

a terrible failure. Experience has shown that workers plans are not a magic solution to redundancy — but they can help. Above all, the events of the last ten months have shown that Lucas management, the unions and the government will have to be pushed all the way by the rank and file in the company if Lucas Aerospace workers are ever going to produce socially useful products and save their jobs.

STRUGGLE

It is obvious that the Corporate Plan does not provide a magic solution to the threat of redundancy and many of its supporters knew that. There are no wonder demands that solve the struggles

between workers and capital. Now, as before, events at Lucas Aerospace are proving that there is no substitute for hard work, careful organising and sustained struggle. The Plan and the Combine are important weapons in the struggle — not substitutes for it.

TRIMMING

To the doubters, who will argue that the Plan has not stopped some redundancies, it can only be said that there were 14,000 redundancies in major firms on Merseyside alone last year, and there was not too much fight against them. Limited victories are better than total defeats. If the Combine is right in thinking that last year's redundancy proposals were the first part of a bigger trimming-down operation, then there are more battles to come.

is handing out a lot of money to Lucas in grants, but it will not take a stake in the company and it is not determining which products will be produced by the new factories.

TIES

On the negative side, then, implementation of some of the Plan's proposals has been taken out of the hands of the Combine and into the area of tri-partite negotiations between State, management and unions. And only some jobs have been saved. On the positive side, management and unions have been forced to take up some of the Plan's proposals, and this can be used as a stepping stone to further implementation. In particular, there should be close ties between the Combine and the workers in the two new factories, who should press for more production and further investment.



A Critical Assessment

socialist unity

The component forces of Socialist Unity(SU) had always agreed that its aim was to provide a socialist alternative rooted in existing struggles, expressed through an action programme: Interventions that could focus these struggles and build the campaigns around them, from rank and file union organisations to UTOM and NAC (National Abortion-Campaign). All SU campaigns worked hard to build such initiatives, with some successes, notably in the mass anti-racist struggles in Southall. But there were also problems. The most important of these are not of our own making: firstly, the rigid divide that exists between the parliamentary orientation of the Labour Left and the workplace focus of the revolutionary left and secondly, the non-involvement of the SWP who put

considerations of party-building before the needs of the struggle.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT NEEDED

There were, however, problems that need to be critically assessed and not avoided, if the first and vital joint election initiative by the far left is to be built on in the future:

■ The interventions lacked a solid framework to provide political and resource back-ups. There had been no meetings of the National Steering Committee for sometime, and no national mailings were sent out. This meant that it was hard to maintain continuity and involve independents, made worse by the resulting lack of any internal life to SU. The local campaigns were left to get on with it, losing the feeling of being part of a genuinely national political initiative.

■ There was a lack of thorough political planning of the areas and interventions. The problem was not so much that we had not been active as SU before, but whether there had been sufficient groundwork laid by the activity of revolutionary socialists in general. One result was that some campaigns were not rooted enough in the local needs and situations.

■ The forms of propaganda and agitation were sometimes unimaginative and too imitative of conventional politics, like cramped, badly-presented election addresses. A number of comrades felt that not enough space was given to act-

ually arguing for socialism in general, beyond the necessary action programme.

■ Lukewarm support by some members of Big Flame and IMG.

These were factors that limited the scope of our interventions. It is doubtful whether they affected the vote. The vote for the ten SU candidates (and the two independent candidates SU supported) was disappointing, because they failed to break out of the normal far left vote of between one and two%, even in Southall. They compare unfavourably with SU's bye-election and local election results. We cannot trumpet these successes and then say "votes don't matter" when things don't go as well.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Votes are secondary to what we succeed in building. We must build on the experience of SU to fight for things like a class struggle programme in the unions, unity in action on general political initiatives, building the independent movements of women and youth; but most of all to fight for the idea of a united electoral intervention of the far left. BF will explain our views on the future of SU and such electoral initiatives in the next issue of the paper. Both the programme and forms of organisation, must be debated at the SU conference, which is due to take place soon. We would be interested in reactions from our readers, particularly those who have been active in SU campaigns.

"However effective, therefore, our campaigning on single issues, our womens' group, our shop stewards' committee or our anti-fascist propaganda, our lack of activity at the times which for everyone else are moments of political choice, seriously weakens the impact of our political ideas."

(From Introduction to "Beyond the Fragments, Feminism and the Making of Socialism" Hilary Wainwright, Sheila Rowbotham and Lynne Segal)

The limited activity of revolutionary socialists during the elections was a tragic missed opportunity. The SWP's poster campaign and a few desultory public meetings, in defiance of their conference decision to stand candidates was not an **intervention**. Meanwhile the WRP, (Workers Revolutionary Party,) despite the absurdities of parts of its politics - restore wage differentials, defence of anti-communist Arab regimes and so on - was able to appear as the main socialist alternative to Labour's Tory policies. A real socialist alternative was desperately needed as Labour ideologically crumpled before the Tory onslaught. The successful ANL campaigns against the NF were not and could not be a substitute for an alternative.