workers power

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INSIDE

Tony Benn on the left

S African miners' strike

Korea: workers take the stage

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ANTI-UNION LAWS...PRIVATISATION...SCAB UNIONS...

No laughing matter



Andrew Ward (Report)

THE TORIES' agenda for the labour movement is crystal clear. A new round of anti-union legislation will complete the wide ranging legal shackles that the bosses have at their disposal.

The impending onslaught in the inner cities is part of Thatcher's plan to 'eliminate socialism'. If the attacks go through, Labour councils will be discredited and, so the Tories hope, the last bastions of Labour's electoral support will be stormed.

As the delegates and dignitaries of the labour movement assemble for the annual conferences, the question they should be confronting is how to put the movement on a war-footing to resist the Tories?

This question is not even being considered by either the TUC in Blackpool, or the Labour Party at Brighton. The theme that will dominate both conferences is how to spruce up the 'public image' of the labour movement. Videos, films, and public relations exercises have become the favoured replacements for strikes, demonstrations and mass campaigns. The enormous and heroic struggles of the past four years are being blamed for the labour movement's 'bad image'.

IMAGE

The TUC is particularly concerned to change what the Nupe resolution on 'promoting tade unionism' says i.e. the image of unions as *'bullying, threatening and undemocratic'*. This was certainly how Nupe appeared when it sold out its members in the Addenbrookes Hospital strike. But stopping bureaucratic betrayals and corruption is not the intention of the 'image conscious' union leaders. The new films and videos — like Kinnock's election gimmicks — are there to cover up for the union leaders' total failure to challenge Thatcher's onslaught.

With 'unity' as a major element of the TUC's new image there is little wonder that Willis is pressuring the TGWU to drop its opposition to 'no-strike deals'. The EETPU leaders are again threatening to pull out of the TUC if this is passed. Given EETPU's view of trade unionism is now becoming flavour of the month, Willis is keen to appease them. He has already ensured that a Sogat resolution on Wapping has been ruled out of order at the TUC. He now wants to hand EETPU victory over the TGWU prior to the conference.

In this he has the enthusiastic support of the Communist Party. The Stalinists have praised the absence of any 'left/right conflict' and attacked the TGWU as 'divisive'.

In fact Willis, the right and their Stalinist friends need not worry too much. The TGWU has itself been busy in a number of factories concluding no-strike deals. In the best Hammond-scab style it offered to do a deal at Margam if the NUM would not. Its resolution calls for no specific action against the EETPU or AEU, who lead the field in no-strike deals. It is a classic attempt to appear left, while doing absolutely nothing to fight the cancer of scab unionism.

The trade union movement is on the brink of a severe crisis. Its membership is falling by the day — now down to 9,243,297, a fall of 342,432 over the year. Its role in the lower echelons of the state has all but vanished — impelling it, belatedly, to withdraw from the slave-labour JTS in protest at the snubs it has suffered from the Tories. Its finances — so dear to the bureaucrats with their expense accounts and chauffeur driven cars — are in a mess. The TUC has a deficit of £600,000 this year.

POSTURING

Neither the left posturing of the TGWU over no-strike deals, nor the 'image consciousness' of Nupe or the GMB will solve this crisis. And the business unionism of EETPU and the AEU will resolve it solely in the interests of the bosses. Image, style and strikes are not the cause of the unions' problems. The real cause is to be found in the legacy of defeats that have allowed the Tories to decimate whole industries (steel, cars, mines), ride roughshod over union rights (Warrington, GCHQ, Wapping) and launch an enormous attack on the welfare state (NHS, local government). At every opportunity the union bureaucrats have stabbed the resistance in the back. Their aim was to show their value to the Tories as policemen over the working class. Their achievement has been to undermine the relevance of trade unionism to thousands of workers.

Kinnock has aided this process of decline. At Brighton he will continue to do so with further attacks on the left. For good measure he is telling the bosses that his new, SDP-style Labour Party is free of union influence by deliberately refusing to address this post-election TUC. He hopes to reassure the bosses and the middle class that the days of the union barons 'running the Party' are over.

In this situation we need to organise around the central slogan: **STOP THE RETREAT!** We need to stop the drift towards business — or service — unionism with the TUC reduced to the role of arbiter in recruitment battles. We need to put a halt to the dithering of the union leaders. We need to stop Kinnock's bid to expunge the last vestiges of working class influence in the Labour Party.

To do this two tasks must be fulfilled. In the first place the repeated examples of a rank and file willingness to fight must be built upon. The miners, busworkers in Scotland and London, postal workers and civil servants have all taken strike action in the last month. From these struggles we must construct a co-ordinated network of militants, a rank and file movement, capable of spreading the action and taking on the back-stabbing bureaucrats.

In the Labour Party we must unite all those prepared to fight in a determined struggle to resist the onslaught of the right wing.

But in the unions, in the Labour Party, and most importantly, in the streets and factories which Labour will ignore until election time returns, we need to fight for a new kind of politics. The withered union branches and Trades Councils, the Labour Party wards still moribund despite the influx of the middle-class left — these are testimony to the bankruptcy of Labourite politics and non-political trade unionism.

WILDERNESS

The fight for revolutionary communist politics may seem like a vain cry in this wilderness. But all the efforts of the militant minority, soldiering on against the odds for a hundred and one campaigns and causes will not halt for a minute the headlong flight from struggle, from class politics, unless they are focused around a coherent strategy. That strategy has to be to turn the defensive struggles of today into the offensive against capitalism itself. Unless we build a revolutionary party to fight for that strategy there is no guarantee at all that today's retreat will not become tomorrow's rout.

EDITORIAL

WHY CHILDREN ARE ABUSED

EARLIER THIS summer there were 202 suspected cases of child abuse in Cleveland. Of these, 83 were diagnosed as actual cases. Children were taken into care. Parents issued denials. The right wing Labour MP in the area, Stuart Bell, in alliance with the police, conducted a vitriolic attack on the doctors concerned and on the local services.

The hypocrisy and hysteria evident in much of the discussion is blatant. When child abuse goes unchecked and leads eventually to brutal deaths such as happened in the Jasmine Beckford case and others, the press indulge in witch-hunting of the social workers involved, accusing them of wilful neglect and failure to intervene to protect the poor helpless child. And yet when professional input into the sphere of detection of child abuse is increased, leading to higher rates of discovery of abuse, the same press throws up its hands in horror at the thought that such high levels of cruelty may exist in our caring families.

The first thing to say is that child sexual abuse is not the same thing at all as inter-generational sex. This is an important point, since papers like the *Sunday Mirror* are consciously using the child abuse question to witch-hunt paedophiles. Child sexual abuse, like rape in general, involves a terrible violation of a person's sexuality. It is forced on the child.

Nor is child abuse a product of 'male power' as *Spare Rib*, *Marxism Today* and the feminist-Stalinist Bea Cambell, would all have us believe. For them, child abuse is yet another example of the way in which all men, as a result of their masculinity, exercise their totalitarian rule over women and children inside the family. Such a view does not take account of the fact that power relations within the family are rooted in class relations within society as a whole. They are shaped to serve the reality of capitalist society, not the abstraction of 'male power'.

The feminists argue that the high incidence of male abusers (about 95%) and of girl victims (between 60-80% — figures from a retrospective MORI survey) proves their point. The problem is that they are confining their research to sexual abuse. But general physical and emotional abuse is meted out to children on a daily basis by parents of both sexes, teachers and, all too often, by state employees in the hostels and institutions of the social services.

Child abuse stems from the general and systematic oppression of youth within capitalist society. In approaching the present discussion this has to be the point of departure for Marxists. The Cleveland case — allowing for the mistakes that were inevitably made — underline this point. The high number of cases indicates not that the men of Teeside are particularly monstrous, but that children and youth are systematically oppressed. After all theirs is the one voice that has not been heard in the whole debate. They are the objects of a battle. Children and youth have virtually no legal rights. The Criminal Justice Bill considers abolishing the admissability of children's evidence at all (it is currently treated with scepticism in the courts). The denial of childhood sexuality and the belief in the 'innocence' of the child is another pernicious means of maintaining oppression. Nicholas Tucker, a child psychologist at Sussex University, risked the wrath of the press by pointing out that child abuse often occured because children were kept in a state of total ignorance about sexuality. Worse, when they did get sex education, it was confined to matters of reproduction and was useless in teaching a child to cope with either their own or their parents' sexuality.

INEQUALITIES

The family is the only recognised place where children can be brought up in this society. The tensions in the family inevitably arise from the inequalities of women and children within it, due to their exclusion from social production and their subsequent economic dependence. These tensions cannot be solved by either hiding away from the problem or, in the end, by taking the most visible victims out of the family into state care. The whole form of social relations in which we live must be transformed, so that wider layers of society take responsibility for child care. Under conditions of capitalism this will never be achieved as the family is an essential unit for the reproduction of workers. A task that cannot be socialised without a massive injection of funds, the liberation of women and youth and their full integration into social life.

Of course socialists must develop answers in the here and now that take us towards that goal. We do not say that doctors or the social services should keep their noses out of family matters. We do say that they should be given a massive injection of resources to be able to set up child care day centres, recruit and properly train more staff. We argue for workers' control within this field to ensure that resources are properly utilised. But, we also argue against the all-or-nothing care order system that ignores the possibility of mistakes, that leaves parents guilty without trial and that often replaces family oppression with the oppression of an institution. Thus, when the social services decide in favour of a care order there should be tribunals of social workers, doctors and youth representatives to assess the cases of abuse and to hear appeals from the parents.

Most centrally we need to fight youth oppression. We need to fight for the rights of children to be free of parental or institutional tyranny. School student organisations need to be built that can give support to younger children in cases of abuse, that can fight for a decent sex education programme for children, and that can represent children in legal cases.

As the capitalist crisis deepens child abuse will become more common. Economic deprivation heightens all the frustrations and tensions that are endemic in family life. A fight for 24-hour childcare facilities, creches at workplaces, the right to free abortion and contraception on demand and against cuts in the welfare state can all help reduce those frustrations and tensions. All of these demands should figure in the socialist programme to deal with child abuse. Neither the 'happy families' nor 'male power' theories will help us to formulate such a programme.

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INTO THE BROKEN MOULD

LABOUR'S BRIGHTON Conference will see the leadership launching a determined bid to impose tight bureaucratic control on the party.

Already secure in his dominance of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and Shadow Cabinet, Kinnock is now trying to consolidate his grip on the party as a whole. Such control is vital if he is to take the Party in the direction he wants: to the right and towards a possible accommodation with the Liberals.

Kinnock is committed to forcing the party into the SDP's broken mould. This is the significance of the sudden focus on proportional representation (PR). No less than 29 resolutions calling for PR and/or compulsory voting have been tabled at the conference. Whilst opposing compulsory voting, socialists should support PR as a basic democratic reform. Bourgeois democracy is not our favoured political system at all. But while it exists we seek to make it consistant bourgeois democracy through demanding PR.

Nevertheless at this conference its major proponents are those who want to open the door to an institutional Liberal/Labour pact under the banner of an 'anti-Thatcher alliance'.

With the break up of the SDP this prospect has become even more alluring to some of Kinnocks most loyal supporters. From *Marxism Today* to *New Statesman* editor John Lloyd they have been queueing up to air their preference for an electoral pact with Steel.

This of course would mean abandoning the majority of workers in the rural south and east to this historically decrepit party of the bosses — a small matter for the 'Communists' of *Marxism Today* but a massive step backward to 19th century politics for a third of the working class.

ELECTION

Underlying the leadership's strategy is its analysis of Labour's disastrous electoral showing.

For Kinnock Labour lost because its policies were too left wing, frightening off SDP and Tory voters. As he sees it the way to victory next time is to ditch any remaining policies which may be considered even remotely pro-working class.

Tom Sawyer, chair of the party's home policy committee has spelled out clearly what this means. Labour must appeal to the wealthy *'home owning, credit card carrying majority'*. Labour must *'face the decline in its traditional working class vote'* and drop any pretence of fighting for policies which make the bosses and yuppies feel uneasy. Hence this call for a 'review' of policies on defence, taxation and the economy.

Sawyer is not alone. Roy Hattersley has blamed present policies on taxation, defence and renationalisation for lost votes and has said they need 'looking at'. John Prescott has written of the need to *'re-evaluate the party's policies'*. And of course Kinnock made it plain where he stood when he said *'anything is up for grabs'*.



Peace pipe for the liberals?

This process of 'policy review' is beginning now, but will be stepped up dramatically once the organisational plans of the leadership are carried out. Brighton will definitely see moves to reverse the party's unilateral nuclear disarmament stand. Policy against re-nationalising privatised industries is likely to be passed. However this will only be the start of the process of 'Owenising' the party.

One Member, One Vote will remove any vestiges of MPs' accountability to the constituency GCs. Together with Austin Mitchell's ideal of a *'low involvement, low commitment membership'* it will give free rein to the right wing MPs. It will put the most 'left' of the Campaign Group and the three Militant MPs under extreme pressure from the passive Kinnock-loyal party members.

Similarly the Sawyer proposals for the LPYS are aimed at curbing another source of potential opposition. By dictatorially lowering the age limit to 21, giving the Kinnockite student leaders a greater say and closing down *Socialist Youth* the leadership will demonstrate to the bosses its ability to run the Party as it would run the country.

NO FIGHT

In exchange for the right to elect the women's places on the NEC the Labour Women's Conference will be forced to submit to the rule of the trade union block vote; that is to the union bureaucrats, not the rank and file women members. By this measure Kinnock hopes to end the consistent support the Women's Conference has given to 'left' policies and workers in struggle.

Despite the seriousness of the attacks and their obvious purpose, the left has failed to mount any meaningful opposition. No one is standing against Kinnock for leader, thereby giving him a free hand. There has been no national campaign to defend the LPYS. Similarly, despite the long period over which they have been taking place, there is still no effective national campaign against the expulsions and suspensions.

Instead we have been treated to an 'Appeal for Unity' from a self-appointed coalition of the 'soft' and 'hard' left. The increasingly irrelevant Labour Left Liaison has been rescued from the wilderness by the emerging split in the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC). For the price of a joint statement against Lib/Lab coalitionism and a commitment to *'no new wave of disciplinary actions'*, the LCC (Black Sections, Women's Action Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy) have signed a pact for a joint slate in the next Shadow Cabinet elections. Focused around such demands as *'strengthen links between the unions and Labour'* and *'support for the campaign to organise part-time and temporary workers launched by the T&G, GMB and Nupe'* and *'an independent socialist foreign policy'*, this platform for an 'alternative shadow Cabinet' will hardly have Kinnock quaking in his boots.

There is only one way to reverse Kinnock's advance. To wage a fight — up to and including risking expulsion and disaffiliation — to defend the LPYS, reinstate the expelled, maintain and extend delegate democracy in the GCs, open the Women's conference to the rank and file, and challenge Kinnock for leadership.

With the trade unions barons in full flight to the right there is no guarantee of victory for this course. In fact Kinnock faces more opposition from the inertia of his existing bureaucratic machine than from the mobilised 'left'.

But it is an essential component of the fight for *class* politics against the defeatism and developing coalitionism of the Labour leaders.■

by Steve Foster and Chris Ramsey

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FUND APPEAL

This year we did not take a summer break, but produced an extra copy of the paper instead. It meant an extra hefty print bill. Also we've produced a journal, **Permanent Revolution No6**, adding yet more to our costs.
Help us out by making a donation to our fighting fund.

DEFIANCE NOT COMPLIANCE

FULFILLING PART of Thatcher's promise to look after 'our people in the inner cities' is the aim of the Local Government Bill to be presented in Parliament's next session. 'Our people', in this case, are Thatcher's favourite exploiters and profiteers — the likes of Pritchard's and Crothalls, companies which most benefit from the Tories privatisation policies.

The further privatisation proposals are part of a battery of attacks all aimed at removing the power of Labour authorities to act as barriers to the Tory plans for dismantling services. They are intended to undermine the local authority trade unions' ability to defend their members conditions and wages.



Buses - In the front line against privatisation. *Stefano Cagnoni (Report)*

ILLEGAL

They hope that the new Bill will finish the job, begun in 1980 and continued through numerous Acts since then, of carrying out a massive reduction in government expenditure on local services. The aim is to 'shed' a further quarter of a million jobs amongst the local authority labour force. The Bill makes it legally binding on authorities to 'tender out' six areas of services — refuse collection, street cleaning, cleaning of buildings, catering and ground and vehicle maintanance. The Secretary of State will have the power to add to this list anytime he or she wants to. It will be illegal for local authorities, when choosing which tender to accept, to consider any 'non-commercial matters'. These 'non-commercial' factors include of course, *'the terms and conditions of employment by contractors of their workers'*. No regard can be paid to wage rates, health and safety procedures, use of non-union labour or even anti-union policies. The same goes for the firm's equal opportunities record except where the company can be shown to be breaking the provisions of the Race Relations Act (this same section will make illegal 'discrimination' against firms trading with South Africa or supplying South African goods).

These proposals make a nonsense of the 'strategies' put forward by many Labour councils, like Lambeth, to fight them. They have pinned their hopes on using 'contract compliance' policies, insisting on contractors having good trade union practices and equal opportunities policies to award contracts to the 'in-house' tenderers — i.e. themselves.

Nor does the policy being put forward in London by 'London Bridge', the all-London local authority shop stewards organisation, offer any better alternative. It puts forward a policy of *'working with managers and committees to develop new specifications based on the improvement of the service and with no loss of pay, hours and conditions of service'*. Such new specifications aimed at eliminating the Pritchards of this world are also likely to be illegal under the Bill. The Bill specifically prohibits local authorities doing anything which 'restricts competition'. The district auditor and the Tory judges will not hesitate in striking down any attempt to use this method.

The only strategy which offers the possibility of victory over these proposals and all the other Tory attacks on local council services is an all out struggle for non-compliance with Tory laws. The trade unions must adopt such a position and refuse any involvement at any stage in the process of tendering out; from the drawing up of work specification onwards. Any participation in the procedures softens the workforce up to the idea that they have to start relinquishing their hard won conditions and pay levels now in order to be able to tender competitively later. Alliances between the workforce and management 'against the Tories' on this basis merely plays into the hands of Labour councils who themselves are in retreat on looking for ways to impose cuts and reduce expenditure to comply with Tory dictats. With unions like Nupe already abandoning non-compliance in favour of *'membership participation in the tendering process'*. This is a fight that needs to be taken up both locally and nationally.

The lessons must be learnt from the previous struggles against the Tory attacks on local government. Leadership cannot be left in the hands of vacillating 'left' Labour councils. We must certainly demand that Labour councils adopt policies of non-compliance, but only strong rank and file union organisation committed to industrial action offers the possibility of holding councils to these positions and winning the struggle against the resultant Tory legal attacks. In addition the council unions need to go out to the unions in private industry, to the community organisations, not with a purely defensive perspective of defending the already run down and inadequate existing sevices but by mobilising a struggle to restore and improve those services to meet the needs of the working class community. Action Councils in all areas, linked up on a nationwide basis, need to be formed urgently for the coming battles. This should be the perspective fought for at any local authority emergency conferences, such as the London Bridge called conference on 10 September and the Camden Nalgo called conference.

- **Defiance of all anti-local government legislation passed by the Tories — including the Rates Act, Local Government Bill and 1982 Local Government Finance Act.**
- **No rent and rate increases. Make the bosses pay for their own crisis. End all interest payments to the Banks and finance houses.**
- **Reverse all the cuts. Return the £17 billion stolen from local government since 1979.**
- **For a massive programme of public works under workers' control.**
- **For councils of Action to take forward the struggle.**

by Ann Wackett

ABOLISH THE GUN LAWS

IN THE WEEKS since Michael Ryan gunned down fifteen residents of Hungerford the press, the police and the censorship lobby have been clamouring to turn the atmosphere of shock and popular sympathy with his victims into a tide of legal and moral reaction.

Once it had exhausted the news value of the bullet-ridden corpses and the relatives' grief, the *Sun* discovered 'Ryans Kinky Secret'. In a wretched story titled 'Maniac Rambo Was My Gay Lover', ex-soldier Andrew Preston described how he 'kissed and cuddled a killer'. The problem of why a seemingly 'normal' man could massacre indiscriminately was thus solved within the week for readers of the *Sun*; he was gay. This could not have fitted better with the *Sun's* gay baiting hysteria.

Even quicker onto the scene was Thatcher herself, reinforcing her self-help and personal responsibility theories with the words:

> *'It was not an accident from which we get terrible tragedies. It was a crime — an evil crime.'*

The TV companies, which withdrew a couple of mildly violent films according to the practice of avoiding 'bad taste' after tragedies then found themselves riding a wave of moral reaction. Mary Whitehouse and the National Viewers and Listeners Association were howling for the permanent censorship of violence on TV.

But by far the most serious result of the hysteria generated by the Hungerford killings has been the campaign for tighter gun laws. Whatever crime Michael Ryan had committed it soon became clear that it was not the illegal posession of his Kalashnikov assault rifle. This had been bought legally under the provisions of the already very strict Firearms Act (1968).

RULING CLASS

Home Secretary Douglas Hurd immediately pledged a review of the Act. Within a week both the West Midlands and the Metropolitan police had unilaterally decided to stop issuing permits for semi-automatic rifles. The whole of the capitalist press came out for absolutely tight restrictions on all private gun ownership, including the normally 'free market' *Economist*. And the Police Federation weighed in too with the call for a ban on sales of such weapons.

Britain's firearms laws, like all laws, are class based. Of the one million legally held shotguns and rifles in this country the vast majority belong to the ruling class: the farmers, the aristocratic 'sportsmen', off duty and retired service personnel and rich playboys. Firearms are expensive in the first place. In the second place firearms certificates are routinely denied to known socialists, trade unionists and black people.

But does the answer lie in tightening up the law so that the rich cannot own guns either? This is certainly the logic behind the Labour Party's call for tighter gun laws and its echo in the Communist Party's *Seven Days*. Those who answer yes are ignoring the fundamental reason for gun laws under capitalism.

The class rule of the capitalist farmers, businessmen and aristocrats is protected by an armed state machine. The existence of the army and the increasingly gun-toting police is far more important to the bosses than their right to impress each other on the clay pigeon range.

Since 1969 the British state has been using its armed force to maintain its class rule and national oppression in Northern Ireland. From Brixton to Broadwater Farm it has terrorised black families with armed police raids. At Orgreave and Wapping it has perfected the riot tactics which will dovetail easily with the introduction of plastic, or even real lead bullets.

As long as ordinary people are denied the right to carry weapons, and any object is illegal if intended for use as an 'offensive weapon', the state is enormously strengthened in relation to the struggles of workers and the oppressed.

That is why the abolition of the gun laws is an elementary democratic demand for socialists. It was written into the bourgeois democratic constitution of the USA and was a key demand in the democratic programme of Russian Marxism.

POLICE

Those who object to such a demand should look at the practice of the front runners in the race to tighten the Firearms Act; the Metropolitan Police. The Met, which has voluntarily stopped processing applications for semi-automatic rifle certificates recently supplied itself with a complement of Heckler and Koch machine pistols which can spray hundreds of bullets a minute around the departure lounge of Heathrow Airport where Met officers are regularly deployed. The Met shot and paralysed Cherry Groce sparking the 1985 Brixton uprising, and it is regularly armed during the routine raids on the homes of Irish activists under the PTA.

And the ghoulish 'record' for the biggest civilian mass shooting that Michael Ryan broke was previously held by the Paratroop regiment who shot down 13 unarmed demonstrators in Derry on Bloody Sunday in January 1972.

Marxists do not glorify violence, but it is an intrinsic feature of capitalist society, and therefore a necessary evil in the struggle for working class power. Because our answer to every problem has to point to and mobilise for, the seizure of power by the workers and the destruction of the bosses' state, we refuse to lull the exploited and oppressed into a pacifist inspired sleep with calls for tighter gun control.

The residents of Hungerford got an unexpected and bitter taste of the terror any army of occupation metes out to the oppressed. The nationalist people in Northern Ireland and the Palestinian population in the West Bank are faced daily with hundreds of potential Michael Ryans in uniform. When workers in Britain get anywhere near a level of struggle that could challenge the wealth and power of the rich we too will have to decide the question of power, in Trotsky's words, with 'arms in hand'.

At present all the arms are in the hands of the oppressors. Tighter gun laws will stregthen their grip.

- **Abolish the gun laws!**
- **For the right of all to bear arms!**

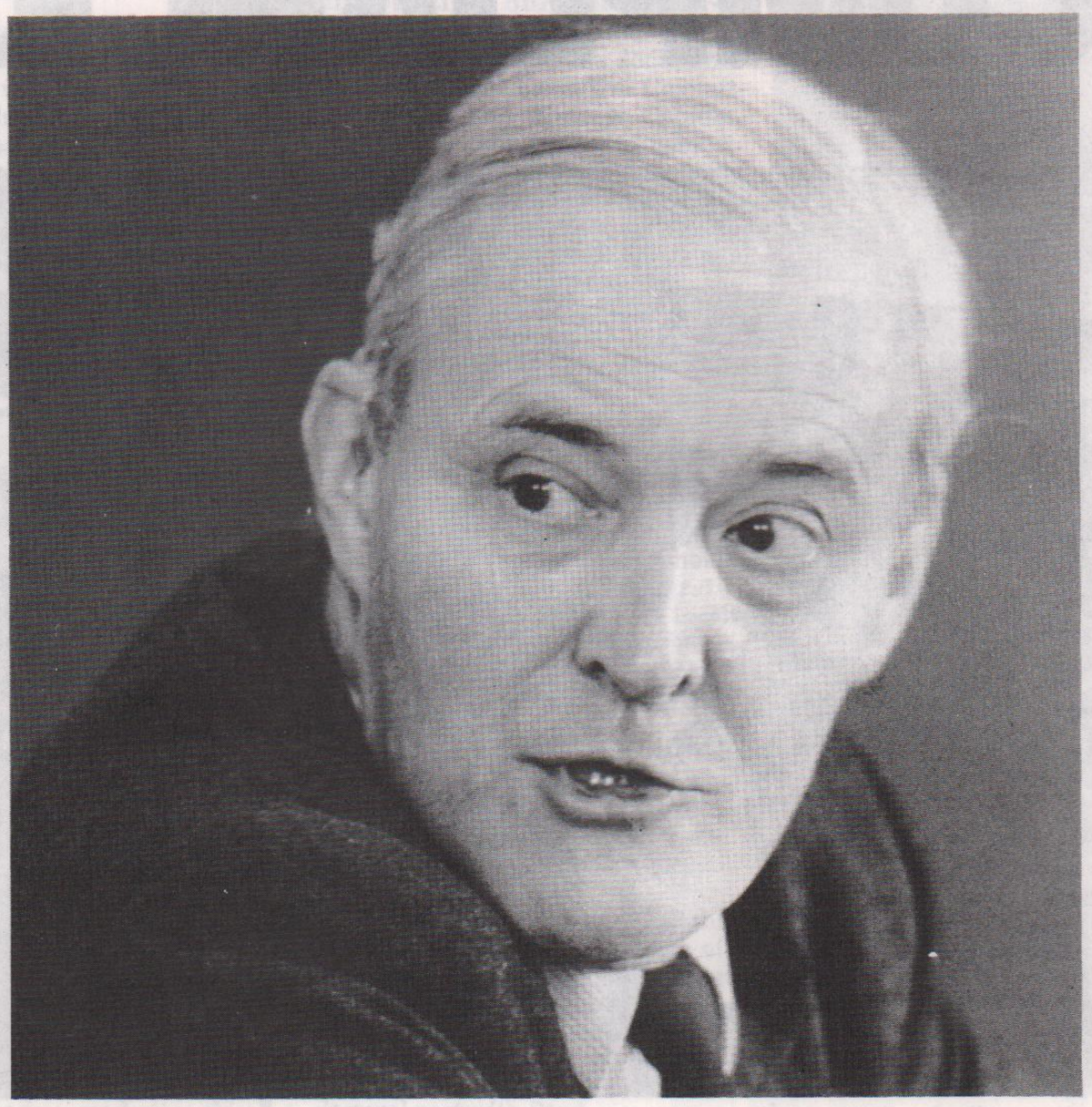
by Colin Lloyd

CAMPAIGNING FOR SOCIALISM?

From 1979 to 1982 Tony Benn was the figurehead of the Labour left. His narrow defeat in the Deputy Leadership election in 1981 marked the highpoint of the Labour left's advance. From the 1982 Bishop's Stortford conference Benn led the left into retreat and eventual disarray after the 1983 election.

Many would-be revolutionaries peddled 'Bennism' uncritically throughout this period. *Workers Power*, in contrast, has always criticised Benn and the Labour left's essentially reformist politics as the root cause of their defeat. *Stephen Foster* put our criticisms to the Chesterfield MP.

In this extract we concentrate on the role of the Campaign Group and the future of the left. Whilst we disagree with his conclusions at virtually every point, we think the interview outlines a coherent reformist strategy. At its core lies Benn's refusal to lead the fight against Kinnock now.



The Campaign Group in the PLP is now bigger. What do you see as its current aims and objectives?
The Campaign Group has never presented itself as a purer group than *Tribune* or anything else. That is not the issue. The issue is whether you see your role in parliament as an integral part of the labour movement or whether you see yourself as separate. The characteristic of the Campaign Group, going back in some shape or form to the deputy leadership campaign in 1981, was to work alongside miners, printers, nurses, teachers, Silentnight, Hangers, etc. During these strikes we sent people out to speak at meetings; we raised an enormous amount of money from PLP members.

When we settle down again that will continue, whether its the people of Broadwater Farm (or of Walworth Road who are likely to be sacked) there will be a continuing commitment. That is an entirely different and, I think, correct perception of the role of Members of Parliament. They are not people who have been catapulted into a higher level of government, they are the paid official representatives of the labour movement. Once you forget that you have accepted all the ideas of a bourgeois parliamentary system, which is quite inadequate if you are interested in social transformation. It may be adequate if you hope that every now and again you'll get your turn in office. But that has nothing to do with power or transformation. If the Campaign Group continues then it will play a significant part in the very bitter struggles that lie in the years ahead.

But there is a degree of vagueness and incoherence about the Campaign Group's policy that confirms the traditional Marxist view of the Labour left. How to fight? How to link up with workers in struggle? That's still a weakness.
I'm not here to hold it up as a model, I'm saying that its analysis of the work it has to do doesn't differ from what you say: it is addressing itself to these questions. And if you look at the support we've given to the various struggles it's been as great as that of any other left group. There are groups who say 'we campaign, you're just a lot of parliamentarians'. It isn't true. Secondly we've put out two very significant policy documents: one on *A Million Jobs a Year*, one on *Non-Alignment*, and another one coming out on *The Future of Trade Unionism*. It's also one of the sponsors of the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield in October which will be a national conference. It's promoted a lot of useful things. But if you believe, as I do, that social change begins from the bottom, you wouldn't look to the top to see how it's going to be engineered from there. It's a co-relationship; supporting people, encouraging solidarity, articulating their demands, and at the same time hammering those demands into place as policy. So you have to be modest about the parliamentary struggle, which is what you'd probably say anyway.

So what do you think is the role of local Campaign Groups? They have been set up around the country with varying degrees of success. Do you see the need for accountability between the rank and file supporters in the Labour Party and trade unions and the parliamentary leaders?
There are supposed to be 100 Campaign Groups around the country. Their strength varies from locality to locality. Undoubtedly the pre-election atmosphere of 'don't rock the boat' did damp down the things they wanted to say publicly. But my hope would be that in every constituency there would be a Campaign Group, they would be working with people in struggle in their own locality, they would also be a centre of political discussion. It isn't a sectarian group in the sense that it is attached to one particular analysis. If you think the future belongs to socialism then you've got to listen to every view and you've got to make it a very broadly based argument, so that you get different tendencies able to go to the Campaign Group. We don't want to see them taken over in any particular area by one tendency, because that drives other people out. To that extent it's different in character than any of the various currents that are associated with various left newspapers.

On a national scale, however, the main impetus and controlling force of the Campaign Group still resides within the PLP.
No I don't think so. If the Campaign Groups were simply a fan-club of various left wing members of parliament then it would fail. The purpose is to encourage people to set up their own groups and to do their own thing. If you take for example the industrial struggles we've supported, they haven't been triggered by, led by, or subordinated to Labour MPs. But I think when you do get a struggle, for example over the disciplinary code in the mining industry, there is something to be said for having a group of Labour MPs who see their function as to assist. So, I'm saying it's a secondary, not a dominant role. Leadership means explanation, analysis, support, argumentation, etc. It is not based on the idea that there are a few people in shining armour who will solve all your problems.

You say you don't want to personalise things at the moment, but it's impossible to deny that the left is increasingly on the retreat. There are increasing attacks ie the Sawyer proposals of the YS, One Member—One Vote, the continuing expulsions, etc. Apart from these organisational questions the leadership are wanting to carry out a political re-assessment. Neil Kinnock recently said 'anything's up for grabs'. What will be your response in terms of challenging and trying to replace this leadership?
Well there is a contradiction and a paradox here. Every day you hear 'socialism is dead', 'socialism is off the agenda', 'socialism is extreme'. There have been so many funerals of socialism that it makes me wonder why you need more than one. Looked at another way, and I accept that there is a massive attack on socialism, if socialism is as weak an influence in our society as is made out by Mrs Thatcher, the press, and some Labour people, why do they have to go on attacking it? I think there is another way of looking at it, which is to say that socialism has never been stronger. The fact that in the election the press concentrated so strongly on the left in the LP, with huge attacks on Liverpool, Lambeth, individual socialist councillors and trade union leaders, suggests to me that the people with power are really afraid that the continuation of their policies is going to lead to real trouble. They want to remove all socialist influence, and they know they can't.

So I have to say, in contrast to what you're saying, when weren't socialists under attack? Ramsey MacDonald, when he defected in 1931 said that the Labour Party was 'Bolshevism run mad'. In the thirties Cripps and Bevan were expelled, then in the 1950s, Bevan had the whip withdrawn, in '59 Gaitskell tried to remove Clause IV, then you had Wilson with *In Place of Strife*. Every time this has happened, it has produced such a strong response that the people who have advocated this have very often disappeared into the Liberal, or even Tory, Party, like Reg Prentice. So I don't think one should assume that this is any different from the past. It is a long struggle, and a struggle of morale.

One of the reasons I'm always sceptical when left wing socialists come along and say, we're in retreat, we've been defeated, is that it could, without meaning to, create pessimism. Whereas I say that there are probably more committed individual socialists who've become socialists by experience now, than there have been since the 1930s, because the experience of struggle has bred a quality of understanding in people which represents a foundation on which you can build for the future.

But even if we take your argument on board, and we would disagree that the left is strong, doesn't it mean that the leadership should be challenged?
I agree with 'challenge', because I think the socialist argument is an argument for transformation and not for short periods of ministerial office. But I think you also have to learn a bit from history. If you look back at the left over a long period, there have been various attempts to deal with this problem. For example when the Communist Party was set up it kept out of the Labour Party; I think that was a great mistake, but they did. Then in 1930 the Independent Labour Party was so disgusted by Ramsay MacDonald they withdrew from the Labour Party, and withered on the bough. Then in the thirties you had Stafford Cripps. Then 1951 on, you had various attempts: the Bevanites were a purely parliamentary fraction, unlike the Campaign Group. Then when Bevan said he wanted to keep nuclear weapons that caused a great spread of disillusionment because they put all their faith in Bevan.

Then you had the deputy-leadership campaign in 1981. Now I'm not saying that was wrong; I fought the campaign, and I think it was right to do it. At the same time again there was too much emphasis put on a candidate. It's easier to destroy a candidate than to destroy a movement. If you look at all that experience of the left it seems to me that the correct thing to do now is to build from the bottom, collectively in the movement, and to learn from the mistakes of the past.

So if I'm quite specific about it, if a candidate was put up against the leadership now, if that's what you're suggesting, that candidate would be very unlikely to win support, because the foundation has not been properly laid. I'm not saying that at some stage, as we've got an electoral college, we shouldn't use it; I think we should. But I think it's much more important to get a shared analysis, to get a clear understanding, to build up support, to build confidence, because if you do that anyway you're going to win. But if you have a leadership campaign without that you will be defeated, and all the ideas that are widely shared in the movement would appear to have been defeated as well. So I think it is better to build the movement, to really construct and re-found the Labour Party on a broader basis, because the class is changing.

Some people say the working class is disappearing, that's rubbish. But it is changing; it's more technological, more women, more white-collar, more part-time and with more black people, and you've got to recognise now that working class interests go beyond the annual wage-claim which characterised the early days of trade unionism; into the environment, into internationalism, into peace, etc. It seems to me that is the job we should be doing now. But I'm not ruling out the possibility that at the appropriate stage the left could decide that it wanted to focus this argument by putting forward a candidate, but it would have to be a candidate chosen collectively, not somebody as in the old days throwing their hat into the ring and saying 'I'm the answer to the Party's problems', because then you're stuck in the same position as you were with Bevan.

But the left has challenged for Shadow Cabinet and NEC places, what we're saying is that's inconsistent with not challenging for leadership.
Well that argument has been discussed. Before the election it was thought it would not be sensible and I think that was right, after the election the general feeling is that it would be better if we rebuilt the foundations and then saw what emerged from it. That's where the Chesterfield conference will be useful, then if people do want to put up a candidate, that's allowed for in the constitution.

You will acknowledge that in the early eighties you became, personally, a representatve of the shift to the left in the Party, of 'Bennism'. But then the advance of the left stopped at Bishops Stortford, by agreement. Looking back how do you see the process of defeat for the left developing as it did?
I never believed in Bennism. In '81, in a sense, we won. The defeat in the deputy-leadership election was only made possible by ten Labour MPs remaining in the Party long enough to vote for Denis Healey and then leaving the Party within a fortnight. In '82 we were then moving very near an election. I went there and said: 'existing leadership, existing policy, existing membership'. Rightly or wrongly that was the general consensus. Of course it was broken immediately because the expulsions began. The leadership then supported the Falklands War. It didn't mean that we didn't argue; we got 80 Labour MPs to vote against the Party on the Falklands war. Then in '83 we did get most of the policy in; it was actually quite radical. The leadership of course didn't agree with it and made it difficult to put it across to the public, but that was the position.

Of course I was personally defeated in '83 in Bristoland removed from parliament, and didn't get back until '84. I was immediately thrown into the miners' strike, then the Scarsdale strike then the Print strike. And what I've tried to do here over the last two years is two things. One was to try to show that if you encouraged a local party it could develop a potential for growth that was quite phenomenal. The pamphlet *Campaigning for Socialism* has shown what could be developed — and all I've done is encourage it, I haven't asked anybody to make it my fan club, I've tried to be a faithful servant. Then with the election of '87, with all that preparatory work, this is now able to be a foundation for the next stage.

In Chesterfield itself we have the Socialist Forum, we're thinking of setting up a community liaison committee which will be a move toward the Councils of Action called for by the last General Committee, against the poll tax. Chesterfield is accepted because of its record as the natural place for the Conference. The Campaign Group hopefully will be able to gain strength, to build itself up, but it will have a different sort of function. It is encouraging people to build up a socialist movement from underneath, and not throwing yourself against the granite wall of the existing leadership and presenting it as if the individuals at the top were changed everything else would change. I never have believed that.

My own opinion is that the economy is in a much more dangerous state than is admitted, that we are heading into a world recession, rise in interest rates, balance of payments problems, manufacturing industry declining, oil revenue declining, over-the-top privatisation gains are once and for all and won't recur; and the need for a very powerful labour movement based on solidarity, internationalism and democracy, etc is going to become apparent.

How do you see the future for the left and your own role in that future?
I'm not so interested in myself; thinking about what you're going to be doing in a year or two's time can be very corrupting. If the left does a proper job, the resistance to the policies that are being pursued, in the context of a deteriorating situation, will become stronger. People will learn by experience more clearly what has to be done. The function of the left is to analyse, to inform in a completely non-personal way. What's needed is much more analysis than we've offered. You go around and explain to people in struggle some of the interconnections with other struggles they may not have appreciated. Out of that you will get a much more radicalised Labour conference, out of this you'll get more radical policies, out of these you'll be able to address working people on the central questions of our time in a way that is credible, and socialist ideas will re-enter the arena.

My objective is that socialism will become the accepted philosophy of an overwhelming majority, just as monetarism has. Monetarism is accepted by Thatcher, Owen, Steel, sections of the Labour right; and the object is to replace this with socialist ideas. The idea of building a society that is international in character, build on need rather than profit. All the old socialist ideas have got a relevance today.

I hope and believe that if we put these views forward honestly and openly they would win support. And if the situation gets worse people might listen to those who warned. If there isn't a socialist analysis put forward and the situation gets worse then British society could move further to the right. I don't rule out that if the debt crisis caused worldwide banking collapse you could see a much more explicit, 'Mussolini' policy, and Thatcher could seem quite moderate. But you've got to be rooted in the community. People have got to be able to see that you are engaged in the daily business — on a personal and a collective level — of assisting people to survive.■

THE BUREAUCRACY OF THE BUREAUCRATS

THE TRADES Union Congress (TUC) has a long, but not particularly proud record. In fact its history is one of stabbing major working class struggles in the back: the 1913 Dublin Lock-Out; the 1926 General Strike; the 1984/85 Miners' Strike. The bigger the battle the bigger the knife the TUC plunges between the shoulder blades.

Why is the TUC so prone to treachery? In essence, it is because it has, from its earliest days, served as the co-ordinating centre of the trade union bureaucracy. It is the bureaucracy of the bureaucracy. This fact, rather than the particular characteristics of individual TUC general secretaries, is what has shaped its policies and direction over the years. Indeed, its treacherous nature was determined early in its existence.

The TUC was founded in 1868 at a meeting organised by the Manchester and Salford Trades Council. It was an inauspicious beginning. Only 34 delegates attended. Most of them were from provincial trades councils, and they agreed on little except that another congress should be convened in Birmingham in the following year.

The really important force in the labour movement at the time, the London Trades Council, was conspicuous by its absence. This body was not only a trades council but a de facto leadership for the big national craft unions, or New Model Unions, which had their head offices in the capital.

SKILLED

The New Model Unions were a relatively recent phenomenon themselves. The most important of them, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, had, for example, only been set up in 1851. These new unions dominated the entire labour movement. They consciously confined their membership to skilled, male workers, thereby leaving the great mass of workers unorganised. The relatively high wages and standards of living enjoyed by many of the craft workers, workers Lenin was to later dub as a kind of aristocracy of labour, were the result of the super-profits Britain's bourgeoisie enjoyed in its role as master of the workshop of the world. The privileged position of the skilled workers of the New Model Unions was the material root of their often servile approach to the bourgeoisie. This was particularly the case with the emerging caste of full-time officials who led the New Model Unions.

The most important of these trade union officials, the 'Junta' as the Fabian historians Sidney and Beatrice Webb called them, were William Allen of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Richard Applegarth of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Daniel Guile of the Iron Founders, Edwin Coulson of the Bricklayers and George Odger of the Shoemakers.

These men spent much of their time hob-nobbing with the bosses, keeping their more militant members in check and avoiding strikes. As William Allen of the Engineers said:

> *'We believe that all strikes are a complete waste of money, not only in relation to the workers, but also to the employers.'*

While the New Model Unions were the most powerful and best organised trade union bodies there were some unions of unskilled workers, particularly in the north of England. By and large these unions were more militant than their craftist counterparts and they found a powerful advocate in the working class newspaper, the *Bee-Hive*. This was edited by George Potter, who though a member of a craft union himself, was for a time opposed to the pro-boss servility of the Junta and organised against them. Some of these militant forces were involved in the moves towards establishing the TUC.

Their presence, with the risk of infectious militancy, was anathema to the New Model Unions. They promptly set up a rival movement, the Conference of Amalgamated Trades, the main task of which was impressing the Royal Commission on Trades Unions (1867) with the respectable nature of their brand of trade unionism. The Commission had been set up in response to the so-called 'Sheffield outrages'. The 'outrages' occurred when trade unionists took direct action against scabs. The Commission wanted to ensure that such actions did not become typical of the unions. It also wanted to try and codify the unions' legal position after a series of judgements had served to underline their still essentially semi-legal position.

The very existence of the more militant forces around the newly established TUC was a potential threat to the 'Junta's' drive for respectable trade unionism. To counter this threat, the Amalgamated Societies changed tack and aimed to take over the TUC. The delegates from London Trades Council were among the 40, representing a quarter of a million workers, who gathered for the 1869 Birmingham Congress. The Junta was soon running the show. George Potter worked quickly, reconciling himself with his former adversaries in a bid to gain a share in the control of a powerful federation.

The hegemony of the New Model Unions within the TUC was increased as the economic recession in the 1870s weakened many unskilled unions. In no time at all the TUC itself was exhibiting all the old faults and prejudices of the New Model Unions — only on a bigger scale.

LOBBYING

Meanwhile, the government, in line with the findings of the Royal Commission, drew up a new bill which gave legal recognition to trade unions and enabled them to protect their funds. But the bill still left many areas of trade unionism open to prosecution under criminal law. This was unacceptable to even the New Model TUC. In what would become a somewhat familiar course of inaction in the future, the TUC decided to confine its lobbying activity to parliament for the desired changes in the law. Pressure on the Liberal Party was seen as the best means of securing the TUC's interests.

In fact the most that the TUC's lobbying achieved was the splitting of the bill into two parts — which were passed as laws in 1871 and 1872. Ironically it was the Tories, desirous of securing the new votes which followed the enfranchisement of many skilled workers in 1867, who eventually amended the legislation when they formed a government in 1875.

Undaunted the leaders of the TUC decided that parliamentary lobbying — preferably of the Liberal Party — was still the sensible course to be followed. So they set up a small 'Parliamentary Committee' to continue the pressure on the main political parties in between the annual congresses of the TUC. Some measure of the politics of this body can be gauged by its reaction to the Tories' 1875 Trades Union legislation, the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act and the Employers and Workmen Act. According to the Parliamentary Committee this Act meant that *'The work of emancipation* [is] *full and complete'.*

The horizon of the Parliamentary Committee, later to become infamous as the General Council, was limited to minimal reforms and to securing representation for workers within parliament via MPs for the bourgeois Liberal Party — the 'Lib-Labs' as they were known. The affairs of unskilled workers, of women, and of the unemployed, didn't concern the Parliamentary Committee at all.

From its earliest days, then, the TUC reflected the interests of the emerging trade union bureaucracy. That bureaucracy, arising from the skilled unions and, later, assimilating the leaders of the unskilled unions into its fold, was an arbiter between capital and labour. This role gave it influence amongst the working class and a material interest in maintaining the capitalist system. Without that system, or in revolutionary conflict with that system, the role of arbiter, or negotiator and of policeman over the wokrers, is made redundant. The bureaucrats of the early TUC were determined to prevent that happening at all costs. Thus the regular betrayal of the wider interests of workers is an essential part of the nature of the TUC.

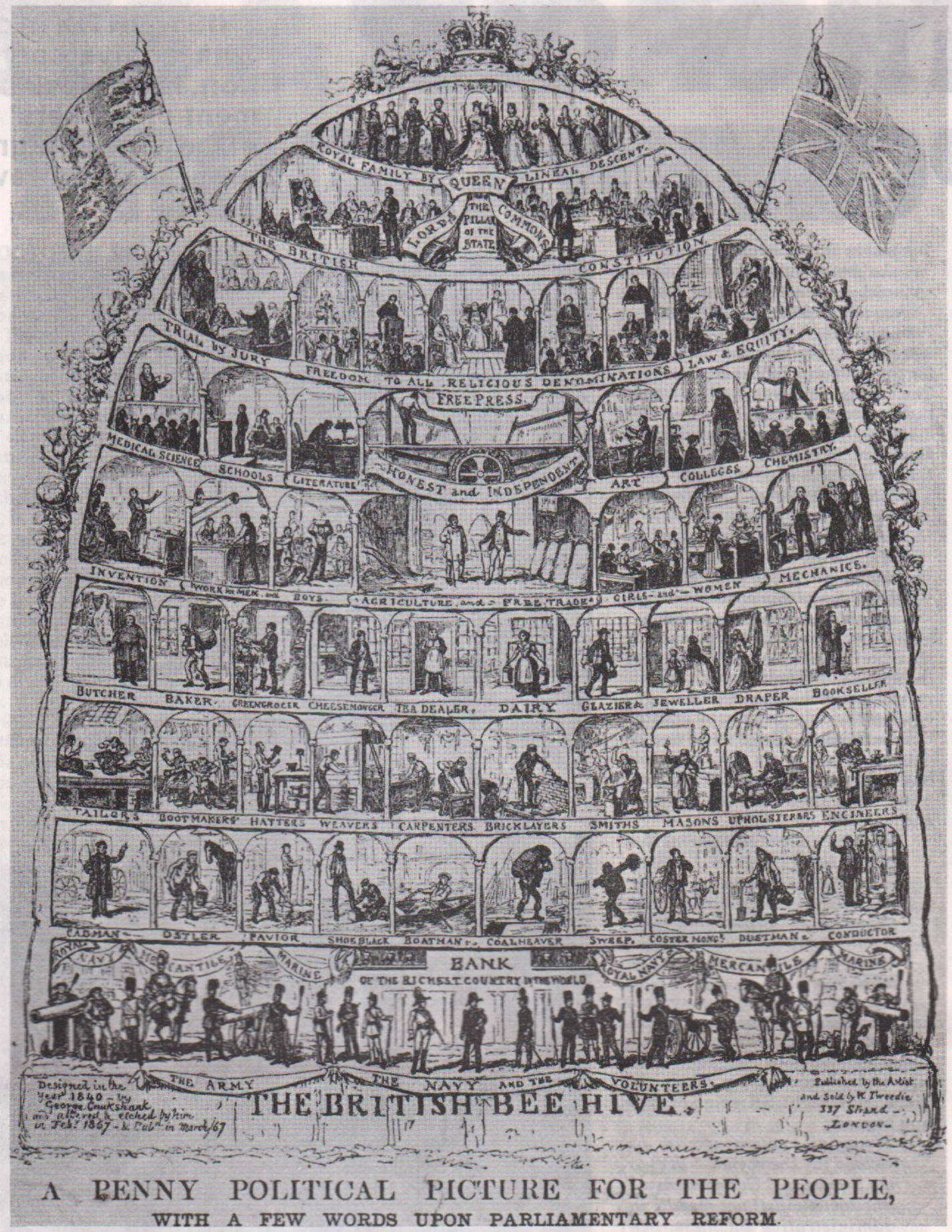
TRANSFORM

But should we conclude from this that workers should ditch the TUC? No. But neither should we conclude that changing the TUC is simply a matter of swapping its present leaders for others — a view which follows naturally if the problems of the TUC are merely reduced to the lack of class calibre of its individual leaders. The TUC needs to be transformed into a fighting, national, centralised organisation. At a time when it is debating its future and considering turning itself into a service centre for business unionism the struggle for this goal is more urgent than ever. The TUC with its millions of affiliated members, its apparatus, its coffers, is potentially a mighty weapon. The main lines of the transformation needed were laid down by the Minority Movement, a rank and file trade union organisation led by the then revolutionary Communist Party, in the early 1920s. The Minority Movement placed particular importance on the question of leadership in the transformation of the TUC:

> *'We, of the Minority Movement, desire a General Council which will bring into being a bold and audacious General Staff of the Trade Union movement, fearlessly using its power in intelligently planned campaigns on behalf of the workers, mobilising the workers' forces, reorganising these forces, fitting them in every way to fight against and finally to overcome and suppress the forces of capitalism.*
>
> *We can guard against the General Council becoming a machine of the capitalists, and can really evolve from the General Council a Workers General Staff only by, in the first place and fundamentally, developing a revolutionary class consciousness amongst the trade union membership, and in the second place by so altering the constitution of the General Council as to ensure that those elected thereon have the closest contact with the workers and are the most trusted, most loyal, and most clear-minded and audacious champions of the working class'* (From the Minority Movement resolution on the Concentration of Trade Union Power in the General Council of the TUC).

Join us in the fight for these goals today — and so help to ensure that you are not next to get a stab in the back courtesy of the TUC.■

by Jon Lewis



A PENNY POLITICAL PICTURE FOR THE PEOPLE,
WITH A FEW WORDS UPON PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

BIRTH OF OUR POWER

THIS MONTH, in our series celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Mark Hoskisson looks at the development of workers' councils, the soviets and at the general significance they have for the programme of revolutionary Marxism.

IN THE afternoon of 27 February 1917, in the Tauride Palace a group of Petrograd workers' leaders set up the Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' deputies. It agreed to elect deputies on the basis of 1 per 1000 workers. When it met in the evening there were between 40 and 50 deputies present. At the meeting of the soviet soldiers, as well as workers, were represented. Deputies elected from the army companies that had joined the revolution were instrumental in turning the Petrograd Soviet into an organisation of workers and soldiers.

The significance of this was immense. Not only did it bring military support and arms to the soviet, it brought the peasantry — for the soldiers were, for the most part, 'peasants in greatcoats' — into contact with the proletariat. It helped forge the alliance that was eventually to be consumated in the revolutionary workers' and peasants' government after October.

DELEGATES

After the evening meeting of 27 February the Soviet went from strength to strength. In Petrograd eleven major (local) soviets were set up by late March. The central Petrograd Soviet grew, through March, to a body of 3000 delegates. Through out the length and breadth of the old empire, soviets sprang up. There were 400 by May, 900 by October. At the first all Russian Soviet Congress in June 1917 1090 delegates representing 20 million workers, soldiers and peasants assembled in the capital.

The Soviets developed in more than just a numerical sense. To the consternation of their initial Menshevik leaders they constantly intruded into government business. In the naval base town of Kronstadt where the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries (SR)were in a majority from the outset, the soviet declared in May:

> *'The sole power in the city of Kronstadt is the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which acts with the Petrograd Soviet in government matters.'*

The Soviet dismissed the Provisional Government's representative in the city and even declared a republic.

This struck terror into the hearts of the compromisers in the Petrograd Executive commmittee. Tseretelli and Skobelev were dispatched to persuade the Kronstadters to desist from such actions. Everywhere, the dynamic of the soviets was pushing them in a similar direction to Kronstadt. In the Bolshevik stronghold of Vyborg in Petrograd, home of the major factories, the soviet oversaw workers' control in the factories and took over the prison bakery at Kresty to ensure that the workers got bread.

The Vyborg factories were at the forefront of the struggle for soviet power from early on. In April, the bourgeois minister Milyukov was forced out of the Provisional Government following the publication of his note to the allies declaring Russian fidelity to the Czar's war aims. In response Vyborg issued the loudest calls for an end to dual power. The resolution of the Optico Machine Construction factory typified the Vyborg mood:

> *'Therefore, we find the Milyukov-Guchkov Co. not corresponding to their appointment and recognise that the only power in the country must be the soviets of workers' soldiers and peasants' deputies, which we will defend with our lives.'*

Until June Vyborg and Kronstadt were relatively isolated in calling for the resolution of the dual power. The bourgeoisie was well aware of the problem it faced, having to coexist with the power of the soviets, Guchkov expressed his grasp of that problem as early as 9 March:

> *'The Provisional Government has no real power, Its orders are endorsed only by the soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies . . . stated bluntly, the Provisional Government exists only by the soviets' permission.'*

The point about the dual power situation was that until September the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet — looked to throughout Russia for leadership — granted that permission. The Executive concluded a deal with the bourgeois has-beens of the State Duma Committee and then told the workers and soldiers:

> *'As long as the agreement between the Petrograd Workers and Soldiers' Soviet and the Provisional Government is not breached, the Provisional Government must be regarded as the sole legal government for all Russia,'*

After the departure of Guchkov and Milyukov and the entry of Soviet representatives into the Provisional Government Tseretelli drew the logical conclusion from the Menshevik/Right SR point of view and argued:

> *'Now, all power would be yielded* [by the soviet — WP] *to the Provisional Government . . . (the soviet must) not meddle in administrative business. We should not hinder national government, but sound the alarm in case of mistakes.'*

Why were the compromisers able to instil into the mass of workers and peasants deference to the Provisional Government for so many months? In the first place, it was because the Mensheviks and Right SRs were stronger than the Bolsheviks within Russia at the outbreak of the February Revolution. They were better placed than the Bolsheviks to rapidly assume positions of leadership in the soviets. As such they were able to play on the genuine fears workers had of counter-revolution, to limit the role of the soviets to monitoring the government. Remembering the persecution that followed 1905 many workers were not prepared to assume sole responsibility for the fate of the revolution. The Menshevik thesis of leaving government to the bourgeoisie fitted in with such fears.

PROCLAMATIONS

As a delegate to the April City Conference of Bolsheviks ruefully put it:

> *'When the proletariat still feared to take power into its hands, at that time the bourgeoisie made its way to the Duma and began to issue proclamations and elect deputies. Our best workers, fearing counter-revolution, facilitated the accidental composition of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.'*

But it was not only fear that played a part. Until Lenin's return no party of the revolution was, or had ever, advocated constructing soviet power as the immediate objective of the revolution. The Bolshevik formula was for a revolutionary provisional government.



Kronstadt sailors enforcing soviet control on the streets.

Even leading figures in the party like Kamenev, advocated critical support for the Provisional Government created in February. It is not surprising, therefore, that the mass of the working class and army saw their job as keeping the government on the democratic straight and narrow. Typical of this outlook was the resolution of the Baltic Shipbuilding Factory, which proclaimed:

> *'. . . full confidence in the Soviet, and we are sure that the Soviet, basing itself upon our trust and the support of organised revolutionary democracy, will be able to force the Provisional Government to take into account the wishes of the revolutionary army and people.'*

From the end of April to July the Bolsheviks, initially a weak fraction within most soviets (40 out of 3,000 deputies in Petrograd at the end of March), hammered away at the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets'. Their aim was to escape the pro-bourgeois politics of the compromisers and win leadership in a soviet republic established, if possible, by peaceful means. By June they were beginning to make considerable headway.

The Provisional Government was incapable of solving the great problems of economic production of the land question or of the war. More and more the workers came to blame the capitalists for obstructing the solution of these burning problems. More and more they looked to their own organisations to do the job for them. When the Soviet leadership banned a Bolshevik demonstration out of fear in June, they were obliged to call an official march to let off steam. The march was over 400,000 strong and was made up of workers and soldiers. The rest of 'democracy' cowered in the cafes and salons. Despite the 'official' character of this march, its moods and slogans reflected the fast growing influence of Bolshevism. Eyewitness to the march, Sukhanov, noted:

> *'And again, and again, as the insistent call from the very bowels of the revolutionary capital, as destiny itself, like the fateful Burnham Wood, they came toward us: "All Power to the Soviets", "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!" '*

The drive to counter-revolution after the July Days (see WP 95) necessitated a change of slogans with regard to the soviets. The illegalisation of the Bolshevik Party, the arrest of many of its leaders and the repression against the most advanced workers and soldiers, all measures backed by the Soviet leadership, the SRs and the Mensheviks, led the Bolsheviks to drop the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets'. The Bolsheviks hopes for a peaceful development of the revolution evaporated.

In attempting to justify their rejection of the call for soviets latter day centrists like to quote Lenin in the period of the July Days and also Trotsky on Germany in 1923. In both cases the great Russian marxists warned against fetishising the soviet form of organisation. In both cases, however, the centrists only tell half the story. In the July Days Lenin argued that the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' had become inoperative due to the reactionary leadership that controlled them. However, he did not abandon the fight for new soviets, which would, when they were created, render the slogan of 'All Power' once again central. He wrote:

> *'Soviets may appear in this new revolution, and indeed are bound to, but not the present soviets . . . It is true that even then we shall be in favour of building the whole state on the model of soviets.'*

Lenin was aware of the danger of separating the organisational form

SOVIETS & THE MARXIST PROGRAMME



THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION in Russia was carried through by the Bolshevik Party under the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets'. In the course of the 1905, and more precisely in the 1917 revolutions, Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks had come to understand the historic significance of the soviet form of organisation.

The soviet, a council representing all of the exploited and oppressed groups, basing itself on the principle of direct elections, recallability and the abolition of bureaucratic privilege, was rightly seen by the Bolsheviks as the best possible organisational expression of the power of the proletariat and its allies. It was the best possible basis for the dictatorship of the proletariat — the soviet state.

In 1938 Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Programme* that:

> *'The slogan of soviets, therefore, crowns the programme of transitional demands.'*

He explained that in the struggle for power soviets were the means for uniting all of the forces struggling against capitalism.

OBSCURED

The degenerated centrist fragments of Trotsky's Fourth International have repeatedly obscured or downplayed the centrality of soviets. Most recently, in Poland, the USFI ditched the slogan of soviets in favour of the struggle to create a second chamber of the Polish parliament, the Sejm, as an organ of power for the proletariat.

Others, like the Morenoite tendency and Politica Obrera in Argentina, have been willing to dub trade union bodies (Solidarnosc, the COB of Bolivia) as 'soviets' — thus abandoning the vital task of constructing soviet-type organisations. Instead they have raised the slogans 'All Power to Solidarnosc' and in the case of the Morenoites of Bolivia currently, 'COB to Power'.

The attempt by the centrists to find alternatives to soviets reveals their appetite to revise the theory of Lenin and Trotsky on the role and nature of soviets. For in Lenin's and Trotsky's view there was no substitute for soviets as organs of working class power. What led them to this view was the actual nature of the soviets themselves.

The soviet form of organisation — directly elected councils — arises at the point where the day to day struggles of the masses take place in the context of a revolutionary crisis. Soviets are an extraordinary form of organisation to deal with the extraordinary problems posed by a revolutionary situation. Precisely because of this, they are more immediately sensitive and responsive to the needs and wishes of the masses than the established, often bureaucratic, forms of organisation. They are representative of workers and their allies in struggle. A participant in the local (Rajon) soviet in Vyborg in 1917 gives a flavour of this truly representative characteristic of the soviet form:

> *'. . . the masses of the Rajon (Vyborg) brought all their needs and expectations to the soviet; for them it was the meaningful and accessible organ of power. From morning to night workers, youth, soldiers, came with various problems. None went away without an answer.'*

Compare this proximity of the soviet to the rank and file with the distance the TUC bureaucrats place between themselves and their nine million members!

By virtue of representing the masses in struggle the soviet develops another characteristic. It is uniquely suited to serve as an instrument for revolutionary struggle. Because it is truly representative of these masses it can, all the more easily and effectively call them to arms. In 1905 and 1917 the Petrograd Soviet was able to mobilise tens of thousands across industries in strike action to secure the eight-hour day. Its job was to co-ordinate and direct the struggle of those to whom it was accountable. Of the 1905 Soviet in Petrograd, Trotsky commented that it resembled a *'council of war, more than a parliament'*.

This very feature was what made Trotsky optimistic in 1917 that the soviets were susceptible to Bolshevik influence. The test of action could not be easily delayed by a cumbersome bureaucratic machine. Every passing hour posed a new problem for the soviets to resolve in practice. The programme of revolutionary action can, quickly and often dramatically, reveal its superiority to the masses. The programme of delay and compromise — of reformism — is not protected by the million-and-one delaying mechanisms of the parliamentary talking shop. Trotsky noted:

> *'Of all the forms of revolutionary representation, the soviet is the most flexible, immediate and transparent. But it is still only a form. It cannot give more than the masses are capable of putting into it at a given moment. Beyond that it can only assist the masses in understanding the mistakes they have made and correcting them. In this function of the soviets lay one of the most important guarantees of the development of the revolution.'*

EMBRYONIC

The third vital element of the soviet form that led Lenin and Trotsky to value it so highly for the purposes of revolution, was that it was an embryonic organ of power, of workers' power. This was revealed in both 1905 and 1917. The soviets developed out of strikes but took on the functions of administration, of organising supplies and of organising a proletarian militia. In the strikes of 1905 the soviet was born in Russia. The first one developed in Ivanovo-Voznesenk, in May. During a strike by 40,000 workers in this textile town, 110 deputies elected by the strikers met on the river bank. The significance of this meeting was that it united all the workers of the district on a city-wide basis, irrespective of trade or skill.

The Petrograd proletariat — the vanguard in 1905 as it was in 1917 — was quick to emulate its brothers and sisters in Ivanovo-Voznesenk. During the October general strike 40 delegates met in the Technological Institute and established a soviet to organise the strike, but also to do more. It declared:

> *'The assembly of deputies from all factories will form a general workers' committee in St Petersburg. The committee will strengthen and unify our movement, represent the St Petersburg workers to the public, and decide actions during the strike as well as its termination.'*

BULLETIN

This was no mere strike committee. By November it had 562 delegates. It issued *Izvestia* as a daily bulletin — occupying the printing presses of the bourgeois papers to ensure it was regularly and professionally produced. Under Trotsky's leadership it advanced a programme of political demands aimed against the power of the Czarist autocracy. It forbade the distribution of papers that were censored by the state. Only those bearing an 'uncensored' stamp from the Soviet were distributed. Most significantly, it continued its existence and its struggles after the strike was terminated. The St Petersburg chief of police was so worried about the Soviet that he warned, prophetically, that it was threatening to become a 'second government'. Its potential as an organ of workers' power revealed itself in October 1905. This potential was realised in October 1917, partly due to Lenin's success in modifying the Bolshevik view of soviets taken in 1905.

Initially in 1905 the Bolsheviks were suspicious of the Soviet. They saw it as a Menshevik ploy to set up a rival non-party body, through which they could then outmanoeuvre the Bolsheviks. This suspicion stemmed from the Soviet's refusal to confine itself to purely trade union questions. A leading Bolshevik agitator, P.Mendelev, declared:

> *'The Soviet of workers' deputies has no right to exist as a political organisation, and the Social Democrats must resign from it, since its existence damages the development of the Social Democratic movement. The Soviet may exist as a trade union organisation or it should not exist at all.'*

The suspicions that the Bolsheviks felt towards the Soviet, more precisely to the Mensheviks who they believed were behind the Soviet, were far from groundless. The Mensheviks were enthusiastic to build soviets as 'workers' congresses'.These congresses could, in Martynov's words, serve as the means of *'exerting revolutionary pressure on the will of the liberal and radical bourgeoisie'*. The Mensheviks believed the role of the proletariat was to encourage the bourgeoisie forward during the democratic revolution.

FORUM

The soviet, as a form of local government and workers' congress was seen not as an organ of power but a pressure point on the bourgeoisie. Moreover, the Mensheviks believed that it was within such a forum that a mass party of the working class — one which would encompass multifarious political trends — could be built. Thus for Martynov the soviet was 'abnormal', but could be used to achieve the norm of international Social Democracy, a mass party:

> *'. . . that is wide enough to include or render superfluous organisations on the pattern of the soviets of workers' deputies.'*

Lenin perceived the real essence of the soviets — their representative nature, their capacity for revolutionary struggle and their potential as organs of power — despite the influence of Menshevism within them. By posing the soviets, not as an alternative to the Bolsheviks, but as the organisational means of fulfilling the Bolshevik's governmental slogan — the Provisional Revolutionary Government — Lenin won the party to the need for the struggle for leadership within the soviets. For him the soviets were both 'instruments of insurrection' and 'cells of the new revolutionary power'. In 1906 he wrote of the Petrograd Soviet:

> *'That was the face of the new power — or rather its germinal form, since the victory of the old power destroyed the young shoots very early on.'*

In February 1917, following the overthrow of the autocracy, the young shoots sprouted once again. This time the Bolsheviks, after Lenin's return and the triumph of his April Theses which placed socialist revolution on the immediate agenda (see WP92), waged a struggle to make the soviets the sole organs of power throughout Russia. The Mensheviks, bound hand and foot to the bourgeoisie, sought to contain the soviets to a monitoring and advisory role over the capitalist Provisional Government. In fact, after February power was split between the bourgeoisie and the soviets, a situation of dual power prevailed.■

from its political leadership. Under a reformist leadership soviets can play a reactionary role — as indeed they did in July 1917 in Russia and Germany in 1914/20. However, with a revolutionary leadership the soviets would, once again, play a revolutionary role. The struggle for new soviets actually became in August 1917, the struggle for Bolshevik leadership. The existing soviets were renovated and cleansed of their reactionary leadership. In the debate at the Bolshevik Congress in July, Buhkarin had perceptively warned:

> *'. . . the baby is being thrown out with the bathwater . . . We must not denounce the form of soviets because their composition has proved unsuitable.'*

To a large extent, particularly in the local soviets, his advice was heeded. By September, across Russia, the Bolsheviks began to win majority after majority in the soviets, leading Trotsky to comment:

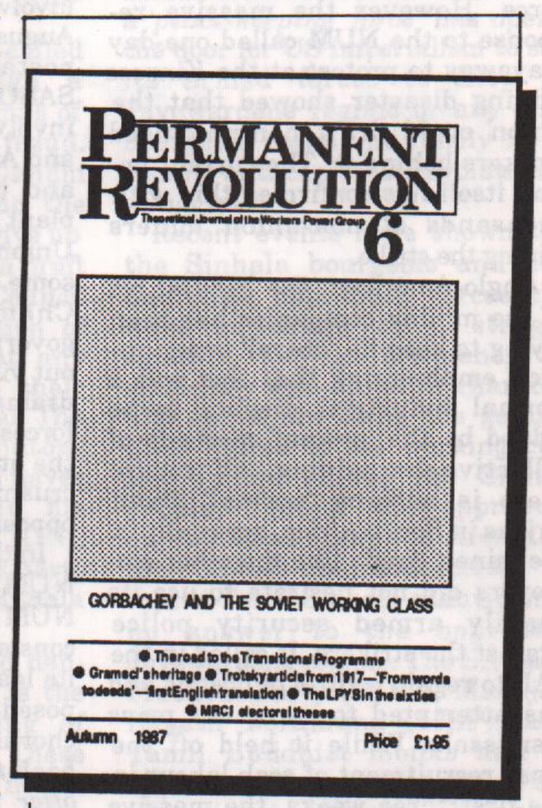
> *'For this reason the slogan "Power to the Soviets" was not removed from the agenda a wsecond time, but it was given a new meaning: all power to the Bolshevik soviets. In this formulation the slogan finally ceased to be a call for peaceful development. The party approaches armed uprising through the soviets and in the name of the soviets.'*

A major factor in the strengthening of the Bolshevik positions in the soviets in September 1917 was their role in the defeat of the Kornilov coup. Using this united front tactic and proving themselves the most consistent fighters against reaction, all over the country during September Bolshevik majorities began to be recorded.

On 9 September a debate on the composition of the Praesidium of the Petrograd Soviet took place. Trotsky, now a Bolshevik, led the attack on the compromisers. He spoke for the majority of Petrograd's proletariat. The compromisers were defeated 519 votes to 414. On 25 September Trotsky once again became chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. In 1905 in that capacity, he had been obliged to order the breaking of weapons and submission to the Czarist police. In 1917 there was no such need to submit. On 25 October at the Second All Russian Congress of Soviets, following the rising of the night before, the first soviet republic in the world was established.■

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The October Revolution



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MINERS SHAKE APARTHEID

SOUTH AFRICA'S black mineworkers have shaken the mineowners and the apartheid regime with the strength of the strike led by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Before the walkout, the Chamber of Mines was pouring scorn on the ability of the NUM to stage a prolonged dispute, claiming that it represented only 170,000 of 500,000 workforce in gold and coal. But by the third week of the strike, the NUM still had 300,000 mineworkers out, even while the Chamber's own figures put it at over 200,000.

This was achieved despite intense pressure from the mining bosses, which ranged from the straightforwardly brutal attacks organised by Goldfields involving their own goonsquads and the South African Police (SAP), through to the 'reasonable' pressure from the so-called progressive bosses of Anglo American which threatened to dismiss 16,000 workers in an attempt to force a settlement. After two weeks of the dispute, six miners had been killed, 200 arrested and thousands sacked. This was set to increase with the rank and file's rejection of the Chamber's 25 August offer.

POVERTY

Unlike their fellow mineworkers in other countries, black workers in South Africa's mines earn wages which are below other industrial wages. In fact 85% of all goldminers' wages are below the poverty datum line. In 1986 shareholders of South Africa's gold mines earned more in total dividends than the workers did in total earnings. The average miner earns £1700 a year, while the mining bosses' profits are worth nearly £3 billion!

The bosses have been able to achieve this because of the system of migrant labour. Miners come either from the 'Homelands' — areas usually of poor quality land which black families have to make their official homes — or from poorer countries dependent on the miners' incomes, such as Mozambique and especially Lesotho. The apartheid system prevents the miners settling with their families in the same areas as the mines. Patrick Moseho, NUM chair of the Randfontein Estates gold mine explained in an interview with the *Weekly Mail*:

> *'When I am at home my children do not know me as their father. I have to start afresh each time'.*

Miners like these work 12 month contracts, going home at the end and hoping to be able to return. Although 'liberal' bosses of Anglo American profess to dislike the apartheid system, they happily benefit from it, keeping miners in hostels, the cost of which is deducted from their wages.

Such are the super-profits achieved from this system that it may seem difficult to understand why the Chamber will not concede the 30% increase demanded by the NUM instead of sticking by the 17-23% already offered. But like bosses everywhere they are ruthless in defence of their profits. For the coal industry, it is precisely the cheapness of South African coal which is enabling them to export on an increasing scale. And it is not only the mineowners who want to see profits high. The state takes a total of R3366 million in revenues from gold mining profits. One estimate published in the *Weekly Mail* showed that for every extra rand miners managed to squeeze in pay, the government would lose 57 cents in tax.

Conditions for South Africa's miners are dirty and dangerous as they are for miners the world over but the apartheid state has shown a particularly callous disregard for black miners' lives. Particular hazards faced by South African miners are the intense heat in the deep gold mines, and cost cutting procedures. The bosses have been able to get away with such procedures as a result of their ability to keep effective union organisation out of the mines for decades. The hazards in the industry were tragically illustrated in the Kinross disaster last Autumn. A major task the young union set itself was the improvement of safety and compensation standards. Meticulous attention to detail and individual cases, representation by shaft stewards, use of every possible legal procedure and lengthy battles for recognition have all helped the NUM build its reputation and its membership. Now safety and conditions are a major element in the claim with demands for danger pay, increased holidays and better conditions in the barrack like hostels.

KINROSS

The NUM of South Africa has moved cautiously into launching a major confrontation with the Chamber of Mines. It still only unionises about 50% of the workforce. However the massive response to the NUM called one-day stayaway to protest at the Kinross Mining disaster showed that the union could draw non-unionised workers behind it. The current action itself has confirmed this with thousands of non-union miners joining the strike.

Anglo-American, the hardest hit of the mining companies has been trying to keep its 'liberal' image intact, emphasising that this was a normal industrial dispute to be solved by the 'normal' methods of collective bargaining. Of course there is nothing 'normal' about strikes in South Africa, especially in the mines. Anglo like the other employers did not hesitate to use its heavily armed security police against the strikers. It called in the SAP to regain control of hostels and has attempted to carry out mass dismissals. While it held off the mass recruitment of scab labour in the first three weeks, the massive rejection of the 25 August offer led Anglo to launch into a huge scab herding operation to try and break the strike.

Of course there was much more at stake for the Chamber of Mines and the South African state than simply the resolution of a 'normal' industrial dispute. The strike takes place in a country wracked by massive struggles against the apartheid regime. While the vicious repression has contained and put on the defensive the struggles of the youth, school students and township organisations, the trade unions show no signs of suffering any such set back. Since Cosatu was launched there has been a considerable increase in union membership and strike activity. The strength of the NUM and its growth in the last period is one sign of this. The struggle for a 30% wage increase is part of the Cosatu launched struggle for 'a living wage'.

The recent victories at OK Bazaars and especially by the railworkers has greatly increased the confidence of the South African workers. It is estimated that half a million workers have been or are involved in industrial actions during August — a national strike by 20,000 postal workers, the strike at SASOL's collieries, several strikes involving several thousand Food and Allied Workers Union members, and the continued struggle on a plant by plant basis of the National Union of Metal Workers — are just some of the ongoing disputes. The Chamber of Mines and the government recognised that an all out victory by the NUM would have dramatically altered the balance of forces within the mines and within the struggle nationally. Similarly a crushing defeat would have had the opposite effect.

In this situation the strategy of the NUM leadership was vital. The NUM membership had shown itself consistently more intransigent than its leadership. A popular song composed during the strike had as its chorus line *'Leadership don't come back to us, until you have a better offer from the bosses'*! One of the strengths of the NUM has been the development of the shaft steward system, with stewards' councils being powerful rank and file bodies in the union. Before the strike at the last NUM conference the NUM proposed the replacement of these councils by more geographically based area councils a step which would have seriously weakened rank and file control of the strike if implemented.

The proposals announced at the start of the strike by NUM General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa, that miners should leave the mines and go back to the homelands to avoid confrontation and violence, also appear to have been rejected by the membership.

A senior Chamber official indicated early in the dispute that the owners saw the weakness in this strategy:

> *'We are glad that the union has called on strikers to leave the hostels and mines. this means that those who want to stay at work will be able to do so without the threat of violence and intimidation. It also means that in the event of a long strike, we will not have to evict workers but merely recruit new workers to replace them.'*

Only where mine owners succeeded in evicting or starving out miners does the return home appear to have happened, although obviously the pull to go home for workers who don't see their families from one six month to the next was considerable.

In many areas the NUM was instead attempting to take control of the hostels and actually occupying the mines at Harmony and at Anglo's Western Deep Levels where the workers responded to the threat of work or dismissal by starting a sit-in underground. These effective and vitally important tactics would have inevitably brought the miners into conflict not only with the company police but also with the SAP, raising the necessity, already recognised by Cosatu, for the workers to set up properly organised and armed defence squads.

It appears that it was the threat of Anglo-American and other mine owners to institute mass sackings and use the SAP to smash resistance in the hostels, to the use of scab labour which led the NUM leadership to retreat on their members' rejection of the 25 August offer.

The alternative was precisely to develop the defence of the miners' hostels and above all to win solidarity action from other workers as well as linking up with workers already on strike. The NUM should have placed an immediate demand on COSATU to call general strike action in the face of a police onslaught on the miners. The immediate linking of strike committees to the existing township committees, youth and student organisations in Committees of Action to organise food and aid to the strikers and mobilise for solidarity action and a general strike was the vital next step in the strike.

It is not yet clear what the impact will be on the NUM of its leadership's retreat. Already Anglo, while announcing it will re-employ the 40,000 sacked strikers, has said this will depend on satisfactory work records and job availability. If the NUM members fail to reverse the leadership's decision they will be faced with immediate struggles against victimisation in the mines.■

by Sue Thomas

FREE MOSES MAYEKISO
March to South Africa House
Saturday 10 October 1987
Meet 12 Noon
Clerkenwell Green
LONDON EC2
Farringdon tube

Campaign for Trade Union Sanctions Against Apartheid Conference
11am Saturday 26 September
Carrs Lane Church Centre
Carrs Lane
BIRMINGHAM
Delegates: £3
Observers: £1.50

CENTRAL AMERICA

PEACE PLAN SELL OUT



DEVELOPMENTS IN Central America have left Reagan's administration gobsmacked. On 7 August five of the region's presidents, meeting in Guatemala, endorsed a 'peace plan' for Central America put forward by President Oscar Arias Sanchez of Costa Rica. For the US administration, which had spared no effort in sabotaging the previous Contadora peace efforts, the agreement could not have come at a worse time.

Reagan had just lined up the Congress Democratic House Speaker behind his own 'peace plan'. This was the administration's familiar list of demands on Nicaragua — including immediate, internationally supervised elections. In these elections Contra participation was demanded as well as their right to maintain their armed positions inside Nicaragua.

The plan was framed so as to guarantee it would be rejected by the Sandinistas. In turn this would pave the way for bi-partisan agreement in Congress on further aid to the Contras at the end of September so that they could continue their murderous military campaign. The endorsement of the Arias plan by the Presidents of Guatamala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Nicaragua immediately led the Democrats to jump ship. Reagan was left floundering with no guarantee of being able to renew aid to the Contras via Congress.

What led puppets of the US Administration like Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador and the Presidents of Honduras and Guatemala to sign such an agreement so embarrassing to their paymasters in the USA? The Contra war has produced growing frictions within both Honduras and Costa Rica. Clashes between Contras and the local population in both countries, and even with the army, have been increasing. Thousands of armed Contras have preferred life on the borders to fighting in Nicaragua. Mass Contra desertions and the growing intensity of the war have also led to a serious refugee problem.

All this, combined with the possibility of armed clashes with the Nicaraguan army, has led the governments of Costa Rica and Honduras to try and distance themselves from Reagan's all or nothing attempt to overthrow the FSLN government. Their willingness to risk a break with Reagan has been strengthened by the Contragate scandal and the undermining of the Presidency it has involved.

SOCIALIST

Another factor prompting the region's rulers is that the peace deal, if it is carried out, would represent a significant political victory for the likes of Napoleon Duarte. As with the Contadora Treaty, which the Nicaraguan government was willing to sign, the Arias plan not only commits Nicaragua to not supporting any guerilla movements in Central America, but specifically calls on such movements to give up the armed struggle within 90 days. The signatories agreed to *'deny assistance and territories to armed groups acting against other signatories'.*

Most importantly this would affect the FMLN in El Salvador and the URNG in Guatemala both of which have indicated their unwillingness to abide by the agreement. Duarte quickly brought out the meaning of the agreement in his speech inviting the FMLN/FDR to amnesty talks:

> *'The five presidents of Central America rejected violence as a means to take power and declared the FMLN/FDR illegitimate.'*

Moreover Duarte would have the Sandinistas blessing in declaring the FMLN illegitimate. A representative of the Salvadorean fighters ruefully commented:

> *'Most of the benefits of this agreement will go to the Sandinistas. But for us it has very little.'*

For the Sandinista government the Arias Plan is the logical outcome of its attempts to end the Contra war by offering sufficient concessions to appease at least the Democrats in Congress and so stop Contra funding. Offering proof of their willingness to live in *'peaceful coexistence'* with the repressive and reactionary regimes that surround them is just one such concession. Already the arch reactionary, Contra supporting, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo has been put onto the Nicaraguan 'Commission of National Reconciliation', to be set up in each country under the terms of this plan, as a further sign of *'good faith'* to the Democrats.

No doubt many on the left, especially in the USFI, who have become uncritical cheerleaders for the Sandinistas, will either cover over in silence or attempt to justify this blatant stab in the back of the other anti-imperialist movements in Central America. Certainly the Nicaraguan economy is in desparate straits as a result of the assaults launched by US imperialism and the first duty of socialists is to defend Nicaragua against attacks. The situation is not helped by the Soviet Union's refusal to meet Nicaragua's needs for oil supplies in 1987, no doubt in pursuit of its own detente policy with the USA.

But the solution to the crisis in Nicaragua lies not in making diplomatic manoeuvres and concessions to imperialism that weaken the anti-imperialist struggle in the region. The only guarantee of defending and extending the gains of the masses in the 1979 revolution always lay in extending the revolution throughout Central America. In Nicaragua the key task is to defeat and disarm the counter-revolution through expropriating the capitalists and large landowners and establishing a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. And in Central America as a whole the task is not to conclude deals, like the Arias plan, that weaken the struggle against imperialism, but to support to the hilt all anti-imperialist struggles and fight for a socialist federation of Central America.■

by Stuart King

SMASH GANDHI'S ACCORD

THE JAYEWARDENE-GANDHI Accord, purporting to inaugurate a settlement of the Tamil national problem, is the outcome of a conspiracy between the Jayewardene regime and Rajiv Gandhi. It is intended to disrupt the struggle of the Tamil people for their liberation from the Sinhala bourgeois oppression they have suffered for several decades now. In conspiracy with Jayewardene, Rajiv Gandhi has transported 3000 Indian troops to force the Tamil militants to end the armed struggle, and to force them to surrender their arms to the Jayewardene regime.

This Accord is without the consent of the Tamils engaged in the liberation struggle. For Jayewardene, this accord with Gandhi is helping him to disarm and defeat the Tamil liberation struggle that has been heroically waged by the Tamil militants with the sacrifice of the lives of thousands of their best fighters, and the killing of thousands of innocent Tamils by the Sinhala armed forces.

For Gandhi, the accord has given India the image of a hegemonic role in the South Asian region, and has elevated the standing of the Gandhi regime in relation to US imperialism. And, incidentally, Gandhi has got rid of the problem of the 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees presently in South India regardless of their future fate in Sri Lanka.

Jayewardene's offer of so-called regional autonomy through a Provincial Council to the Tamils of the north and east is a fraud. Although the Jayewardene-Gandhi Accord has been signed, and the militants are being forced to give up their arms, there is not even a draft document of the Provincial Council that will show the devolution of power. Tamils will not get any measure of autonomy for their region that could be called real. The anti-Tamil and discriminatory policies of Jayewardene have never changed. Jayewardene and his Cabinet of Ministers, his UNP Parliamentary group and his party remain as anti-Tamil and Sinhala chauvinist as ever before.

The most objectionable and dangerous aspect of the Accord is the provision for the stationing of Indian troops in Sri Lanka. These Indian troops are stationed in the north not for the protection of the Tamils but for the disruption of the Tamil liberation struggle and to prop up the hated Jayewardne regime. This means that the Indian troops are in Sri Lanka to protect Jayewardene and his regime, when the workers and toilers throughout the country, sooner or later launch struggles to overthrow it.

What is more, this Gandhi-Jayewardene alliance to keep the Indian armed forces in Sri Lanka as a *'peace-keeping force'* has opened the door for US imperialism to send its armed forces to help the Jayewardene regime or any other bourgeois regime militarily in the coming anti-capitalist revolutionary struggles.

Recent events have shown that the Sinhala bourgeois and petit bourgeois opposition forces that have embarked on a struggle against the government, are virulently anti-Tamil in character. The forces are using the genuine class hatred of the working class and toilers among the Sinhala people, against the oppressive Jayewardene regime to strengthen their Sinhala chauvinist forces.

Anti-Tamil Sinhala chauvinism is no answer to the oppressive Jayewardene regime. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP). anti-Tamil Buddhist monks and the opportunist, conservative and chauvinist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) cannot provide an alternative to the capitalist Jayewardene regime. The only alternative is an anti-capitalist workers' and peasants' government.

Sections of the Tamil masses in the Northern and Eastern provinces could well be happy that the Sinhala armed forces have moved out of some of the army camps in the north. In any event, such a moving out can only be temporary. On the other hand, the Indian troops are not at all the friends of the Tamils in the north. They are in the north to help Jayewardene and to prop up his government.

Rajiv Gandhi is not only helping Jayewardene to break up the Tamil liberation struggle, but is even now, helping him to suppress the workers and toilers in the south by giving Jayewardene a chance of transfering Sri Lankan troops to the south by the stationing of Indian troops in the north. It is clear, in terms of this Accord that if the masses in the south and other parts of the country revolt against the oppressive Jayewardene capitalist rule, and if the Sri Lankan armed forces cannot suppress the masses, the door is open for the Indian troops to intervene to break up such a revolt.

Down with the Gandhi-Jayewardene Accord!

No disarming of Tamil militants by Indian troops!

Tamil militants do not give up your arms!

Tamil militants resist the Indian troops with all your might!

Indian troops out of Sri Lanka!

Sinhala workers and toilers, the struggle we need is the anti-capitalist struggle under the leadership of the working class to throw out the fascistic UNP regime!!■

We print below a statement on the India-Sri Lanka Accord from a group of revolutionary Marxists in Colombo. It was written and distributed within days of the agreement.

Although the Accord has fuelled the anger of the Sinhalese chauvinists its purpose is to behead the struggle for Tamil liberation.

We print this statement as an act of solidarity with those forces trying to resist the Accord on the internationalist basis of support for the Tamil struggle. We disagree with the designation of Jayewardene's regime as 'fascistic', however. While not underestimating the brutality and indiscriminate slaughter of the Sinhalese army against the Tamils, we recognise the Jayewardene's government rests for its support not only upon the Sinhalese workers and peasants but also upon the corrupt Tamil Indian union leadership of the southern highland plantation workers. Nevertheless, we fully concur with the analysis in the statement concerning the purpose of the Accord, the nature of the autonomy proposals and the demands outlined.

We thank the Revolutionary Workers Party of Sri Lanka for bringing this statement by the Revolutionary Marxists to our attention.

KOREA WORKERS TAKE CENTRE STAGE

IN THE last two months the South Korean working class has moved decisively to the centre stage in the struggles of that country. There have been over a thousand officially recorded disputes since early July. The workers have pursued the most audacious tactics to achieve their ends. They have carried out occupations, closed off towns and routed the regime's security forces. In the massive Hyundai Heavy Industries the workers held the company's founder, Chung Ju Tung, captive in order to back up their demands for free unions and higher pay.

The South Korean workers have virtually destroyed the tame company unions that they were previously allowed to join. The industrial centres are now alive with a new network of trade union delegates. What is at stake now is whether the South Korean workers can use their strength to end the super-exploitation they have suffered so long and to put an end to the corrupt, repressive regime of Chun Doo Hwan.



Hyundai strikers demonstrate their power.

EXPLOIT

Bosses the world over like to point to South Korea as an 'economic miracle' that proves that capitalism can conquer backwardness. In fact the key to South Korea's economic development over the last twenty years has been the massive exploitation of its working class. Successive US backed regimes have worked hand in hand with giant concerns like Samsung and Hyundai to keep things that way.

South Korean workers have the longest working week in the world. According to the ILO they average 57 hours per week spread over seven days. The average industrial wage in South Korea is £37 per week. Many workers have to work between 70 and 90 hours per week to make ends meet. They receive five days holiday in the winter and five in the summer. South Korea also tops the world's industrial accidents league.

The only unions allowed until now have been company sponsored in-house unions that are not permitted to operate or organise beyond the confines of a single workplace. So much have these unions been in the pocket of management that only 1.1 million out of South Korea's 8.5 million industrial workers were registered as union members.

The tight grip of US imperialism and its local stooges has maintained these conditions for the massive exploitation of South Korea's workforce. No wonder imperialism has nurtured South Korean industry. Last year manufacturing labour costs in the USA averaged $13.09 an hour. In Japan the figure was $9.50. South Korean labour costs in the manufacturing industry were recorded as a mere $1.55 an hour. While productivity in South Korean industry has doubled since 1980 wages over that period have only increased by 40%.

ELECTIONS

The present round of labour militancy was triggered by the repressive, military backed regime of Chun Doo Hwan being forced to give concessions to the democratic demands of the students and the bourgeois oppositional forces of the Reunification Democratic Party (RDP). The regime's announcement of elections and of rights for the opposition gave confidence to the workers to press forward with their own specific class demands. Most importantly they have been demanding free trade unions organised by the workers themselves and in the form the workers decide and substantial pay increases.

As the major car plants, the mines and the shipyards ground to a halt the government attempted to take the heat out of the struggle through mediation. While the security forces clamped down on demonstrations and occupations, killing one worker in the Daewoo shipyard, the goverment was urging management to give in to some of the workers' demands while holding the line against immediate pay rises. In fact such has been the show of proletarian strength that in many cases the workers have secured pay increases of between 11 and 20%. What terrifies the regime is that the working class, sensing its power and independence, will organise itself as a political force. Hence its preparedness to make some concessions in the hope of containing the struggle.

MARKET

The labour unrest has shown the RDP in its true colours. As a capitalist party it is committed to a free market. Along with other sections of South Korean capitalism — including the Federation of Korean Industries — it is demanding less state intervention in the economy. For them an organised and confident working class threatens the very basis of the South Korean economy. From the very start of the industrial battles RDP leader Kim Young Sam warned that the industrial struggle *'will give anti-democratic forces an excuse to hamper democratisation'*. His position has been to urge the workers to limit their demands to democratic rights and to restrain their pay demands. As he put it:

> *'The reason for the disputes is that the workers' rights have not been guaranteed. But however rightful their demands, they cannot be solved all at once.'*

CORRUPT

There is enormous pressure on the South Korean workers to restrict their demands to the workplaces, to the economic sphere, and leave the struggle against the repressive and corrupt regime to the bourgeois RDP. If the election campaign does eventually materialise the workers' organisations will be called upon to lend their strength as electoral workers for the RDP.

In all the main industries the South Korean workers have established their own cross-plant union delegates. They are destroying the company union system. These organisations must be consolidated as free and democratic trade unions. They must be completely free of management and government. They must fight to put an end for ever to the super-exploitation of the South Korean working class. Profits for the first half of the year rose by 69% yet the bourgeoisie, be they of oppositional or governmental hue, insist the workers should restrain themselves. The new unions must reject all such arguments and press ahead now for a massive cut in the working week and for wage rises for those who have created South Korea's wealth.

The workers have entered into struggle at a time when the South Korean bourgeoisie is divided and when US imperialism is pressing for cautious democratisation in order to dampen potential political instability. A reborn workers' movement must not restrict itself to economic matters alone. The vital questions of the thoroughly undemocratic constitution, of US imperialism's military bases and of the continued division of Korea must be confronted by the working class as an independent political force. It can only end its super-exploitation if it uses its newly asserted strength to end the rule of imperialism and its stooges in Korea.

The workers' struggles have inspired a significant section of South Korean students just as they have terrified its bourgeoisie. The regime deeply fears that the workers can rally forces behind them that can take the struggle beyond the terms of ordered presidential elections within the present constitution. The same fear haunts the bourgeois opposition. Seventeen Seoul labour organisations are reported to have criticised the RDP for their support for the:

> *'. . . deceptive direct election position of the military dictatorship . . . which cannot sufficiently represent the true desires of the workers and the people.'*

QUAKE

As the bosses quake at the prospect of a strengthened and reawakened workers' movement it is vital that the working class organises its own political party based on its new unions. The struggle must be for this party to be won to a revolutionary communist programme. Only in that way can the struggle be taken forward to its final conclusion. Only in that way can the workers break with the 'democratic' capitalist opposition and put an end to the repressive regime in US imperialism's South Korean semi-colony.■

by Din Wong and Dave Hughes

IMPERIALISM OUT OF THE GULF

THE BIGGEST build up of US naval strength since Vietnam, combined with reinforcements from Britain and France, has turned the Gulf into a war zone waiting to ignite.

The spark that threatens to set off billions of dollars worth of hi-tech killing power is the increasingly desperate regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Saddam's hopes of neutralising Iran lie in encouraging or engineering an imperialist onslaught against the Islamic Republic.

IRANGATE

The immediate cause of the current US intervention was the escalation of the 'tankers war', which saw this vital shipping lane increasingly littered with the blazing wrecks of Iranian and Kuwaiti oil tankers. The Reagan administration was also faced with the need to divert the US public from the Irangate debacle. Iraq's oil is exported overland, so when it began to hit Iran's most important oil route, the tanker lanes from Kharg Island to the straits of Hormuz, Iran responded by attacking the tankers of Iraq's major backer, Kuwait. It also stepped up its threats to take the 'Islamic Revolution' into the pro-US Arab states, most importantly Saudi Arabia. The US response to this threat to stability, despite the rhetoric, will not automatically lead to an all out attack on Iran.

STABILITY

US strategic interests in the Gulf are best served by stability and the absence of military conflict. Although the US maintains its massive middle-eastern Rapid Deployment Force, and in alliance with Britain it has stocked the enormous arsenals of the Saudis, a war on land with Iran would be a much more serious business than any US or British military adventure since Vietnam.

Hence it was the US who played a major role in the United Nations Security Council call for a ceasefire; offering Iran the opportunity to de-escalate the conflict, and enforcing, until 30 August, a truce in the tanker war. There are powerful conjunctural factors however that could override this chosen path in favour of a US attempt to impose stability by inflicting a military defeat on Iran. First, the Saddam regime is increasingly desperate to drag the US back into a joint offensive against Iran. The restarting of the 'tanker war' by Iraq is the latest indication of this.

Secondly the reactionary despots who rule Iran need the continued war to deflect the Iranian workers and peasants from the growing economic problems in Iran. Domestic instability of a different kind — the unmasking of the Contragate scandal and the Reagan regime's failing credibility — could prompt the US to forget 'pax Americana' if an Iranian missile sinks a reflagged Kuwaiti tanker. Once the shooting started the British navy would come to the aid of the US without question, as would the French — both have committed enormous naval resources to the Gulf relative to their size.

SUPPORT

If this happened it would be necessary for workers throughout the world to side unconditionally with Iran. A more blatant case of imperialist militarism could not be imagined. The war between Iran and Iraq, which at present serves a purely reactionary purpose for both regimes, would in the case of a US/British/French naval attack allied to Iraq's ground and air offensive, necessitate workers everywhere siding with Iran, despite the reactionary character of the regime.

Whether or not the Iraqi ruling class manages to light the blue touch-paper workers in Britain have to make clear their total opposition to British and US intervention in the Gulf.

- **Britain, France and the USA out of the Gulf!**
- **Hands off Iran!**
- **Unconditional support for Iran against imperialist aggression!**

by Paul Mason

REVIEWS

'A tempest of virtuous indignation'

'My friend Sylvia Pankhurst . . . lives in a tempest of virtuous indignation' wrote George Bernard Shaw in 1935. This aptly describes the approach of a woman to her many interests. Her campaigns ranged from the fight for women's suffrage, the struggle against war and for the building of a Comintern section in Britain during her early life alone.

In contrast, her sister Christabel went from leader of the Suffragettes to the most jingoistic supporter of the First World War, later campaigning against moral degeneration and venereal disease. Respected by the same establishment she had once been committed to fire-bombing, Christabel was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1936, by which time she was well on her way to obscurity as a Christian revivalist.

The lives of these sisters are followed in a brief but informative account by Barbara Castle. It starts with their childhood experiences when the daughters gained their earliest political ideas from their parents, Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst. Richard was a radical lawyer in Manchester who campaigned actively for various reforms — education, nationalisation of the land, adult suffrage and the abolition of the House of Lords.

In this atmosphere the Pankhurst daughters, Christabel, Sylvia and Adela, were often surrounded by the people and debates of liberals and various socialists — William Morris, Tom Mann, Annie Besant and Keir Hardie were all visitors when they lived in London.

Castle's book looks at the political careers of Sylvia and Christabel, paying particular attention to the divergence which occurred during the course of the Suffragette's struggles. Mrs (Emmeline) Pankhurst and Christabel became committed to the Women's Social and Political Union (WPSU), a group of radical suffragettes intent on pressurising the government throught direct action. Sylvia was part of this group for a long time, but it seems she was never happy with either the autocratic way in which her sister and mother ran it (she was never included in the decision making), or the more adventurist tactics adopted. Sylvia was more concerned with the wider interests of women, with working class politics in general.

Helen Ward reviews
Sylvia Pankhurst: portrait of a radical
by Patricia Romero
(Yale University Press £17.50 Hdbk)
and
Sylvia and Christabel Pankhurst
by Barbara Castle
(Penguin £3.95 Pbk)



Wartime women munitions workers.



Sylvia Pankhurst.

WORKERS

Romero's book is useful in that it goes into great detail about the period of Sylvia's life when she had broken with her mother and sister, turning away from their 'Populist' pressure politics towards the workers of the East End of London. Seeing herself as champion of their cause she moved to live alongside them, and in doing so became far more aware of the reality of oppression for women in the working class. She began to realise that the achievement of suffrage alone was not sufficient, although she remained a campaigner on that issue, setting up the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS). She saw first hand the poverty, the appalling living conditions that women and children suffered. What was needed was a much more radical change than could be achieved by granting certain women the vote.

In this period (1912-14) Sylvia finally broke with the WSPU. Christabel became increasingly anti-men as parliamentary manoeuvres failed to grant her wishes. The direct action campaigns of the WSPU were increased with attacks on property and personal attacks on politicians escalating, with all the activists being repeatedly imprisoned, going on hungerstrike, being force fed and finally released only to be rearrested when their physical condition improved. All that is except Chistabel, who in this period had decided that one leader was necessary in exile, and that it should be her, sending orders from the comfort of a Paris refuge.

Sylvia saw that the increased militancy was having no effect, and continued to argue for a greater orientation to working women, for demonstrations and alliances with working class struggles. As Christabel decided that the new campaign slogan should be 'Votes for Women and Chastity for Men' (she was now an anti-venereal disease campaigner) and thus excluded men from the WSPU, Sylvia became involved in support for Irish strikers and the Home Rule campaign. As a result she spoke on a platform alongside George Lansbury, thereby breaking Christabel's new rule of non-cooperation with men. This was the final clash that led to Sylvia and her ELFS breaking with the WSPU. Lansbury had in fact been a supporter of the WSPU — resigning his seat over the issue of women's suffrage and restanding on that issue in 1912. But that made little difference to Christabel.

WAR

Sylvia's group in the East End was committed to universal suffrage, and began publishing *Womens' Dreadnought*, a weekly paper, in 1914 which dealt with more general issues. There is little evidence that the organisation was any less autocratic that the WSPU, with Sylvia writing all the editorials and seemingly controlling the direction of the group. She did build up considerable support and respect amongst the working class women of the area, which she built upon during her work in the war.

If the outbreak of the First World War split the Second International, it just as clearly tore apart the cross class women's suffrage movement in Britain. Christabel declared that it was *'God's vengeance upon a people who held women in subjection'*, but nevertheless soon wound up *The Suffragette* and agreed to drop the issue of votes for women for the duration of the war. She brought out a replacement journal called *Britannia* and was one of the most ardent supporters of the war. Sylvia on the other hand was a longstanding pacifist and immediately began campaigning against the war. She never dropped the suffrage demands, claiming that a wider franchise would improve the fight against war.

In East London Sylvia and her followers worked tirelessly to provide food and clothing for local women whose husbands and sons had been drafted into the war and were left with little or no welfare. They opened up various enterprises to provide employment and services needed by women — garment, toy and boot factories were opened up, a child-care centre called 'The Mothers' Arms' was organised in an old pub, and cost-price restaurants set up. Sylvia organised repeated deputations to parliament demanding better welfare and wages — 'a man's wage for a man's job' was the call when women were recruited into the armaments factories. The ELFS was renamed the Workers' Suffrage Federation.

This combination of philanthropy (Sylvia managed to get money from some of her old middle class suffrage allies to fund these activities) with working class struggle had a radicalising effect on Sylvia. When news arrived of the victorious February revolution in Russia she was elated, immediately calling for a negotiated peace on Russia's terms. The failure of the Provisional Government just demonstrated more clearly to her why a more thorough transformation of society was necessary, and when the Bolsheviks led the workers to power in October she was convinced that this was the course she must follow in Britain. Already in July of 1917 she had published a column in *Womens' Dreadnought* calling for the armed forces to mutiny. The ensuing police raids of her offices led her to harden her position. She changed the name of the paper to *Workers' Dreadnought.*

BOLSHEVISM

Sylvia's subsequent romance with Bolshevism and the Comintern (CI) is the episode which brings sharpest criticism from Romero, and scant coverage from Castle. Romero's whole argument is that Sylvia was a radical who flitted from one cause to another, dedicating herself totally for a period to each but then moving on to some new interest. She argues that Sylvia's radical politics originated in her childhood and early adult experience of rejection: Christabel was always the favoured daughter, Emmeline and Christabel ran the WSPU and excluded her. The resulting anger, according to Romero, fuelled her radical politics including her period in the CI. She quotes Lillian Hellman who wrote that *'a rebel cannot be a good revolutionary'*, and argues that Sylvia confirms this by her rejection of the revolutionary discipline required in the CI. It is true that Sylvia never learned the true political method of Bolshevism, and could not bring herself to accept democratic centralism, which went against the middle-class, autocratic way in which she ran her organisations, nor the scientific considerations of tactics and strategy that are the foundations of a revolutionary party. But Romero rejects more than this in her criticism of this period of Sylvia's life.

Sylvia was undoubtedly ultra-left. She came to agree with Bolshevism through her own experience in the East End plus the impact of the Russian Revolution. Yet she never became part of a group that could train her in Marxism — her only schooling was the reforming socialism of Keir Hardie. She therefore transposed her wish for a Bolshevik revolution in Britain into a misunderstanding of the tasks involved. She made immediate calls for the workers to take power in 1919, for demonstrations to storm prisons to release prisoners. She declared her own WSF the CI section — renaming it the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International) despite having failed to get Lenin and the CI's backing for her group. Romero assures us that at this point in her life *'Her grip on reality was failing'*, and she indulged in *'hysterical rhetoric'*. In fact for the one and only time in her life Sylvia was attempting to pursue a course which would tackle all the injustices she saw around her in the East End of London, not simply campaign on isolated liberal issues as she spent the rest of her life doing, albeit with great vigour.

Sylvia Pankhurst clashed with Lenin over the questions of affiliation to the Labour Party by a British section of the Comintern, and over Parliamentary work. Sylvia's ultra-left rejection of such tactics reflected her petitbourgeois, moralistic approach to political life. It ultimately led to her expulsion from the British Communist Party when she failed to obey the democratic decisions of the International. Her ideas were sufficiently important for Lenin to polemicise against in *Left Wing Communism, an infantile disorder*, a testament to the respect and following she had built up as a result of her vigorous anti-war activity. She organised against intervention in Russia and was jailed again in 1921 when *Dreadnought* carried articles 'inciting the armed forces to mutiny and lawlessness'.

After her expulsion from the CP GB she continued in her campaigning, until her death in 1960. The Second World War found her vigorously campaigning against Italian intervention in Ethiopia, and led her to eventually live in that country.

Despite Sylvia's eventual collapse into adulation of Haile Sellassie it is clear that Sylvia, of all the Pankhursts, was the only one to attempt to break from her own class background and immerse herself in the struggles of the working class.

CHILDREN AND SEX

Ian Hassell reviews
The Betrayal of Youth: radical perspectives on childhood sexuality
by Warren Middleton
(CL Publications £7.95 Pbk)

'OUR COMMUNITY cannot begin rational debate about paedophilia so long as it accepts a fantastic stereotype of the paedophile, imagining a dirty old man, mentally sick, or at the very least, alcholic or senile. Using sweets, money or guile to lure innocent children to lonely places, he then does unspeakable things to them, often rounding off the awful business with sadistic murder.'

So begins Beatrice Faust's contribution to a debate on paedophilia that has been suppressed for far too long. *The Betrayal of Youth* is a series of essays by people who all recognise the validity of paedophile relationships. Although all the essays are flawed in some way the book succeeds in its essential task of stripping away many of the myths that surround this taboo subject.

The book is particularly sucessful in showing that paedophillia is about consensual child love, not child molestation or abuse. To simply conflate the two is to play into the hands of the reactionary bigots. There is much evidence produced to show that inter-generational love far from being the emotionally destructive force it is always popularly portrayed as and can be beneficial for both parties. It is usually the discovery of the relationship by outsiders and the subsequent social condemnation that ensues that causes the damage to the child.

The book also helps show that children do have a sexuality which is certainly repressed and denied them through the culture of 'innocence' and the legal weapon of the oppressive age of consent laws which police the sexual behaviour of children and youth.

The biggest flaw in the book is that it fails to offer any programme to fight the oppression and persecution of paedophiles. All forms of sexual oppression are rooted within the structure of the family under capitalism. To recognise the importance of the existing family structure of the capitalist class is to understand this oppression. On this point the book is at its weakest.

However, overall the book is a valuable contribution to the debate on the subject. It is a measure of the current moral climate that Warren Middleton was refused by every publishing house and had to publish it himself. In addition many shops are flatly refusing to stock it. While the book does not present a socialist analysis of paedophilia it will help socialists discuss and develop such an analysis.■

workers power

MINERS REJECT CODE

LAUNCH FIGHTBACK NOW!

THE MASSIVE three to one majority in favour of industrial action in the recent NUM ballot is convincing evidence of the miners' determination to resist management's offensive.

The attack on miners via the disciplinary code was something British Coal (BC) hoped it could pull off quickly and without trouble. Haslam and his gang know that they must follow up their victory in the 1984/5 strike by a strengthening of their position in every sphere of the industry. Their new code simply institutionalises the methods they began to use during the strike itself. They are driven on by the realisation that that victory did not solve their problems. *The Economist* (1 August 1987) calculated the tax loss of BC at £1.5 billion in the year 1986/7. Which privateer is going to buy that?

The combination of the management's determination to push through the code and the rank and file's will to fight back has led, temporarily at least, to the closing of ranks in the NUM leadership after the public disagreements over 'flexible working'. It is significant that the ballot itself was proposed by Des Dutfield of South Wales.

No militant should be forced by this new found unity into believing that they now have an executive that is ready to re-launch a serious fightback. Des Dutfield is still working flat out for a sell-out deal at Margam. George Bolton is churning out article after article in the Stalinist press calling for a reunion with the UDM on the scabs' terms. In fact in the new spirit of unity scabby Jack Jones in Leicester was able to get a 73% vote in favour of action in the ballot . . . because Leicester miners knew that Jones' deal for staying in the NUM was that he would never be made to call them out on any action. The danger is that unity around the code will, potentially, be used by the area barons — especially Dutfield — as a trade off. He'll oppose the code, provided National drop opposition to a deal at Margam.

The ballot was also used, in Yorkshire, to dampen down the militancy that exploded at Frickley in mid-July. There, Jack Taylor and company appealed for a return to work so as to *'maintain unity in the run up to the ballot'*. In effect they stabbed the Frickley lads in the back.

DANGER

The squandering of that militancy has had a predictably disorientating effect in Yorkshire in the campaign to re-instate Branch Secretary Ted Scott, sacked under the terms of the new code. Some pits have called for immediate strike action, others for an overtime ban and at others, such as the normally militant Armthorpe, the majority opposed taking any action.

There is a danger that the same thing will happen to the militancy displayed in the ballot. A week after the announcement of the result the membership still didn't know what action, if any, they were supposed to be taking. The union leadership is using the result as a bargaining counter in negotiation at ACAS. Militancy cannot be switched on and off repeatedly like water from a tap. If it is it will eventually pave the way for BC to trample on the workforce. The NUM's main demands in the dispute are for a return to the old agreement, or the amendment of a new code. These amendments would be: to include the right to representation by a union official of an accused miner's choosing; a simplified procedure of no more than 14 days duration and the reintroduction in all areas of neutral industrial 'umpires' whose decisions will be binding on both sides of the industry.

Obviously, 'return to status quo' is the critical response of a union when faced by an attack on conditions. But it should not become the sole objective even in a defensive dispute. The old status quo was in force when BC sacked miners for their part in the Great Strike and it did not defend them!

On top of that there is a dangerous political weakness in the NUM's insistence on 'neutral' umpires. It suggests that discipline and safety are themselves neutral issues which are equally fair for both sides of the industry — just as the law is supposedly impartial between all citizens.

Nobody in their right minds would deny the need for strict safety and disciplinary regulations in the mines. However, that does not mean that this is an area of common interest between management and workers. Safety? For whom? At what cost? Supervised by whom? Discipline? Of whom and by whom?

VETO

BC clearly realises its potential advantage in reducing the role of the union in disciplinary matters. The union should adopt the same attitude and fight to establish the right of miners to supervise both safety and disciplinary procedure with an absolute right of veto over all management proposals and decisions.

The present mood of mititancy must also not be artificially restricted to one issue among many. BC is advancing on several fronts — pay, 'flexible working', pit closures and redundancy as well as the disciplinary code. Any retreat by management in the face of militancy now would clearly be an important step forward for the NUM. Nonetheless, any such victory would be followed by further attacks — the bosses simply cannot afford to let up. That is why the fight on the disciplinary code must be seen as just one part of the overall struggle.

So apart from the immediate implementation of an overtime ban and working within the terms of the Mines and Quarries Act, both of which are possible under the ballot, a campaign for a new strike should be started now. *The Miner* and all recognised NUM papers plus special national leaflets and pamphlets must be produced linking the issue of the code with those of jobs, reinstatement of sacked men and 'flexible' working and putting the case for a strike against them. And, if another Frickley — a rolling regional strike — begins it must be spread across the areas by pickets co-ordinated in a fighting rank and file movement, and turned immediately into a national strike.

Scargill should be called on to support such action, even if it means going against his fellow bureaucrats. A rank and file movement can and must fight to replace all those in the NUM leadership who prefer collaboration with either BC or the UDM, to class struggle.■

by Steve MacSweeney



Frickley strikers showed the way.

John Harris (IFL)

COLLEGES FACE TORY AXE

IN THE first two terms of the Tory Government the funding of Further Education and Technical Colleges was savagely cut. It has fallen in real terms from £1,008,000 in 1981-2 to £985,000 in 1987-8. Student/staff ratios have deteriorated and many courses have been abolished altogether.

FE and Technical Colleges have also become more and more dominated by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). The MSC now controls 25% of all FE college budgets. In some colleges 50% of the budget comes from the MSC in funding for 'training' for YTS, Restart, JTS and other MSC slave labour projects. Colleges, desperate for cash are keen to keep on the right side of the MSC. This means that colleges are playing a key role in making the slave labour schemes like JTS look respectable. The growth of private sector training agencies also means that there will always be the threat hanging over colleges that the MSC will take their custom elsewhere.

Even before the present round of cuts, students in FE and Technical Colleges had always had a raw deal. They receive no mandatory grants from Local Authorities and are often forced to rely on parents or try and get around the DHSS '21 hour rule'. This outlaws FE students who study for more than 21 hours a week from claiming supplementary or unemployment benefit.

DOLE

The twisted Tory logic behind this is that any one studying for more hours than this will *'not be available for work'*. This wilfully ignores the fact that many students are at college to get themselves out of the cleft stick of either dole queue or YTS/JTS slavery. But the Tories have even tighter restrictions in store.

From April 1988 school leavers will not be able to claim supplementary benefit until they are over 19. The message is clear: YTS or starve! The Tories are hell bent on driving working class youth out of decent further education for good.

Many student unions in FE and Technical colleges are affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS). The NUS Executive is dominated by the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS). The Labour Party claims to be on the side of working class youth, but what has NOLS done to defend FE and Technical students, the most working class section of the student population and the hardest hit by the Tories?

Not only has NOLS failed to come up with a strategy to fight the Tories they actually refused to let Labour Clubs at FE and Technical colleges even join NOLS! When FE students got so fed up with this they formed their own organisation, Further Education Labour Students (FELS), the NOLS Executive collaborated with Kinnock to have them declared an unofficial body, which should get no support from the party.

FE students have no time to lose in organising themselves for a fight back. The first step for FE students is to ensure that their college has a student union and that it is affiliated to NUS. Opposition to the cuts in the college and a fight for decent grants for FE students is a priority issue for such unions. Rank and file students should organise occupations and demonstrations on these questions. These actions should be under the control of rank and file committees with elected, recallable delegates.

UNIONS

The NUS has tended to ignore thousands of MSC trainees at colleges. This is totally wrong. They should be involved in any struggles that take place. The union executive should be forced to mount an active campaign to encourage all YTS and JTS trainees to join an appropriate trade union and be allowed full membership of the student union irrespective of how many days they are at college.

In order to make Thatcher back down nationally over education cuts, students need to win the active support of the *organised working class*.

Most FE and Technical colleges will have several trade unions on site. While student action should not be conditional on getting site union support in advance, FE students can start the struggle to form links with these unions by gaining their support for all student action and building support for any actions the unions take against cuts or for better pay.

The key demands around which to organise a fightback are

- **No cuts or closures in the colleges. Restore all cuts made by the Tories.**
- **All FE students to get a full grant as of right. For all grants to be set at the average industrial wage. No discretionary awards. No parental contribution.**
- **For a massive expansion of the FE sector financed by the government but implemented under workers' and students' control.**
- **For the full rate of pay for YTS trainees. TUC out of the MSC.**

by Liz Wood
Birmingham Polytechnic Labour Club (in a personal capacity).