEAL

DURING THE TRIAL of the Newham 7 over 90 people were arrested. Those arrested were campaigning against the trial of the Asian youths for supposed affray. In fact the Newham 7 were defending themselves from one of the many racist attacks that their community suffers.

The police - eager to see racist justice be done - did everything they could to harass the Defence Campaign. On two occasions they launched particularly vicious attacks on the Campaign. On April 17th 1985 they made numerous arrests during a march which ended outside Forest Gate

Police Station. Before that they had attacked a march which ended in Plashet Park on March 11th 1985. It was during these incidents that most of the arrests took place.

The Newham 7 Defence Campaign is having difficulty contacting witnesses so it is appealing for witnesses of the incidents and arrests at these events to come forward and testify on behalf of those arrested and charged. Any such witnesses should please contact the Newham monitoring Project on (01 outside London) 555 8151. Any information relating to these events would be useful. Witnesses of other arrests (outside the Old Bailey, for example) should also come forward.

NEWHAM 7 - INNOCENT.

Wales Labour Unity  
Conference:  
Saturday 5th October at  
11.00 am, Temple of Peace,  
Cathays Park, Cardiff.

SOUTH AFRICA'S RULERS replied to demands for change in the Apartheid state with Botha's declaration of a state of emergency on July 20th and the mass repression which followed it. In his Durban Address of 15th August, Botha made clear his intention to defend all the major pillars of Apartheid (such as the Group Areas Act which excludes blacks from designated areas) and ruled out completely any movement to majority rule.

His declaration, despite being greeted with 'shock and horror' from the bourgeois media in the West, was perfectly consistent with Botha and his cabinet's well known intentions with regard to 'reforms'. The whole basis of the South African state and its white ruling class depends on the exploitation of cheap black labour ensured by the Apartheid system. It has been able to strengthen that rule by granting extraordinary privileges to the white workers, such as the reservation of skilled jobs for whites, high pay, access to quality housing, blacks as servants and so forth.

Botha's National Party which has ruled South Africa since 1948 and presided over the growth and refinement of the Apartheid system, represents the political alliance between white bosses, farmers and workers.

## REFORMS

Any major reforms such as abolishing the Homelands system, declaring a common citizenship, abolishing the Pass laws or repealing repressive legislation would allow the black working class to strengthen its organisation and further challenge the cheap labour system. Dismantling this state through reform therefore means not only an end to South Africa as a pre-eminent haven for super-exploitation for South African and imperialist capital, but also shattering this alliance through the erosion of white workers' privileges. This the South African ruling class will not contemplate.

Since the late 1970's, under the impact of the Soweto rising and the growth of black trade unionism, the National Party has instituted a series of minor reforms aimed at 'modernising' the Apartheid system, while keeping its fundamentals intact. These measures included the recognition of black and non-racial trade unions, the creation of black Community Councils in the townships and a changed constitution which allow for the Colored and Indian population to elect MPs to separate Chambers in order to be 'consulted' by Government. All these reforms were designed to encourage the creation of a black middle class and trade union leadership which was committed to collaborating with the Apartheid system thus heading off the pressure for revolutionary change. But these measures have rebounded on the National Party government.

## TRADE UNIONS

The trade union struggle and demands for fundamental changes in the Apartheid structure of the workplaces continues unabated. The other 'reform' measures have met massive resistance and were the spark which set off the present wave of struggle. In the Autumn of 1984 the new constitution was opposed by the umbrella opposition groups, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum Committee (NFC). Colored and Indian voters boycotted the elections for their stooze representatives in massive numbers with less than 20% participating in this fraud.

Since then the regime has faced continuing and increasingly widespread rebellion. Disturbances previously centred on the Eastern Cape spread to the Transvaal, the trade unions were drawn in with the successful November 'stay away', massive boycotts of white retail outlets and actions which virtually drove Community Council collaborators out of the townships, all demonstrated the rejection by the masses of Botha's pathetic bribes and the continued



ANC leaders Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela.

opposition to his repression. 36 out of 38 Community Councils have had to be disbanded. Over 50 local policemen have been killed.

The growing fear within the imperialist countries who have major investments in South Africa that the Botha regime will be unable to suppress the rising struggle has led not only to a flight of capital, but also to debates about the advisability of backing 'reform' parties. Thus the growing queeziness of the Democrats in the USA with Reagan's 'back Botha at all costs' line.

## FEDERAL SOLUTION

Within South Africa the Progressive Federal Party led by Van Zyl Slabbert puts the reform option, but commands, as might be expected, only around 18% of the white vote. More importantly it receives support from some business quarters. The mining giant Anglo-American has added its voice to the reform road. But even here the reform envisaged stops far short of 'one person, one vote'. These groups favour negotiating a 'Federal Solution', a form of 'power sharing' at provincial level with blacks which would give each of the different designated groups - whites, coloreds, Indians and Africans - their own constituency and thus avoid majority rule, maintaining the dominant position of the whites.

## NEGOTIATION

All these reform perspectives are united in their belief that the transition must, above all, be based on 'peaceful negotiation'. They assume that the South African ruling class can be persuaded by argument and international pressure to abandon its defence of Apartheid. The whole perspective is based on sand. The bourgeoisie will not concede majority rule until it is convinced that the whites can no longer hold back the tide of black struggle. Until then it is united in its attempt to play Canute. It has again and again demonstrated its determination to crush anti-Apartheid movements - Sharpeville, Soweto and now the state of Emergency - killing hundreds in the process.

# FOR WORKERS' RE IN SOUT

Whenever they fail to buy off mass resistance from black workers their ultimate reliance on the South African racist state will become more and more evident.

There is however no shortage of black leaders who peddle the idea that the only way forward is a bloc with these 'progressive' sections of the national and international capitalists to win reforms. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief Minister of the Kwazulu 'homeland' and leader of the million strong Inkatha organisation is one. Buthelezi, who was recently touted round various countries with Helen Suzman to argue against sanctions, has recently restated his willingness to negotiate on power sharing. He calls for one man, one vote but would accept a minority veto; "I have always talked of sharing power" he told Newsweek. "There are other political organisations that are committed to seizing power from the present regime".

While Buthelezi is an open collaborator and is increasingly seen as such, even by a growing number of Zulus, there are others who increasingly pin their hopes on some sort of 'change of heart' by the South African government.

In recent years, the churches have played an increasingly prominent role in the opposition to Apartheid, especially within the UDF. They occupy an important position of influence amongst the black population. Where political and cultural life has been brutally restricted for decades, where poverty and oppression reign there is fertile ground for the churches. But the preaching of resignation and promising pie-in-the-sky could not last in such circumstances either.

Pushed by the desires and actions of the masses, influenced by the young radicals for whom the churches provide one of the few outlets to a decent education, the churches have increasingly taken a stand against the Botha regime. But they also hold back and mislead the movement. They call for peaceful protest. They cannot tolerate talk of mass action



Tutu and Boesak: Church leaders strive to keep control of increasingly radical movement to 'smash' the regime.

Bishop Desmond Tutu, Archbishop of Johannesburg, the only leading figure in opposition still at liberty, has been a consistent advocate of violent opposition to Botha's position of peaceful reform through mass pressure has been increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of the Botha regime's intransigence.

## BOTHA'S SPEECH

Tutu declared himself "shattered and devastated" by Botha's Durban speech. "More and more I will be seen as increasingly irrelevant" he complained to Sunday Times reporter, "I am using terms which are increasingly irrelevant. I talk of peace and non-violence".

Dr Allan Boesak, another church leader, patron of the UDF and President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, was a central organiser of the visit of Edward Kennedy to South Africa. This move reflected the hopes of the leadership of the UDF in wooing 'progressive' American bourgeois politicians to their cause. Whereas the UDF is firmly committed to fight for one



UDF rally hears Mandela's reply to Botha delivered by his daughter Zinzi.

# OLUTION AFRICA

struggle and set their targets at the achievement of socialism".

The ANC reflects in this way the major political force within it, the misnamed South African Communist Party (SACP). Like other Stalinist parties the SACP has a 'stagist' view of the revolution. It argues that the present stage of the struggle should remain at the level of fighting for democracy and a 'democratic national revolution'. The SACP is capable of putting a 'left gloss' on this position.

## LEFT GLOSS

In this way it does reflect the massive upsurge of the struggle and the demands of the workers which often go beyond democratic demands and broach such questions as workers' control and expropriation of the bosses. Thus a statement of the Central Committee of the SACP, dated January 1985, can declare, "workers must engage in the struggle for a democratic South Africa fully conscious of their unique class interests, the necessity to make their imprint on the democratic revolution and to prepare the conditions for an uninterrupted advance from popular democracy to proletarian rule" (African Communist, 2nd Quarter 1985).

But in practice this means subordinating the demands of the workers and the struggle for socialism to maintaining an alliance with the church and hoped for alliance with "domestic capital". The willingness of the ANC/SACP to tie the trade unions to the programme and perspectives of the UDF, despite the objections from them that its structure gave middle class organisations far too much weight, is a reflection of this policy.

## LEADING ROLE

Despite much repetition by the SACP that the working class must take a "leading role" in the struggle their perspectives for the goals of the current struggle - a bourgeois South Africa - necessarily relegates the working class to a subordinate role.

The enormous support for the ANC undoubtedly stems from their advocacy of the necessity of armed struggle to overthrow the Botha regime. Nelson Mandela has, for the present, refused to renounce "violence" as a condition for his release. The black youth applaud every blow which "Umkhonto. We Sizwe", the ANC's armed wing, inflicts on the murderous South African police and army.

But the ANC/SACP did not develop the armed struggle as a tactic integrated into mass working class struggle. From the 1960s the ANC developed guerilla struggle as a strategy, directed from outside the country, divorced from the internal struggle and increasingly dependent on support of the Front Line states for aid.

The bankruptcy of this strategy was proved decisively in the 1970s with the massive explosion of trade unionism and working class organisation which virtually bypassed the ANC. The Nkomati accords by which Mozambique agreed with South Africa to stop the passage of ANC guerillas was the final nail in its coffin. After a short period of trying to dismiss the independent trade union movement the ANC was jolted into recognising its enormous growth and potential. But still the working class struggle is not seen as the central means of struggle against the Apartheid state.

Despite the enormous potential of general strike action demonstrated by the November "stay away" the ANC/SACP have never made the fight for general strike action central to the current struggle. Despite on occasion calling for "extended stay aways", the ANC has posed different methods of struggle under the emergency.

Oliver Tambo, in a statement issued after Botha's Durban speech, appealed to "the business community of our country, the professionals and the intellectuals, the religious community and others" to join in the struggle to destroy Apartheid. He appealed not for international working class action in solidarity but for the West and "the entire business community to cut all links" (ANC press statement, 16th August 1985).

## GENERAL STRIKE

Fighting for a general strike against the emergency, which would link the miners' struggle and other economic struggles into a fight to overthrow Botha, would open up a very different perspective. It would move the working class to the centre of the stage, throw up in the struggle action councils - soviets - which would draw in the entire black communities and townships behind the workers. It



would terrify and paralyse the South African ruling class (and their backers) as they faced a united movement of such proportions that their very property and survival as a class were threatened.

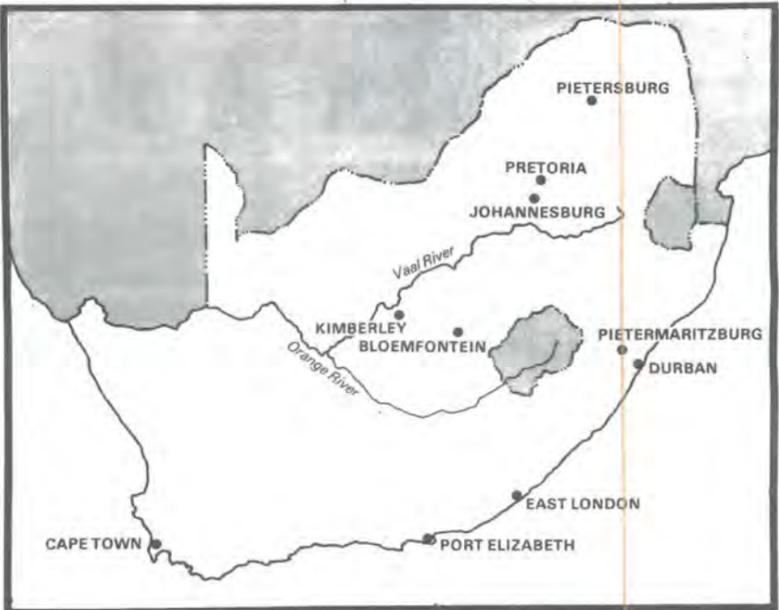
In these circumstances real splits would occur in the ruling class with regard to reform which would shatter the white class-alliance and disorient its repressive apparatus. Only such a situation would open up the road of armed insurrection via a workers' militia and the armed masses.

But of course such a perspective, of working class insurrection, poses the question of working class power - not a "democratic revolution". The demands of the workers in struggle would shatter the alliance with "business sectors" so carefully nurtured by the ANC and the SACP. That is why such a perspective can never be central to either these organisations. They pose instead abstract calls to make South Africa "ungovernable" (how, without a massive general strike?) for "people's committees" and "people's power".

## FOOT SOLDIERS

Despite its talk about the leading role of the working class the ANC has not changed its spots. They still see the working class as a helpful adjunct to the struggle. In the 1960s it was seen only as a recruiting ground for the guerillas underground struggle, in the 1980s it is assigned the role of footsoldiers for the popular frontist leaders of the UDF. In both cases the influence of the SACP has proved crippling for the South African working class. ■

by Stuart King and Sue Thomas



son, one vote - a fact which gives it its enormous support from Black organisations and the masses - even this sometimes appears as a negotiable far off goal. The UDF's first annual conference held earlier this year called for a series of reforms which would "mark the beginning a process of transition to a new democratic state" (our emphasis). A UDF statement went on to assert "there is still time to achieve peace through consultation between the state and authentic popular leaders for a transfer of power to the people" (Anti-Apartheid News, June 1985).

This perspective dominates the UDF strategy. It is one based on seeking alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie both within South Africa and amongst the imperialist powers in order to win reforms. Violence and mass action could frighten off these gentlemen and therefore must be avoided or at best used only to 'warn' the government of the consequences of their intransigence. It is this programme and the attempts to tie the workers' organisations to it through calling on them to affiliate to the UDF, which is so utopian in its belief that reform can be negotiated via the progressive bourgeoisie, which means tying the hands of the proletariat, which alone has the power to smash the Apartheid system.

## UDF

The ANC is undoubtedly a major ideological (and probably organisational) force within the UDF. The ANC is able to exist happily alongside the clerics and small businessmen, despite its emphasis on the armed struggle. It can do so because of an agreed perspective on the goals of the present struggle.

The ANC is at pains to reassure sections of what it calls 'domestic' or 'indigenous' capital that its programme is no threat to their existence. In a recent article in *Sechaba* (official magazine of the ANC) on the Freedom Charter, which embodies the ANC's programme, Jack Simons emphasises that this is not a socialist document and that "Congress is not a workers' party with a socialist programme". This is because "At the present stage of the revolution, the liberation movement aims to release the economy from control by transnational monopolies. It is not directed against the owners of domestic capital" (June 1985). He goes on to denounce "workerist tendencies" (within the trade unions) and "self-styled marxists" who "reject all forms of capital, emphasise the class

# IRISH WORKERS AGAINST APARTHEID

by a member of the Irish Workers Group

AFTER OVER 13 months, the eleven striking shop-workers at the Henry St. Dublin branch of the Dunnes Stores Supermarket chain remain committed to the struggle against handling South African goods and are determined to see the strike through to victory.

The strikers, mostly women, are members of the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union (IDATU). They were suspended in July 1984 for refusing to handle South African fruit in line with a conference decision by IDATU calling for a "ban on all South African goods and services." The dogged and heroic persistence of the strikers has won them headlines nationally and internationally. Praise has come from Bishop Tutu, the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, trade union leaders and even members of the Irish government. However all of this has amounted to nothing in terms of practical support by way of extending the action. On the contrary Irish trade with South Africa is on the increase.

The mobilisation of solidarity action is made more difficult in view of the 'left' leadership of IDATU having failed to make the strike the springboard for an effective blocking of South African goods. Consequently the struggle has been directed into the cul de sac of a moral protest about the individual right of the striking

workers not to handle the goods which would continue to be on sale. The IDATU leadership, headed by John Mitchell, has offered a return to work on this basis but the Dunnes bosses, true to their union bashing traditions, have not made it easy for them.

## PIOUS WISHES

In spite of the obvious beacon that this strike represents for other workers the field has been left open for the liberal politics of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM). The IAAM, numbering various bourgeois politicians among its patrons, is incapable of turning to the perspective of united workers action to stop trade with the racist South African regime and resorts to the pious wish that consumers will individually cease buying South African goods in the shops. This strategy - about as watertight as a sieve - prefers to appeal to "individual conscience" rather than to the solidarity of workers in struggle.

Not surprisingly the Irish Congress of Trade Unions have tagged along behind the IAAM's tactics as it lets them off the hook of having to organise their constituent unions in support. At its most recent conference in June, after 11 months of hand wringing in the

face of the strike, it finally called on the membership of all affiliated unions not to shop in the Henry St. branch of Dunnes. Not a word about scab deliveries, nor even a hint that unions should block imports from South Africa. If ever a mountain produced a mouse....

The task of revolutionaries must be to fight for the extension of the action. This includes crucially placing demands on IDATU to bring out their members in all Dunnes Stores and direct appeals to other rank and file workers to join the pickets as a key step to the halting of all supplies to the store.

Recent mass picketing has begun to develop with the support of rank and file workers from different workplaces and unions and a support group is beginning to tackle the problem of supplies through longer pickets and appeals to workers in companies supplying Dunnes. This work must be deepened and extended and the fight must be broadened into an effective struggle to get all handling of South African imports stopped through workers action. In this way alone can the courageous stand of the Dunnes strikers become an effective part of the struggle of our black brothers and sisters against the yoke of Apartheid and the rotten system of imperialist capitalism that props it up. ■



THE CURRENT CRISIS has shown up the potential power as well as the weaknesses of the independent black trade unions. The prospect of a strike by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) continued to shake the international money markets throughout August. Not surprisingly since gold, coal and diamonds account for revenues of £10.5 billion a year, of which 80% comes from exports.

South Africa produces 80% of its energy from its coal industry. A national strike by the most strategically important section of South African workers in a period of mass struggle against the Emergency was an explosive combination that the bosses had to avoid at all costs. The Catholic Bishops added their voices, appealing to the Chamber of Mines to improve its offer because of the "possibility of a mass strike looming".

#### PARTIAL BATTLE

However at the end of August the NUM will be going into a partial battle in extremely unfavourable circumstances. It of course faces huge problems posed by the repression, by the mine owners' ability to deport migrant labourers, by the fact that it directly organises only 150,000 of the 550,000 black mineworkers and by its meagre funds.

But the NUM's tactics have weakened its position. Sticking to the laid down negotiating procedures, the union, after winning an enormous yes vote in its early August ballot for strike action, set the strike date for 25 August. As the deadline approached, one half of the employers in the Chamber of Mines moved to settle, led by Anglo-American, the world's biggest mining group. Anglo added another 2% to its own 14-19% offer and an extra 10% holiday leave. Of the NUM's membership, 80% work for Anglo-American.

The NUM's final strike call was restricted to those companies not making the improved offer - Gencor, Gold Fields and Anglo-Vaal. Whether or not the NUM can deliver action, or solidarity action in the event of mass sackings, it has certainly entered the dispute at a severe disadvantage, with its membership now divided.

#### WEAKNESS

As it is, not only the NUM's weaknesses have been revealed. None of the trade unions or trade union federations responded to the Emergency and repression with a strike call - and a general strike was and remains the one thing which could have halted Botha in his tracks. Why this immobility in the face of Botha's action? It cannot be entirely accounted for by the repression and severe restrictions on trade unions (although we in the West should never forget those). In fact, relatively few of the top trade union leaders were detained in the wake of the Emergency. There is also the weakness of political strategy.

The independent black and non-racial trade union movement went through a staggering growth from the late 1970s. Its membership now stands at 880,000. While this is only a fraction of the 4.5 million black workers, it is a significant proportion of the workforce which can reach out to the unorganised.

#### WIEHAHN REPORT

When the National Party government introduced industrial reform in 1979, following the Wiehahn Report, it sought to allow trade unions to grow, but in a controlled manner. It hoped to create a layer of responsible black trade union leaders that could be integrated within the existing system and thus become a force for conservatism and control within the workforce. Companies like Anglo-American sought to encourage 'normal' trade unionism by recognising and negotiating

# POLITICS AND THE BLACK TRADE UNIONS



living conditions in miners' hostel



Vaal Reef miners

with trade unions. Anglo has avoided major confrontations two years running through these tactics.

The strategy has by no means been an all out success for the ruling class. Not only did trade unions grow, but they did so through organising at rank and file level. Those unions affiliated to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), for example, stressed the importance of shop steward organisation. The NUM has a shaft steward system.

Most importantly, 'normal' trade unionism - like the British variety that sticks to wages and conditions - proved impossible under Apartheid. How could it when organisers like Neil Aggett die in prison cells? How could it when employers like Vaal Reef's mine bosses sack and deport thousands of workers as they did to break a strike last April? How could it when residency restrictions, lack of citizenship, the pass laws and a battery of repressive legislation make 'normal' organisation impossible?

The new layer of trade union leaders could not avoid these questions that are continuously raised in the course of 'normal' trade union struggles. When in 1984 Botha introduced the Constitutional changes, creating fake parliaments for Colored and Indian representatives with no enfranchisement for the black African majority, the trade unions joined in the successful boycott campaign.

The most significant political action called by the unions was

the two day stay-away (protest strike) in the Transvaal last November. An estimated 800,000 workers took part. The strike was called on the combined issues of educational reform including the end to sexual harassment in schools, the withdrawal of security forces from the townships, the release of all detainees and no increases in rents or fares. It was organised by a general committee representing the youth, the FOSATU unions and community organisations, reflecting the mass pressure which had been building up in the working class townships.

The repression which followed the stay-away - including the arrest of a number of key leaders - does not entirely explain why the subsequent stay-away calls in 1985, in the Eastern Cape in March, and in the Transvaal in May in protest at the murder of union leader Andries Raditsela, were not so successful. Explanations such as lack of preparation and the failure to unite youth and workers have been advanced. But if this is the case then in part it must result from FOSATU's stated wariness about using the stay-away weapon in the future.

In fact the trade unions attitude to political organisations has been marked, not only by considerable differences, but by lack of clarity. While some trade union leaders such as the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), affiliated to the UDF others, in particular the FOSATU

unions and the General Workers Union (GWU), kept their distance. Included in their reasons was an objection to the subordinate role which the working class was being offered in the UDF which they defined as a 'multi-class' organisation.

The FOSATU leadership took the clearest position on their relationship to the ANC which later defined their attitude to the UDF. Joe Foster the General Secretary argued that however successful popular movements had been in overthrowing oppressive regimes it is "essential that workers must strive to build their own powerful and effective organisations even whilst they are part of the wider popular struggle". This was necessary to stop the popular movements being 'hijacked' by elements who would turn on their worker supporters. The FOSATU leaders pointed to the lessons of the Zimbabwe struggle where the "country was liberated" but "workers were not".

This position aroused the anger of the SACP which accused FOSATU of trying to substitute the trade unions for the already existing party of the working class - the South African Communist Party. "Dare it ignore the confusion and division it will sow in the ranks of the working class if it sets up a new 'workers movement' in competition with or alongside the still living Communist Party?" (all quotes from "Power", Denis MacShane, Spokesman).

There is both a healthy and weak side to FOSATU's attitude, which reflects as well other unions' positions. The healthy side is the recognition of the need for independence in the struggle and the danger of subordinating workers' demands to other classes. However the weakness lies in believing that a trade union - which aims to recruit all workers on the basis of defending their immediate workplace interests rather than aiming to recruit politically conscious workers on the basis of a general political programme dealing with every aspect of society - is sufficient to defend workers' interests.

In practice the members of the unions participate as individuals, often with the encouragement of the unions in the UDF. This does indeed provide them with political leadership, but one with a class collaborationist content. It also runs the danger of the unions, as organisations, confining themselves to purely economic issues leaving the political struggle to the UDF/ANC. This is an abdication of responsibility for providing leadership for the working class. To defend its interests and pursue the struggle to break the shackles on the workers by the Apartheid regime, the working class needs a political voice, a political party.

#### REPRESSION

Despite the inevitable problems of repression and illegality, it is vital to raise the call for an independent workers' party. This should be raised openly by exile publications and wherever possible internally - in shop stewards organisations, in trade union committees, in whatever ways possible in the workplaces and townships. It must be prepared underground, when open building is impossible.

Of course, there would not be unanimity immediately about the programme such a party would have. Some might consider it should espouse ideas of negotiating reforms with the regime. Revolutionaries would argue with those workers and would fight for a programme for building workplace and township committees, for a general strike, for an armed militia to overthrow the Apartheid state, for seizing and nationalising the banks and monopolies.

That programme should also take up the democratic questions - abolition of the repressive legislation, the nationalisation of the land, not a 'national convention' but the immediate convening of a Constituent Assembly freely elected on the basis of votes for all over 16 years. It would show how these democratic reforms could only be achieved by revolutionary methods. The fight for this programme in the workers organisations is a crucial element in the fight for a revolutionary workers party.

#### POLITICAL QUESTIONS

November 30th is now set for the launch of a unified trade union federation which would represent 400,000 workers. It will include FOSATU, 10 unions affiliated to the UDF, 11 based in Natal and now also the NUM, which has left the black consciousness federation, the Council of South African Unions (CUSA). The CUSA unions, and others of like mind, plan to stay outside. Despite that, steps towards trade union unity and the apparent agreement on building industrial unions is an important advance for South African workers.

But it leaves the political questions open. If the conference is allowed to go ahead by Pretoria, it would be tragic to lose the opportunity for a clear call from it for an independent workers' party. If the existing trade union leadership continues to avoid that question and to avoid calls for protest strike action, then it will have missed a vital opportunity to take the struggle forward. ■

by Sue Thomas

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER AND PALESTINE..... the rot deepens

THE CURRENT DEBATE on Palestine in the pages of Socialist Organiser reveals much about the Socialist Organiser Alliance's political method and direction. Having torn up the strategy of Permanent Revolution with regard to Ireland, they are now completing the process with Palestine, gutting their programme of any socialist content in relation to the democratic, nationalist movements of the oppressed.

The discussion on Palestine has polarised between Bruce Robinson's advocacy of the slogan for 'the democratic secular state of Palestine' and SO's editor John O'Mahony and Martin Thomas, amongst others, who advocate the 'two-state solution'. Neither side of the debate attempts the crucial

fusion of the tasks of the democratic revolution (self-determination, national unification, etc.) with those of the socialist revolution. Both adopt an essentially stage-ist approach. Furthermore, both camps are anxious to appear 'realistic' in the eyes of their friends in the Labour left.

isers lacked the resources, military and economic, to ensure the success of their project. Hence the strategic alliance between the Zionists and the imperialist powers that did or might rule Palestine. Unsuccessful flirtations with the Ottomans and the Germans led to a successful alliance with British imperialism to establish the Zionist settlements.

Then came a switch of allegiance by the Zionists to US imperialism, who wanted an 'independent' but reliable agent to enable it to divide and dominate the oil-rich Arab states. Despite an episodic clash with British imperialism in the mid-forties Israel was conceived, grew and was born as an artificial state carrying out the interests of Anglo-Ame-

like a distant project" he says. You can say that again! To renounce force - the anti-imperialist struggles of the Arab countries - in the name of appealing to the still Zionist Israeli population is a position unworthy of a self-proclaimed Trotskyist. If this is the 'anti-Zionist' wing of Socialist Organiser what can we expect of its opponents? In fact it is the logical outcome of SO's 'Trotskyism without Permanent Revolution', an alarm clock without a spring.

Bruce Robinson cannot put himself on any solid ground precisely because he too rejects Trotsky's strategy of Permanent Revolution and falls back into the Menshevik and Stalinist notion of separate democratic and socialist 'revolutions'. Of course there is a 'democratic' or 'national' starting point to the struggle in the Middle East. It pits bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces as well as workers and peasants amongst the oppressed and super-exploited Arabs against their imperialist and Zionist tormentors. Whoever cannot or will not see this starting point and will not join in an anti-imperialist or anti-Zionist struggle is no revolutionary communist.

This means unconditional support for the progressive and legitimate struggle of the Palestinians and even for the bourgeois Arab states when they actually fight imperialism and the Israeli state. This support does not in any way entail a refusal to criticise the whole strategy and tactics (including the military ones) of the Palestinians. Far from it. We should reject the Utopian goal of a bourgeois-democratic secular state and the Popular Front strategy the PLO and its fragments have always espoused to win it. To limit in advance the struggle to a bourgeois objective and to subordinate the working class's historic and immediate demands to this has and always will lead to disaster.

## PERMANENT REVOLUTION

The Arab bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie cannot lead this struggle to a victorious conclusion. The former are to be found - except for episodic clashes - firmly in the camp of imperialism. The latter cannot orient themselves independently of the Arab bourgeoisie - their paymaster. The strategy of Permanent Revolution in the Middle East indicates that the proletariat must play the leading role and that its greatest ally is the oppressed and exploited peasantry. This struggle must hit at imperialism's economic tentacles throughout the region, not only at Zionism. This will lead inevitably to a clash with the semi-feudal, oil revenue-dependent parasites of Saudi-Arabia and the Gulf states as well as the bourgeois and military bonapartist regimes in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iraq and so on. The natural allies of the Palestinians are the workers and peasants of these countries. That is why they must set as their goal revolutionary workers' and peasants' governments in all these countries and a Socialist Federation of the Middle-East.

A working class-led movement will of course hold out the hand of class brotherhood to the Jewish proletariat, which as the pillars of imperialist and Zionist rule totter can be won over to the fight for workers' power. Here and now revolutionary communists should support every class demand of the Israeli proletariat, seeking to aid the latter's break with their bourgeois exploiters and to link up with the Arab workers. They should support the democratic anti-war movements which arise in Israel. To support these struggles is in the direct interest of the anti-imperialist and anti-Zion-

ist struggle since to dislocate sections of the Jewish proletariat from their own bourgeoisie will hasten the collapse of Zionism.

John O'Mahony and Martin Thomas have been thoroughly consistent. From rejecting Permanent Revolution they have gone on to reject any support for the actual Palestinian struggle. They have developed a prettified and 'democratic' version of the one being touted by sections of Western imperialism and its agents in the Arab world.

O'Mahony starts from a recognition of the 'right of self-determination of the Israeli Jews'. He argues that "the Jews have a right to a certain portion of Palestine by virtue of the fact that they are there and most of the Jews there now were born there". They can enjoy this right, says O'Mahony, irrespective of "how they conduct themselves in that territory". In this approach, despite his denial, he is equating the rights of an oppressed nation with those of the oppressor. He sees a symmetry between the national rights of the Palestinians and those of the Israeli Jews and, ignoring the allimportant role of imperialism naively argues that all will be well if both sides can sort themselves out so that neither oppresses the other. In this, O'Mahony adopts a petit bourgeois democratic rather than a Marxist attitude to the question of self-determination.

## SELF-DETERMINATION

Marxists are internationalists and counterpose the international achievement of communism to the limitations of the capitalist nation-states, which have long since outlived any progressive potential. In the epoch of imperialism, however, there are many nations and national movements, oppressed directly and indirectly by imperialism. We support their struggles precisely because they have as their enemy imperialism. Any such struggle can develop into an anti-capitalist struggle and indeed to be successful, must do so. The realisation of the democratic right to self-determination can thus become part and parcel of the struggle for socialism.

There is one condition for this - that the national struggle be that of an oppressed nation, one denied national state existence by Imperialism and its agents. This is the case with the Palestinians. This is not the case, on the other hand, with the Israeli Jews who have established a nation state through a strategic alliance with imperialism and through imposing a brutal national oppression on the Palestinians. To give unconditional support to their self-determination, as does O'Mahony, is to deny in reality that support to the Palestinians. It leads to the placing of conditions on the struggle of the Palestinians, the oppressed nation. Herein lies the reactionary logic of the two

state position.

We must be clear that the Palestinian struggle for their own self-determination - for the return of the exiles and full citizenship for all Arabs as well as Jews within Palestine - would make the Zionist state impossible. Talk about some sort of ideal, future non-Zionist Jewish state amicably sharing the old mandate territory with a Palestinian state is a utopian dream. Utopian not primarily because it doesn't or couldn't exist but because there is no road of anti-imperialist and class struggle which the working class and the oppressed masses can take to reach it. Of course two states could be realised but only in the form of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza areas becoming fully blown Bantustans with puppet regimes providing cheap labour as in South Africa.

At present this is not a desirable aim for US imperialism or Zionism since it fears that such states could be a base for continued guerilla war against Israel. Also it would ideologically undermine the famous Golda Meir dictum "There is no such thing as the Palestinians...they do not exist". It would to some extent put a block on Israeli expansionism. It would only ever be adopted to prevent a far worse alternative - the collapse and destruction of the Zionist state altogether.

Thus the "two states" utopia, if it were realized, would not be a beautiful democratic harmonious dream but a reactionary nightmare that the Palestinians and progressive Jewish workers would have to seek to destroy. O'Mahony's failure to achieve a shred of realism is reflected in his talk of a struggle for the "overthrow of the monarchy in Jordan, and federation or merger between a Palestinian mini-state and a democratic Jordan" (our emphasis). In this, once again he limits his horizons to democratic aims, makes no reference to the class forces able to achieve such an overthrow, and is unable, therefore, to indicate any way it might be achieved.

Furthermore, he contrives to give the impression that the Jewish state, sitting alongside the Palestinian mini-state, would somehow have become de-Zionised. Yet he says nothing of how this de-Zionisation can come about except to vehemently argue against outside interference in the internal affairs of Israel!

Sadly, for readers of Socialist Organiser, the conclusion from analysing the writings of O'Mahony and co on this question is unavoidable: the two state solution is simply a fig-leaf, a cover for an abdication from the struggle against Zionism, an abstention from any anti-imperialist united front, and the dropping in practice of unconditional support for Palestinian self determination.■

by John Rubinstein



The Zionist war machine

fusion of the tasks of the democratic revolution (self-determination, national unification, etc.) with those of the socialist revolution. Both adopt an essentially stage-ist approach. Furthermore, both camps are anxious to appear 'realistic' in the eyes of their friends in the Labour left.

The idea of a democratic secular state of Palestine in which Jews and Arabs live together in perfect harmony has long been the favoured position of the British left. It is incorporated into the platform of the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine and, indeed, it is the traditional position of Socialist Organiser itself. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, it gains credibility from the fact that since the late 1960s it has been the adopted position of the PLO itself (and since the split in the PLO ranks, the 'democratic secular state' has been the rallying cry of the most progressive of its sections). Secondly, whilst appearing to allow for a vigorous anti-Zionist struggle it also sounds a very 'democratic' and 'nice' solution designed to keep everyone happy. In reality however, it is a utopian schema, devoid of class-politics and worthless as a revolutionary guide to action.

## THE ZIONIST STATE

The state of Israel was conceived of and built as an exclusively Jewish state. That is the essence of the Zionist aim. In contrast to Southern Africa, where the white colonisers incorporated the indigenous black population into the state as a super-exploited working class, in Palestine the Zionist colonising settlers expelled the native Palestinians from their lands in order to build a Jewish-only nation. That Palestine was a 'land without a people' was a cynical myth. Its people had to be driven out and replaced with Jewish immigrants. 'Land, Labour and Produce' was the slogan of the early Zionists, meaning that all land should be owned by Jews, all labour should be supplied by Jewish workers and all produce should come from Jewish farms.

However, the would-be colon-



Palestinians massacred in Lebanon - the legacy of Israel's war on them.

## COAL, THE NATION'S ENERGY FUTURE

SAVE IT WITH THE NUM

DURING THE GREAT STRIKE, Arthur Scargill and the NUM Executive tirelessly criticised the NCB and the Tories for abandoning the Plan for Coal. They insisted that the Plan was the only basis for a settlement of the strike. Indeed after the strike was defeated, the NUM Conference gave Labour Energy Spokesman Stan Orme a rousing cheer, when he promised that the cornerstone of the next Labour Government's energy policy would be a new Plan for Coal.

However, far from being a solution to the Great Strike, the Plan was in fact one of the major causes of the strike. Worse, the divisions in the NUM that it helped foster were a crucial factor in causing the defeat of the union. These two facts - that the Plan made the strike inevitable and that it helped lead to its defeat - are the two major lessons workers must learn from the strike.

### THE ORIGINS OF THE PLAN

The Plan was brought into being and given shape by two great events, the first economic and the second political. The first event was the four-fold increase in oil prices at the end of 1973 (combined with fears that the capitalist world was running out of oil). The second was the resurgence of militancy in the NUM manifested in the victorious strikes of 1972 and 1974.

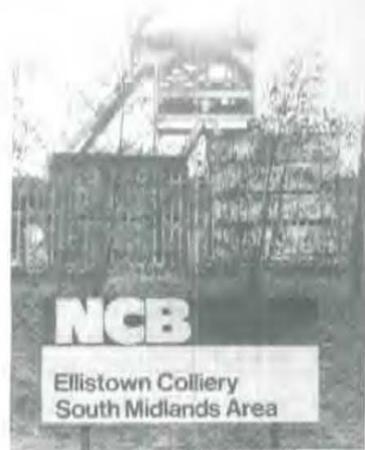
The quadrupling of oil prices by OPEC at the end of 1973 put to an end the post-war era of cheap oil. The capitalist class were forced into a strategic re-evaluation of their energy policies. They turned to coal with renewed interest. In the words of the Plan, "Recent energy developments, particularly the dramatic increases in prices by the Middle East oil producing countries...made it even more urgent to re-appraise coal's forward contribution to the UK's energy supplies...".

The coal industry was however sadly neglected. The Plan recog-

nised that by 1972 capital projects had fallen to one tenth of the expenditure of the previous decade. The Plan sought to arrest this run down, and by increasing investment to modernise and expand the industry.

This was its economic aim. Its political aim was to neutralise the militancy of the NUM. The militancy of 1972 and 1974 had helped bring down a Tory government. It was feared by both Labour leaders and right-wing NUM leaders like Joe Gormley. It had disrupted the tradition of collaboration between the NUM and the NCB established with nationalisation in 1949. The Plan sought to restore this collaboration by enlisting the support of the miners for the programme of modernisation. This was spelt out in the Plan: "...the Board recognise that the necessary advances in productivity can be secured only with the full co-operation of the work force".

The Plan re-united the NUM and the NCB. Ezra and Gormley pledged their support for the project of modernising the British coal industry. When Scargill added his support to the Plan he was ignoring its crucial political aspect.



Scab pits will be rewarded with closure too

He emphasised the Plan's economic aspect but did not criticise the class collaborationist element of it.

### SO MUCH FOR SO LITTLE

In fact the Plan promised workers very little. It did not promise them a shorter week or early retirement. It did not promise job security or improved working conditions. All it promised was that recruitment would be increased from an average of 20,000 to 28,000 over the course of the Plan.

This increase was completely cynical. In the six years before the Plan, recruitment had indeed averaged 20,000 per year, but total employment had nevertheless fallen from 336,000 to just 250,000. In other words a fall of 86,000. Had recruitment been stepped up to 28,000 from 20,000 this would not have prevented the fall, but only slowed it down. Instead of a reduction of 86,000 there would have been a reduction of 38,000 in the number of miners, a fall nonetheless representing over 10% of the workforce. As it has turned out, in no year while the Plan was operative (1974-83) did employment in the industry increase. By the end of 1983 there were only 192,000 miners left. A further fall of nearly 25%.

The Plan did not promise modernisation for the benefit of its coal miners. On this matter it was very clear. Modernisation was designed to make coal more competitive and cheaper for industry. In return for more investment the Plan expected increased productivity from the NUM: "Higher productivity needs to accompany massive increases in capital investment".

The NUM delivered the increased productivity. Coal miners paid for it with job losses. The Plan undermined the defence of jobs. It incorporated the NUM into the running of the industry and thereby enormously strengthened the hold

# PLAN FOR COAL:

of the officials on the rank and file. NUM leaders sat on joint consultative boards. They submitted joint proposals to the government on the future needs of the industry. Consultation and agreement became the norm. Little wonder that of the 58 closures between 1974 and 1982, as many as 53 were by mutual agreement.

Much more seriously, the Plan divided the miners externally and internally. It did this by prompting miners to identify with the success of the mining industry. Miners were encouraged to put coal first. This cut them off from workers in other energy related industries particularly the nuclear industry. The NUM went as far as to call for the closure of the nuclear industry in order to secure the future for coal. This effectively cut them off from workers in the nuclear industry, an isolation that was to cost the miners dear in the 1984 strike.

By opposing the coal industry to the other energy producing industries, the NUM was unable to establish an alliance of workers in these industries. The widespread use of scab oil during the Great Strike demonstrated how important this failure was. Furthermore, the repeated calls for import controls and increased state subsidies to counter imports in order to protect the British coal industry risked cutting the NUM off from foreign miners. The support of many foreign miners during the Great Strike was to prove an exhilarating antidote to the narrow nationalism of the NUM leadership prior to the strike.

### CLASS COLLABORATION

Plan for Coal style collaboration not only divided miners from those external to the industry. It divided miners internally as well. After all, if miners were expected to support a modern and efficient coal industry, how were they to defend jobs and conditions when efficiency required fewer jobs and changed work practices? By putting the coal industry first, the NUM began to split between those who were to gain from modernisation and those who were to pay for it.

This was the inevitable outcome of the investment strategy of the Plan. The Plan did not promise modernisation of all the pits. It promised investment in the richer seams mines. "The majority of investment for boosting production capacity at existing pits will be at general purpose collieries where production costs are significantly lower than average" (WP emphasis). This was the corner stone of the Plan.

The concentration of investment in the better mines and super-pits began to produce an uneven industry. A dynamic core surrounded by a neglected periphery was created. Wales, Scotland and Kent were being turned into expendable coalfields. This unevenness began to express itself in a growing division in the NUM. In 1972 and 1974 the NUM was almost completely united in its strike action. In the years that followed, under the impact of the Plan, divisions began to appear. This was quite evident by the time of the ballot over productivity deals.

The Area Incentive Scheme complemented the Plan for Coal. The growing two tier industry was being held together by the national wage agreement which bound miners together through a unified wage structure regardless of whether they worked in a productive or unproductive pit. What the NCB needed was a productivity deal that would destroy this unified structure by rewarding miners in the more productive pits at the expense of miners in the less productive pits. Enter that friend of the miner, Labour Energy minister at the time, Tony Benn. Benn had

the left credentials to cover the devastatingly anti-working class nature of the scheme.

During the Great Strike, much has been made of the fact that the scheme was imposed despite the majority voting against it in repeated ballots. This is true and shows the hypocrisy of the scab areas who called for a ballot on the strike but ignored the ballot on the incentive scheme.

However, the size of the "yes" vote in the ballot at that time - 87,901 - should have served as a warning of the growing divisions inside the NUM. Militancy was being consciously sapped by Gormley, Benn and the NCB via the Plan for Coal and the Incentive Scheme. The success of these saboteurs was revealed by the "yes" vote. Almost 90,000 miners identified their well-being with the success of the coal industry, success meaning increased productivity and fewer workers.

The Plan had succeeded in dividing the miners between those who hoped to gain from the modernisation and those who were to lose by it. The stage had been set for Nottingham's scabbing in the Great Strike.

### THE INEVITABLE STRIKE

In the year the Plan was drafted, 1974, coal output was 120 million tons. The Plan forecast potential demand for coal in 1985 at 150 million tons. As it has turned out, demand for coal in 1985 could be less than 100 million tons. That is, 20 million tons less than in 1974. Imagine, the NCB was proposing to expand the coal industry in the expectation of increased demand, when in fact demand has turned out to be less than in the year the Plan was first proposed.

It would however be quite wrong to blame the NCB 'planners' for getting it so wrong. Every 'plan' in every industry got it just as wrong. It is simply quite impossible to plan capitalism. It is impossible because capitalism is a crisis ridden economic mode of production based on fierce competition and the scramble for the best possible profits.

Indeed, the Plan itself was drafted in 1974 amidst the deepest recession since the war. The NCB, however, considered that this recession would be of short duration and would be followed by a period of sustained growth. They were wrong. In 1979 capitalism, internationally, was plunged into an even deeper and longer recession.

This recession hit industries like coal particularly hard. A recession is essentially caused by the fall in investment resulting from the fall in the rate of profit. No capitalist will invest in production if he or she considers the rate of profit to be too low. Their refusal to invest means that fewer and fewer new factories are built and some factories are closed. How does this affect the demand for coal?

Throughout the history of capitalism, machinery and equipment have been invented that have revolutionised production. The productivity of labour has been multiplied many times over. The modern spinner today is 100 times more productive than his or her counterpart who worked that symbol of the industrial revolution - the Spinning Jenny. And yet, despite these advances, the burden of labour has hardly been reduced.

Why? Because of profits. Reducing the working day means a loss of profits to the capitalist class. That is why increases in the productivity of labour lead to fewer workers in employment rather than to fewer hours and full employment.

To explain this let us turn back to the coal industry. According to the more authoritative figures of the NCB, in 1974 the labour of miners (not only face workers) could be represented by about 335 tons of coal per miner per year. Of this 335 tons, miners were paid for only 220 tons. The balance of 115 tons was produced free for the NCB and this represented its profit. This production of unpaid coal by the miners is the sole source of profit for the NCB (just as in all other industries the workers are the sole source of profit). The existence of machinery merely allows workers to produce more profit. It is workers not machinery that actually produce profits.

By 1983 the productivity of labour had increased by about 10%. The labour of each miner was now represented by approximately 370 tons of coal. Of this 370 tons miners were paid for only 217 tons. This meant that miners were now producing 153

tons of free coal, or 38 tons more than the 115 tons they produced in 1974. At £40 per ton this meant that each miner now produced £6120 profit in 1983 as against £4600 in 1974 when they produced only 115 tons.

## FEWER HOURS OR FEWER JOBS?

Unfortunately, over the same period the number of miners fell from 249,000 to around 200,000. In round figures this represented a fall of approximately 20% in the workforce. Let us now look at what would have happened had the working day (shift) been reduced to maintain full employment. In that case each shift would have been reduced by 20%. This would have reduced production per miner from 370 tons to approximately 296 tons. If each miner continued to be paid the equivalent of 217 tons, then the amount of coal not covered by his wages would have only been 79 tons. Compared to the 155 tons of coal miners actually produced for the NCB in 1983, this represents a fall of 76 tons. In money terms this would have meant a fall in profits from £6120

per miner per year to only £3160.

From the first moment of Nationalisation the NCB was dedicated to making profits out of the miners' labour. This was disguised in some years by a declared loss, due in the main to massive sums paid out to the old owners (compensation), to the bankers (interest) and a massive hidden subsidy to other state and private industries by selling coal below market prices. The profits the NCB actually made for the capitalist class included these sums as well as the declared profit of the NCB itself. The pursuit of profit, and not the provision of a useful substance, let alone a decent livelihood for miners and their communities, was what the NCB was all about.

When they say that the NCB must be 'economic' they mean profitable for the capitalist class. Thus the NCB - like any other employer - violently opposes any reduction in the working day.

Developments in technology which make each miner's labour more productive would be "wasted" if they just led to a shorter shift and working week. It makes economic sense to them to maintain the length of the working day and to reduce the number of workers. Thus the NCB made sure that each of its workers produced £6120 for it, instead of £3160.

This shows why capitalists - including state capitalist monopolies like the NCB - and workers cannot have a definition of what is 'economic' in common. Whenever workers accept the bosses definition of what is economic they are simply accepting the stepping up of their own exploitation. ■



1977 protest against the incentive scheme

# A RECIPE FOR DOLE



Only workers control can make technology serve the workers

Firstly, if there are fewer factories operating, then there is a reduced requirement for power. The closure of factories in 1979-82 reached epidemic proportions. Whole regions were laid waste. The word 'de-industrialisation' captured it all. Closed factories require neither electricity nor coal to heat their boilers. The result was a collapse of demand for coal in industry.

Secondly, if capitalists do not open new factories and close old ones, then employment must fall. So it did, unemployment more than trebled. But if there are fewer workers in employment then there are fewer earning a wage. There are therefore fewer workers able to afford adequate heating or lighting. So the demand for coal for domestic purposes also collapsed.

Worse, the collapse of investment in industry in general coincided with increased investment in the coal industry. As a result new capacity planned in the mid 1970s began to come on stream just as the demand for coal plummeted. By the early 1980s the NCB had huge amounts of overcapacity on its hands. There was only one capitalist solution to this overcapacity - the accelerated closure of the less efficient pits.

## MINERS PAY THE PRICE

The stage was set for the Great Strike. In 1981 and 1982 NCB attempts to speed up their pit closure programme were thwarted by the militancy of sections of the NUM (and by strikes in other parts of the economy). This only made them more desperate. The Tories improved their preparations for the pending battle - more police and larger coal stocks. They appointed field marshal MacGregor. They were ready for the decisive showdown.

The Plan therefore did not reduce the need for the NCB to attack workers but made it more urgent. The introduction of new capacity demanded the accelerated closure of the old. Miners were forced to pay the price for the 'success' of the Plan. This has always been the case and will always be the case whenever workers co-operate in planning under capitalism. As *The Miner* was to ruefully admit during the strike, "The reward for increasing the coal industry's productivity to record levels is to come forward with a plan to put thousands on the dole" (March 1984).

The Plan for Coal did succeed in turning the British coal industry into one of the most modern in the world. In the process of modernisation it split the NUM in two, while the completion of this process provoked the Great

confronted with MacGregor's closure programme and miners are now paying with their jobs for their leaders' loyalty to the Plan for Coal.

## THE CLOSURE PROGRAMME

Many militants have called Thatcher spiteful and vindictive. This she may be. But more important than her personal qualities is the fact that she represents the interests of her class of capitalists. The Tory government's proposals for resolving the crisis in the coal industry are no different to the proposals carried out in other industries. The NCB's proposals were therefore twofold. First to increase profits by making miners work harder. Second to reduce the capital invested in the industry through a programme of rationalisation.

Rationalisation means the closing down of high cost mines or plants. The high cost mines contribute little or nothing to the total profit of the industry. Accordingly closing them means little or no loss of profits. However these mines represent a substantial portion of the capital invested in the industry. Closures therefore increase the rate of profit because profits are measured over less and less capital.

This is the economic rationale for closures. It may not make much sense to workers when we see old people dying in winter for lack of warmth, pits closing with mineable reserves entombed, skilled men rotting at home. But then capitalist production is production for profit not human need.

Understanding their rationale enables us to see clearly what the NCB meant by "uneconomic" pits. Uneconomic pits were those that stood in the way of a slimmed down, but highly productive, competitive industry producing cheap coal. The cheap coal in turn gets sold cheaply to industry - in fact a form of government subsidy to the profiteers in other industries - and expensively to the domestic

users, mainly workers. Our starting point in dealing with the question of "uneconomic" pits should never be offering solutions to make them "economic" in capitalist terms. That will mean further job losses. No, it must be stating unambiguously that closing a pit that still has workable reserves is uneconomic for us, the workers. A closed pit is uneconomic for us since it means the dole. Therefore we must fight every closure.

During the strike Arthur Scargill traded sharp words with the NCB over whether the Plan for Coal allowed for the closure of uneconomic pits. By referring to the various drafts of the Plan produced in the 1970s both sides were able to claim that their interpretations were correct. From the rank and file miners' point of view this whole debate missed the point. Clearly the logic and strategy of the Plan envisaged closures. The closures under Labour proved this much. The document was, in that sense, **class collaborationist**. The actual defence of jobs, regardless of the Plan for Coal and the NCB's accounts should have been, and must become, the rank and file miners' response to the argument over "uneconomic" pits.

## THE LABOUR PARTY

The Plan for Coal does not simply represent a form of class collaboration. It was framed by the NUM and NCB under the auspices of a Labour government. For this reason many miners mistakenly date the beginning of the failure of the Plan from the beginning of the Tories' term of office - 1979. As sure as night follows day this leads to the belief - strengthened after the defeat of the Great Strike - that a future Labour government, administering a new Plan for Coal will save the industry. Orme, Kinnock, Scargill and the NUM leadership are all doing their best to bolster this belief. It is a mistaken belief.

## The falling Rate of Profit

Capitalist production is production for profit. Capitalists will only invest in production if they make a sufficient profit. But when is a profit sufficient? On this question a great confusion exists in the labour movement. Many trade unionists believe a company is sufficiently profitable to carry on as long as it declares a profit.

This is not so. Capitalist investors are not simply concerned with whether a given company makes a profit or not. What they are most concerned with is the rate of profit, i.e. how many pence profit they receive in return for every £1 capital they invest. A simple example will show why this is so. It may mistakenly be said that a particular company is profitable because it makes a £2 million profit. But what if this £2 million represents only a 2% return because £100 million has been invested in it? If you were the owner of this factory and you could get 10% if you put your money in the bank, would you continue investing it in a company where the return is only 2%?

If you did you would see your capital shrink relative to all other capitals. Since the motive force of economic life under capitalism is profit-making then its vitality is measured not by whether profit is being made at all, but at what rate it is being made. When this rate is stable or increasing, then capitalism is booming - expanding. When the rate of profit begins to stagnate and then fall, crises occur.

So what causes the rate of profit to fall? The capitalists have an answer ready of course. They blame the 'greedy workers'.

For them rising wages are responsible for falling profits and falling profits for the falling rate of profit.

This is nonsense. The rate of profit is not the ratio between wages and profits. When the capitalists invest in production they not only spend money on hiring workers, they also have to invest in buildings, machines, equipment and materials - in short means of production. The total capital invested in production is therefore composed of two parts. One part is spent on wages/salaries, and the second on the capitalists calculate their rate of profit, they measure their profits over the total capital invested and not only on the part invested in wages.

Accordingly the rate of profit can and does change with changes in the investment in means of production. This is exactly what happens as competition drives the capitalists into repeated rounds of investment in labour saving machines and equipment.

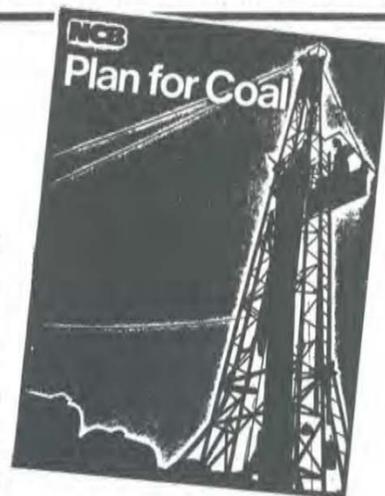
As a result the capitalists end up employing more and more

machines and relatively fewer and fewer workers. This is as true of the coal industry as any other. Between 1974 and 1983, while the value of the means of production increased by 33% from £7,800 million to £10,400 million, the number of workers fell by 22% from 248,000 to 192,000. If each miner continued to produce the same amount of profits then 22% fewer miners would have produced 22% fewer profits. 22% fewer profits compared to the 33% increase in capital would have led to a fall in the rate of return of 55%. To have prevented the rate of return falling each remaining miner would have had to produce 55% more profits.

A 55% increase in profits per miner was impossible over such a short period of time. (During this period productivity went up only 10%.) The great bulk of such profits could have only come from a massive attack on wages. Miners' wages would have been slashed by an enormous amount to provide the increase in profits. Such a scenario was impossible. The cut in wages required would have actually left miners starving. They would not have been able to work and therefore unable to carry on producing profits for the NCB.

So we can see that the rate of profit tends to fall not because wages go up. It falls because there are relatively fewer and fewer workers to produce profits, and more and more capital over which to measure these profits. ■

(Sources: Annual Abstract of Statistics, Business Monitor, National Income and Expenditure.)



When Labour came to power in 1974 they repaid the workers, whose action had put the Tories to flight, with a massive cut in living standards via the Social Contract. They closed pits. They introduced the Area Incentive Scheme against the wishes of a majority of miners. They cut social services, closed hospitals and slashed the wages of the low-paid.

## KINNOCK - NO ALTERNATIVE

Labour carried out its anti-working class policies because faced with a deep capitalist recession, it chose to administer capitalism not overthrow it. Labour was the servile government slave of the bankers and industrialists.

The fact is that a Labour government under Kinnock would be no different to the last one. Kinnock showed that he was not prepared to give full support to the miners even before he had any governmental responsibilities. He has withdrawn Labour's commitment to reduce unemployment by a specific amount. He has refused to promise reinstatement for sacked and freedom for jailed miners. The new Plan for Coal will say nothing about these class war heroes. A Kinnock government, faced with an even deeper capitalist recession than that which faced Wilson and Callaghan, will be forced, if it chooses to administer capitalism again (and we firmly believe it will), to attack the working class.

The alternative to accepting this prospect emerging is to organise the fightback now. We must not hold back our struggles in order to give Neil Kinnock opinion poll credibility. Our jobs, our wages and our services must be defended now, not sacrificed in the hope that a future Labour government will bring all our gains back. No Labour government in history has ever played fairly godmother to the working class.

## WORKERS' CONTROL

Our struggles will conflict with the needs of capitalism. The defence of pits challenges the plans of the NCB directly. We must face up to this challenge and extend our struggle. We must fight for control of production in the pits. This has nothing in common with participation or collaboration. Workers' control in the mines will mean that miners control shift patterns, production levels, manning levels, hours worked and, crucially, closures.

The fight for control of production is the workers' alternative to the redundancies, the speed-ups, the job losses, the lower wages that capitalism requires to save its rotten system.

Of course the more control of production we win, the more desperate the capitalists will become to re-assert their right to manage. As the miners learnt, they will use all the state forces at their disposal, their police, their courts and their jails. Workers, will therefore have no alternative but to go forward to smash the capitalists' state power and abolish capitalist private ownership of the means of production and the land. That done, planning production in the interests of human need will become a real possibility. ■

By Derek Brown

# workers power

## KNAPP LEADS RAIL RETREAT

THE BRITISH RAIL Board had the measure of their enemy when they launched their offensive against the NUR guards. They banked on the NUR leadership's verbal opposition to Driver Only Operation (DOO) turning to dust. And they were proved right.

Taking his cue from MacGregor BR's Reid decided to force the NUR to put up or shut up. The NUR had already accepted the principle of DOO when they allowed it on the Bedford - St Pancras line. Knapp had also attempted to reverse union policy on DOO and manoeuvred this year's NUR AGM to work within the confines of Tory law and agree to ballot on future industrial action. This gave the NUR executive - and Knapp in particular - ample opportunity to abdicate the duties of leadership and hide behind the ballot the moment decisive action was called for.

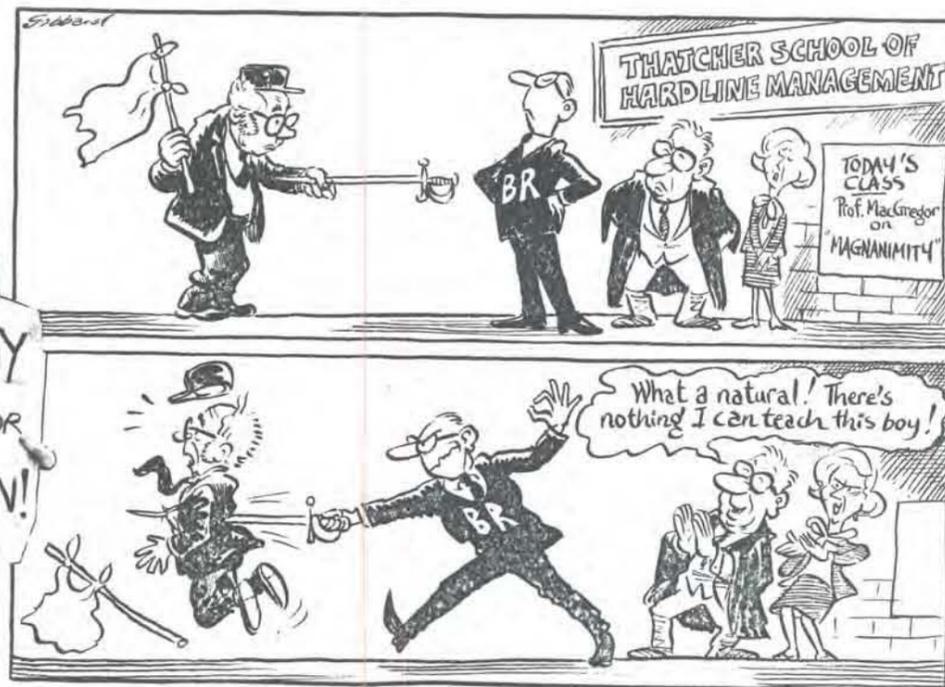
### MANAGEMENT OFFENSIVE

BR also knew that the NUR was fighting the issue of the DOO as a separate issue to the other major attack on railway workers in the form of scrapping 6000 workshop jobs and complete closures of workshops at Swindon and Glasgow. Sensing the NUR was in retreat and that its forces had been divided, the BR management went on the attack.

Guards at Glasgow Central and Margam had been blacking driver only operation since early August and mid July respectively. Llanelli guards had been out in sympathy with guards sent home since July 22nd. Throughout this period there was also sustained action in defence of guards' jobs at Kings Cross. With Management pressing on with their attack and key groups of workers prepared to hold the line now was the time to push forward a general counter-attack of all railworkers. Instead the NUR leaders held course for a ballot on August 29th while



John Sturrock (Network)



Guardian cartoon reveals the bosses' accurate view of Knapp's ballot: not quite a "sword to smite the Tories"

Management issued its dismissal ultimatum to the guards on August 13th.

Jimmy Knapp has a record of talking left. His actions in August show just what a deceitful left talking blow broth the man really is. He dressed up his call for a ballot in the most ludicrous left talking camouflage. Readers should not forget his immortal lines...."The Tories have got ballots like a sword hanging over us. Let's grab that sword out of their hands and smite them with it, use it to our own advantage, and slit them down the middle". In fact the only people slit down the middle by Jimmy Knapp's ballot were his own members!

When Management started the sackings the NUR should have called out their members immediately. They should have appealed directly to all unions for all out

action together. With Scots and Welsh printers refusing to handle BR's deliberately provocative re-advertisements of the sacked guards jobs the NUR should have called on the entire labour movement to rally round them with similar shows of physical solidarity. The guards of Glasgow, Kings Cross, Llanelli and Margam should have been dispatched as pickets to their fellow railworkers first, to the rest of the labour movement next.

### NUR MAJORITY COWED

Instead the NUR leaders sat on their hands. They refused to deliver a counter-blow at the time it was required. And the ballot performed the task that Thatcher, Owen and Kinnock all praise it for. It served as an alternative

to an immediate response to a calculated and well timed bosses' attack. It held back the militants from spreading the action. It gave the bosses two whole weeks of bogus promises about job security and muscle flexing intimidation to cow the majority of NUR guards - voting as isolated individuals - into backing off from a fight.

The yellow press shrieked with joy that Jimmy was 'Knapped' by the ballot. This was not the case. The ballot result gives Knapp the chance to try again to reverse union policy on DOO at the special delegate conference. He was glad to get out of a fight he never wanted in the first place.

Railway workers are under heavy attack. BR took Knapp's climbdown as a green light to give the NUR another kicking. The Glasgow sackings stand unless

the NUR signal complete surrender on the Driver Only issue. They are pressing ahead with workshop-closures confident that the separate ballot amongst the affected NUR members is even less likely to vote for action. In concert with the Tories and the NCB they are pressing on with their part in the plans to divert coal movements to the road and of axing a new round of passenger services.

### MILITANTS MUST ORGANISE

The antics of Knapp and co have failed to stop them. It is down to the militant minority who held the line for the miners and want to fight all closures and cutbacks, to organise and build an alternative leadership to that offered by Knapp and his cohorts.



## BASSETTS

SEVENTY WORKERS' at Bassetts sweet factory in Sheffield have been out on strike for almost a month. The men, members of the AUEW and EETPU, are striking for higher pay.

Bassetts have for years been claiming that the poor economic climate has meant pay rises of any substance were impossible. Over the last period, however, they have been unable to disguise the fact that the order books were improving and profits were booming. The strikers demanded a £20 flat rate increase to compensate for years of low pay. The management offered £7.45.

The strike is being sabotaged by ASTMS members in the factory who are scabbing and by the TGWU drivers who are taking essential supplies like glucose across the picket lines. Although both the AUEW and the EETPU have recognised the strike as official they have done nothing to help it win.

Cynically they have made no official approach to ASTMS or the TGWU to stop the scabbing by their members. Nor have they paid out a penny in strike pay. The men have had more help from the non-unionised women who are allowed across the picket line by the men on the grounds that they are non-productive. The women persuaded one striker who had buckled and returned to work to go back on strike!

To help the strikers win TGWU and ASTMS members should push for official support and an end to scabbing by members of their union. All trade unionists should send messages of support and urgently needed donations for the Bassetts Solidarity fund to:

J. Hamer,  
c/o 2 Providence Road,  
Sheffield S6 5BE.

## MINERS RANK AND FILE

ON AUGUST 10TH the National Rank and File Miner's Movement (NRFMM) held its third conference. The conference debated the NRFMM's future political direction.

A series of resolutions, some moved by supporters of Workers Power, laid a clear political basis for the movement. On the crucial scabs issue the conference voted to campaign for the expulsion of all scab leaders and organisers from the NUM. In contrast to the

vague resolutions on pay and closures at the NUM conference, the Rank and File called for the scrapping of the Incentive Scheme and a campaign to rebuild the NUM in preparation for a new round of national strike action.

Wary of the bureaucratic nature of the recent rule changes the conference agreed to campaign for a thoroughgoing democratic transformation of the union, ending the federation that has proved so disastrous.

The conference also voted to support the struggles of South African and American miners. Resolutions of support and financial donations were agreed.

Prior to this conference the Stalinist paper *Straight Left* had denounced the NRFMM as a Workers Power front. It implied that the movement was made up of "thieves and splitters" diverting money from the NUM. Needless to say not a shred of evidence for their lying charges, so typical of the Stalinist Communist Party, was cited. Conference roundly denounced these charges and a resolution, moved by a supporter of *The Leninist* proposed that a letter of reply be sent to *Straight Left*.

Though the conference was small the militants grouped in the movement are serious about addressing the problems facing the NUM. If resolutions passed can be turned into practice by intervening in the countless local disputes taking place, as well as other conferences and forums being organised in the NUM, then the movement can be built into a strong force in the NUM.

The NRFMM must become capable of organising for a fight to reverse the NCB's victory of last March.

## HADDON AND COSTELLO

TWENTY TWO SHOE components workers at the Haddon and Costello factory in Leicester have now been locked out for eleven weeks. Their offence was joining the Transport and General Workers Union.

Despite weekly mass pickets and collections in large T&G organised factories the management has kept the factory going with scabs recruited from the dole queues and from the owner's own family. In the face of this behaviour the response of the local T&G officials so far has been scandalous. "We regard the dispute as official" they have said, "but it is not official".

Unlike the rail ballot and the defeat of the miners' strike the Haddon and Costello dispute will not overshadow the TUC conference. But if the 'new realism' of the bureaucrats prevails, union busting and lockouts such as at Haddon and Costello will be the future that faces thousands of workers.

Donations to the strike fund and messages of support should be sent to;

Haddon and Costello Dispute,  
c/o Unemployed Workers Centre,  
138 Charles Street,  
Leicester.

workers power

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