

Workers' ACTION

12 pages
15p

No. 143

June 2-9, 1979

TENS OF thousands more school leavers will be without jobs this summer.

The Tories have imposed a ban on recruitment in the civil service for the next three months. This will hit hardest in the lowest clerical grades, where turnover is biggest — and where many school leavers would normally find jobs.

The SCPS (the higher grade civil service workers' union) has already called for an overtime ban and no cover for vacant posts. And the IRSF, the tax staffs' union, has also imposed a no cover policy.

The National Executive of the CPSA (the biggest civil service union) will be deciding on action this week, and the Section Executive in the DHSS is calling for industrial action on cuts in staffing.

The immediate reason for the ban on recruitment is the last pay deal. The Government intends to claw back about £80 million of the £270 million increase in the wages bill by cutting jobs — in other words, to force through a productivity deal via cash limits.

There are currently between 7,500 and 11,000 vacancies in the civil service, mainly in lower grades. The three-month ban is scheduled to cut 22,000 jobs, or 3% of the civil service total. It could cut more sharply in some London departments where turnover reaches 30% a year.

Only individual office-by-office exemptions will be allowed.

It is only a continuation of what Labour started, and a beginning of what the Tories intend. The DHSS is currently trying to axe 1,000 posts. The budget on June 12th will certainly promise more cuts. Other public sector workers — teachers, builders on direct works, and hospital

CIVIL SERVICE CUTS

SAVE JOBS, CUT HOURS

by Stephen Corbishley (CPSA NEC, in personal capacity)

workers — will also be under attack.

The Tories' ban relies for its effect on 'natural wastage', i.e. staff turnover, rather than sackings, so they hope they can get it through without too much resistance as a softening-up exercise. And the union full-time officials' response has been

plaintive bleating. CPSA General Secretary Ken Thomas said the ban was 'a silly act and an unnecessary act'.

The effective response must be:

- No overtime
- Every vacant post must be blacked.
- No job flexibility to off-

set the unfilled vacancies.

■ The unions should refuse to cooperate on new machinery and procedures until the recruiting ban is lifted.

Official backing must be guaranteed for any action taken by branches and workplaces against the cuts, and if workers are suspended for



Now civil service workers are in front line of the fight

refusing to cover or cooperate, the unions must reply with industrial action.

The Tories will talk about cutting waste and bureaucracy. The real issues — saving jobs, saving services, combating speed-up — must be got across, first to the civil service unions' membership and then to the broader labour movement. The unions should call meetings in work time to discuss and organise against the measures, and develop rank and file links with other public sector unions, to extend the fight and get their members

prepared for the further cuts to come when Howe announces his plans on June 12th.

But no reliance can be placed on the TUC Public Service Committee, or the top bureaucrats of the National Steering Committee Against the Cuts. Rank and file members must keep control of the fight. And it must be linked to the general fight on jobs: the fight to cut hours without loss of pay, to share out the work under workers' control, and to unite employed and unemployed round the demand for jobs for all.

INSIDE

Magazine section: The left and the EEC, Kautsky and Luxemburg on the mass strike p.8-11

International: Iran, Namibia p.2, p.5

Analysis: the left and the elections p.6-7

The Tory axe and the fightback p.3

Private medicine and the NHS p.12

FUND DRIVE

Received this week:

East London.....	£21
Manchester.....	£55
Total to date.....	£136
Target.....	£500

to help cover the cost of expanding WA to 12 pages.
Send contributions to: Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Iran: fight for the Constituent Assembly

IRAN'S Islamic rulers have now junked their repeated promises to call elections for a constituent assembly. The draft constitution due to be ready on June 8th will be discussed by 'representatives' drawn from the differ-

ent regions and national minorities.

After that discussion, the draft will go to the secret 'revolutionary council' headed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Then it will be voted on in a plebiscite.

The people of Iran are faced with a repeat of the March referendum, where they could simply vote 'yes' or 'no' to Khomeini's 'Islamic Republic' — with the warning that those who voted 'no' would be branded

as supporters of the Shah!

Having mobilised the people of Iran against the Shah, Khomeini and his bourgeois allies now want to stop any mobilisation, and to consolidate a new repressive regime. In block-

ing Constituent Assembly elections, they aim to cut dead all real political debate in the country.

Meanwhile, although Khomeini has said the death penalty should henceforth only be used against those guilty of using their authority to instigate or carry out murders, three people accused of sex crimes have been put to death. In Tehran two youths have been executed after being found guilty of a homosexual rape. (The victim of the rape was said to have committed suicide). A third person for shot for having allegedly raped his ten year old niece.

The attempt to whip up Islamic moral feeling, and the political blackmail of the referendum, are Khomeini's weapons in trying to stop and reverse the revolution. But Iran's workers and peasants have not said their last word. They still need our support — now, first of all, in the fight to make sure the Constituent Assembly is convened despite Khomeini and his government.

... See inside, page 5: The workers and Khomeini.



Turkoman fighters facing Khomeini's troops. By not calling a Constituent Assembly he hopes to evade the demands of the national minorities like the Turkomans and Kurds, appealing instead to their common religion — Islam.

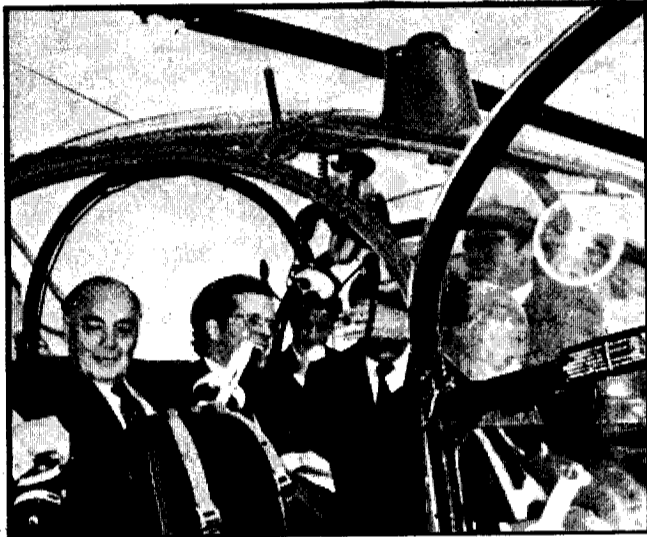
The mass strikes of 1973, the fall of Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique in 1974-5, and the Soweto rising of 1976, have shaken white supremacy in South Africa.

But as the threat to apartheid grows, the apartheid rulers fight for every inch. The proposals of the recent Wiehahn Commission for making South African labour law more flexible have been cut down to very little by the Government under pressure from the die-hard right wing. And in mineral-rich Namibia, South Africa has flatly defied the United Nations appeals to withdraw, by setting up a National Assembly which will run Namibia in close association with South Africa and on the South African model.

For the same powers that pass United Nations resolutions against apartheid also profit from apartheid. Britain, the USA, and other big capitalist powers have major interests in South Africa and Namibia. Although they might prefer minor reforms of apartheid, they will never side with the black workers and peasants of Southern Africa in revolt against the apartheid system.

NEIL COBBETT outlines how the white rulers established their grip on Namibia and what they get out of it today.

★ This feature is based on 'The Workers of Namibia' by Gillian and Suzanne Cronje, published by the International Defence and Aid Fund.



Harry Oppenheimer of Anglo-American in his private helicopter. Anglo-American alone reaps profits of £50 a year for every man, woman and child in Namibia.

WHO OWNS NAMIBIA?

THE NAMIBIAN economy is dominated by mining. The country has rich mineral deposits that include diamonds and silver, copper, lead and zinc, uranium, vanadium and wolfram. Oil and natural gas are being prospected for. Mining contributed 32% of the gross domestic product, and 70% of exports, in 1977.

Mining is controlled by a number of multinational companies. The most important of these, Consolidated Diamond Mines, is controlled by the giant Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, which holds a monopoly of diamond mining in Namibia. In 1974 its profits were £46 million, out of which £17 million was paid out in dividends to its predominantly overseas shareholders.

Rössing Uranium Ltd, which operates the largest open-cast uranium mine in the world, is controlled by the British firm Rio Tinto Zinc.

In the early 1970s foreign investment was running at £25 million a year. The returns were rich, with dividends covering initial capital investments within a couple of years.

In 1975 the UN computed the poverty datum line [the amount of money necessary for a family to survive on] in Windhoek at £78 a month. In 1978 the University of Port Elizabeth calculated the household subsistence level for black families at £93 a month.

The average per capita income for blacks in Namibia is £72 a year — roughly a third of the University of Port Elizabeth's estimated subsistence level. Meanwhile, white per capita income averages around £1734 a year — 24 times that of blacks.

Before the 1971-2 general strike of contract workers, wages were even worse. Between 1971 and 1975 wages for

black miners at Tsumeb mine almost doubled from an average of \$64 a month (only \$28 of which was paid in cash) to \$120 a month (\$64 in cash). But at the same time average cash wages for white miners rose from \$494 a month to \$750. White workers still got 12 times as much in cash as black workers, as well as non-cash benefits in the form of housing, free schooling, hospital and recreational facilities.

In 1976 a Lutheran pastor did a survey into black workers' wages in Windhoek. He reported wages of £3.5 to £14.5 per month for farm workers; £6 per month for domestic servants; £17 to £58 per month on the railways and £23 to £46 for hotel workers. These were the figures that the employers gave, and often black workers claimed their wages were even lower. For hospital workers the official figure was £18.5 per month.

Where black trade unions haven't been suppressed, they have been barely permitted to exist, and attempts to take industrial action have been crushed. Strikers have been fined, jailed and killed.

Under a 1952 law, white and 'coloured' workers are allowed to strike, as long as they meet certain conditions (and strikes are prohibited in 'essential services' and during the period of an industrial agreement or award). But Africans are excluded from this right, and effectively all strikes by black workers are illegal. Strikers can also be arrested under the Terrorism Act for disrupting industry.

All unions are banned from any support or affiliation to political parties. This is especially aimed at the National Union of Namibian Workers, which is the trade union wing of the South West Africa Peoples Organisation.

Namibia

Apartheid's colony

NAMIBIA (South West Africa) was colonised by Germany in the nineteenth century. The black population was forcibly dispossessed of land and cattle, and at least 80,000 people were butchered by the German army. In 1915 South African troops snatched Namibia from the Germans, and in 1920 the League of Nations mandated South Africa to administer the country.

By this time the South African regime had begun to consolidate and to systematically enforce the emerging policies of apartheid. Even in the north, where German colonisation had hardly penetrated, the African people were now stripped of their land and their rights.

Two years later the South African government announced its plans for 'native reserves'. The foundations of racial segregation and the migrant labour system were

being firmly laid. Black Namibians existed first and foremost to serve the white owned economy. Africans were only tolerated in white-occupied areas to form a labour supply for the white-owned farms.

Taxes were introduced to force people to work for money wages. Africans who didn't submit to wage labour were threatened with deportation from white occupied areas under the Vagrancy Act. Convicts were hired out to employers. Welfare officers were sent to the African reserves 'to see that there was no loafing', and Christian churches were required to urge blacks to seek employment in the wage sector.

Today Namibia's economy is based on a contract labour system. The population has been classified on a racial basis into 12 'ethnic' or 'population' groups, each of

which, with the exception of 'whites' and 'coloureds' has been allocated its own, ultimately 'self-governing', homeland or tribal reserve. Forty per cent of Namibia has been allocated to the black population numbering 720,000, and 43% of the land to the whites who number 99,000. The rest is directly controlled by the South African government. All the main mining and manufacturing businesses have been included in the white area, as has all the most productive arable and stock-rearing land. The 'homelands' are utterly impoverished areas with poor land turned over to subsistence farming.

The homelands are incapable of supporting their populations. Most black Namibians have to choose between starvation and working for a white employer — which usually means leav-

ing the homelands and seeking work in the white zone as migrant labour. Between half and three quarters of the 481,000-strong black labour force is migrant labour, of whom 50,000 work on white-owned farms, and 75,000 as domestic servants.

Only a small minority of migrant workers have acquired residential rights in black townships or on farms in the white zone. Most black workers are not allowed to have their families with them and must return to the homelands as soon as their labour contracts expire. They have few rights in the white zone and are forced to live in hostels or compounds, which are frequently overcrowded. They sleep on concrete bunks, lack even the most basic amenities, and are constantly supervised and harassed by cops and bosses.

When the workers fought back

ON 13th December 1971 a general strike of 20,000 migrant workers began, which lasted until 20th January 1972 and shut down the mining industry and almost paralysed communications, transport, farming and commerce.

The aim of the strike was to end the contract labour system. More immediate causes were the introduction of photos on passes, making evasion of the security laws more difficult. And the final spark was a comment by the Commissioner General for Indigenous Peoples of South West Africa that contract labour wasn't a form of slavery because the workers concerned signed their

support. On 11th December armed police were sent to Walvis Bay. On 13th, 6,000 contract workers in Windhoek refused to go to work and were besieged in their compounds.

The strike spread to Walvis Bay, Grootfontein and the copper mines at Rehoboth and Tsumeb. A strike committee was set up to formulate demands, and pledged itself to reject any terms which the workers didn't accept or weren't consulted over.

The repression was fierce. Mistakenly, the workers and strike committee decided that all striking contract workers should return home and raise as big a crop as

the collaborator chiefs and officials and killed informers. Meanwhile the South Africans had begun an elaborate propaganda campaign headed by M.C.Botha, Minister of Bantu Administration. He held meetings with the employers, officials of the Native Labour Association, and the Ovambo and Kavango bantustan authorities. An 'agreement' was reached and quickly broadcast, using the name of one of the leaders of the strike committee.

On 26th January the South African army was sent into Namibia. A total black-out was imposed on the north and a reign of terror followed. Strike meetings and gatherings were attacked and fired on. People were rounded up and arrested on a mass scale. On 30th Jan-

Basically, a new system of collaboration with the bantustan authorities to administer contract labour had been worked out, with some cosmetic reforms to entice the workers back to work. Eventually, repression and hunger forced the workers back, and the new reality became clear. All the essentials of the contract system remained, and in some cases were worsened as employers exacted their revenge for the strike.

Some groups of workers did win wage rises, though many were deceived by the conditions attached. Actual wages rose by between 10% and 20%, while the minimum paid wages went up more. Some of this was offset by the withdrawal of fringe benefits and payments in kind, as employers claimed workers could now afford to pay for their own food, clothes and transport.

The greatest impact of the strike was on the strikers themselves. It increased their militancy and self-confidence and made it clear to the white rulers that some sort of changes would have to be made. The immediate response of the South African government was to accelerate its programme of 'indirect rule' for Namibia (i.e. the establishment of 'self-governing' bantustans) as well as to make cosmetic changes in the contract labour system itself.

From 1972 things could never be the same again, for the mass walk-outs had made their mark on the attitudes of every migrant worker.



SWAPO supporters in Windhoek, December 1978.

contracts voluntarily.

The strike call came from Walvis Bay where 3,200 workers, mainly from the Ovambo region, were employed in fish canneries. Delegates and letters were sent out to other areas for national

they could before negotiating, to make them independent of wage labour. This was just what the authorities needed, allowing them to disperse the strikers and to recruit scab workers to keep their industry going.

uary an unarmed group of Ovambos were fired on as they left the Anglican church at Epings after Mass. Four were killed and four wounded; two of the wounded later died. In response, the people burned the homes of

The council cuts...

THE TORY government has been quick to follow up its announcement of a three month freeze on civil service recruitment with similar policies aimed at slashing local government spending.

Although the rate support grant will be increased to cover the full amount of a new police pay increase, most of the pay rises won by other local government employees (including teachers) will not be supported from central government funds.

This will mean that local authorities are faced with the prospect either of issuing large supplementary rate demands in October, or making large-scale reductions in staff, through direct sackings or through natural wastage.

Given the experience of large rate increases in April (up to 40%), cuts are the most likely outcome.

Coming after local authority services had already been bled dry by the Labour Government, these measures can only mean that public services become more run-down, disrupted, and inefficient. The effect of the cash limits imposed by the Labour government range from bad road maintenance to curtailed social services.

A fight against these policies must be organised now, linking local government workers, teachers and civil servants. The union machinery and the newly elected local Labour councils can both be used in this fight, but from recent statements their activity will be restricted to trying to alleviate the effects of Government policy rather than fighting directly against that policy, unless united rank and file action forces them into a political fight.

ALAN CHERRETT

Organise now!

THE GOVERNMENT is making it easier for Tory councils to dismantle their housing stock and leave tenants waiting for ever to get transfers from tower blocks or run-down estates. Immediate measures will make it easier to sell council houses.

Further into the future, the Tories promise a law to compel councils to sell their houses to sitting tenants. This threat has produced a noisy and hostile response. Labour councils in Manchester, South Yorkshire, the London boroughs and elsewhere have said they will defy the Tories.

But the same happened with the Tories' legislation to compel councils to increase rents, the 1972 Housing Finance Act. Dozens of Labour councils said they would defy it. Only a handful did. Only Clay Cross stuck it out to the end, and they were 'left to rot' by the Labour leaders.

This time, too, the Government is waiting for the windbags to run out of hot air, hoping that the rash of 'defiance' will leave no permanent campaign.

The lesson is clear. We should organise a campaign in full knowledge of the fact that many councils, when faced with 'the majesty of the law', will simply rat out of the fight.

Councillors looking for loopholes in the Tory legislation will probably be disappointed. One way of preventing the loss of houses while complying with orders to put them on the market seemed to be to delay a valuation, or just 'overprice' the houses. The Tories plan to block this (as *Labour Weekly* reported on May 18th) by allowing tenants to go to the

District Valuer (an employee of the Department of the Environment), who will make an independent valuation binding on the council.

For *Labour Weekly*, this meant "there would be nothing the council could do about it". This is an evasion. Whatever else the Tories do with the law, they are not going to change the law of property to allow one body to sell another's property! The councils will still have to choose to defy the law or carry it out.

Tenants and trade unionists — especially council workers who stand to see jobs decimated by Tory policies (already, next year's rate support grants will exclude the wage costs of any new or replacement staff taken on as from now) — must start organising now. They can push wavering councils to stand firm. And Labour councils who are really willing to fight will need the support of council workers, to stop the top full-time council officials sabotaging the fight.

Labour councils determined to fight should also demand the national backing of the labour movement — and insist that a repetition of the scandal of the Labour Party's refusal to lift the Tory penalties on the Clay Cross councillors will not be tolerated.

Organising to fight is what's needed, not trying to wriggle round the coming Tory attacks. The Tories have given warning. They have also left a breathing space. They hope to see the labour movement 'letting off steam'. We should use the space to build up the steam to an explosion.

NIK BARSTOW

...and don't trust the councils

LABOUR councillors in Barnsley have come under fire for saying they will refuse to sell council houses despite any Tory legislation that would force them to do it.

Cllr. Fred Lunn has said that the Labour-controlled borough council, by taking this stand, is simply implementing its election manifesto. Lunn also said that a circular sent to all council tenants 18 months ago asking if they wanted to buy their homes produced a reply from only 3% of them.

Sheffield council has also reacted angrily to the prospect of its cheap bus fare policy being attacked by the

Tory government. (Sheffield has the lowest bus fares in the country.)

The last Labour government wasn't too happy with it either, and held back much-needed money, demanding the council put up the bus fares. It refused.

But talk of South Yorkshire 'doing a Clay Cross' is premature. However, militants in the unions and Labour Party should support the two councils' stand against the Tory attacks and demand that those who are only mouthing phrases put their money where their mouth is.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

EDITORIAL

Democracy and the right to fight back

LAST WEEK James Callaghan and Denis Healey called on workers not to take industrial action against Tory Government policies.

Callaghan said that the Tories have a mandate and should be allowed to rule. Healey said: 'Nothing would suit Mrs Thatcher better than to have trade unions appearing to justify her policies by taking industrial action'.

On Healey's logic, workers should never demand wage rises because that would 'appear to justify' moneyed hypocrites who say that workers are greedy. They should aim to be the 'deserving poor'.

Callaghan's argument has more to it, if only because it is the same as Thatcher's: trade union action, especially strikes, beyond a very limited level, threatens democracy.

Callaghan and the Tories have turned the concept of democracy upside down in a curious way. For them, it is always the mass of the people — and particularly the people with least wealth and power — who 'threaten democracy', never the governments, never the rich and powerful.

So much for any radical notion of democracy as control by the people over the government! So much for the idea that the first principle of democracy is the people's right to organise and protest, to demonstrate, to strike, and to picket. The democratic ideals of the bourgeoisie of two centuries ago are too radical for Callaghan.

Callaghan (and the Tories) complain about the unions

being beyond the control of the law. Actually they want to subject the unions to stricter control than the law. For industrial action against pay beds, or against Tory proposals for anti-picket laws, is not illegal.

Of course, the Tories may change the law to make those protests illegal, but only a policeman's concept of democracy would make all illegal action undemocratic.

The argument about the Tories' mandate is a complete phoney.

Parliamentary governments are not mandated to



Callaghan: watching out to stop a fightback

carry out particular policies. They are mandated to rule. They are not bound by the vague promises in their manifestos, and they do not even pretend to calculate what they do on particular issues according to majority opinion. Indeed, they usually boast that they are 'willing to take unpopular measures in the national interest'.

Thus curbs on union rights are not, and cannot be, made 'democratic' by the fact they were included in

the Tory manifesto and the Tories won an election majority.

What sort of a 'mandate' have the Tories got? Parliamentary democracy assumes that most of what a government does will be determined by factors that have nothing to do with elections: in short, by the interests of the ruling class, and more specifically by the interpretation of those interests by the permanent state apparatus.

The Tories are 'mandated' to run the state affairs of the ruling class. From no point of view does that make everything they do democratic. For democracy is not about voting and then putting up with whatever the government does.

The bourgeoisie do not leave politics to the ballot box. How could they? The ballot box, on their own admission, only decides who sits in the ministries, not what the ministries do. Ruling class pressure groups throw constant efforts into influencing governments, quite apart from the ballot box. And it is those influences which decide what governments do, day to day.

As long as the ruling class remains stable, parliamentary democracy serves as a means to gain the consent of the majority... and thus to keep that ruling class stable. As soon as the class struggle goes beyond certain limits, parliamentary democracy solves nothing. The Chilean generals knew that; the British Tories knew it too, when they declared in 1914, while encouraging armed resistance to the Liberal Government's Bill for Home Rule

in Ireland, that "there are things stronger than parliamentary majorities".

Callaghan is appealing to workers not to use their democratic rights — their rights within bourgeois, parliamentary democracy. He shows that he is not even a good bourgeois democrat.

But his arguments have a logic. The use by the working class of bourgeois democratic rights creates a different sort of democracy — the democracy of the strike committee, the picket line, and the mass meeting, where the electors control their delegates and have the right of recall.

That working class democracy, extended to the whole of society, means that the mass of the people are raised to the level of actively controlling production and controlling society. Unlike bourgeois parliamentary democracy, it means that no privileged minority ruling class, no domination of private economic power behind formal political democracy, is possible.

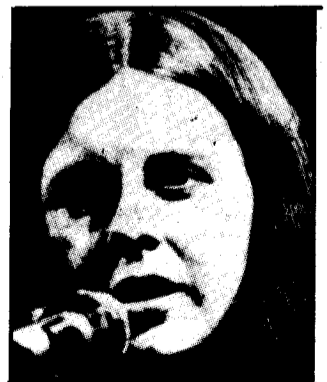
It is what Margaret Thatcher was frightened of during the lorry drivers' strike, when she spoke of 'the country being run by strike committees'.

In the coming battles against the Tories, it will be our democracy (and our class interests) against their class interests. And the first step in strengthening our democracy should be to call Callaghan to account, to commit every Labour Party and trade union branch to oppose his sell-out policies, and to reaffirm our determination to fight the Tories by any means necessary.

JUNE 7: MPs FOR EUROPE'S WORKERS, NOT FOR BRITAIN

Losing sight of the class struggle, most of the left have posed the question of the EEC as 'Britain against Brussels'. This nationalist approach has gripped the left like a fever... even if some, like the IMG, try to wave the banner of working class internationalism at the same time.

Workers' Action advocates a vote for Labour candidates in the European elections and a fight to make them use the EEC's chamber as a platform from which to rally workers throughout Europe for a united class struggle.



Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey is standing as an Anti-Repression candidate for the European Parliament. She knows it's a talking shop, "But if I'm elected, I'll be talking about Ireland". "It's been 60 years since the Irish people voted in the same election", she points out. "Then Sinn Fein won a mandate for an Ireland independent of Britain. That's why the British partitioned our country. I want to rekindle that spirit".

SEE PAGE 8: Feature on the EEC

ACTON Works London Transport Shop Stewards' Committee and several other shop stewards' committees are sponsoring a 'rank and file' conference on the theme 'Defend our Unions', on June 23rd in Manchester. The major political force behind the conference is the Socialist Workers' Party.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY, a newly-elected member of the National Executive of the civil service workers' union CPSA, gave Workers' Action his views on the issues facing the conference.

The union leaders have learned from 1970-74. They would prefer to negotiate with the Tories, to restrain Tory policies and restrain the rank and file. They will oppose the sort of mass action which nearly won the struggle at Grunwick.

Many trade union and Labour leaders want to continue the approach of the Concordat with the Tories in power, to hold back the struggle and haggle with the Tories. Callaghan has condemned any industrial action against Tory policies.

The key is to organise and develop solidarity with every workers' struggle, to ensure

ANTI-TORYISM WON'T BE ENOUGH THIS TIME EITHER

that the arguments are won and that direct efforts are made to give support and assist secondary picketing.

For this we need a fight for democracy in the movement. At our union conference we decided to hold union elections in workplace meetings in work time. Without that sort of democracy and direct involvement of the membership, militancy can be brittle and easily broken.

Trades Councils and local Labour Parties must turn outwards to become organising centres for struggle. The fight in the Labour Party is very important. We are on the defensive now because of

a double result of the election: the Tories won, and the Labour leaders also won in terms of having their right-wing policies dominate the campaign for Labour's re-election. The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory tried to push a socialist alternative, but more needed to be done.

We now face a double task in building a rank and file movement: this Tory government will be harder and sharper in its perceptions than the last one, and the trade union bureaucracy has learnt too. We should have no illusions that a Tory government means that anti-

Toryism will automatically produce direct action and solidarity.

Looking back at the rank and file movements over the last ten years, many emerged from official disputes. They pushed the action further than the official leadership wanted, but they were going with the grain. It was partly because they failed to understand this that IS and Socialist Worker overestimated the success of the rank and file groupings and drove them to shipwreck under the Labour Government.

The rank and file movements grew in two forms in the struggle against

Heath. The militant left caucuses have declined. The combine committees and shop stewards' organisations have continued to grow but become more bureaucratised. The health and safety representatives are another example of the institutionalisation of a whole area of working class organisation.

Simple anti-Toryism was not enough last time, and it will be even less so now, with the Concordat and the TUC's open opposition to militant picketing. There is a major political and ideological battle to be fought. The Tories' campaign on the closed

shop shows that.

The ruling class is generally not against the closed shop. They often rely on the closed shop to help control the rank and file. But the Tories take up the issue to help isolate militants and workers who want aggressive policies.

The 'Defend the Unions' conference must take up the political questions of law and order, the state, workers' control, and the rights of black people and of women. On unemployment, we cannot just call for the right to work, but must convince workers that right can be won by a campaign to cut hours and share work out.

Our union passed a motion committing it to a policy of cutting hours in response to the threat of losing 1000 jobs from having the unemployed sign fortnightly. Without this demand, we can create no unity across unions and beyond unions, between employed and unemployed.

★ 'Defend the Unions' conference: June 23rd, at the New Century Hall, Manchester. Credentials for trade union delegates £1 from 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4

FBU Conference Showing a healthy distrust for the officials

AT the Fire Brigades Union conference on 16-18 May, a moving account of the events at Southall and of the death there of Blair Peach was given by a fireman who was there. The conference agreed to support the call for an independent inquiry into Blair Peach's death, and also to donate £50 to the memorial fund.

Many speakers wore Firemen Against the Nazis badges, showing the success the group has had among union activists. But at station level, where only a tiny handful of blacks have jobs, the fight against racism has still to be won. One step would be for the union to demand that the Fire Brigade takes on more black workers.

But the resolution on Southall was a start.

On other issues, too, the delegates adopted an independent stance and showed a healthy distrust of the officials. They showed a determination not to let the



FBU leaders — still not trusted

gains of last year's strike slip from their grasp.

An Executive-sponsored move to extend the period of office of full-timers from four

to six years was defeated. The main reason given by the EC for this rule-change was that the membership found regular and numerous elections confusing. Little

wonder delegates found themselves profoundly unconfused when voting on that one!

Several resolutions called for the maintenance of firemen's wages at the level of the upper quartile of skilled manual workers after November of this year, when the formula that ended the strike will be fully implemented. A composite to this effect was carried unanimously.

However, it contained certain dangers. It was so woolly and imprecise that it could be taken to mean that we want a permanent comparability study, thus removing the FBU from direct wage bargaining and relying on the struggles of others — and on the goodwill of governments — for our wage rises.

Of course we wish to maintain and improve our recently raised real wages. But comparability studies are a dangerous trap, as the civil service workers have discovered.

And if we are determined to maintain a decent wage level using the strength of our union, we should guard against the percentage deals of this year and last, which have massively widened differentials.

While the firemen, leading firemen and sub-officers, who fought the strike, got between £14 and £20 rise last year, the divisional officers and other ranks who scabbed on the strike were rewarded with rises of £30 a week or more. A straight money claim and settlement would be to the advantage of the vast majority of the union's membership.

The events of the last three years have transformed the FBU from a sleeping organisation into an active, fighting one with a high level of participation. If the rank and file are to extend and consolidate the control we now have over our leaders, we must ensure it stays that way.

DOUG MACKAY

workers' ACTION

For more information, or to subscribe to Workers' Action, complete this form and send to the address below:

NAME

ADDRESS

- I want more information
 I want to be put in touch with Workers' Action supporters in my area
 I want to subscribe for 25 issues/50 issues.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES Rest of the world, air mail
25 issues: £9
50 issues: £16.50

Britain & Ireland Surface mail
25 issues: £6.75
50 issues: £12.75

Cheques etc. payable to 'Workers' Action'. These new subscription rates come into operation from the beginning of June, in line with the expansion of the paper to 12 pages and the rise in price to 15p.

SEND TO: W A PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Socialist Organiser

June issue will be out on June 9th.

Socialist Organiser groups are being set up in every area where the paper has active supporters. For more information, or for details of your local Socialist Organiser group, send this form to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16. For a copy of the June Socialist Organiser, send 22p in stamps.

NAME

ADDRESS

'SO' STAYS MONTHLY

'SOCIALIST Organiser', the paper launched by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, is to be continued as a monthly, the Steering Committee of the SCLV decided on May 13th.

The SCLV was successful in putting forward an alternative voice to Callaghan's "steady as she goes" policy in a number of areas, but it was Socialist Organiser that really tied the campaign's work together. The paper has grown as regards circulation, the areas of the country where it is sold, and the spread of activists writing for it.

Equip

Now we plan to build Socialist Organiser groups in every area where there are supporters and readers. These groups should not just operate as left caucuses for Labour Party GMC (though they will do that, too), but also organise programmes of political discussion and organise Labour Party members to turn outwards to the struggles in the work-

places and the communities. And the SO groups will decide on the paper's approach and content through delegate Editorial Board meetings every two months.

The SCLV Steering Committee was unanimous that we must involve socialists outside the Labour Party, especially union militants, in the fight to renovate the labour movement and equip it to fight the Tories.

There were different views on what was likely to happen on the left in the Labour Party. Everyone recognised that the mainstream 'left' shared the responsibility for the election defeat by refusing to fight the Labour government's policies which paved the way for the Tories, but is that left likely to grow quickly now the Tories are back?

Socialist Challenge supporters argued that the 'Bennite' current around the recently-formed Labour Coordinating Committee would grow quickly into a major force, and that SO should work to build it and become a tendency within it.

Workers' Action supporters pointed out that the growth of this 'left' is by no means such a cut and dried matter. The growth of the Labour left is very much dependent upon when and how the first real battles with the Tories take place — and on how well revolutionaries can use the present 'phony war' period (while the 'Establishment' left is still weak) to organise forces for a fight-back based on class struggle policies rather than reformist prescriptions for the next Labour government.

Debate

The Steering Committee agreed to Workers' Action proposals that Socialist Organiser should debate with supporters of groups like the LCC to try to win them to policies for organising a fight now and away from the reformist 'wouldn't it be nice if', 'think-tank' approach — but also stressed joint work with the LCC on issues such as democracy and accountability in the labour movement

NIK BARSTOW

"THOSE WHO incite the workers to continue striking are guilty of treason greater than the assassins of the old regime". With these ominous words, Ayatollah Khomeini on 17th May accused the USA and USSR of financing the agitation of workers in Iran. And he called on Moslems to oppose atheists as fiercely as they opposed the Shah.

Over three months after the downfall of the Shah, the Iranian economy remains in chaos. The religious leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Council, who have effective power in the country, far from proposing a programme for solving the economic problems have from the outset been more concerned with vicious attacks on the left and militant workers as perpetrators of the problems.

The first victims of the absence of any economic programme are the three and a half million unemployed — a third of the working population. Many of them had been working on the installation of nuclear power centres; road making, the building industry, and the construction of the Tehran metro have all come to a halt. Factories remain closed and small businesses have gone bankrupt.

In early April a number of demonstrations of the unemployed took place in different cities, most notably in Tehran, Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz. A 50,000 strong protest to Ayatollah Taleghani demanded work for all and unemployment benefit immediately, with shouts of

KHOMEINI CALLS FOR PURGE OF ATHEISTS

by Mary Corbishley

'we want action not words' and 'promises don't provide bread'. Three days of sit-ins at the Ministry of Justice followed. In Shiraz the demonstrators threatened a 48-hour hunger strike.

Applications to join the army rose to 70,000 in the early weeks of April.

Prime Minister Bazargan called on those who were working to give up 1% of their earnings to a fund for the unemployed. Ayatollah Khomeini condemned those who put up prices, as contrary to Islamic morality and likely to incur the wrath of Allah, and called for the prices of basic foods to be brought down. He promised a programme of house and road building to absorb the unemployed.

In practice the main efforts of the religious leaders have gone on preventing students from gaining employment in factories or joining the peasants. The first issue of the Fedayeen newspaper Kar (Labour) reported attacks by Imam's committees on students going to factories and workers going to the universities.

The purging of 'non-Islamic' elements from the media continues; a number of journalists were recently sacked from the leading Tehran daily Kayhan on such pretexts.

On the large May Day demonstrations, the Association for the Unemployed joined the 100,000-strong march of the left alongside other workers, students and



Unemployed workers on the May Day march in Tehran

intellectuals, demanding nationalisation of foreign companies; the right to strike; the participation of workers in drawing up the constitution; and the democratisation of the press.

The demand for an accurate presentation in the press has been a consistent one by the unemployed. As one of their leaders said, 'they have presented us sometimes as lazy, as good-for-nothings, and sometimes as counter-revolutionaries'.

The Islamic Republican Party has come out clearly with attacks on the rights of workers. Their leader Bani Sadr called on workers to denounce the strike weapon as likely to inflict harm on the economy. The setting up of Islamic Workers' Committees has been counterposed to the organisation of trade unions.

In the face of continued opposition, Khomeini has raised the banner of Islamic nationalism ever higher. 'I count on the patriotism of Iranians, on their solidarity in the face of western intrigue, to give the government time to resolve the problems'.

The condemnation of oppositionists as counter-revolutionaries reached new heights on May 25th. Two demonstrations were to take place outside the US embassy, as both the left and the Islamic Republican Party gathered to protest against the US Senate's resolution condemning the executions in Iran. The Islamic demonstrators seized the opportunity to attack the march by the left: they were fulfilling Khomeini's call for the purging of atheists.

But the failure of the gov-

ernment to solve any of the problems of the economy, and the recent derisory offer by the Minister of Labour, Darioush Farouhar, of £60 million for welfare payments in the coming year, has only increased the determination of the unemployed workers. Their association has said it will step up its activities.

Meanwhile, despite the denunciations of strikers, 7,000 dockers are on strike in the port of Khorramshahr.

In the light of the increasingly anti-working class stance of Khomeini and his followers, the continued opposition and organisation of workers will be the measure of the revolutionary potential in Iran, combined with the building of a revolutionary party which can lead the struggles of the workers to victory.

SLEEP TORTURE IN PADDINGTON GREEN

ACCORDING TO the *Guardian*, "it is understood that the prisoners at Paddington Green and other police stations, particularly those charged with drunkenness are routinely woken at night to make sure they have come to no harm".

A doctor described Jimmy Scanlon, a member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), as "virtually begging for sleep" after he had been woken every half hour for four nights in Paddington Green. He was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on Tuesday 22nd in wave of over a dozen arrests of Irish militants in Britain, allegedly in connection with the bombing of top Tory Airey Neave's car on March 30th.

Other 'suspects' received the same treatment. Peter Grimes, a former IRSP member, was held for over 30 hours and only released after his doctor reported he was under such pressure that his mental health was at risk. Grimes himself said on Wednesday 23rd, after his release, that "I was so frightened I was prepared to write anything, confess to anything, name anybody, just so they would give me a period of peace".

Secret

It is hard to obtain any information about other 'suspects' who have been treated in the same way. At Paddington Green no information about prisoners held under the PTA is available. Their names are not listed in full, just an initial followed by the letters 'PTA'. Such prisoners can be held for up to a

week, with the permission of the Home Secretary, before being charged.

James Scanlon has not been charged at all — but is now being held in Brixton prison, having been served with an 'exclusion order'. Under the order he will be deported to the South of Ireland and forbidden to enter Britain or Northern Ireland. Scanlon is making an appeal but it stands little chance of success. It is dealt with personally by Home Secretary William Whitelaw, and his word is final.

Exiles

'Sensory deprivation' through preventing sleep is a form of torture. James Scanlon has been subjected to that and now is faced with exile and the loss of his abil-

ity to work — he moved to Britain to find a job.

The Tory government is starting as ferociously as the Labour Government left off in its persecution of Irish militants — here as well as in Ireland.

NIK BARSTOW



Peter Grimes

Defence campaign for Pat Arrowsmith

PAT Arrowsmith stood as an independent socialist candidate for Cardiff South-East in the general election, campaigning especially for British withdrawal from Ireland.

On Saturday 14th April she was arrested while making an election speech in Queen Street pedestrian precinct. The charges were: 'insulting language likely to cause a breach of the peace under the Public Order Act', 'obstructing the highway', and 'obstructing a police officer in the course of his duty'.

Arrowsmith was arrested a

second time on May 2nd while picketing Cardiff's Army recruitment office, and charged with obstruction.

A defence campaign has been set up, which says in its circular: "Fundamental issues are at stake here. The right of a socialist candidate to put across their views to the public. The right to hear Pat Arrowsmith's views, including on the British intervention in Ireland". The defence campaign is organising a petition, meetings and demonstrations: details from S.Bell, 108 Salisbury Rd, Cardiff.

Anti-Zionist held in Haifa

AS THE Israeli flag was lowered over El-Arish in the Sinai to mark the opening of the border between Egypt and Israel, the Zionist state was showing its true colours elsewhere.

In the north, the Israeli army was striking at Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon. In the negotiations with Egypt over the status of Jerusalem and over the question of 'Palestinian autonomy', the Israeli representative has taken the expectedly hard line of rejecting any notion of 'Palestinian sovereignty and any Palestinian claims on Jeru-

salem.

The previous day, Dr Uri Davis, an Israeli anti-Zionist publicist, was arrested when he arrived at Ben Gurion airport. Uri Davis, who is a senior research fellow at Bradford University's Institute of Peace Studies, has published many articles and books on Zionism and Israeli politics. He has always taken an anti-Zionist position [though with important differences from WA's position].

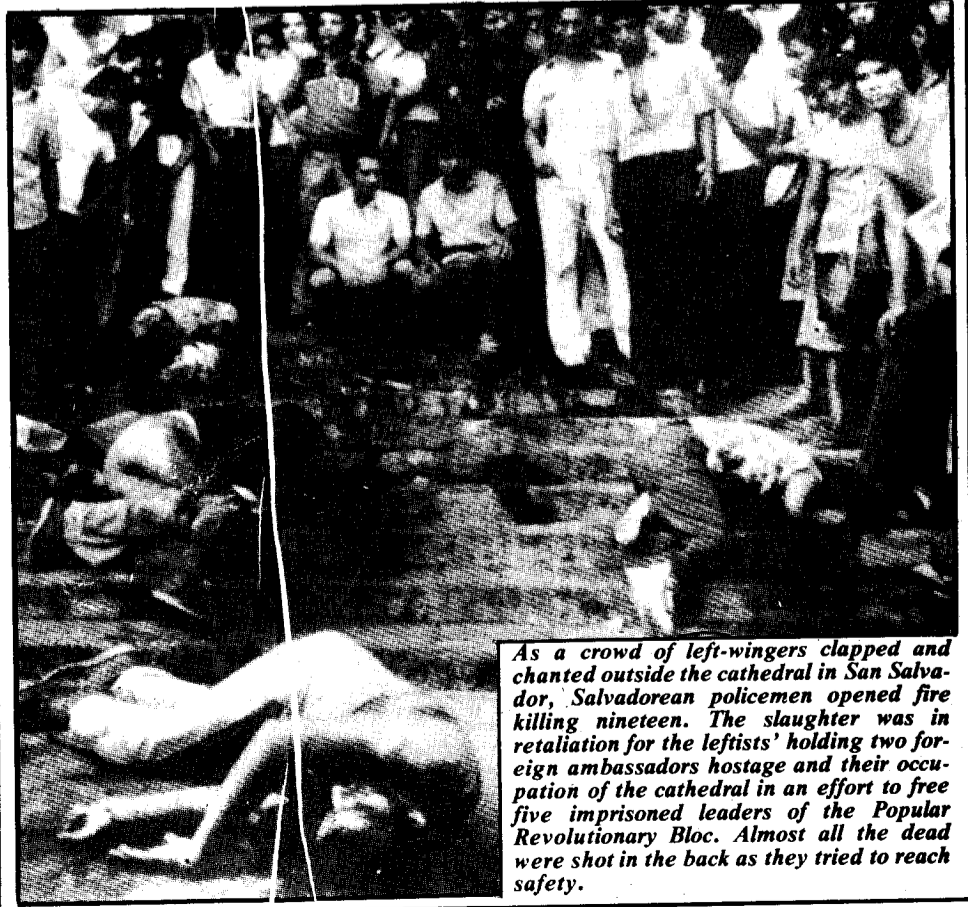
He is one of the leading socialist anti-Zionist activists outside Israel.

Dr Davis is presently being held on remand in the

Jalameh high security prison near Haifa for eight days, pending additional information from the police. It is claimed that during the interrogation by police of eight members of the Israeli-Arab Progressive Arab Students' Movement, one of the arrested Arabs told police that Dr Davis had passed on money from Fatah leader Abu Jihad for the setting up of a newspaper in Jerusalem. Dr Davis has reportedly denied the accusation.

Students at Bradford have staged a protest sit-in, and staff have met to discuss their protest.

Massacre in El Salvador



As a crowd of left-wingers clapped and chanted outside the cathedral in San Salvador, Salvadorean policemen opened fire killing nineteen. The slaughter was in retaliation for the leftists' holding two foreign ambassadors hostage and their occupation of the cathedral in an effort to free five imprisoned leaders of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc. Almost all the dead were shot in the back as they tried to reach safety.

IRON LADY WITH THE IRON HEEL



HAVING HAD time to consider and comment on the election campaign and its results, the papers of the left have mostly decided not to.

Apart from a brief analysis of the results in Scotland, Socialist Worker (May 12th) commented only on the 'humiliating' defeat of the National Front.

The NF's setback — though smaller than their losses between February and October 1974, and no greater than was to be expected from the downward trend of their vote in recent years — was partly, as SW argued, a victory for the Anti Nazi League.

But it was a victory for the ANL's longer-term onslaught on the NF, not for its work in the election itself. By the time the election came the ANL was seriously in decline, way past its peak. One of the most powerful leaflets indicting the NF was produced and circulated by the Labour Party itself.

Yet ANL activity was the Socialist Workers' Party's [SWP] only independent activity specifically focused on the election.

Interviewed in Socialist Challenge on April 12th, Duncan Hallas of the SWP blandly explained his party's political abdication.

"This [the election] is an issue we shouldn't get very excited about. In terms of the national alternatives we have to say, 'grit your teeth and vote accordingly'...

"We will not involve ourselves in the nitty-gritty of election work, because we have a series of operations that we are attempting to mount which will absorb all the energies of our people".



Readers of SW are still waiting — long after the election is over — to be told what exciting things the SWP was so busy with. SW was very excited indeed about the elections — almost every week, for nine weeks running, the elections monopolised SW's front page!

In reality Hallas was just trying to put a good face on the fact that when the election forced its way to the centre of public attention the ferociously anti-Labour SWP had nothing to say — except "vote Labour". "Callaghan may be bad, but Thatcher will be much worse", said Socialist Review (April), summing up the SWP position. Other than that the SWP explained the general desirability of socialism and advised workers not to pay too much attention to current politics, but to build a rank and file movement instead.

But the central problem the working class faced in the election was not that the party of the bosses — the Tory party — represented... ruling-class interests. It was that the party of the labour movement did not represent working class interests, and in fact stood for re-election on its record of five years of anti working class rule.

The task was to combine the fight to defeat the Tory Party in the election with creating an anti-Callaghan presence in the working class

and in the labour movement during the election, challenging Callaghan's monopoly of the politics of the labour movement (in however limited a way), countering the right wing Callaghanite election propaganda for their anti working class politics, and thus preparing a socialist fightback whoever won the election.

This could be done by a parallel election campaign within the party of the working class movement, the Labour Party, winning over some Constituency Labour Parties [CLPs] to class struggle politics as the basis of their campaign in the General Election. Or it could be done by a serious electoral challenge to the Labour Party. The SWP did neither.

The SWP's Paul Foot told the Evening Standard (April 9th): "For the next three weeks I am a strong Labour supporter. I am very anxious that a Tory government shouldn't be returned, and I shall be going around to meetings we are having telling everyone to vote Labour". And that about expresses it! SW spends most of its time bluffing and blustering about the Labour Party and Parliament being irrelevant — and when it comes to it they switch over to being "strong Labour supporters" in the name of the 'lesser evil'. "for three weeks".



They are 'peace-time' anti-Labourites and anarchistically contemptuous of politics — except when there is an election, in which case they are just "strong Labour supporters"!

In practical terms, despite their 'revolutionary' rhetoric the SWP accepts the political domination of the working class by reformism. Normally this is expressed in two ways.

Firstly: by the pretence that routine wages struggles have a built-in socialist significance. In order not to antagonise militant trade unionists the SWP avoids raising, or raising clearly and with necessary sharpness, 'difficult' political issues (such as Ireland: it differs from time to time). Thus, by accommodation at crucial points, the SWP fails to do what is necessary to transform trade union militants into revolutionary socialists.

Secondly, the SWP's tacit acceptance of reformist domination is expressed by a completely sectarian abstention from the political struggle within the party of the British working class movement, the Labour Party.

In an election, abstention from the political struggle against the dominant forces in the Labour Party (who are politically Liberals) becomes a direct and positive acceptance of the right wing's political domination of the working class. The SWP leaders know the reality of their political standing in the labour movement, and express it every few years by abdication of their political responsibilities in face of the entrenched might of the right wing Labour leaders.



For them, this is the price to be paid for the pretence they normally indulge in that the Labour Party (or reformism) is dead and ready to be buried by the SWP. The General Election brought them up against the reality — which is otherwise. The logical conclusion from their normal denunciation

and boycott of the Labour Party would be abstention in the election. But that would cut the SWP off from the reformist militant trade unionists to whom they relate on a generally sub-political level (while preaching general socialism). So instead the SWP drops its self-deluding and sectarian bluster and becomes a "strong Labour supporter" for three weeks.

When the election is over, they resume their blanket denunciations and abuse of the Labour Party from outside, thus unwittingly helping the right wing to survive in control, to rat again... and to be in a position to force the SWP to be "strong Labour supporters" next time round too.

They are like a certain Russian Marxist tendency which Lenin defeated, the 'Economists'. About 1900 they proposed that Marxists should focus on the trade union struggle, organising the militant trade union workers into a socialist party, and leave the political struggle against Tsarism to the bourgeois liberals. It was to be a bourgeois revolution in Russia; the Marxists had their own socialist concerns (with the 'rank and file', though the Russians did not use the term) — and the immediate political concerns could be left to the bourgeois liberals. The socialists could meanwhile organise their forces and grow; in due course they would supersede the liberals.

Lenin explained that such a course (combining opportunism with a sort of sectarianism) would mean surrendering the working class to the practical political leadership of the liberals. The political struggle would develop because it was objectively necessary and had to be fought through. If it were left to the liberals, then they would be able to dominate the working class who, inevitably and rightly, would be drawn into that struggle.

The SWP engages in the trade union struggle, makes general socialist propaganda and 'builds the SWP'... and leaves the political working class movement to the liberal-Labour politicians of Callaghan's ilk. But these Lib-Labs represent the bourgeoisie (indirectly) as the Russian liberals did (directly) (*1).



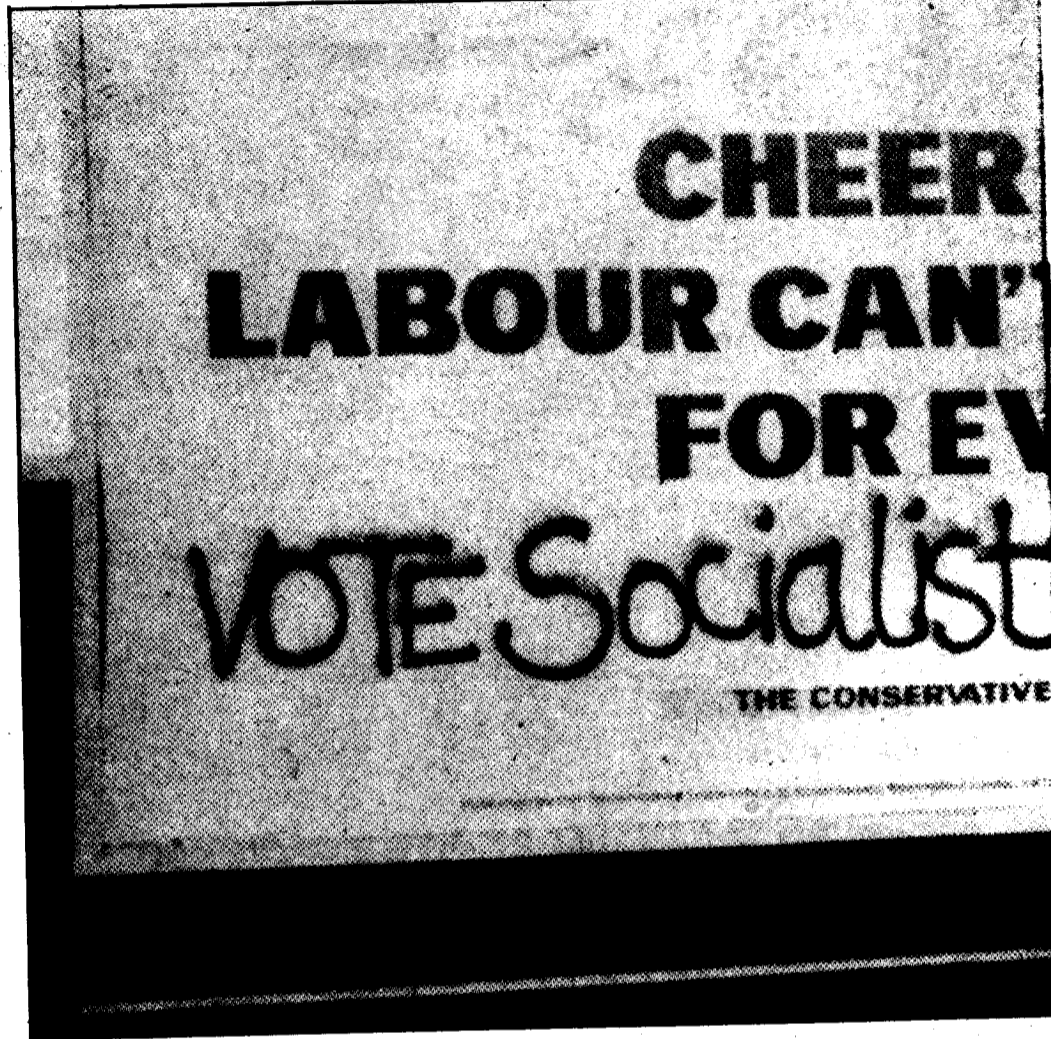
The link between the SWP and their Russian 'Economist' ancestors is in sectarianism. The unrealistic and sectarian assessment of the Labour Party by the SWP leads them to self-exclusion from the mass political party of the working class movement, organically produced by and linked to the trade unions.

In certain conditions revolutionaries might have no alternative but to be outside the Labour Party. But the Labour Party is both the party of the mass labour movement and a party in which revolutionaries, for now, have great freedom to win support for their ideas. The SWP gives up to the Lib-Labs and reformist socialists the entire field in which the trade union movement (including militant rank and file trade unionists) expresses its politics and tries to hammer out policies to serve its interests.

The sort of anti-Toryism expressed by Paul Foot and Socialist Worker (*2) pre-dates the birth of the Labour Party (and Marxism) and belongs to the 'radicalism' of the stage when working class politics had not yet begun in Britain, or was just

Bluff, blus complac

The Left, Labour an



beginning. At best it expresses a general and unclear hostility to 'vested interest' and the 'gentry'. Here and now it expresses the awareness that the Tory party is the ruling class's party.

In the actual political situation in Britain, this husk of old 'Radical' prejudice veils the reality that Labour, led by the Lib-Labs, is an effective fall-back party for the bourgeoisie. Anti-Toryism was the election stock in trade for Callaghan and for those trade union leaders responsible for allowing Callaghan to be a better 'Tory' for five years than Heath or Thatcher could have been.

The SWP relates to the election with anti-Toryism as its only stock in trade. In this way it relates — back to back, to be sure, and for the period of the election only — to the Lib-Labs who lead the Labour Party by moving backwards towards them in face of the 'Tory monster' of worn-out British Radicalism. Yet there is nothing socialist in that anti-Toryism. It has served the agitational needs of some of the worst scoundrels and best servants of Capital in British political history, like Lloyd George.

It shows the power of the British ruling-class Radical tradition even within the revolutionary movement, as revolutionaries accommodate mimetically to a labour movement in which that Radicalism is still a potent force.

While it would be pedantic and foolish to refuse to relate to the anti-Tory feeling in the

labour movement, that must be linked with a war against the Lib-Labs in the labour movement. Otherwise, you merely join in a chorus of anti-Toryism which has become a refuge for Lib-Lab scoundrels and bankrupts.

SW could opt to go along with that anti-Toryism for the period of the election campaign because of its political method: a conception of socialism as emerging some day, somehow, from the process of rank and file industrial struggle becoming more and more militant, as if workers start off as political 'blank slates' and gradually become more and more socialists as they strike more often. They blur over or downgrade the political and ideological battle-fronts.

(*1). Very often SW tries to link its minimalist trade union involvement with its general socialism by moralistic exposure journalism. Sometimes valuable, this often just rests on exposing upper-class departures from bourgeois norms, as in the various sex scandals. In 1974 SW 'fought the Tories' on the basis of salacious excerpts from the memoirs of a prostitute involved in a scandal with top Tories. The denunciations often imply ideologically endorsing backward or reactionary attitudes.

(*2) Even the great Jonathan Swift — a bigoted Tory and renegade Whig — can't break into SW these days without being disguised by a headline: "Tories — I'd hang 'em"!

Socialist Challenge



SOCIALIST Challenge may have someone of an ironic turn of mind in their headline department, for their summing-up article on the campaign of their ten 'Socialist Unity' candidates was headlined, 'The sound and the fury' (May 10th). The article put a brave face on their poor scores (every one below 1% of the poll, except Birmingham Small Heath and Islington North): "We realised that many of the people who agreed with

our program vote Labour matter to us "Shop like Birmingham chester, we told our ca agree with ing for, but our to try Tories', we cies which in the trade "We were forces — all scale — for mass move ist alternat

The Social a Labour V recognising the great conscious agreed with would still and then ai forces for mass move ist alterna tacit tribu work by me the CLPs an sponsored among "a the issue cies". SC the work in by the SCL led to thos being hear vious issue ally attack not relatin struggle". The ch SCLV wa September for exemp ed a leadi ing in resp to defend

ter and ency

and the Election

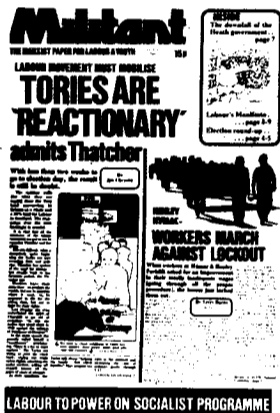
UP!
HANG ON

ER.
Unity



Labour's policies outraged many sections of workers, but did they stop voting Labour?

Militant



THE ECONOMICIST Socialist Workers Party is curiously paralleled by the Labour-loyalist *Militant*: *Militant*'s mixture of appeals to vote Labour because the Tories were so terrifying and general talk of socialism was very much like SW's.

The link is this: both *Militant* and SW operate with a notion of the British working class moving towards revolutionary socialism without any need to explode the contradictions of Labourism: SW, because it sees Labourism as more or less irrelevant, *Militant* because it sees Labourism as already expressing all the socialist consciousness needed for victory

Thus *Militant* complacently commented (May 11th): "Tony Benn and a number of the Tribune MPs have rightly called for a return to fundamental socialist ideas. Re-

grettably (!) the parliament-ary left's opposition to the leadership's policies was muted during the campaign. (And what of *Militant*'s opposition? But it turns out that none of this matters)... the Labour Party will undoubtedly turn further (what, even further?) to the left in the next period. Fear of this has already been expressed in the capitalist press".

For *Militant* the task is to explain, again and again, that "Labour's right-wing leaders still have the illusion (!) that they can remain within the framework of capitalism and nevertheless implement improvements in the conditions of the working class" (April 13th). Explain for long enough, and the misunderstanding will be cleared away.

As this shows, both the *Militant* tendency and the Socialist Workers 'party' see the process in the labour movement as a ripening towards socialist consciousness. Both see this as a result of the working class gradually building up and maturing politically in face of the experience of capitalism, and of the struggle to build their respective tendencies. They focus on a minimum programme of agitational demands around the daily struggle of the trade unions on issues like wages, while extolling a socialist future which is not very visibly related to the routine struggles, except through being better than what we have.

Socialist Unity had been to show up the pretences of the SWP that the SWP was the alternative to Labour, by getting more votes than it in the Stechford and Ladywood by-elections (probably because the anti-parliamentary diatribes of the SWP do not exactly condition its supporters to be good at electioneering!) By dropping its plans to stand candidates in the general election, the SWP deprived the Socialist Unity exercise of even its sectarian point.

And then, by any standards, Socialist Unity received a crushing indication of its real standing within the working class. In Southall circumstances were exceptionally favourable for a strong Socialist Unity vote.

A few days before the election there was a mass confrontation between black youth and the police, an event which could be expected to shake loose those youth from the authority of their community leaders who would focus on established politics. The Socialist Unity candidate was one of the most publicised black men in Britain. The Labour candidate had signed the Parliamentary Select Committee report which advocated the introduction of pass laws in Britain for many thousands of his constituents.

400-odd votes, in those circumstances, was a big defeat for Socialist Unity.

meekly falling into line behind Callaghan's hypocritical anti-Toryism and having nothing else to say in the election except that socialism is desirable.

In both tendencies there is a strong streak of that reliance on organic ripening of the movement (and the party/tendency) which is notoriously linked with the name of Karl Kautsky [see the Magazine Section]. Implicit in both is a semi-evolutionary project to rebuild the political labour movement (rather than reorganise



In *Militant*'s pipedreams, Benn will push Labour further and further to the left

in struggle), in parallel to the existing political labour movement: for the SWP, outside the Labour Party, for *Militant*, inside it, and using the existing structure as scaffolding.

Both consider opportunist manoeuvring and abdication of political responsibility as necessary and permissible in order to stay in the Labour Party scaffolding (*Militant*) or to keep close to the trade unionists who vote Labour (SWP). Both are still recognisably seeds from the pod of the Revolutionary Communist Party of the 1940s.

JOHN O'MAHONY

Our feature article on the Industrial Relations Act & the fight against it, scheduled for this week, has had to be held over for lack of space

Presenting themselves as a viable alternative?

would still
That did not
ards in places
m and Man-
ne after time
sers, 'Yes, I
you are call-
ust vote Lab-
keep out the
won for poli-
will fight for
ns...
le to win new
on a modest
fight in the
for a social-

the National Front, while *Socialist Challenge* denounced the fascist march on the ghetto as a 'provocation against the ANL Carnival' and told anti-fascists to go to the carnival, not to Brick Lane.

And, in the light of its own summing-up of the election campaign, how does SC justify its previous argument (April 26th) that "calling for 'critical support for Labour' — without at the same time standing independent revolutionary candidates — amounts to telling people to vote for right wing policies"? It does not. It does not attempt to deal with the obvious conclusion that standing candidates hindered, rather than helped, *Socialist Challenge*. It simply brazens it out by saying that votes don't matter.



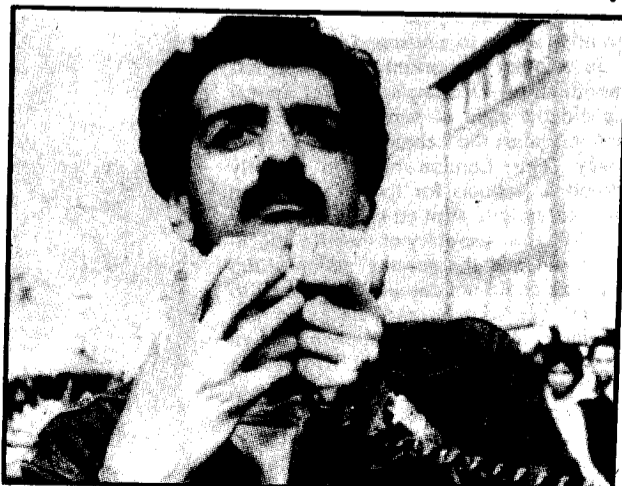
Campaign for
y started by
unavoidably
ity of class-
kers 'who
programme
te Labour',
'to win new
fight in the
for a social-
SC pays
the SCLV's
ing some of
didates who
SCLV as
that raised
cialist poli-
not mention
Labour Party
others that
wing voices
ed, in pre-
had disloy-
e SCLV as
the 'mass
against the
ulous: on
last year,
SCLV play-
mobilis-
the appeal
Lane from

Election results in Britain give a distorted picture of the way people think politically, but not so distorted as to be unrecognisable.

And votes did matter. The politically serious precondition for standing against the reformist trade-union party for socialist politics was a possibility of polarising a revolutionary working class force against reformism, registering it and beginning to consolidate it through the initial commitment of a vote.

The alternative reason why revolutionaries might stand in an election, no matter how few votes they could expect,

would be to utilise the election campaign to make propaganda. That was not relevant in conditions where the SCLV proved in practice that it was possible to run a 'parallel campaign' within the Labour Party election campaign, making socialist propaganda which included a condemnation of the Labour record in office and in some constituencies making its policies the official Labour Party position. What the SCLV could do was shown to be limited only by its support.



Tariq Ali: only 477 votes despite the militancy in Southall

Nor did Socialist Unity justify itself by being more boldly revolutionary than a campaign inside the Labour Party could be. SU itself was an electoral alliance, not a revolutionary party; and its platform was weaker than the SCLV's.

Standing candidates almost certainly lessened the

impact of Socialist Unity's socialist propaganda. The focus on voting Socialist Unity or for the trade union party, which was moreover the real alternative to Thatcher, could only have lessened the effectiveness of propaganda for alternative policies. It presented such politics in a sectarian package.

The task of Marxists in the election was to organise the class struggle left in the labour movement. In face of this task the Socialist Unity

(essentially, IMG) candidates were an irresponsible gimmick, disruptive of the work Marxists must do in the labour movement. By the election Socialist Unity had even lost the one real point it ever had, as an IMG-building manoeuvre against the SWP. The only achievement of the IMG and

ON JUNE 7 you will be able to vote in the world's first international election.

The election is for members of the European Assembly (Common Market Parliament). Despite a publicity campaign by the EEC Commission, the general response throughout the Common Market has been almost complete indifference.

The Assembly is a talking shop with few powers and little influence. It is quite clear that EEC policy is made elsewhere, by the Commission, in the ministerial meetings, and most obviously at the regular summit meetings of the nine heads of government.

This corresponds to the reality of the EEC, as an alliance of independent capitalist states which have not travelled far along the road to the European super-state of which many of the Community's founders dreamed.

The origins of the Common Market lie in the way that capitalism developed after the second world war. The USA emerged as the dominant imperialist power on a world scale, but in Eastern Europe the USSR extended its power, and later by military-bureaucratic means smashed capitalism.

In Vietnam, China, Korea and Malaya there were powerful national liberation struggles. In France and Italy the armed workers of the Resistance movements held effective power as the war ended, and only the treacherous policies of the Communist Parties, calling for national reconstruction and describing strikes as 'the weapon of big business', enabled capitalism to survive.

The American capitalist class soon set itself the task of reviving the West European economies, and in the process extending its own profitable interests. From 1947 the Marshall aid programme and other American investment led to millions of dollars flooding into Europe.

The boom that followed saw the acceleration of a process that has gone on since the beginnings of capitalism. Small firms were taken over or squeezed out by their larger rivals, as the amount of capital needed to compete effectively grew faster than ever before, mainly because of the speed of technological advance.

In the struggle to survive, European capitalists have been forced to combine: by takeovers across national borders, by creating firms based in more than one country, such as Dunlop-Pirelli, or by uniting to form very large national firms such as GEC, capable of competing on the world market.

American companies have been able to keep their relative superiority. With their huge home market they gain massive economies of scale and a big pool of profits for investment. US arms development has provided a major subsidy to American big business, as well as spin offs in high technology areas such as computers and the silicon chip and in building up scientific expertise.

The founders of the Common Market hoped to break down the outworn national boundaries in Europe which hindered the growth of economic units capable of competing effectively on the world market. In some industries, such as aircraft, the separate European economies are incapable of supporting the costs of development on their own, while in others the need to spread risks and get a sufficient home market makes cooperation necessary.

Britain refused to join the EEC at the start because the Commonwealth seemed to provide a much greater prop for British capitalism than their ex-colonies did for other European powers. Also, British firms were generally larger than their continental rivals and thus did not feel the pressure to amalgamate so strongly.

Nonetheless, cooperation developed even prior to British entry, the most obvious example being the long string of joint aircraft projects: Concorde, Jaguar, the Tornado, etc.

The state today plays a vital role in financing and developing national capitalist progress. The EEC is a faltering step towards a European super-state carrying out these functions in relation to the growth of European-wide capital.

Although a European super-capitalism would threaten US interests, American big business has generally supported the EEC. This has mainly been because the EEC has helped widen the scope of US subsidiaries in Europe. Firms such as Ford of Europe are among the largest concerns in Europe, in their own right.

In fact progress towards economic integration has been slow since 1958. The various capitalist classes in Europe still compete vigorously with each other.

The EEC's main 'achievements' to date have been an agricultural policy (which is in chaos, and which has only survived so long because those who are profiting by it refuse to allow any change), and the European Monetary System, which is seen as the first stage in creating a common European currency. Britain has not joined the EMS, and Italy came in only on terms which make its participation fairly nominal. With the various EEC economies developing at different speeds, its chances of survival do not look good.

In its youth, in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the capitalist class, fighting against feudalism, formed today's nation states. Where before there were dozens of petty principalities, all sorts of local taxes and customs barriers, and restrictions on free trade, the capitalist class created a unified national market, a unified system of law, and uniform national tariffs. These measures of national unification, carried through by the capitalist class when it was a revolutionary class, were essential for the further growth of industry and commerce.

Today the giant productive forces created by capitalism are making those national frontiers obsolete. Industry can only develop on an international scale. The capitalist classes, hesitantly, slowly, try to break through the limits of those national frontiers. But today the capitalist class is no longer a revolutionary class, fighting against feudalism. It is a reactionary class concerned above all with keeping its profits and its system going somehow from day to day, without much view to the future.

Its attempt at 'internationalism' — the EEC — is a miserable, botched effort. Only the united socialist working class of Europe will really be able to carry through the international unification of the continent. □

Britain against Brussels

SOCIALISTS CONDEMN capitalism because it reduces men and women to fragments of what they could be. Capitalism does that mainly and in the first place through its ceaseless drive for profit, which harnesses millions of workers to the yoke of alienated labour. Drudgery for the purpose of enriching millionaires dominates the lives of the majority.

But another way in which capitalism mutilates humanity — and an important one — is by national divisions.

The advance of technique and communications today makes it quite possible for most people to live in several different countries in the course of a lifetime, as well as doing several different jobs. It makes it possible for national narrow-mindedness to be overcome, for people to get to know the culture of many nations. It makes it possible for each individual to develop himself or herself to the full by experiencing a wide range of aspects of the network of human cooperation which makes up civilisation.

Capitalism brutally closes off those possibilities. It exalts national spirit in order to combat class spirit. It sends workers to meet each other, not in fraternal dialogue, but in war for the benefit of the exploiters. It sets up a handful of rich nations to exploit millions in the poor nations. It wastes enormous resources in conflicts between nations. And the workers who do move from country to country in order to work become the lowest slaves of capitalism — deprived of citizens' rights and subjected to racism.

International unity is not just an aspiration for the society of the future. It is a guiding principle for the struggle today. Despite its huge superstructure of national competition, capitalism has united the world economically with a dense network of economic interconnections. The crises of capitalism are international. Capital is international. Steelworkers in Britain, in France and Germany face the same international crisis. The same for shipyard workers, the same for car workers.

A policy based on anything but international unity will only play into the hands of the bosses.

And the countries of Europe are so closely interconnected that it is hardly possible to imagine a socialist revolution in one of them which would not rapidly provoke counter-revolutionary intervention from and revolutionary risings in the other countries.

Economic planning today can only be a feeble makeshift if it is not a continent-wide scale. Even the capitalists can see that, though their competition prevents them doing much about it. The need for a continental arena will apply even more to working-class socialist planning.

That is why our objection to the EEC is not that it represents a move to a European super-state. Our objection is that it represents too feeble a move towards a European super-state. We want a European super-state uniting all Europe, east and west, with frontiers not just relaxed but completely swept away. That can only be a Europe under workers' rule.

by Simon Temple

THE INTERNATIONAL Marxist Group prides itself on having the only candidate in the Euro-election who stands for getting Britain out of the EEC. Other left-wingers object to this only because it is not anti-EEC enough for them. The Workers' Socialist League, for example, calls for a boycott of the election. Many left-wingers in the Labour Party want to have nothing to do with the election. The Communist Party has said it will not vote for Labour candidates unless they are anti-EEC.

Voters can only interpret the anti-EEC line as one form or another of support for a nationalist, protectionist economic policy. Of course, the anti-EEC left would say that is not their intention. The IMG say: "We refuse to accept either the devil of the EEC or the deep blue sea of British capitalism". Even the French Communist Party couples its ultra-nationalist slogan "No to a German Europe" with the phrase "we want a workers' Europe". Where these arguments are not vile cynicism, they are foolish. The IMG know well enough that a special campaign against 'the monopolies', or 'the multinationals', or 'American big business' (or, even worse, 'Jewish capital') would be no less 'the socialism of idiots' if it were accompanied by face-saving statements of opposition to small exploiters, national capitalists, British business, or non-Jewish capitalists. The same goes for a special campaign against the EEC.

How did the left go so far in forgetting the old socialist

or workers against capitalism

principle, 'The main enemy is at home', and replacing it with the notion: 'The main enemy is in Brussels'?

From the time of the first British application in 1962 the Labour left and the Communist Party have opposed EEC membership, while most of the Labour Right have usually supported it. To begin with this division reflected a real dispute in the ruling class, as the big monopolies sought to strengthen their ties with the rest of Europe and the smaller and less competitive capitalists tried to protect their future in a separate Britain. But as time went on the capitalist class as a whole was reconciled to the need to go in to the EEC, leaving the left reformists on their own... with some right wing Tories and the National Front.

The left's campaigns against entry and for withdrawal were rancid with the nationalism that is the curse of the British working class movement. When they did not simply reflect the hysteria about foreigners which papers like the *Daily Express* were trying to create, they argued about the national sovereignty of the British Parliament. They saw the EEC as a threat to their cherished plans to introduce socialism gradually through parliament (the *British* parliament). But if the British parliament were to try to legislate socialism, it would face bigger and more violent obstacles much nearer home than Brussels!

In any case the material basis does not exist to construct socialism in one country in a hostile capitalist world. Ultimately we can only succeed as part of an international movement. The campaign against British membership inevitably turned its back on such a movement — and substituted an outcry against Brussels bogeymen for class struggle.

In the early '60s, most revolutionary socialists took a very clear and principled stand — against the working class even being drawn into the so-called Great Debate over British membership.

'The left's arguments have been rancid with nationalism'

At the time of the referendum in 1975, the revolutionary weekly *Workers' Fight* argued:

"It will mean no fundamental advantage to the working class whether Britain is in or out of the Common Market. The choice between the Little England of the bosses and their attempt at unity is not a real one. We believe that workers should abstain in the referendum. Many of those who advocate voting 'no' say that they are for a United Socialist Europe. But this isn't what we are being asked in the referendum: it isn't asking what sort of Europe we want, but what British capitalism should do in relation to a capitalist European organisation. The only way to fight for a United Socialist States of Europe is to abstain in the referendum and to fight against the effects on the working class of economic crisis and capitalist rationalisation, whether they happen within the EEC or out of it. The key to this is the building of stronger links between workers throughout Europe (inside and outside the Common Market)..."

Sadly, by that time *Workers' Fight* was virtually alone. Most of the far left groups had used one excuse or another to leap aboard the chauvinist anti-Common Market bandwagon. Their case against the Common Market came down to four propositions, used in varying ways and to varying extents by the different groups.

■ *That the EEC is an attempt to create a Europe-wide 'strong state' capable of more ruthless repression of the working class than the existing national states.* The 'strong state' is a far remove from the existing feeble EEC structure. The existing national states are capable of quite ruthless repression on their own account — as in Northern Ireland — and will aid each other against workers' revolutions regardless of the EEC. And the notion that a European state must be more repressive than a nation state is nothing but nationalist prejudice.

■ *That the EEC is part of an international process of capitalist rationalisation and must be opposed like all ruling class policies.* We do not oppose capitalist development and rationalisation as such. Such opposition would be backward-looking and futile. We oppose the effects of capitalist development, their efforts to rationalise at our expense.

■ *That the EEC is part of a military conspiracy against the USSR.* The USSR and the deformed workers' states can only be effectively defended by class struggle, not by futile attempts to turn back the capitalist clock. In any case, the military conspiracy against the USSR is NATO, not the EEC.

■ *That regardless of the political issues most militant workers as well as the left bureaucrats are anti-Common Market, and we must side with the workers whilst criticising the chauvinism of the official anti-EEC campaign.* Here is the real reason! It replaces the first principle of Marxism, to state the truth honestly and bluntly, with the first principle of opportunism: if you can't beat them, join them.

The correctness of the internationalist argument has been proved over the last four years. Once militant workers got involved in the 'Get Britain Out' campaign, they were bound to see a 'Yes' vote in the referendum as a defeat. The demoralisation that followed made it easier for the Labour government to force through the first round of its wage-cutting pay policy.

But some people never learn. Labour leftists who had made much of the undemocratic Brussels bureaucrats at the time of the referendum now spend time denouncing direct elections to the European Assembly, thus showing that their objection to the EEC was not that it was undemocratic but that it was unBritish.

Socialists in the labour movement should tell Labour candidates that we don't want them to go to Strasbourg as representatives of Britain. We want them to go as representatives of the working class — and the working class is international.

We want them to speak up for the West German workers fighting for a 35 hour week as well as for British workers. We want them to use Strasbourg as a forum for the international demands of the working class which flow from the international capitalist crisis. □

From Kautsky to Eurocommunism:

Mass action or waiting for the votes

WE ARE continuing our publication of the 1910 debate on the mass strike in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) with the final section of Karl Kautsky's article 'What now?' and the beginning of Rosa Luxemburg's reply, 'Attrition or struggle?'

In the final part of 'What now?' Kautsky comes to look at the prospects for socialism in Germany. His conception of an organic process of ripening of capitalism is very clearly brought out here. He argues that there are a whole number of objective factors (such as unemployment, price rises, militarism and the danger of war) leading inevitably to growing successes for the SPD. Conscious or active initiative by the working class plays little role.

Indeed, Kautsky sees the economic factors as determining class consciousness, with consciousness thus moving forward in parallel with the development of economic conditions and the contradictions in capitalism. He can hardly conceive of a regression in working class consciousness — it can only go forwards unless the party makes a needless adventurist error. He sees it as possible to maintain the agitation for a change in the unequal Prussian suffrage system without escalating the struggle until the Reichstag elections due to take place a year and a half later.

For Kautsky, those elections were the real focus for the SPD, a focus which should be maintained against Luxemburg's 'adventurist' conception of the mass strike. He saw the SPD's intervention in the elections and the winning of an absolute majority in them as the means for the SPD to pick the 'fruit' which had ripened in the previous period. He wrote:

"We have the key to this momentous historical situation, overwhelming victory in the coming Reichstag elections, already in our pockets through the whole combination of circumstances. Only one thing could lead to us losing it... an act of stupidity on our part. And it would be such an act if we allowed ourselves to be drawn through impatience to wanting to pluck the fruits before they have ripened..."

Rosa Luxemburg grasped the fact that revolutionary movements have an inner life, a logic of their own, which cannot be reduced solely to the development of economic contradictions in capitalism. While such economic conditions provide the preconditions for the possibility of a revolution, only the conscious action of the working class, the subject of history, can make a revolution.

She points out:

"The Marxist conception consists precisely in considering the masses and their consciousness as the main determining factor in all the political actions of social democracy"

Despite the accusations of spontaneism often levelled against her, Luxemburg did not see socialist consciousness coming from nowhere, let alone being sustained indefinitely as Kautsky envisaged. The action of the workers had to be nurtured, given an overall aim and kept alive by the Social Democracy. If the party was incapable of directing the spontaneous struggle, the workers would soon become demoralised and the missed chance would lead to a step backwards for the whole movement, as well as discrediting the Social Democracy.

Luxemburg appears almost to ignore the role of political leadership. In fact, however, she was constantly arguing for a bolder policy on the part of Social Democracy. As Trotsky later argued: "Rosa... was much too realistic in the revolutionary sense to develop the elements of the theory of spontaneity into a consummate metaphysics... Rosa Luxemburg exerted herself to educate the revolutionary wing of the proletariat in advance

by Bruce Robinson

and to bring it together organisationally as far as possible... The most that can be said is that in her historical-philosophical evaluation of the labour movement, the preparatory selection of the vanguard, in comparison with the mass actions that were to be expected, fell too short with Rosa."

Luxemburg begins her article by showing that the demand for the mass strike was not something she had dreamt up, but was being widely discussed in the SPD as a result of the suffrage agitation. She argues that the discussion cannot be 'banned' because the use of the mass strike is posed by the development of the political situation and the class struggle.

Kautsky, on the other hand, sees the mass strike as one of a variety of weapons from which the Social Democracy can choose, like a man who is challenged to a duel. He sees it as something which will occur if social democracy and the unions 'order' it, or can be avoided if they decide to 'ban' it. His military analogies are not accidental: the relation of the party to the working class is seen as very much like the relation of military commanders to the rank and file.

Luxemburg points out that this conception is essentially the same as that of the Anarchists. The Anarchists

believed that capitalism would collapse if, on a certain day, they could call the whole of the working class out on a general strike. The state would be paralysed and unable to resist.

Kautsky, though of course opposing the use of the mass strike in most situations, also saw it as something that could be decided on almost independently of the development of the self-activity of the working class, similar to a demonstration for which one only has to name a time and place. Both Kautsky and the anarchists also ignore the question of how the working class can be organised for the general strike, and see it only as a cataclysmic weapon for use to finish capitalism.

For Kautsky, workers' action appears as merely a function of a general organic historical process which stamps itself on human consciousness. The real struggles are seen as mere manifestations of laws of capitalist development. Luxemburg re-emphasises that capitalism does not of its own accord create socialism, but only the preconditions for it. Only working class activity can transform those preconditions into the reality of socialism. She restores Marx's dictum that "men make their own history, but under circumstances not of their own making" to its place as a basic thesis of Marxism.

Karl Kautsky: WHAT NOW?

IV

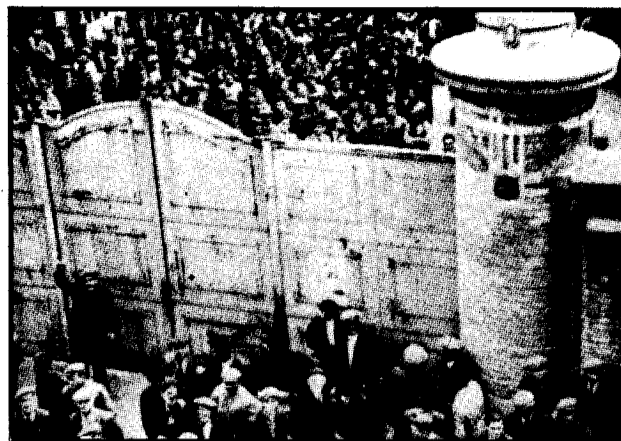
The fear that the masses will abandon us is therefore no reason for us to use sharper methods and go over to the strategy of overthrow.

The conflicts certainly become sharper in any struggle. Its simple duration increases bitterness. In addition class contradictions are sharpened by economic development and the growth of the forces involved through growth of economic organisation and technical progress. But the debate is not about the gradual and spontaneously developing "inner logic" by which an escalation and sharpening of mass action comes about. It is about adopting new, sharper methods to be introduced through a "slogan", a planned agitation of the party.

The fear of disillusioning the masses gives no basis for this. The dilemma of which Comrade Luxemburg speaks does not exist for us, as long as we do not create it through our own agitation. We could only have one reason, apart from that mentioned in the Jena resolution, to give up the strategy of attrition and go over to the strategy of overthrow through rapid stepping-up and sharpening of mass action: that is, if our opponents were trapped in a most difficult situation which we had to exploit as quickly as possible, and which could best be exploited by means of a mass strike.

Is the present situation of this type? This is the decisive question. Whether propaganda for the mass strike is appropriate depends on the answer to this question, and not on the inner logic of mass movements.

At first sight it might seem as if the present situation is a product of the street demonstrations. One might say: thanks to the fact that social democracy used sharper methods, it has inspired the masses and cornered the government. But this enthusiasm will soon be dissipated and the government



While Kautsky envisaged the mass strike as a tactic calculated in advance by the 'general staff' of the working class, Rosa Luxemburg stressed its spontaneous character. Here a factory joins the French general strike of 1936.

will regain prestige, strength, and credibility if we do not proceed further along our path, i.e. constantly sharpen our methods of struggle, inspire the masses more and more, and push the government more and more into a corner until it collapses before the overwhelming attack of the masses.

If that were the situation then anybody who did not now work with all his strength to spur on the proletariat to use sharper methods of struggle would commit a gross crime against the proletariat.

But the situation seems to me to be different.

The street demonstrations have certainly given rise to great fervour. The government is certainly cornered. But if it were possible without any further ado to arouse enthusiasm in such a fashion and to weaken the prestige as well as the strength of the government, why then did we not use this simple method long ago?

It is just the other way round. In the conditions of Prussia, the success of the street demonstrations and their great effect on morale were only possible after social democracy had become a mass party and the masses were highly aroused. Only the fact that the street demonstrations were born of great mass enthusiasm made it possible for them to achieve their powerful impact and deep effect. Only on that basis were they able to inspire and encourage the masses and throw the government and the ruling parties into confusion.

The masses' great bitterness has very deep-rooted causes. These causes have been at work for years, and they will continue to exist for years. I have already described them in my book "The Road to Power", and need only briefly recapitulate (11)

As a most powerful cause of broad discontent, we have the rising prices of the necessities of life. When I pointed to these rising prices in my book as a factor sharpening class contradictions and intensifying the revolutionary mood of the masses, the "Korrespondenzblatt der Gewerkschaften" [trade union paper] considered it necessary to denounce me on that account as an enemy of trade unions. It was very annoyed by the fact that I did not stick my head in the sand in the supposed interest of the trade unions, and that I saw facts which are very inconvenient for the theory of peaceful evolution into socialism. Today it is clear to everyone that such a head-in-the-sand policy would be a real "labour of Sisyphus" (12). No reasonable person doubts any longer that rising prices have outstripped wage increases for some time, but certainly also no reasonable person will see this as an argument against the trade unions. The masses are stirred up by the rising prices, not against the unions, but against the existing order of state and society.

The effect of rising prices is reinforced by the arms race. Just recently the arms race has taken on the maddest dimensions, through naval armaments increasing much faster as well as land armaments. Technology plays a much greater role than numbers in the navy, and the level of technology can quickly be raised by the necessary expenditure of money.

And so the tax burden grows, increasing class contradictions even more. At the same time the international situation becomes more perilous, for the ruling classes cannot accept disarmament. But there is only one way, apart from disarmament, to lift the ever more unbearable tax burden: a war.

These conditions are international. Everywhere the masses are aroused. At the same time contradictions grow within the ruling classes. Not only is there growing tension internationally, but the masses of the bourgeois world — the petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, small traders and smaller capitalists — are set against the landowners, big financiers and great industrial monopolists, who keep all the advantages of these unbearable conditions for themselves and try to unload all the disadvantages onto others. In Prussia this general international situation acquires particular acuteness because the Junkers from east of the Elbe dominate the state. This makes the advantages which they reap at the expense of the other classes even larger, the disadvantages even more difficult to bear, and the general conditions even more insufferable.

There is perhaps no class in Europe which owes so much to brute force as the Prussian Junkers. Among the ruling classes of Europe there is none more ignorant. Geographically situated on the fringes of world intercourse, they have never found it necessary to hold their own through superior knowledge.

Thus the Junkers have no idea of the fact that their brutal violence achieved a real effect only when it corresponded to economic development, i.e. in the direction of the national unification of Germany. From their successes they have developed a cult of brutal violence for its own sake, and they show this side all the more defiantly and ruthlessly the more they see their privileged position threatened, i.e. the more this position comes into contradiction with the needs of social development. The more harmful they become, the more stupid, insolent and brutal they become.

This comes out above all, of course, in relation to the proletariat and its class party. It is noticeable however that the



bourgeois parties and masses are also coming to experience this brutality and ruthlessness to an increasing degree, as the Junkers artificially raise the price of food and raw materials, shove taxes off their own shoulders and onto others, claim all the good posts in the bureaucracy and the army for themselves, and treat government, courts and police as their tools to beat down any inconvenient opposition.

But this Junker regime finally becomes burdensome even to the most hardened exploiters and enemies of the proletariat. As soon as they have understood what the whole capitalist world outside of Russia, Prussia and Japan has understood — that the working class has become too strong a force for it to be kept down by brutal methods of compulsion — the regime appears sinister and dangerous.

Everywhere governments and exploiters hate the militant proletariat in the same way. But in advanced states they have recognised that the possibility of hindering the advance of the proletariat to some extent can lie only in more subtle methods than those which a police state knows how to use. Their best method is apparent compromise which divides the ranks of the proletariat, corrupting a part of its most energetic elements and weakening the rest, as has been temporarily achieved in England, America and France.

The more intelligent advocates of capitalist exploitation in Prussia and in the rest of Germany look on in horror as the empty-headed brutalities of the Junkers and their government rally the ranks of the working class, arouse them, and make their feelings and thoughts more and more revolutionary. Thus it is not only the working masses but also broad sections of the bourgeois world who turn ever more strongly against the Junker regime. They have the most different, sometimes quite contradictory reasons, but they are all the more united in the conviction that this regime is driving Germany towards an abyss.

The bitterness is strongest and most unified in the lower social strata, who suffer most from price rises, the tax burden, and bureaucratic ill-treatment. It naturally guides these strata towards social democracy. It enables them to see social democracy as their shelter and the champion of their interests. These are the reasons for our street demonstrations having such force and importance and for the ranks of our voters swelling, as each Reichstag by-election shows. It threatens to make next year's general election a terrible day of judgment for the Prussian Junkers and their allies or semi-allies. Their statisticians already recognise the possibility that we will win 125 seats in the coming elections.

That is one and a half years away, and people forget quickly. Should we not fear that in the meantime the anger will fade? That the government, through some ruse, will find a popular election slogan to restore its prestige and wash away the hate and contempt which have so recently overwhelmed it? It is well known that enthusiasm is not something to gamble with. If we want to take advantage of it we must do so at once. Since the arena of the Reichstag elections is not today at our disposal for this purpose, we must create a different one, and that can only be the mass strike.

Many will think this way, and there would be a lot to say for this argument if we had reasons to expect that the causes of the present arousal of the masses would no longer be operative by the time of the next Reichstag elections. But there is no reason to suppose so.

Rising prices, the tax burden, and the Junkers' brutality are rooted in conditions which cannot be so easily changed. They will be just as strong in 1911 as in 1910, probably even stronger because the arms race will have gone further. The government will certainly do its utmost to postpone all new tax demands until after the elections — and that is a reason for them to bring the elections forward — but it will not be able to do as it wants. In England the Conservatives have the upper hand. They have already forced the Liberal Cabinet to strengthen the navy. If they themselves come to power in the course of this year, as is to be expected, then the arms race will proceed at an even faster tempo.

'The causes for the present arousal of the masses will be just as strong in 1911 as in 1910, probably even stronger'

Price rises will not slow down. Anyone who wants to know what to expect should follow the American situation, which is decisive for the international market in foodstuffs. And that shows we must reckon with a further rise in prices.

Someone will perhaps object that unemployment has contributed not a little to the working masses' bitterness, and this will have significantly decreased in a year's time through recovery from the crisis. This is correct to the extent that the coming year again promises to be one of a *more favourable* business trend. But a *boom* is another question. And even more than in the previous period of prosperity, the trusts and cartels will take the cream and the workers will get not much more than the rising prices — for prosperity means an increase in the price of commodities.

On the other hand it cannot be maintained that in times of prosperity the workers are so satisfied that no bitterness about their lack of rights and ill-treatment wells up in them. One could even say the opposite. In times of crisis the workers are timid and not ready for struggles or for strikes, still less for a political mass strike, since everyone is glad just to find or keep a job.

Taken absolutely, the one assertion is just as wrong as the other. Both are correct to the extent that proletarian action finds obstacles to hinder it both in crisis and in prosperity. In the former its militancy, in the latter its revolutionary drive, cannot emerge as prominently as would otherwise be the case. A proletarian politician will certainly have to take these conditions into consideration in choosing methods of struggle. In a period of crisis large street demonstrations will be easier to carry out than mass strikes. In a period of prosperity the worker may be more easily won over to a mass strike than during a crisis.



In the French general strike of 1968, the calling of elections helped to subdue the strike movement.

We must however take into account not only prosperity and crisis, but also the changeover between prosperity and crisis. These transitional periods, it seems, are those in which the worker is most enthusiastic about taking action. In particular this seems to be the case in the first period of prosperity, when the memories of the privations, the painful uncertainty, and the degradation of the crisis is still alive, and at the same time the feeling of strength and the desire for struggle which result from prosperity are there.

Thus, the revolutionary fighting mood of the German proletariat at the close of the '80s, which led to the collapse of the Anti-Socialist Laws and the remarkable gains in the Reichstag elections of 1890, was partially caused by the prosperity developing from 1888 after a long crisis.

Those who remember that period will see many similarities with the present situation. At that time, too, a regime was about to meet its end. It met ever more energetic opposition from the working class. It aroused less and less enthusiasm and confidence in the bourgeoisie itself. It had to grapple with growing difficulties in international relations, and it failed in everything both at home and abroad until defeat in the elections of 1890 led to its collapse (13).

But in the two decades since the world has not stood still. The situation today is far more threatening for the ruling classes, far more hopeful for us.

At that time the leading statesman of Prussia was still a genius, borne along by the glorious prestige of three successful wars in which he had defeated all his enemies, fulfilled the longing of the German people for unity in a form which at least satisfied the bourgeoisie, and also raised the German Empire to be the leading power of Europe. Today the Imperial Chancellor is without prestige in the eyes of both friend and enemy. He is the prisoner of the most ignorant and backward party of the Empire, the laughing stock of everybody.

At that time, the international difficulties were partly insignificant ones — with Spain and Switzerland — and partly ones which seemed to threaten the nation itself in opposition to France and Russia. The government could count on the whole nation standing behind it should the situation turn really serious. Today there is the danger of a war against England in which the nation as such would be threatened neither here nor there. It would be a war in which not questions of life and death of the nation, but questions of colonial possessions, the mere questions of life and death of a few cliques of exploiters, would be fought out. As soon as a war of that type costs sacrifices — and it will cost terrible sacrifices — the mass of the people easily separate itself from the government carrying out the war and turns against it unless there are successes. Even if it does not come to a war, the arms race awakens anything but enthusiasm. It meets growing resistance. In the '80s no-one apart from social democracy would have demanded disarmament vis-à-vis Russia and France. Today the demand for disarmament vis-à-vis England has spread far beyond our party.

And how the party itself has grown in the meantime! Between 1887 and 1907 its share of the votes has increased fourfold. If it succeeds in making the same advance in the election of 1911 as it did in 1890 — and the situation is very promising — that, doubling its share of the votes, then it could achieve an absolute majority of all votes cast. Of course we are not so sanguine that we assume we will make such a leap forward. But everybody is agreed that we will

'There is the danger of a war against England. It would be a war in which not questions of life and death of the nation but questions of colonial possessions, the questions of a few cliques of exploiters, would be fought out'

make a powerful advance which makes the achievement of the absolute majority of votes cast a question of a few years.

If that becomes clear in the next Reichstag elections, then it means more than a normal electoral victory. In the present situation, in view of the high level of activity of the popular masses and the tense foreign and domestic situation, such a victory means nothing less than a catastrophe for the whole ruling system of government.

For me there is no doubt that the next elections will shake this system to its foundations.

The elections may finally drum dialectics into the ruling elements, so that they understand that they cannot continue to manage things as hitherto, and they decide to adopt western methods in order to hold back the rising flood of socialism. They will attempt to win over larger sections of the working population by means of concessions.

In view of the high level of bitterness and the great sharpening of contradictions, these would be considerable concessions if they were to have any pacifying effect. It cannot be done with anything less than conceding the right to vote in parliamentary elections for Prussia.

Alternatively and more probably, our victory will have the opposite effect: it will spur on the ruling classes to use violent and brutal blows to batter down the movement which it cannot cope with on the basis of the existing laws.

Or finally, and most probably of all, the ruling regime will lose its head, vacillate helplessly between brutality and concessions, pursue neither of these two approaches consistently. Consequently its brutality will only lead to embitterment, its concessions will only give the impression of weakness. Both will only provide more fuel for the fire they want to extinguish.

Whatever the conditions may be, the elections for the Reichstag must create a situation which produces a new and broader basis for our struggles. If one of the two last-mentioned alternatives occurs, the situation would certainly develop more and more quickly through its inner logic to great decisive battles, which, however, on the new broader basis, we will be able to fight out in a completely different way from today.

We have the key to this momentous historical situation, overwhelming victory in the coming Reichstag elections, already in our pockets through the whole combination of circumstances. Only one thing could lead to us losing it and ruining this tremendous situation: *an act of stupidity on our part*. And it would be such an act if we allowed ourselves to be drawn through impatience to wanting to pluck the fruits before they have ripened; if we wanted to provoke in advance a test of strength on a terrain where our victory is by no means certain.

'We have the key to this momentous historical situation, overwhelming victory in the coming Reichstag elections, already in our pockets. Only one thing could lead to us ruining this tremendous situation: an act of stupidity on our part... to provoke a battle in advance'

Certainly one must risk much in any battle; a general who wanted to fight battles only when his defeat is excluded from the outset would hardly celebrate great triumphs.

But if, as a result of a favourable situation and the skilful exploitation of the situation, one has reached the position of being on the brink of a certain and great victory, and if this victory cannot be endangered by anything save the transition to a new strategy which would provoke a battle on unknown and difficult terrain, then it would be incredibly stupid to open such a battle in preference to the certain victory and thereby to endanger the victory itself. No reasonable general will transfer a battle from the battlefield on which he is certain of a victory and on which the opponent must come to face him to another where the outcome is more problematic.

The author of the "Bremer Bürgerzeitung" article mentioned above poses Mehring the question "whether such a defeat (of the mass strike) would not increase the chances of our future electoral victory. But I do not believe that this astonishing conception will find many adherents.

It is true that every battle awakens so much enthusiasm and so much bitterness that it can thereby reward our agitation, even if it ends with a defeat. But then this occurs *in spite of, not because of, the defeat*, and only when the material defeat is a moral victory: whenever the battle has been so well conducted on our part that we even gain the respect of the enemy, or whenever the battle was unavoidable and forced on us by the enemy.

Thus we also expect this year's trade union struggles to give rise to an increasing bitterness and a strengthening of the fight for the right to vote, even if it turns out that they are not as materially successful as we would wish them to be. Moreover, this is one of the reasons why the present period of activity does not seem to us to be as shortlived as it does to Comrade Luxemburg and her friends. But this reinforcement for the suffrage struggle and the electoral struggles through previous battles would be transformed into its opposite if the battles were to bring us defeats for which we ourselves bore the blame, defeats which arose from us, of our own free will, involving the proletariat in difficult struggles with highly problematic outcomes without having to and without worrying about whether the proletariat is up to such battles or not.

But the worst defeat — and this possibility must also be taken into consideration — would be if we were to call on the proletariat to take part in a political mass strike and if by an overwhelming majority it did not follow this call.

We would kill at birth all the fruitful prospects which the coming Reichstag election holds if we were to provoke battles which resulted in heavy defeats for us before the election, without being forced to do so. The government and

the ruling parties could wish for nothing better. We would provoke exactly what it needs to get out of the mess in which it finds itself.

Our current agitation should reach its peak not with the mass strike but with the Reichstag elections.

In one case already our comrades have sought revenge for the injustices of the Landtag [provincial State parliament] suffrages in the elections for the Reichstag, and their success was outstanding. That was in Saxony in 1903, where our party won 22 out of 23 seats in the state. Now it is a case of taking the same revenge for Prussia, with probably an even greater effect on morale.

Let us maintain the momentum of the movement without wasting it in gestures. Let us use every opportunity to undermine the authority of the ruling class and to demonstrate their pernicious character and their hostility to the people. But let us also show the masses that the struggle for suffrage is more than a matter of a few changes in the electoral law. What is at stake is the overthrow of the Junker régime and of the elements who draw their profits from high prices and new taxes. Such a battle is a long and tough one, and it will not just end with the passing of a suffrage bill. The next foreseeable opportunity of delivering a shattering blow to the enemies of the people is the coming Reichstag elections. We have to summon up all our energy and put it into these elections.

'Our current agitation should reach its peak not with the mass strike but with the Reichstag elections'

Let us continue with our previous strategy of struggle. Let us keep a free hand in the choice of our methods of struggle and let us beware of an agitation whose inner logic would place us in a dilemma which could force us to bring our final and most deadly methods of struggle into play at the wrong time and in the wrong place, thus wasting them.

Precisely because we are convinced that we face great and difficult struggles, that we are close to the point at which the strategy of attrition must go over into the strategy of overthrow, precisely because of this it is all the more necessary not to allow ourselves to be led by impatience into premature actions and into using up our last cartridges in the initial skirmishes.

Agitation which aims to arouse the working masses to expect that in the next few weeks we shall use sharper and sharper methods, attempting to break the opposition of the government by mass strikes; agitation designed to place us in a dilemma or position of constraint where we are no longer masters of the situation, but the situation is master of us; agitation which would face us with the alternative of lashing out at any price whatever the situation, or becoming the laughing stock of the world: such agitation was never more dangerous than right now; when we face certain victory without it, a victory which promises to open up the road for the great final struggle.

Should Comrade Luxemburg mean by her suggestion carrying out agitation of this kind; then we could not follow here. It would be different if she only intended to get the masses to consider the idea of the mass strike and to make them acquainted with it. She would certainly have chosen a very unfortunate and easily misunderstood form for this but that need not prevent us from agreeing with her in this sense.

In the whole existence of the German Empire the social, political and international contradictions have never been as sharp as today. Precisely because the next Reichstag elections render an overwhelming defeat for the ruling system inevitable, we must consider the possibility that the hot-headed supporters of the system will unleash big battles before the election, as they hope to do better in this way than in the elections themselves. They have much more cause to do so than we do. That does not mean that we should peacefully put up with everything our enemy does, and that we should face him unarmed. Nothing is more possible than surprises which lead even before the next Reichstag elections to violent outbursts and catastrophes in which the proletariat is moved to call forth all its strength and all the forces at its disposal. A mass strike under such conditions could very well be successful in sweeping away the existing regime.

Just as it seems to be wrong to develop agitation which would face us with the dilemma of choosing between the mass strike under all circumstances and moral bankruptcy; just as it seems to me necessary to keep our powder dry for the next great battle; just as it seems to me probable that this battle will be fought in the coming Reichstag elections — so also it would seem to me to be equally out of place not to consider also the possibility of completely unexpected events occurring, and even more out of place to regard the mass strike as completely hopeless in such circumstances.

In the present situation we have all the trumps in our hand, provided we understand how to fuse enthusiastic boldness with persevering tenacity and coldblooded shrewdness.

NOTES

11. 'The Road to Power', written by Kautsky, first appeared in 1909. In it he laid down his evolutionary conception of how capitalism was preparing the basis for socialism.

12. Sisyphus was punished by the Gods by having to roll a large rock to the top of a hill. As soon as he reached the top, the rock ran down the hill again. Kautsky is here referring to Luxemburg's description of trade union action within capitalism as a 'labour of Sisyphus', which can win improvements for the working class within capitalism but must see those improvements constantly eroded by the inherent workings of capitalism until the system itself is overthrown. (See Luxemburg's book 'Social Reform or Revolution', 1899).

13. Emperor William I died in 1888. His Chancellor, Bismarck, was removed from power by William II in 1890.

Rosa Luxemburg: ATTRITION OR STRUGGLE?

AS A RESULT of speaking at agitational meetings across the country, I am somewhat late in replying to Comrade Kautsky. I would be well satisfied if my article on the mass strike and my agitation in April had achieved nothing more than to begin a discussion in the party on the tactic and to breach the ban on such discussion in our theoretical organ, 'Die Neue Zeit'. The first thing was to oppose the incompressible attempt to prevent a public discussion in the party press about questions which arouse great interest in the broadest circles of the party. My article about the mass strike was refused not only by our central organ, 'Vorwärts', but also by 'Die Neue Zeit' — which had at first accepted it and even had the type set for it — in the last analysis because a discussion about the mass strike was not wanted in the party press.

The error in this can only really be seen when one considers that the discussion has not suddenly come out of the blue, it is not something that has just occurred to one person — as Comrade Kautsky presents it when, throughout his article, he only talks about me and my agitation and starts his article with the sentence: "in our Dortmund party organ, Comrade Luxemburg has raised the question of the mass strike."

Before I even entered the arena with my article, the question of the mass strike had already become a live issue in a whole number of party centres and party newspapers. The comrades in Halle and the agitation section in Hessen-Nassau had sent formal resolutions to the Party Executive calling on them to take up the question of the general strike. The comrades in Königsberg, in Essen, in Breslau and in Bremen had decided to hold meetings to discuss the mass strike. In Kiel and Frankfurt am Main, half-day protest demonstrations had already taken place with much success. Comrade Pokorny of the miners' union had put forward the idea of the mass strike in a public meeting in Essen and had expressed the hope that in the coming great political struggles the leading role would fall to the miners. Even our deputies in the Prussian Parliament had already threatened a mass strike. How much the discussion of the mass strike simply corresponded to the mood and needs of the great mass of party comrades is proven by the fact that my article has been reprinted by more or less the whole Prussian party press and even by some newspapers outside Prussia. It is proven further by the fact that, in the sixteen mass meetings which I held in April, in Silesia, in Kiel, in Bremen, in Frankfurt am Main, in the industrial region of Rhineland-Westphalia, and on the 1st of May in Cologne, everywhere without exception, the slogan of the mass strike found the most enthusiastic agreement. Only one other slogan — as I discovered — now calls forth the same stormy support amongst the party masses in Germany: it is a sharp emphasis on our republican position. This slogan is unfortunately also not presented to the public in either "Vorwärts" or "Die Neue Zeit" (2), though in this respect too a section of our provincial press (from the "Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung" to the "Breslauer Volkswacht") does what is necessary on this issue as well.

Thus one can find in the broadest sections of the party a really strong combativity, a really resolute determination to carry the present suffrage struggle through to victory, if necessary through mass pressure on the streets. There has never been such an intense interest in the question of the mass strike in Germany. Only one party paper has up till now remained completely untouched by this mood in the country — our central organ "Vorwärts", which until now has not even had one word on the whole debate about the mass strike in the party press. One section of the party membership is also completely ignorant about it — the Berlin comrades who are supposed to get their information about the mood and intellectual life of the party nationally from "Vorwärts".

Yes, the central organ is so zealous in carrying out the directive it has received that it puts a line through every single word about the mass strike, even in reports of meetings which are held in Berlin. Thus in the report in "Vorwärts" about the mass meeting in Frankfurt am Main on the 17th April (the same report obviously appeared 'unedited' in other party papers) the sentence which states that "the speaker won from the audience a stormy resonance for her propaganda for the mass strike" has been characteristically and carefully removed.

It is moreover not the first time that an attempt has been made to ban public discussion of the mass strike, and the repeated failure of these attempts should by now, in my opinion, have shown that they are futile. The Cologne Trade Union Congress (3) forbade "propaganda for the mass strike", even in 1905. The pre-conference of the German party comrades in Austria before the 1904 Salzburg Party Congress likewise resolved that the slogan of the mass strike should neither be discussed nor mentioned at the Party Conference. Both resolutions failed however for the simple reason that Social Democracy is not a sect which is made up of a handful of obedient pupils, but a mass movement in which questions which stir its internal life must somehow reach the light of day, whether or not this is thought to be desirable.

It is therefore not the attempt to prevent a discussion of the mass strike which is in itself deplorable here — in my view, such bans are to be taken calmly with peace of mind

rather than with indignation — but the general conception of the mass strike which lies behind it. If one was to listen to the arguments which lie behind the claim that it is harmful to discuss the mass strike at present, one might think that the lessons of the Russian Revolution, the whole rich treasury of experiences from that period, which are of vital importance in a consideration of the mass strike and proletarian tactics in general, had passed without leaving a mark. One might think that we were still living in the fine period of the debates with Domela Nieuwenhuis and Cornielsen (4).

According to Comrade Kautsky, "If that", i.e. discussion of the mass strike, "were to take place publicly, it would be the same as conveying to the enemy the weak points of one's own position. The whole discussion would be as useful as if one wanted a council of war to discuss whether to give battle to the enemy within his hearing".

According to this conception, the mass strike would be a slyly thought out coup which is secretly constructed by the "council of war" of the social democracy — something like the Executive of the party and the General Committee of the trade unions — behind closed doors and by which the enemy — in this case, bourgeois society — is taken unawares. I wrote in opposition to this conception as far back as 1906 in the pamphlet about the mass strike written for the Hamburg comrades and can only repeat what I said: (5)

"On the same ground of abstract, unhistorical methods of observation stand those today who would, in the manner of a board of directors, put the mass strike in Germany on the calendar on an appointed day, and those who, like the participants in the trade-union congress at Cologne, would by a prohibition of 'propaganda' eliminate the problem of the mass strike from the face of the earth. Both tendencies proceed on the common purely anarchistic assumption that the mass strike is a purely technical means of struggle which can be 'decided' at pleasure and strictly according to conscience, or 'forbidden' — a kind of pocketknife which can be kept in the pocket clasped 'ready for any contingency', and according to decision, can be unclasped and used".

To the fears of Comrade Kautsky, which stem from this conception and which amount to the belief that public discussion of the mass strike would betray the weak points of our position to the enemy, there is no better answer than the words of Comrade Pannekoek (6), who has already shown up most of the weak points of Comrade Kautsky's position in the "Bremer Bürgerzeitung":

"How misleading this analogy with military techniques is", Pannekoek writes, "is shown by the fact that the party has never done anything but discuss its strong and weak positions completely openly. It could not have been otherwise as Social Democracy is not a small, closed group but a mass movement. Here secret plans are useless. Strength and weakness depend here on general social and political conditions, of which nothing can be kept secret and which cannot be affected by secrecy. How could we betray our weaknesses to the enemy? He knows them as well as we do. And if he does not, if he is the victim of a mistaken assessment of his and our strength, then this too is rooted in necessary historical-social conditions, which cannot be affected by tactical secrecy at all."

Translated from the German by Stan Crooke.
NEXT ISSUE: continuation of Rosa Luxemburg's article.

NOTES

1. Rosa Luxemburg had submitted her article 'Was weiter?' ('What next?') to both the SPD paper 'Vorwärts' and the theoretical journal 'Die Neue Zeit'. It was refused for publication in both: 'Vorwärts' said that party rules forbade propaganda for the political mass strike; Kautsky at first accepted it for 'Die Neue Zeit', but later he yielded to pressure and withdrew it. This marked the end of the personal friendship between Luxemburg and Kautsky. The article was eventually published in a local paper, the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung'. This forced the discussion into the open and Kautsky then had to reply in 'Die Neue Zeit' (see above), though he only accepted Luxemburg's reply to him (this article) after considerable pressure.

The opposition to publishing Luxemburg's articles stemmed from the desire not to offend the trade union leaders and to maintain the compromise with them reached in 1906.

2. The SPD had abandoned the slogan of the republic out of fear that an open campaign against the monarchy might lead to the reintroduction of the Anti-Socialist Laws. Engels criticised the absence of the demand for the republic from the 1891 Erfurt party programme, and only reluctantly agreed to it on the grounds of legality.

For Rosa Luxemburg the slogan of the republic was inseparable from the struggle for equal suffrage and for the mass strike. For her, the call for the republic gave a focus to all the struggles against Prussian absolutism, and also served as a link between those struggles and the overall aim of socialism.

In March 1910, just after the publication of her first article on the mass strike, she published in the 'Breslauer Volkswacht' an article called 'A time of sowing', in which she argued that the slogan of the democratic republic should become the guiding aim of the Prussian suffrage movement. She described the slogan as "a practical war cry against militarism, navalism, colonialism, great power politics, Junker domination and the Prussianisation of Germany; it is the consequence and drastic summary of our daily struggle against all these various phenomena of the ruling reaction".

3. The Cologne Trade Union Congress met in May 1905 and unanimously adopted a resolution opposing use of the general strike.

4. Nieuwenhuis and Cornielsen were Dutch anarcho-syndicalists who saw the general strike as the means to overthrow the capitalist state.

5. The pamphlet referred to is 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions', available in English in the Pathfinder Press collection 'Rosa Luxemburg Speaks'.

6. Anton Pannekoek: a Dutch Marxist, who from 1906 was active in German Social Democracy. He was part of the 'Bremen Left' in the SPD and a keen supporter of the use of the mass strike. He is best known for his anti-parliamentarian and ultra-left positions in the Communist International after the First World War.

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Saturday-Monday 2-4 June. Lutte Ouvrière fete, near Paris. For more details contact WA, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Saturday 23 June. 'Defend Our Unions' rank and file conference. New Century Hall, Manchester. Credentials for trade union delegates, £1 from 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

ANTI APARTHEID MOVEMENT

Trade Union Conference

on Sanctions Against South Africa

June 2nd at St. Pancras Town Hall, Euston Road London NW1. 10.30 to 5.30 'No revolution without women's liberation'. Pamphlet from the Campaign for Solidarity with Iran. 20p plus postage from CSI, c/o 265 Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

Published by Workers' Action, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD, and printed by Anvil Press [TU]. Registered as a newspaper at the GPO.

It's cheap at Woolworths—a life costs less than £200

A **SPRINKLER** system that would have saved many or all of the ten lives lost in the Manchester Woolworths fire is 'ridiculously expensive', according to the Manchester Chamber of Trade.

Such a system would have set Woolworths back by the grand sum of £2,000 a year. In fact, not even that much, as a large part of the cost would be recouped in reduced insurance premiums.

If it had been a question of a security device against theft, it would no doubt have been a different matter. There was no shortage of such security in the store that claimed ten lives. Reports indicated that fire doors were locked in the name of security and workers were trapped behind thick iron bars bolted to the windows of the cash office.

Most of the deaths were caused by deadly fumes of polyurethane foam furniture that Woolworths sells, though the dangers of this furnishing material have been known for many years: it claims about 100 deaths a year in domestic fires.

Although substitutes and fire proofing treatments are available, the manufacturers' motto seems to be 'if it makes a profit, sell it'. Only the stubborn self-interest of the makers prevents a ban on the material.

The fumes from polyurethane foam also appear to have played a tragic role in the fire at Hartop old people's home in Sutton Coldfield — and to have been compounded by penny-pinching Fire Brigade cuts.

Six old people burned to death in a dormitory annexe where no smoke-detectors were installed, although most of the residents were immobile and needed plenty of warning of any fire.

The local fire station had recently been reduced from two machines to one, which meant that only one breathing-apparatus team was available immediately, instead of three.

Which confirms what firemen and health workers have been saying for years: cuts kill.

DOUG MACKAY

WORKERS' ACTION

Sacked for speaking out

WANDSWORTH Council, taken over by the Tories in 1978, is out to destroy its own Direct Works department. First the council stopped the department tendering for new work, and now an attack has been launched on trade union organisation on the sites. Nine stewards have been sacked or victimised since the Tories gained control.

The latest sacking is of Ray Mills, the convenor of the Direct Works Kambala Road site in Battersea. The pretext for his sacking was a letter he wrote to the *South London Press* exposing the rundown of the site and how

this delayed the building of council houses for working class families. The council said that Mills had broken 'confidentiality' by sending the letter — though it was never even published.

They have now altered their trumped-up 'charge' to one of defaming senior management. The real reason is simply that Mills spoke up for the workers he was elected to represent on the site.

The official procedure Mills would have to go through to be reinstated is guaranteed to produce no results. He would have to appear before a panel of

councillors, two Tory and one Labour.

Instead of relying on a change of heart by the Tories, the 'Defend Ray Mills Committee' is calling for a mass picket of the Kambala Rd site to demand his immediate reinstatement in his capacity as convenor.

The picket will assemble outside the Kambala Rd site on Falcon Rd, Battersea, SW11 (nearest station, Clapham Junction), at 7.15 am on Monday 4th June.

Messages of support and donations to: 'Defend Ray Mills Committee', 17 Ravenet Court, London SW11.

NIK BARSTOW

STOP PRIVILEGE LEECHING THE HEALTH SERVICE

by JAMES DAVIES

THE NATIONAL Union of Public Employees (NUPE)'s conference demanded on May 20th that the government phase out all pay beds in National Health Service (NHS) hospitals by January 1st, or "the conference instructs all NUPE members to provide no further services to private patients". The resolution was opposed by the union's executive, but was passed by the membership, 750 votes to 21.

The speech that sent Tory Journalists' blood pressure soaring came from Socialist Workers' Party member Bill Geddes, from Hammersmith Hospital. "Every rich bastard who comes into the hospital", he said, "will only be treated on the basis of being a National Health Service patient, and not because he's got a bit of extra money to pay the consultant. The private sector has its hand round the neck of the National Health Service. I think it is our duty in this conference to cut that hand off".

After a campaign of protests against the milking of the NHS by private medicine a 'compromise' was devised in 1975 by Lord Goodman (who leads the Fleet Street publishers in their attacks on printworkers): 1,000 pay beds were to be phased out over six months, while the rest would be reduced in line with recommendations from a Board. This became law in 1976. But it did not threaten the private medical profiteers.

Three million people have private medical insurance policies. And the largest of the private health insurance firms, BUPA, said in a recent report: "The 1976 Health Service Act (which provides for the phasing out of pay beds [in the NHS] as and when the private sector

can provide alternatives) has formalised the existence and raison d'être of the independent sector, and far from weakening its position the legislation has proved instrumental in bringing about the much-needed stability whereby:

"Consultants use independent hospital facilities, occupancy levels increase, hospitals become economically viable, future markets are assured, and financial institutions are more willing

jumping. Those with money can get treatment that the poor have to queue up for, or can't get at all.

But if pay beds divert valuable resources from the NHS and favour the rich, they do so whether they are in the NHS hospitals or not. The NHS is being starved of funds. Commenting on the NHS, Dr Phillip Caper of the University of Massachusetts Medical School remarked, "The fault in the United Kingdom is not the mechan-

ism but the shortage of resources". Last week a nurses' union claimed that the death of a child at a hospital for the mentally handicapped, St Lawrence's at Caterham in Surrey, could have been avoided if there had been enough trained staff on duty at the time. St Lawrence's are 200 nurses short!

That case is typical: as funds for the health service are squeezed by the Tories even further than by Labour, and with private medicine acting as a leech on the public sector, the hardest hit are the aged and mentally

ill. For instance, the *Observer* reported last week that £17 million earmarked for the treatment of the mentally ill was spent elsewhere. A spokesman for the Oxford Regional Health Authority blithely told the *Observer*: "We were heavily overspent in our general area, so that's where the money went. Anyway, the government didn't ask for it to be returned".

A perfect example of robbery by private medicine is provided by the Wellington and nurses can earn far more than their NHS counterparts at the Royal Free.

Hospitals like the Wellington do not, of course, deal with geriatric patients, mental patients, and the chronically ill — the patients for whom the NHS are most short-staffed and most lacking in resources. Private medicine leads to a drain of medical resources away from the most needy towards the less needy but more able to pay, and frustrates any

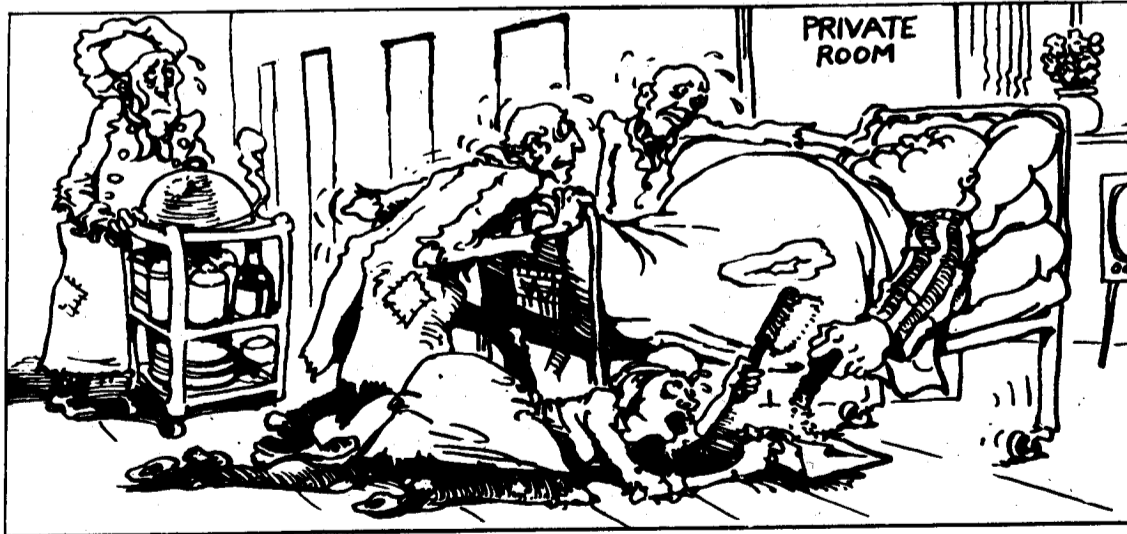
Bill Geddes' appeal must be supported. There has to be strongly coordinated industrial action after the January deadline to rid the NHS of the pay-bed leeches. And this must be linked to a campaign against the whole of private medicine and the way it creates a two-tier health system in Britain — a deteriorating NHS for the vast majority of us, and a flourishing private system for the rich. This means a campaign to nationalise the private sector without compensation.

The campaign should also demand that the drug industry be nationalised without compensation and brought under workers' control. The privately-owned drug industry is hugely profitable and socially irresponsible, and it siphons off millions in health service funds. More is spent each year on drug advertising than on doctors' training.

The health service at present reflects modern capitalism. It is class-ridden, with consultants and administrators getting several times the pay of the ancillaries and nurses, and with the state sector used to make the sleek tycoons of the private sector richer at the cost of the vast majority of the population.

A fight against pay beds, especially one that points the finger at the whole private medical system, is implicitly socialist. It is up to the militants in the struggle to make sure that a socialist view of the Health Service becomes explicit.

* 'Health, not cuts' conference sponsored by 'Fightback': Saturday 30 June, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Details from 'Fightback', 30 Camden Rd, London NW1. Tel: 560 3431 x 679.



to invest in the private health industry".

Since May 1977, the Health Service Board has slowly whittled away the 3,400 pay beds left in the NHS (after the initial 1,000 had been lopped off) to the present 2,800. At present it has proposals that would cut a further 566.

The argument the supporters of pay beds are fond of giving is that the NHS makes money from the pay beds. That is true, but it loses valuable facilities too. The crux of the argument, however, is that pay beds in the public sector mean queue

ing. Those with money can get treatment that the poor have to queue up for, or can't get at all.

But if pay beds divert valuable resources from the NHS and favour the rich, they do so whether they are in the NHS hospitals or not. The NHS is being starved of funds. Commenting on the NHS, Dr Phillip Caper of the University of Massachusetts Medical School remarked, "The fault in the United Kingdom is not the mechan-

ism but the shortage of resources". Last week a nurses' union claimed that the death of a child at a hospital for the mentally handicapped, St Lawrence's at Caterham in Surrey, could have been avoided if there had been enough trained staff on duty at the time. St Lawrence's are 200 nurses short!

Hospital case presently being heard by the Health Services Board. The Wellington is a private hospital in luxurious St John's Wood and has applied to build an extension to provide a further 100 private beds.

If it does, it will want to recruit another 142 nurses — all trained at public expense, and all of whom could work in the NHS — while the Royal Free Hospital nearby has had to close down wards and operating theatres because it is 175 nurses short. Charges at the Wellington are £130 a day before medical costs are added,

efforts by the NHS to improve the balance of provision.

The papers that blew their tops at Bill Geddes' speech were the same ones that were foaming at the — untrue — story they all printed during the ancillary workers' strike, of the cancer ward that had to close. They didn't say a word last Christmas when the cancer ward at Northwick Park hospital, Middlesex, was closed because of staff shortages, while two private hospitals are under construction in Harrow, drawing staff away from Northwick Park.