

Workers' ACTION

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Rank and File conference: tell Callaghan

JAMES CALLAGHAN has predictably denounced the call by the Scottish area conference of the mineworkers' union for a big trade union campaign to force the Tories to an early general election.

Using 'industrial muscle for political ends', he claims, is undemocratic. Instead he promises a 'fierce fight' against the Tories... in parliament.

So when inflation is at 20% and there are two million unemployed (as even the Treasury forecasts), the working class is to listen to 'Today in Parliament' on the radio and hope to hear Callaghan give Thatcher a good thrashing.

The ruling class does not restrict itself to Parliament. There was no ballot-box decision in 1976 when the IMF ordered the Labour government to adopt a programme of cuts. Nor in 1964 when, according to Wilson, financial speculators and bankers dictated Labour's policies.

So why should we fight with one hand tied behind our backs?

Callaghan knows that the working class will soon have to fight against the after-effects of the Tory budget as Britain nose-dives into recession. And he knows that this could create the kind of explosive clashes that brought down the Heath government and gave the left in the unions and the Labour

YES, WE'LL STRIKE AT THE TORIES

party a tremendous boost.

Callaghan plays up the role of parliament at the expense of the industrial struggle. He doesn't want the industrial struggle to 'get political' if that means developing the politics of class war, politics based on

the working class's capacity to fight its exploiters.

Instead he wants the unions to stick to their existing politics, his own politics, the politics of parliamentary manoeuvre, of corrupting contempt for workers' struggles, and of kow-towing

to capitalism.

Under the last Tory government, industrial militancy snowballed. But it never broke through the membrane of reformism; it never set its own political perspectives, different from the parliamentary horizons

provided by Wilson and Callaghan. The widespread *disillusion* with the Parliamentary Labour leadership was never positively transcended by an all-round political alternative.

We need to set a political perspective for industrial militancy, including:

Hours

- Automatic cost-of-living protection for wages
- Cut hours, not jobs — under workers' control and with no loss of pay
- Nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control
- Expand social services. Make the bosses pay. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'. Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation.
- Unity of black and

white workers in struggle against capitalism. Purge racism from the labour movement. Win labour movement support for black self-defence. End all immigration controls.

■ Democracy and accountability at all levels and in all sections of the labour movement. Regular election and right of recall over full-time trade union officials, who should be paid the average wage of the workers they represent. Automatic re-selection procedure for Labour MPs; election of the Labour Party leader by conference.

Rally

The 'Defend the Unions' Rank and File conference in Manchester this weekend (23rd) will be an important rallying point for those who want to fight on the industrial front. But, judging from past such conferences under the same political aegis (the Socialist Workers' Party), it will fall into the trap of calling for more militancy, for stronger shop floor and trade union organisation, while taking more or less for granted that the *ideas* of the movement, its *politics*, will do.

Having sobered up after its disastrously blind militancy-shouting of 1974-6, the SWP will probably stress the need for patient, detailed work in the unions and factories. Rightly so. But this emphasis should not be used to postpone the political issues as 'too advanced'.

As long as industrial militants leave the politics to Callaghan and his gang of parliamentary twisters, the industrial militancy itself will be fettered. In response to Callaghan, we must both organise industrially and take up the fight against Callaghan's political leadership. Every trade union branch and every Labour Party GMC should condemn Callaghan's declaration and start working out its own plans for action.



Boat people: Let them in

THE National Front will be marching this weekend to object to any Vietnamese refugees being accepted into Britain.

Yet in a sense they already have the government on their side, and for the same racist reasons. Britain has let in just 1,500 of the boat people, and its only motive is to take the pressure off Hong Kong. Like other wealthy nations, Britain has been more eager to suggest solutions for the desperately poor countries of south east Asia than make a

substantial contribution to providing a refuge for the hundreds of thousands in danger of death by hunger, thirst or drowning. Japan has accepted just 51 of the refugees, New Zealand 812.

The resources of the USA, backed by all the Imperialist powers, were poured into devastating Vietnam, supposedly for the benefit of the hapless Vietnamese. Now that refugees are pouring out of Vietnam, unable to face the harshness of life in a country all but destroyed by

imperialism, those powers are unwilling to lift a finger to save them.

They never did care about the Vietnamese: only about their own power and pride and profits.

The Thatcher government (as also Callaghan before) would be glad to find the money and the space to welcome in any number of white racists from Rhodesia or South Africa. So of course would the National Front. But the desperate Vietnamese are another story.

The labour movement must stand against this racism and say:

- Let them come!
- End all immigration controls!

Counter-demonstration
Assemble 1pm,
Saturday 23 June,
in Leicester Sq.

FUND DRIVE

Received this week:

East London..... £20
 Total to date..... £396.80
 Target..... £500
 We still need..... £103.20

Workers' Action is taking a break next week (30th). The following week, the Workers' Action staff will be working on the July Socialist Organiser, which will appear for Saturday July 7th. Workers' Action no.146 will therefore be dated July 14th.

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WILL LABOUR FIGHT THE CUTS?

Last Saturday [16th] 136 delegates and 89 visitors attended a London labour movement conference on councils and the cuts. [For report see page 12]. JOHN O'MAHONY reviews the issues raised in the conference debate.

AT THE conference a division emerged between two perspectives for the labour movement in the coming period.

On the one side, a perspective of class struggle, which uses the positions of strength already held by the labour movement on local councils and elsewhere to mobilise for a serious fight-back against the Tory offensive. On the other side, a perspective which makes preserving positions on councils the priority, by a policy of 'riding the punches' of the Tory government.

This was most crassly expressed by *Chartist* Mike Davis with the sage motto, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'.

The division emerged around a resolution from *Workers' Action* supporters (backed in the conference by some Labour Party supporters of *Socialist Challenge*). It was not a stark proposal for an utterly inflexible commitment never under any circumstances to raise rates. Even a revolutionary group of councillors might have no alternative but to comply, to some degree, with the policies of a central government which it could scarcely hope to overthrow with its own efforts. A stark 'never' to rate rises would be a programme for wholesale withdrawal from local government by the labour movement.

But the resolution did attempt to commit the conference to a repudiation of the role which Labour-controlled councils normally fill, of tamely participating in the administration of bourgeois society according to the bourgeois norms and where 'necessary' cutting against the grain of working class interests. It called for a commitment to struggle by

left Labour councillors and councils, while realistically taking into account the possibility of defeat.

Yet in the discussion the opponents of the *Workers' Action* resolution insisted on distorting its meaning and caricaturing it. Their arguments were directed not against what it said but against a position of immediate showdown at all costs and blanket opposition to any rate rises, ever, under any circumstances. The worst of these false polarisations was made by Mike Davis.

Yet before the conference there was seemingly some political agreement between *Workers' Action* and the *Chartists*. Geoff Bender, another leader of the *Chartist* tendency, wrote in the special *Socialist Organiser* supplement before the conference:

"Faced with the certainty of future cuts, the policy of rate increases offers no way forward. Neither the necessary sums of money can be found, nor the potential support mobilised... Two things are needed: firstly, in every area of council services — in employment, housing, transport, education, and social services — the left must be able to put forward policies capable of mobilising the working class: council tenants, local workers, consumers of services. They must be policies geared to the needs of working people. Only this way can existing services and jobs be defended.

"Secondly, the isolation of local councillors must be overcome. Links must be built..."

The difference between *Workers' Action's* resolution and Geoff Bender's formulation was that Bender expressed an opinion and was prepared to leave it like that; *Workers' Action* expressed a similar opinion and tried to commit the conference, including the various 'left' councillors, to act according to it.

Such a commitment meant a beginning to the work of organising to draw practical conclusions from general left ideas; the beginning of the necessary polarisation between those who are clear in their own minds that they are going to fight and those only prepared to indulge in left talk.

The caricaturing of *Workers' Action's* position made it possible to continue to avoid both practical commitment to struggle and a decision not to struggle. The *Chartist* tendency reflected the vacillations and contradictions in the conference, obstructing a clear commit-

ment in favour of the working class. It depends on mobilisation, on struggle. Even if one defiant Labour council could be dealt with easily, could a string of such councils, across London or throughout the country, backed by the power of unions and tenants? (And in fact the last Tory government found it far from easy to deal with one tiny council in Clay Cross).

At the conference it was not a matter of ultra-left fantasies, but of orienting for a struggle, beginning from where we are.

The majority of the conference did not actually 'begin from where they are'. There was much concern to adopt an attitude to rate rises which would 'make sense' throughout the movement. But that was not, should not have been, and in fact could not meaningfully be the real concern of this left wing conference.

The conference's responsibility was to adopt a class struggle policy that could allow *Socialist Organiser* to rearm the left politically and begin to organise it against the Tory onslaught. To the degree that the left can organise class struggle (including around councils), then a real alternative to the sit-tight 'bird in the hand' approach will manifest itself and 'make sense' to those who want to fight in the working class interest.

The *Chartists* especially manifested a fatal lack of a clear conception of their own identity and task. At this stage it is necessary to hammer out and demarcate a real left, defined by commitment to class struggle politics, not to seek to sink the identity of the Marxists in the broader left and that of the broader left in the labour movement.

With *Labour-controlled councils* it is either class struggle politics or the role of administrator of capitalist politics and therefore propagandist for bourgeois ideas. Councils are subordinate to the national government, but despite this difference in scale all the differences about the 'responsibility of councils to maintain jobs and services' and therefore not to risk the 'bird in the hand' by clashing with central government are the self-same ones

Harold Wilson and James Callaghan have used to justify their politics... including their cuts.

They too have to be 'responsible', have to reckon with the entrenched power of the state, the City, big business and the IMF. All such things would be major problems for a Parliamentary-based seriously left Labour government. It would in fact be a left government only to the degree that it mobilised and fought against those forces.

Logically, the 'bird in the hand' approach in local government cannot be limited to local government. If it is a valid argument at all, it applies also to a national Labour government. If it justifies a policy of acquiescence in local government it justifies Callaghan before the IMF.

In fact Labour local government is a major school of class collaborationist politics. The council Labour groups are, after the trade union bureaucracy, probably the most corrupting force in the labour movement. They tie the political labour movement to a soulless municipal administration that has nothing to do with socialism.

In Tower Hamlets, the Labour council, led by a clique which took the leadership of the Labour group five or six years ago on a 'left' platform, now prides itself on beating a prolonged council workers' strike early this year. Almost everywhere, the councillors form dictatorial, undemocratic cliques, with an almost Stalinist 'discipline', which in many areas allows them to play a dominant role in the local Labour Party.

It may not even be too much of an exaggeration to say that the activities of these councils are the opposite of the socialist struggle.

Socialist Organiser has carried articles on transforming this situation with local councils. All the less reason for supporters of *Socialist Organiser* to pretend such a transformation has already been accomplished, or to lend justification to the way Labour councils throughout the country will carry out the local implications of Thatcher's policy with talk of the need to be responsible to the 'bird in the hand'.

WORKERS ACTION'S RESOLUTION

THIS CONFERENCE believes that a Council's job is not to off-load the present crisis, particularly in local government finance and services, onto the backs of the working class, either through cutting back on jobs or services or through rent and rate rises.

Instead, this Conference believes that the best way to meet the crisis is by united action, linking Labour Councils, Labour Parties, Trade Unions, and Community Organisations, to force those responsible to foot the bill. Such action should form an escalating campaign, leading up to industrial action and councils refusing to pay debt charges, with the aim of forcing central government to provide more funds.

The campaign should involve:

■ A fight to commit labour movement organisations to a policy of:

• nationalisation, without compensation of the banks and financial institutions; the removal of the burden of interest charges on local authorities; and the abolition of the cash limits system.

• giving full and automatic support to any local councils, and other labour movement bodies, conducting a fight against cutbacks and rent and rate rises. This support must also be extended to local authority workers fighting to improve their pay and con-

ditions.

■ A campaign to secure the maximum support for the proposed [Labour Party] Greater London Regional Council sponsored Conference scheduled for September. We should seek to win such support on the basis of the policies outlined above, and also on the basis of the Conference supporting the establishment of a representative committee, linking Labour Councils, Labour Parties, Trade Unions and Community Organisations in the different Boroughs, to develop as wide and united a fight as possible. This fight should include the calling of a London-wide demonstration in October/November. It should also involve making, where possible, links with provincial Labour Councils, Labour Parties and other labour movement organisations involved in fighting the present crisis.

■ An immediate move to get local Labour Parties/Trade Union organisations to call Borough-wide conferences, to which should be invited representatives from all the labour movement and community organisations in the particular area. We should campaign to get such Conferences to discuss and decide on a joint local campaign, and also to establish labour movement based 'Fight the Cuts' committees to coordinate propaganda and action.

ment against business-usual Labour councillorism, and blocking a start in drawing the practical class struggle conclusions from premises they share with *Workers' Action*. It is the classic experience that the meaningful dividing line between revolutionaries and vague leftists emerges around drawing such practical conclusions from general left politics.

We were also told that the

left must organise against the Tory government onslaught. The 'bird in the hand' approach to the problem of local councils is a recipe for the most craven compliance with anything the government decrees.

In fact, the relationship between Labour-controlled councils and the living-standards-cutting Tory government is not something given once and for all. It can be modified tremendous-

Not in the Labour Party?

THE WORST feature of the conference was a speech by *Chartist* Mike Davis, in which he overshot crude demagoguery and went over into something resembling old-fashioned witch-hunting.

Arguing against the *Workers' Action* resolution, he wound up denouncing those [WA] whom he [falsely] accused of saying 'no rate rises, ever' and those who had an expectation of 'mobilisations in the streets against the Tories within six months'. These people, he said, 'shouldn't be in the Labour Party at all, but should join the WRP'.

This outburst came in a speech whose political keynote was 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush', meaning Labour councils should be wary of sticking

their necks out in a struggle with the Government.

Davis has so far played a positive role in building *Socialist Organiser*, and so have the *Chartists*. The outburst [and the *Chartists' 'soft' position in the conference]* are therefore all the more regrettable.

The *Socialist Charter* tendency should publicly dissociate itself from Mike Davis' remarks. All the *Chartists* who consider themselves revolutionaries [including Mike Davis] should in addition ponder on why, when political argument and tensions developed between right and left at the conference, they veered to give cover to the right, and their leading spokesman could say that the left in the conference did not belong in the Labour Party.



CONFERENCE REPORT

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argument that it is an 'interim measure' while mobilisation goes ahead.

The *Workers' Action* motion was defeated by a two-to-one margin, but the conference did pass a resolution from Camden NUPE shop stewards' committee, calling among other things for an all-London Labour and trade union conference against the cuts.

In an extremely demagogic speech, *Chartist* leader Mike Davis accused those supporting the *Workers' Action* motion of being utterly impractical and utopian. Such people, he insisted, should not be in the Labour Party.

This witch-hunting sort of attack helped obscure the real differences.

Several far-left sects sent

observers, yet none of them managed to say anything in either the workshops or the plenary session. Apparently, the picture of so many grassroots activists grappling with the problems of building a movement to face up to the crisis in local government was too much for them.

The self-proclaimed 'Marxist tendency in the Labour Party', *Militant*, had evidently boycotted the conference.

Despite the confusion in the main debate, a sizeable section of the broad conference did support the class-struggle policy put forward by *Workers' Action*. There are grounds for confidence that we will be able to convince greater numbers as the discussion continues, and as the real issues emerge more starkly.

JAMES DAVIES

by NIK BARSTOW

NICARAGUA:

Guerillas set to win, but who will rule?

THE Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) has captured Nicaragua's second city, Leon, and the beleaguered National Guard garrison has been evacuated. Fighting is still going on in the slum areas of the capital, Managua, despite a week-long air and artillery bombardment by the National Guard.

At the same time, a FSLN armoured column of 300 invaded Nicaragua from Costa Rica on June 15th. By the 19th it was within ten miles of its first objective, the small town of Rivas, where the FSLN intends to establish its Provisional Government.

The defeats suffered by General Anastasio Somoza's troops have weakened his regime's international position still further. The US suspended aid to Somoza last year and has now banned all arms sales to Nicaragua. Technicians for the airforce provided from the USA and formerly employed by the CIA's 'Air America' have been withdrawn. The US government now has no intention of rescuing the family dictatorship it set up 45 years ago and has supported ever since.

Aid

Five South American countries, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia, have said they consider the FSLN forces and Somoza's government to be on the same level as regards diplomatic recognition. Central American governments in Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico are reported to be providing aid to the FSLN.

Only the other extreme right wing dictatorships in Central America, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, are giving even 'moral support'. A few Guatemalan troops have been seen fighting alongside the National Guard, but there have been no moves to full-scale intervention.

Growing isolation has provoked a crisis in Somoza's government. A report by Agence France-Presse says that Somoza's entourage have been asking him to leave the country so that a settlement can be made. The Foreign Minister, Julio Quinana, invited the US-backed umbrella organisation, the Organisation of American States, to intervene. He said Somoza's government would welcome a 'peace force' to stop the fighting.

But the Somoza government is still hanging on, with the protection of its elite National Guard troops.

By tackling the FSLN forces area by area, the National Guard have been able to beat back most of the attacks. Earlier in June the National Guard recaptured towns taken briefly by the FSLN and beat back two large-scale incursions in the north and the south of the country.

trained 'Black Berets' assassination squad was murdered.

The Somoza family personally control not only the Army, but also large sections of business in Nicaragua. Their control of the state machinery allows them to extort massive sums. When



Sandinista guerilla: who will reap the fruits of the victory he is fighting for?

The National Guard is well supplied with Israeli manufactured weapons and the airforce has enough local technicians to keep flying. The National Guard's loyalty has been kept by the Somoza family's massive corruption machine and by bloody purges. During the last major Sandinista uprising, in August/September 1978, 85 top army officers were arrested for 'plotting to overthrow' Somoza, and the whole general staff of the US and South Vietnamese

Managua was flattened by an earthquake in 1972, aid flooded in from round the world. Managua's centre is still rubble, surrounded by decrepit slum areas (the 'barrios'). The money went straight into the Somozas' pockets.

Conflict

Though this personal control allows the dictatorship to hang on, it has brought it into conflict with every sect-

ion of Nicaraguan society. Employers are threatened by the spread of Somoza's business interests and see their profits hit by government corruption. Shopkeepers suffer from massive government extortion. During the FSLN's last major military offensive in 1978, the employers organised a national stoppage at the end of August, shutting down almost 80% of industry within four days. From June 4th this year, employers in Managua, the capital, have been running a 'general strike'.

Looting

The National Guard, as well as attacking Managua's slum areas, have also hit the businessmen, freely looting shops and supermarkets. After June 14th, they openly approved the looting of shops by slum dwellers, too. National Guardsmen were to be seen organising queues of looters outside the ravaged shops, as supplies of food and basic items ran out.

The National Guard also hoped to disorganise the working class opposition. The people of the barrios had been trying independently to control food and medical supplies, as part of the areas' defences, and the National Guard hope to turn that into a dog-eat-dog struggle for individual survival.

The Sandinista movement has been closely associated with bourgeois opposition politicians in the 'Group of 12'. The Provisional Government announced by the FSLN includes a Sandinista leader (from the 'Tercerista' faction), a member of the Group of 12, a businessman connected with the Broad Opposition Front, a former director of the National University who is a member of the National Patriotic Front, and the widow of Pedro Chamorro, the opposition leader whose murder in January 1978 marked the start of the recent upsurge.

The Broad Opposition Front (FAO) was founded in 1978 and included opposition bourgeois parties and both wings of the pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN). After last September, they tried to do a deal

with Somoza's supporters. They proposed a 'government of national salvation', one third FAO, one third members of Somoza's Liberal Party, and one third 'independents'. The National Guard would be maintained under 'top officers with recognised good conduct and discipline'. The FAO appealed to the Organisation of American States to intervene and conduct a referendum on whether Somoza should go. But Somoza refused.

The collapse of the deal meant the decline of the FAO.

Its place was taken by the United People's Movement (MPU), led by the Nicaraguan Communist Party (PCN: a splinter of the PSN). The movement drew support because it called for 'political independence of the popular movement in the struggle against the dynastic dictatorship' and for 'unity among the revolutionary forces'.

While the rhetoric distanced the MPU from the tactics that compromised the FAO, it soon became clear that it was trying much the same thing: to draw in the bourgeoisie for a solution based on 'national unity'.

In February the PCN led the MPU into a new grouping, the National Pat-

iotic Front, together with the Group of 12, the Independent Liberal Party, the PSN and the Confederation of Nicaraguan Workers. The Patriotic Front has formed close links with the guerillas.

The FSLN has popular support, but it has not organised a political base for that support — politically, it has handed over to the bosses.

Somoza's eventual overthrow looks certain. But the FSLN's emphasis on a military victory, while looking for sympathy from other South and Central American governments, is likely to prolong the war and result in a continuation of bourgeois rule, less irrational and brutal than the Somoza dictatorship possibly, but out for the same thing.

For the inhabitants of Leon and Managua's 'barrios', who have fought the National Guard, been bombed and strafed for resisting, held a month-long general strike and organised their own areas, victory according to this strategy would fall far short of the logical outcome of the struggle they have been waging.

Smash

American imperialism is now at bay, at last prepared to let Somoza fall and hoping that his replacement will do the job he did more efficiently and without provoking such opposition. But the Nicaraguan workers, under different political leadership, could, with their heroism and militancy, smash the hold of American imperialism and, the Nicaraguan bosses.

The Sandinistas

THE FSLN is split up into three tendencies.

Until autumn 1977 the 'Prolonged War' faction was the majority of the leadership, but it has been greatly weakened through the military blows of the National Guard. Their influence is strongest in the mountainous regions of the country.

The 'Proletarian Tendency' is the only tendency in the FSLN which rejects the guerrilla strategy. In their programmatic declaration at the end of last year they came out for an 'authentic people's democracy' under the leadership of the proletariat.

In order to gain unity of all revolutionary and democratic organisations, the creation of a popular front as the concrete organisational alternative for the masses in struggle against the regime is necessary. This popular front must be united on the basis of a revolutionary programme of the proletariat.

In this tendency's statements, therefore, a clear idea

of workers' councils is missing, and so is the internationalist aspect. The dominant perspective is socialism in one country.

The third tendency in the Sandinista Front is the 'third force', the 'Terceristas'. It is closest to the bourgeois camp, and claims to represent the whole FSLN. The Terceristas want a revived September offensive. Although they do mobilise the urban masses, their essential centre of gravity is in the guerrilla struggle. Their concept of a rapid large-scale offensive could not be carried through, since the unfavourable military balance of forces was accentuated.

Although the Sandinistas armed themselves, Somoza could permanently build up his arsenals with Israeli aid.

The three tendencies put out a unity declaration in December 1978, involving both unity in action and a coming closer on substantive issues.

from 'Permanente Revolution' [Austria], May-June 1979.

Clampdown in Czechoslovakia

On May 29th the Czech secret police arrested 15 leading members of the opposition movements Charter 77 and VONS ('The Committee to defend those unjustly persecuted'). The arrests took place at 5 o'clock in the morning with doors being smashed down when the police felt that they weren't opened quickly enough. The warrants for the arrests state that "writings which would undermine the citizen's confidence in the organs of state and create a hostile attitude towards the socialist state system were produced and distributed in large numbers".

Among those arrested were Peter Uhl, who in 1969 founded the 'Revolutionary Socialist Party', the playwright Vaclav Havel, the general secretary of VONS, Vaclav Benda, and psychologist Jiri Nemeč,

who was involved in building links with opposition groups in Poland. One of the few spokesmen for Charter 77 still at liberty, Zdena Tominova, was attacked and beaten up by a masked man on June 5th.

Those arrested face prison sentences of up to 5 years.

The aim of the arrests is to behead the dissident movement. Other Charter 77 leaders have already been arrested and imprisoned: Sabata was given an additional 18 month sentence just before the arrests and the lawyer who defended him was himself framed up and sentenced to 3 months in prison for incidents supposed to have taken place 4 years before.

The real direction in which the opposition is moving was shown by the latest issue of 'Charter 77' which appeared on the same day as the arrests.

Dealing with consumption and corruption among the bureaucracy it stated: "There is in Czechoslovakia a social layer which does not know or hardly knows the problems of the ordinary consumer. These privileged people go shopping in special stores, always well supplied with luxury goods. They don't even have to go out; the goods are delivered to their homes and they pay by cheque".

It may be true that this would 'undermine the citizen's confidence in the organs of state', but a state in which a privileged bureaucracy exists does not deserve their confidence. That is why the secret police have made the latest round of arrests and that is why we must defend the anti-bureaucratic opposition in Eastern Europe.

BRUCE ROBINSON

Australia on brink of general strike

AUSTRALIAN Industry could face a near total shutdown this week as a result of strikes in protest at the arrest of eight union officials for addressing a workers' meeting.



The workers are in dispute at the Hammersley iron ore project in Pilbara, 1000 miles north of Perth, the world's richest iron ore area. The officials, from several unions, were arrested under the recently amended West Australia Police Act and charged with addressing a group of people in a public place on June 11th without the permission of the Chief Commissioner of

Police.

On June 12th, over 30,000 workers walked out in the mining areas in the north-west. On June 13th, workers in South Australian car plants stopped work to hold protest meetings, and the metal workers' union office in Melbourne said it was likely that 150,000 of their members in Victoria would join a protest strike.

Four out of the six Australian state labour councils have called for a 24 hour strike in protest at the arrests.

Bill Hayden, the Labour leader of the Federal Opposition, said that the arrests were deliberately orchestrated by the Western Australia government in order to pro-

voke an early state election. This is probably true. But the scale of the protest against the arrests — in some areas there are proposals for indefinite strikes until the charges are dropped and the amended Police Act repealed — is an unprecedented step forward in the fightback against the right-wing Fraser federal government (whose recent mini-budget abolished the state-subsidised health care scheme and cut social services) and its allies in the states.



It could well lead to more than just a state election. JO THWAITES

by
PETE FIRMIN

Three Mile Island: How the impossible did happen

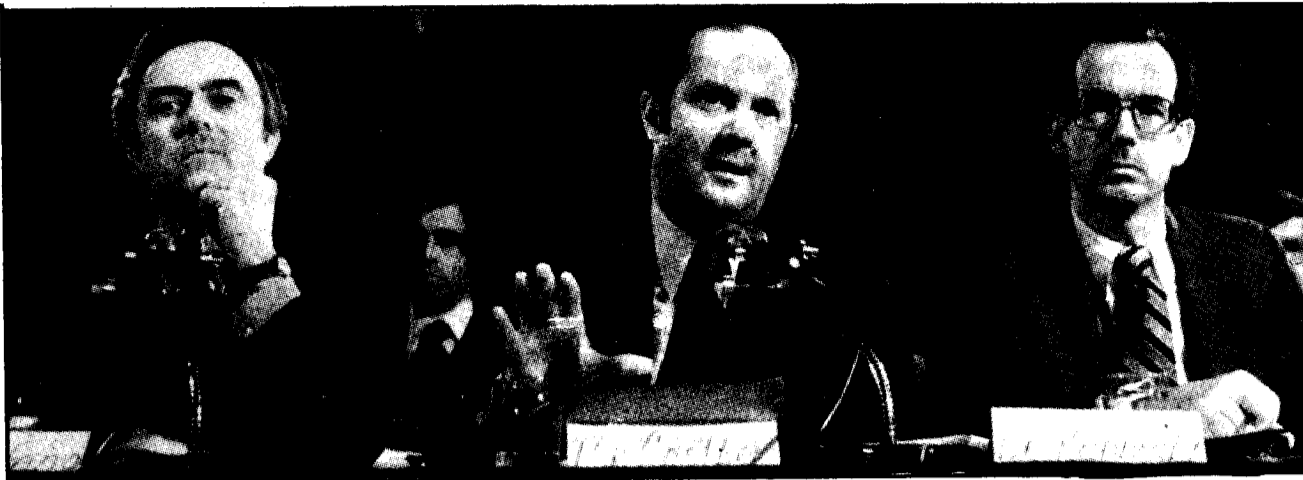
After the 'Three Mile Island' nuclear power near-disaster in March, all the individuals and companies involved are trying to blame each other for the accident. One major reason is the enormous claims for damages likely to come up. Babcock and Wilcox, who made the nuclear steam supply system and various emergency support systems blame the operators. However, apart from supplying equipment, they also trained the Three Mile Island operators.

Babcock and Wilcox deny responsibility for the training on the grounds that the courses were designed by the reactors' owners (Metropolitan Edison) and approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)—the governments nuclear inspectors.

The NRC is squirming too. Three Mile Island was exempt from a set of federal rules designed to prevent radiation leakage during reactor accidents. Regulations had been redrawn in 1975 to require at least 2 safety devices for the containment of radiation in the event of a reactor accident. At Three Mile Island, built several years earlier, only one safety device was required.

Although the NRC was free to require any plant, whatever its age, to install new safety devices this was considered "impractical and economically unfeasible" by NRC officials.

From the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, it appears that five major factors contributed to the accident,



Health and environment chiefs were put up to reassure the Senate [above] that radioactive leaks wouldn't cause cancer. But an anti-nuclear health specialist estimated a possible 50,000 cancers from the Three Mile Island leak.

ent, four due to 'human error'. The crucial factor was when workers carrying out routine maintenance accidentally turned off the supply of cooling water. As designed, the turbine automatically shut down and an auxiliary water pump started. However, the valve admitting this new water supply system had accidentally been closed days earlier. This prevented the emergency water supply reaching the system, causing the temperature of the nuclear fuel and the pressure in the reactor to rise.

Within 5 seconds this pressure reached the point where a safety valve opened

automatically to reduce it—but insufficiently. Four seconds later the pressure had reached a level where the reactor shut itself down automatically. Thus within 10 seconds the two main pieces of generating equipment, reactor and turbine, had shut themselves down as the designers intended.

With the nuclear reaction stopped, the temperature and pressure began to drop, at which point the safety valve should have closed again automatically. It did not—the main technical failure. The system's designers had installed an extra emergency block-valve because such safety valves are notoriously

unreliable, but the failure of the valve to close wasn't noticed until 1½ minutes from the start of the accident, by which time it was too late.

The open valve allowed pressure to escape from the system, posing the danger that the water inside would suddenly turn into steam and leave the fuel uncooled. This activated the emergency core cooling system, when high-pressure injection pumps automatically began forcing an emergency coolant supply into the reactor.

At this stage—2 minutes from the start of the accident—the most important failing occurred. The controllers—

confused by the speed of events—feared the system might now overflow with water, so they shut off the emergency controls. If they had allowed the pumps to continue, there would probably not have been the 'core damage' to the nuclear fuel that took place, and the resulting release of radiation.

The water turned into steam, causing the circulation pumps to shudder so the operators shut them off too. The reactor was now deprived of any coolant at all and its temperature shot up to about 1500 degrees Centigrade. In the next 2 hours much of the water boiled away. The alloy cladding

around the fuel rods began to react with the steam. This created the hydrogen which formed a bubble in the top of the reactor.

It was only after several hours that the engineers realised what was happening and restarted the high-pressure pumps to inject coolant into the reactor.

Eventually, 16 hours after it all began, they managed to 'stabilise' the system at around 240 degrees C. By then, however, radioactive water had spurting through the relief valve and spilled onto the reactor building floor. Although a sump had been designed to collect spillage and drain it off to storage, the venting of the reactor building let radioactive steam and gases escape into the atmosphere.

While the amount of radiation leaking out was relatively small, radiation levels inside the buildings are still so high that no-one has yet been able to approach the reactor to examine it.

The accident has already led to tougher safety standards, which will result in an increase in the cost of nuclear power generation, possibly by large amounts and possibly also driving some plant operators out of business. This is despite the fact that it is usually claimed that nuclear power is 'cheap' compared to other sources.

Here in Britain we would probably never find out the causes of such an accident: all nuclear power station operators are covered by the Official Secrets Act. Safety standards are lower here than they were in the USA before the Three Mile Island incident.

Occupiers defy Tory council

EIGHT houses at Penkull, Stoke-on-Trent, have been occupied for the creation of a women's refuge, a social aid centre and a socialist centre.

The houses, all in one street, are very large Victorian buildings in sound condition, and they have been occupied in defiance of plans by the Tory council to demolish some and auction off others.

The occupations are being run by supporters of *Workers Action* and *Socialist Worker*, and by a group of anarchists, and are supported by other community groups. Two local social workers, Lynne Collis and Brian Williams, have been sacked for working with the occupations.

Local residents came along to a meeting called at the end of May to discuss the occupations. Labour councillors and local Labour MP Bob Cant were also there, but Tory County Councillors who had been invited declined to attend.

But the Labour councillors and MP refused to give their support to the occupations and suggested instead a campaign of letters to the local paper and to the county councillors to stop the sales and demolitions.

Workers' Action supporters will be campaigning for support for the occupations in the local Labour Party and trade unions. We challenged Bob Cant and Trades Council president Leslie Sillitoe to tell the press and local radio that they support the occupation and that they would call on members of the Labour Party and trade unionists to physically support the occupations to prevent any demolition or auction taking place. They refused to give such support.

The SWP were happy to attack the Labour Party as useless. But we argued that without the support of a large section of the local labour movement the occupation will collapse under the first

application of pressure from the council. (Already they have tried to undermine it by offering some of the groups alternative accommodation.) We therefore see the building of this support as our first priority.

ARTHUR BOUGH



THE fight to secure a refuge for battered women in Birmingham continues, though for a while it looked as if Women's Aid had won. On Tuesday 12th June Birmingham council decided [thanks to the absence of three Tories on holiday] to allow the women to keep their present refuge for twelve weeks and then to give them somewhere permanent. But this victory was short-lived.

Two days later the Housing Committee met and said they would not be bound by this decision, but under pressure agreed to form a sub-committee to investigate

the matter.

Meanwhile the threat of eviction, though temporarily lifted, remains on the council books and can be used again at any time. Services remain cut off, though workers helped to put the water back on. Women's Aid have decided to pay £250 to have the electricity connected.

Despite the threats and discomforts, morale is high. When the local paper tried to persuade one woman to leave because of the lack of facilities [wouldn't it make a good story for the right-wing Evening Post?] she could only answer that she and her children had never felt so happy or so free.

Women's Aid still need a lot of help and support to win, and are planning a day of action on June 30th. So get your trade union branch, trades council of CLP to send donations and support to: Women's Aid, 26 Priory Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 15. [021 449 5913].



Strong left opposition at NUT conference

THE NUT special salaries conference held in London on June 16th voted by 188,000 to 67,000 to accept the provisional salary settlement.

But it is doubtful if the result really represents the feelings of the membership. First, not more than about 100 out of 600-odd associations (branches) of the union actually met to discuss the settlement. At least 65 of these associations voted to reject it, and they included the large branches of Manchester, Liverpool and nearly all the London branches, as well as a good spread of rural ones. Had association secretaries been forced to call meetings, then quite likely a majority would have voted to reject the deal.

Second, many associations that did meet and vote

against, unfortunately did not elect and mandate new delegates for this conference and instead sent the delegates that went to annual conference two months ago. Most of them refused to be mandated.

At the conference last weekend, opponents of the settlement were allowed only 20 minutes between four speakers, while those for (all from the platform) had a one-hour speech from General Secretary Jarvis on their side and then extra time for moving and summing up. Further debate was truncated when the right wing moved the usual 'question be put' motion just before one o'clock.

The Executive came out with arguments that ranged from bad to worse. 'The

Prime Minister has indicated that the results of the Comparability Commission will be honoured, and she has kept to all her election pledges so far' (!); 'strikes in June are rather late in the day' and 'not a realistic alternative'. As much time was spent attacking the other teachers' union, the NAS/UWT, as on attacking the left. The NAS/UWT have suggested taking the claim to arbitration, and the NUT top brass are worried that members will leave and join the apparent militants who aren't caving in straight away.

The Executive borrowed their arguments against arbitration from the left, except that the left never coupled these with the advice to cave in instead. We were

told that arbitration only allows a government-appointed chairman to have the last word, usually the same word as the employers' final offer. They then made militant noises about seeking to restore the Houghton pay levels and standing by the original 36.5% claim — only it turned out that the way to get this was to trust to a 'reasonably independent body' like the Clegg comparabilities commission.

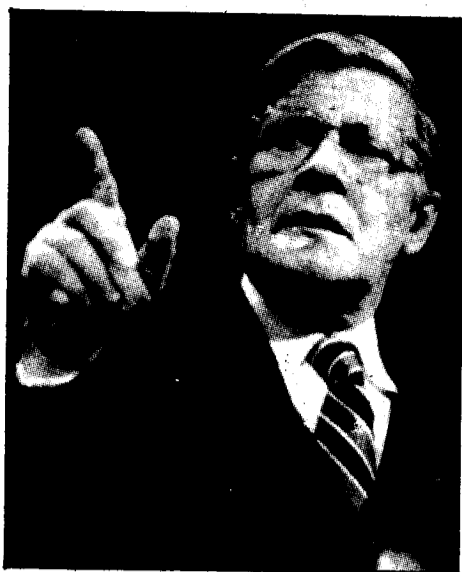
While the platform was drooling over Thatcher's 'election pledges', it was left to the opponents of the deal to point out that the Tory budget has cut £55 million from education already, as well as 5% from the rate support grant, so there is simply no money even if

Clegg comes up with a big award for teachers except through a cut in jobs — unless teachers mount a fight. Dick North, the only member of the Executive to vote against the deal, pointed out that the platform speakers were covering up the fact that since the annual conference at Easter the Executive has been flooded with demands from associations and schools calling for a stepping up of the action.

After the conference, more than 100 delegates met together and decided to carry on the fight — preparing to action on class size, no cover, and the cuts, as well as to stand candidates on a fighting platform in the coming national union elections.

CHEUNG SIU MING

German prisoners' lives at risk



THE LIFE of Irmgard Moeller, the sole survivor of the four 'Baader-Meinhof group' prisoners in Stammheim jail, is at risk again.

Moeller's three comrades, Andreas Baader, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Gudrun Ensslin, died in October 1977. The West German authorities said they had committed suicide, but Moeller, who was seriously injured but survived, insisted they had been murdered.

Now Moeller, along with about 70 other West German prisoners, is on hunger strike. The strike was started by six prisoners in West Berlin on 20th April, protesting against the conditions in which political prisoners are held, and has spread since.

Those who have been on strike longest are now near death, and Moeller's life is in danger too, because she was ill before starting the hunger strike. According to her lawyer, she has been deprived of the necessary medical treatment for her thyroid condition.

In a statement, the prisoners say: "The hunger strike is directed against the special cells: soundproof concrete cells with windows of armoured glass which cannot be opened; glaring neon light all day; furniture screwed down or built in; concrete floors. Many such isolation units are located in sections hermetically sealed

off from the rest of the institution, with full electronic surveillance. Inside the isolation section there is no possibility of contact between the prisoners in the different cells."

West Germany's political prisoners, convicted or accused of terrorist deeds, are daily terrorised by the state: isolated, often forbidden visitors, mail, and books, physically and above all mentally harassed.

The prisoners' demands are:

- The application of the minimum guarantees of the Geneva Convention and the other international conventions on the treatment of prisoners;

- The abolition of special cells and isolation units;

- The bringing together of prisoners in groups where they can interact with each other;

- Abolition of restrictions on information and screens which separate prisoners from lawyers and friends visiting them;

- Outside doctors, trusted by the prisoners, to be allowed into the jails;

- Control over the conditions of detention by an international commission of surveillance;

- The release without restrictions of Gunther Sonnenburg, who is unfit for detention because of his head injuries.



Irmgard Moeller: her life again threatened by Schmidt's [above] jailers.

Meanwhile in Britain Astrid Proll has admitted defeat in her fight against extradition to Germany. The Home Secretary has refused to register her as a British citizen, despite a court ruling that her marriage to an Englishman was valid in law.

Proll, a former member of the Baader-Meinhof group, was held for two years in an isolation unit, awaiting trial. When her health broke down in 1974 she was transferred to a convalescent home, from which she managed to escape to England.

The West German authorities have promised her that she will not be placed in solitary confinement if she returns.

McNee tells blacks: keep off the streets

"If you keep off the streets of London and behave yourselves you won't have the SPG to worry about". With these words Metropolitan Police Commissioner David McNee last Thursday reassured a black journalist that he understood the concerns of black people at the activities of the police force's paramilitary wing. McNee refused to answer any questions about the death of Blair Peach, using the excuse that the police were conducting an internal inquiry.

The occasion was a press conference to present the Commissioner's annual report for 1978. The glib racism tripping from McNee's tongue speaks volumes on the treatment blacks can expect from London's and the country's police in the year to come. Blacks who, despite the Immigration Acts and the forthcoming Nationality Law, are 'lucky' enough to find themselves on the streets of Britain had better get off them again before those unmarked green vans come cruising by.

have five policemen been transferred out of the Special Patrol Group after Southall if there was nothing wrong in their behaviour? How does McNee explain the pathologist's evidence that Peach was killed with lead-filled piping or an iron bar?



A policeman's relative has told the London magazine Time Out that police from Kensington station took iron bars inside rubber hosepipes to the Grunwick picket lines in 1977. When contacted, New Scotland Yard said that if the evidence was presented they would conduct an internal investigation... Meanwhile, as McNee boasted, recruitment to the police is on the up, thanks to Thatcher's twin measures to increase police pay and lengthen the dole queues.

If doubt there was before, McNee's performance last

Thursday shows beyond question that nothing is to be expected from the hypocritical pretence of an inquiry being conducted by the police into themselves over the murder of Blair Peach. The public inquiry being launched by the Southall Action Committee, depending as it does on the goodwill of 'notables' (judges, bishops and others of their like) cannot of itself halt the march of the uniformed thugs either.

Only a mass campaign taken into the labour movement for the disbanding of the Special Patrol Group and for the building of workers' defence squads to protect picket lines, meetings, demonstrations and black communities, will do that. But as part of the campaign socialists must make the best possible use of the information which will be presented to the public inquiry — information which McNee's report and press conference were designed to hide.

JAMES RYAN



Defended also was the use of the 'Sus' law which allows the police to arrest individuals, and the courts to convict them, solely on the evidence that a policeman thinks the person concerned is acting suspiciously. Nothing wrong there, according to McNee. In fact, this Act is an indispensable weapon in the police armoury — especially, judging from the figures, in dealing with black youth. But this Act, like the Public Order Act, a measure much used in 1978 against anti-fascists, could do with being "brought up to date". Even for McNee, constant resort to an Act passed 150 years ago seems to be a little embarrassing.

The argument that the Blair Peach case could not be discussed because of the police inquiry was a handy one. McNee was spared the difficulty of explaining why no-one had yet been arrested for the murder, despite the evidence of several eye-witnesses. Why



The SPG do a good job, says McNee

Unfair to Socialist Unity?

LETTERS

Dear Comrades,

Your article on Socialist Unity and the elections (WA 143) marked a quite extraordinary retreat on the positions which have traditionally been defended by your tendency on the question of revolutionaries and elections.

The political tradition on which your paper stands (essentially those politics defended by the revolutionary socialist paper Workers Fight which no longer exists) always argued that the standing of candidates against Labour by revolutionary socialists was a tactical question. That tactical question was how was it possible to utilise the elections to maximise the voice of revolutionary socialist politics in a period of heightened interest in politics which elections naturally provide.

In a situation where the revolutionary socialist voice is a small one, because of the existing relationship of forces in the labour movement, revolutionaries inevitably face the prospect of being swamped in the massive class polarisation which the Labour-Tory domination of the electoral terrain brings about. Everyone will admit that the possibility of polarising a large working class vote

for revolutionary candidates did not exist.

But the question which your article skates over, or rather simply distorts, is what tactic was most useful in bringing out in the most forthright way the revolutionary socialist alternative — in the form of public meetings, street propaganda discussions with workers in the labour movement (not just the Labour Party) and so forth. Your balance sheet on this question is absolutely one-sided.

Let me give you some examples from our experience in Birmingham. Through having an independent candidate we were able to organise a city-wide meeting on Ireland with over 100 people. We were able to organise a rally of over 250 (including more than 100 black workers) in which we put forward the full spectrum of our politics. And in the local elections, where we stood in exactly the same wards which made up the constituency where we were standing, we received more than 750 votes.

None of this would have been possible if we had confined ourselves to working in the SCLV in Birmingham, which was putting out Tom Litterick's left-social democ-

atic drivel and putting up the SCLV's poster, which due to what was probably a mistake in design rather than politics had as its main slogan "Vote Labour"!

Now none of this means that the choice made by Workers Action supporters was unprincipled or crossed class lines or anything of the sort. But it did mean that their quite correct criticism of Labour's record tended to get lost in the routine of canvassing and pedestrian "Vote Labour" postering. The SCLV was all but invisible.

We would contend that our activity *did* contribute to building and strengthening the class struggle left wing that needs to be built in the Labour movement. We constantly propagandised for the rank-and-file groupings that need to be built in the trade unions, and have made every effort to involve the contacts that we made in these formations.

Further, the allegation that Socialist Unity's programme was weaker than the SCLV's is quite mythical. Our programme (and we'll provide you with a copy if you dispute it) included a full range of transitional demands from the sliding scale of wages, work-sharing with no loss of

pay, troops out of Ireland etc — up to and including a denunciation of the parliamentary road to socialism.

But all this, and you are quite right to state it, relates to tactical choices. A critical campaign for Labour is in no way a priori a capitulation to the Labour bureaucracy or anything of the sort. But what is really disturbing in your article, and marks a distinct shift to the right in the positions of your tendency, is the argument (p.7) that a call for a vote for Socialist Unity against "the trade union party" presented such politics in a sectarian package. Or further that such candidates were "an irresponsible gimmick, disruptive of the work Marxists must do in the Labour movement".

Let's call things by their right names. What you really mean is that until there is a mass base for revolutionary socialist politics independent candidacies are disruptive of the work of Marxists in the Labour Party. We've all heard this argument before, and in the past you denounced it.

It's an argument that we've heard from a tendency whose main theoretician is Ted Grant, reflecting a long-term strategic choice. It would be a real pity if Work-

ers Action started to theorise its tactical choice into general principles and went down 'Militant's' road — which is the graveyard of revolutionary socialists.

Comradely greetings,
Phil Hearse,
Birmingham IMG.

REPLY

Why did the IMG's meeting on Ireland, or their rally, depend on running candidates? They could equally well have organised such meetings as part of a 'Vote Labour and prepare to fight' campaign like the SCLV.

And within the framework of the SCLV, they could have put forward all the socialist ideas in the platform of Socialist Unity, and more.

It is no secret that the IMG has much bigger forces in Birmingham than the SCLV. But that does not resolve the question of how best to use the forces we have, big or small.

Phil Hearse has still not explained how running candidates enabled the IMG to do anything they could not have done within a campaign like the SCLV. And, on the other side of the question, the SCLV had the advantage of linking socialist electoral work directly with the ongoing task of building a militant opposition within the labour movement, while Socialist Unity was an only-for-the-elections alliance.

Also, the SCLV, taking a Labour vote as a basis, could focus directly on the political issues. Socialist Unity was inescapably short-circuited into an argument about losing votes for Labour and helping the Tories. Under conditions where that argument could not be made a positive factor (polarising a sizeable revolutionary minority, registering and beginning to consolidate it through a politically significant election score), it was a serious disadvantage.

Socialist Challenge, in its report on the Socialist Unity campaign, effectively admits this point, conceding that the SU campaign had to play down the anti-Labour vote question: "We realised that many of the people who agreed with our programme would still vote Labour. That did not matter to us..."

That is the nub of our case for saying that the Socialist Unity campaign was 'disruptive' — not 'disruptive' of the work of Marxists in the Labour Party (it did not disrupt us at all, and how could it have done?), but 'disruptive' of the gains which could have been made for revolutionary politics in the election campaign if forces had been best employed.

Phil Hearse's utterly beside-the-point reference to Militant's blind, timeless Labour loyalism seem to be just an effort to take refuge in generalities from the hard facts of this balance sheet.

AT THE other end of the globe, one of the world's most cruelly oppressed minorities is fighting back. And the headquarters of one of the Australian Aborigines' main enemies — the giant mining company RTZ — is right here in London.

The Aborigines have been victims of the world-despoiling march of international capitalism for two centuries now.

When Captain Cook first set foot in Australia, in 1770, he had been instructed by the Admiralty 'with the consent of the natives' to take possession of 'convenient situations' in the name of the King of England. The native (Aboriginal) population had established trade routes crossing the entire huge continent. They had developed farming and animal husbandry, built canals and dykes. They were not willing to have the white invaders take possession of their land.

But Cook duly planted the Union Jack. Britain had just lost the North American colonies, and Australia was a welcome half-substitute.

A campaign of genocide against the Aborigines followed, extending right up to

the later part of the 19th century. The Aboriginal population in 1770 was at least 200,000, probably more. By 1945 it was down to less than 90,000.

The Aborigines were driven from the most fertile land into the barren north and centre of the continent. Their settlements were destroyed. They fought back, and indeed were never finally subdued in the north, but the British authorities murdered without scruple.

A British apologist explained in 1876: 'The survival of the fittest means that might is right. And thus we invoke and remorselessly fulfill the inexorable laws of natural selection when exterminating the inferior Australian... and we appropriate their patrimony'. In 1883 the British High Commissioner reported to the Prime Minister in London: 'I have heard men of culture and refinement, of the greatest humanity and kindness to their fellow whites, talk not only of the wholesale butchery but of the individual murder of natives exactly as they would talk of a day's sport, or of having to kill some troublesome animal'.

In the later 19th century,

THE VICTIMS OF WORLD CAPITALISM

some of the remaining militant tribes were at last allowed to keep some land — on reserves. Control was kept through missionaries and draconian laws.

Despite some reforms since the late 1960s, Aborigines today — in the midst of a prosperous advanced capitalist society — suffer oppression and poverty comparable to the worst conditions in the Third World.

A 1977 survey showed that 25% of Aboriginal children suffered serious malnutrition. In Western Australia the infant mortality rate among

Aborigines is six times that among whites. Diseases characteristic of extreme poverty — like trachoma, which causes blindness, and is estimated to affect one in five Aborigines to the point where they need an eye operation — are widespread.

Australia generally is a highly urbanised society, but less than half of the 200,000 or so Aborigines live in the towns. Even among those who do, unemployment is enormous: the overall rate for Aborigines is over 50%. Many Aborigines live in

reserves, where they are ruled by white officials. In Queensland, for example, where one-third of the Aboriginal population live, 25% are on reserves.

Under Queensland laws, Aborigines can be expelled from the reserve at any time by the white manager. Many have their property managed by the government, and cannot get money, buy 'expensive' items, or enter into contracts without official permission.

They are exempted from minimum wage laws. In 1975, when the legal minimum

was \$83 and the Australian average wage was over \$160 a week, the average wage for Aborigines on Queensland reserves was \$35. And the Aborigines are obliged to do whatever job the white manager allots them.

Some of the Queensland regulations are illegal under Federal Australian law, but the federal government does nothing about it. In other states the position of Aborigines is not much better.

On top of all this, the entire population of the reserve is liable to be moved

off without any mining companies that the exploiting.

Land rights issue round modern aborigines centred.

In 1957 a Queensland law gave Com the RTZ an square miles (reserve land square miles of inal land. The were not cons area, Weipa, shed-like hom area set aside midst of vast pi by bauxite mini volve stripping hundreds of sq Mapoon they driven off the armed police.

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RTZ's latest get land in Territory for ing — have ance. The land aign got under



NICOLA SINCLAIR and JO THWAITES talked to JANINE ROBERTS, author of From Massacres to Mining* about the land rights struggle and its background.

*Published by CIMRA and War on Want, £1.99.

■ ■ Can you explain the particular significance of their land to the Australian Aborigines?

□ □ Aborigines' culture and religion is based on their land. An Aboriginal will say: my spirit was taken out of this particular piece of land and my spirit belongs to nature. Since creation by 'dream-time' they have come from the land and are part of it. Land is therefore sacred.

If Aborigines are moved from their traditional land and it is mined, not only the physical appearance of the

land is devastated but also the culture and lives of the Aborigines. Many have died simply because they have been moved and their relationship with the land has been severed.

When walking round the bush the Aborigines regard it as their larder, school and home. Every plant, rock, and grain of sand has a meaning and a use. Flowering plants will not be picked, and when yams are harvested one root will be replaced in the ground. While different tribes have different customs about the use of the

land, what all tribes have in common is the significance they place on the land.

This is not comprehended by mining companies. For instance, at Gove, in the Northern Territory, a mining company, Aluisuisse Aluminium, kept a tree in a part of a sacred spot, put a fence round it, then built an industrial complex all around it. The Christian equivalent would be keeping an altar and knocking down the church around it.

■ ■ Why is there such a close connection between the question of Aborigines' traditional land and the activities of the mining companies?

□ □ Because it was only with the opening up of the mineral deposits in the north and centre of Australia that whites became seriously interested in these areas. Until the 1950s European settlement in Australia was confined to the coastal areas in the East and South which are fertile and of use for large-scale settlements. The Aborigines were driven into the

How black A is plundered

north and centre of Australia on to land regarded as useless.

But they were allowed to keep certain areas of their land. While the missionaries destroyed many customs, in particular by forcing different tribes to live together and so breaking down the complex kinship structure, the Aborigines still maintained connections with the land.

The missionaries and white Europeans felt vastly superior to the Aborigines and thus bound to save their souls. Aboriginal culture and tribal Aborigines were despised, and their language was forbidden. The official church historian for Mapoon (in the far north of Australia) declared in 1908 that Aborigines were 'cruel and treacherous, gliding like serpents through the grass' and that their women 'looked the picture of stupidity and degradation'. The Mapoon mission sought to inculcate all the Protestant values, to change the whole Aboriginal way of life — to change it to that of the individualistic, property-centred Westerner.

Since the 1950s vast dep-

osits of iron ore, bauxite, diamonds and uranium have been discovered in the North and the attitudes of the mining companies and the state governments have not changed; land has been seized and Aborigines herded into reserves.

■ ■ What role has the Australian Federal Government played in representing the interests of mining capital? In particular, how is this reflected in the Federal Land Rights Act?

□ □ In the Federal Land Rights Act the Australian Government can be clearly seen to represent the interests of mining capital. When the Whitlam (Labour) Government originally drew up the Land Rights Act the safeguards against the power of the mining companies taking over aboriginal land were very weak. It only applied to Crown Land in the Northern Territory, states such as Western Australia and Queensland being excluded, as were cattle stations and areas already being mined.

With the advent of

Fraser's Liberalism, the law amended. Al longer had the mining, but e iate terms an Mining com given time — June 1976 claims for lar Aborigines object nor veto. The list which did lodg ing this per made public.

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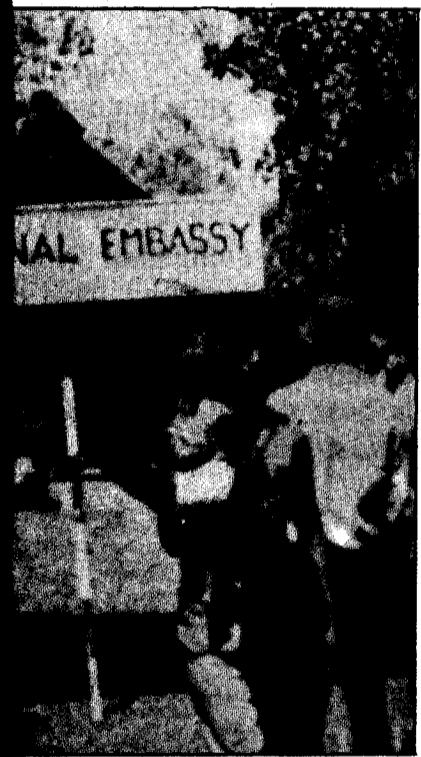
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ay in 1972,

when Aboriginals held public demonstrations in the federal capital, Canberra. They put up a tent 'Aboriginal Embassy' outside Parliament House, re-erecting it again and again after police tore it down.

Eventually the Labour Party, then in opposition, promised to bring in a law recognising Aboriginal land rights. Soon after, Labour won office. It moved slowly, but it did provide for the setting up of two democratically elected Aboriginal Land Councils, in the North and in the Centre.

In 1975 the Labour Government had finally prepared an Aboriginal Land Rights bill, though only for the Northern Territory. But the Bill was never passed. While it was still going through Parliament, the Governor-General (the British Queen's representative in Australia) 'sacked' the elected Labour Government. (The Queen is believed to be a big shareholder in RTZ...)

The right-wing Fraser government which then came in did eventually pass a Northern Territory Land Rights law — but seriously amended, in line with the wishes of the mining companies.



Rio Tinto Zinc and colonialism

"WE are very politically-minded in RTZ. Not party-politically-minded but on an international basis." Sir Val Duncan, ex-chairman.

Rio Tinto Zinc is the largest mining company in the world. The greatest section of its profits comes from its Australian operations — in 1977 over six times the amount of its profits from South Africa and twice its profits from Canada. (Over the past year RTZ profits were £98.4 million.)

RTZ's operations are centred on the old British Empire: Australia, Canada and South Africa; and its methods of operation haven't changed much since the heyday of Empire.

Hidden shareholdings mean that no-one knows exactly who owns the company, but the Rothschilds, the Oppenheims (and possibly the Queen) have major shares as do National Westminster, Barclays and Midland banks, and Commercial Union.

RTZ came into existence in 1962 as the result of a merger between Rio Tinto Copper and Consolidated Zinc. It quickly managed to negotiate with governments to gain extremely lucrative mining concessions.

Even before the merger a subsidiary of Conzinc, Comalco, had managed to get concessions out of the Queensland State Government to mine bauxite deposits on 2,270 square miles of land in the Weipa aboriginal reserve, turning the company into the effective administrative power in that region. All farming, grazing and water rights on the aboriginal land were given

over to Comalco. Royalties were the lowest in the world: maximum tent was £15 a square mile, when the going rate at the time was £320.

Today the Weipa Aborigines live on 308 acres with no legal land rights after the company was allowed to 'fully discharge its responsibilities' to the Weipa people with a final payment of £150,000.

RTZ's iniquities are not confined to Australia of course. In South Africa it profits liberally from apartheid, reaping profits there in relation to assets in far higher proportion than anywhere else. The company boasted that the average African wage paid by RTZ was £39.90 a month, when even according to the

South African Institute of Race Relations the bare survival minimum for an average family was £44.50 a month. There and in Rhodesia and Namibia lucrative mineral deposits cannot even be disputed by the people who once owned the land.

Bougainville Copper, 53 1/2% owned by CRA (an Australian subsidiary of RTZ) began open-cut mining in the Solomon Islands on the basis of 'relocation' of eight villages. 'They won't like moving but it's for their own good' said company manager G.H. Bishop of the people of one of these villages. 'Right below their ridge we'll be sinking an open cut mine 4,000 feet long and 2,000 feet wide'.

The Rorovana villagers were served with a compulsory purchase order after they had rejected an offer of £49 per acre, and when they stood in front of the Conzinc land clearance bulldozers 70 armed police fired tear gas, and when that failed made a baton charge.

Closer to home, at Avonmouth in the West Country, the major development in the Imperial Smelting Corporation since it was bought by RTZ has been the construction of a giant lead and zinc smelting complex. This plant was described in 1972 by a TUC doctor as 'leaking lead at every pore'. At one time 100 workers were suspended as the level of lead in their blood was dangerously high. The company admitted

that there was a 'fairly serious hygiene problem'. High concentrations of toxic metals were also building up in the Severn Estuary and the Bristol Channel where shellfish were found to contain high amounts of zinc cadmium and lead.

And so it goes on... RTZ is accountable to on-one — save the major shareholders, and they're not complaining as long as the profits keep rolling in.

Socialists aren't opposed on principle to large-scale mining, but the arbitrary wholesale destruction of vast areas of land and the dispossession of its people all over the world is obviously not acceptable. These arise from the blind search for profit, which we must fight to replace with rational planning for human needs.

This poses the question of the nationalisation of companies such as RTZ and its offshoots, under the control of the miners in the industry who could draw up plans together with the indigenous peoples on whose land the minerals are to be found.

The bourgeois and racist nature of the governments and their legal systems have nothing to offer the blacks in Southern Africa and the Aborigines of Australia, and so the question of land rights in itself is not a solution. Links must be made between the workers and the indigenous peoples. The links made between the Aboriginal delegation to Britain and the shop stewards committee at Avonmouth last November provide a basis on which the campaign can be taken forward.



CARRINGTON, SHACKLETON, BYERS

AMONG ITS DIRECTORS, RTZ HAS NUMBERED:

□ Sir Mark Turner — Chairman with a salary of £60,000 in 1976. Also a director of Bank of America [UK], Midland and Toronto Dominion Banks, Commercial Union, Mercantile Credit, British Home Stores.
□ Baron Guy de Rothschild — the extensive Rothschild family is probably the richest in Europe worth an estimated \$40,000 million. They are based in London and Paris. The Baron personally controls through his companies most of

the uranium used in France, a large nickel mine in New Caledonia and other mines around the world.

□ S. Spiro — representative of the South African empire of the Oppenheimer family. They control about 80% of the world's diamond trade, much of South Africa's uranium and gold production and Zambia's copper. Also a director of Barclays Bank.

□ Lord Shackleton — Labour Leader of the House of Lords 1968-74.
□ Baron Greene of Harrow

Weald — leading right wing trade unionist who headed the NUR and gave long service to the ruling class on the TUC General Council. Also a Director of the Bank of England, of the Southern Electricity Board and of The Times.

□ Lord Carrington — Tory Leader of the House of Lords most years since 1964. Also a Director of Barclays and Cadbury Schweppes. Now Foreign Secretary.
□ Lord Byers — onetime chairman of the Liberal Party; left RTZ in 1973.

Australia

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cannot be claimed by Aborigines and in the remaining 30% mining cannot be vetoed. However, even this is better than the situation in Western Australia or Queensland, where there are no holds barred — the companies can do as they please.

In Queensland, the attacks on Aborigines, workers and other groups are particularly notorious. This is due to a racist government which refuses to repeal the Queensland Aborigines Act (1971). Bjelke-Petersen, the Queensland Premier, has a controlling interest in a major oil company. In 1970 several members of the Queensland government, including Acting Premier Gordon Chalk and his family, took up Comalco shares at a nominal price. Comalco, on promises of bauxite riches to come, managed to increase its quoted stock market value by more than 1000% overnight!

The conflict of interests between the white Australians and Aborigines is particularly acute in North Australia, which might account for the harshness of the legislation there, but

in general political terms Queensland is extremely right-wing.

Under the Queensland Aborigines Act (1971) there is a permit system to get on to and to leave reserves. People can't visit relatives and members of aboriginal councils can be removed. Many aboriginal militants are prevented from entering reserves. Trade unions are illegal. Federal Government 'assistance' funds are managed by the Queensland State Government. When the Act came up for review recently a committee of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders was appointed. One woman who made some strong objections was sacked. The review was merely a legal requirement and no changes or even repeal could have been expected. It was a waste of time and absolutely nothing came of it.

■ ■ ■ What are the differences in political activity around the anti-uranium struggles in Britain and Australia?

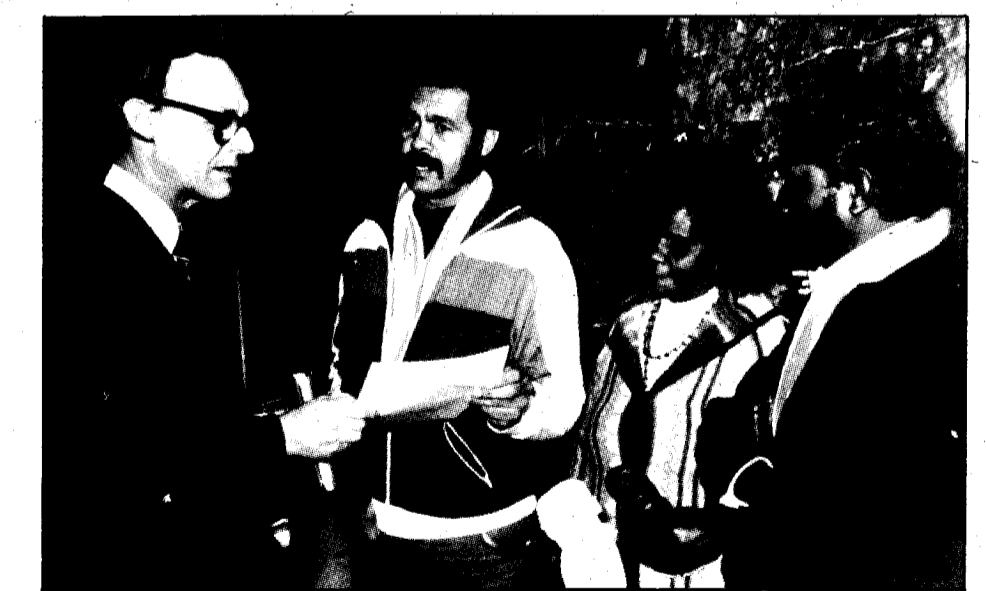
□ □ In Europe the anti-uranium and anti-nuclear

power campaigns are a product of the consumer effects of uranium. Here we are receiving the end-product and the campaigns are conducted accordingly.

In Australia the campaign relates both to the results of the end-product and to the struggle for Aboriginal land rights, which is affected by the extraction of uranium. MAUM — the Movement Against Uranium Mining — takes up not only the environmental issues and safety aspects for the miners, but also the role of international capital in Australia and the dispossession of the Aboriginal people.

This issue is not confined to Australia. Possible deposits of uranium have been located in Orkney by Rio Tinto Zinc (which has played a major role in mining development in Australia). The Orkney Islands Council voted against any mining development, but has been overruled by the Scottish Office. The Aboriginal delegation visiting Britain in November of last year were invited to Orkney by the Islands Council.

In Australia I was asked by individual aboriginals to get international support for their land rights struggle. I wrote my book, and published it in Britain, as part of this. The mining companies involved in Australia are multinationals, so in order to combat them effectively the struggle needs to be taken up on



The delegation to RTZ in London: it's not our affair, they were told

an international level; in a similar fashion to the campaign on South Africa.

Also RTZ, one of the main companies involved, is based in London.

In November of last year, Mrs Joyce Hall, a leader of the Weipa Aborigines, came with a delegation to the doors of RTZ in London. Lord Shackleton had said that under no circumstances would he meet me, but eventually he agreed to meet Joyce Hall and the delegation.

This very stormy meeting lasted two hours, ending up with Lord Shackleton saying that in principle he wasn't against taking a moral position on the company's exploitation of the Aborigines but that he

felt it was a matter for the Queensland and Australian governments rather than for RTZ. This man is a member of the Labour Party...

The delegation then met Tony Benn, Energy Minister at the time. His position was that Australia was the politically convenient alternative to Namibia for extraction of Uranium, and that since all the uranium required for the British Atomic Energy Authority comes from Australia, there wasn't much he could do.

On a more hopeful note, the delegation met the TGWU shop stewards committee at the Avonmouth smelter outside Bristol, which is owned by RTZ.

The workers there had some difficulty in finding out exactly who their employers were as they had an extremely long-winded negotiation process which involves communicating with Australia, then back to London. They received the Aboriginal delegation very warmly and said that they would be fully prepared to black Australian minerals whenever the Aborigines wanted.

Internationally, over the past three years, the Aborigines' struggle and particularly the activities of RTZ, are becoming recognised. The next step is to work toward setting up an Aboriginal-staffed centre in London to continue the work of the campaign.

From Kautsky to Eurocommunism:

CONTINUING OUR publication — for the first time in English — of the 1910 'mass strike' debate which first drew the theoretical lines clearly between reformists and revolutionaries in the major Marxist party of the Second International, this week we conclude Rosa Luxemburg's article 'Attrition or Struggle?'

After the revolutionary strike movement of 1905 in Russia, Rosa Luxemburg and the left wing of the German Social Democracy raised the question of the mass strike more and more insistently. The conservative-minded trade union leaders declared they would never risk their organisations and their funds in such a dangerous affair; the Party leaders approved the mass strike 'in principle', as a hypothetical future tactic, while in practice yielding to the veto of the trade union leaders.

The theoretical debate came to a head in 1910, with the growing militancy of the workers' agitation for the right to vote in Prussia, denied them by the Junkers (landlords) who dominated the Prussian state. (There was a wider franchise for the German Imperial Parliament — the Reichstag — but the Reichstag had little power, and the German Empire was dominated by Prussia).

The idea of the mass strike was raised more and more often in the demonstrations and meetings of the suffrage campaign. Rosa Luxemburg tried to force a discussion on the issue in the central press and leading circles of the Social Democratic Party.

Eventually Karl Kautsky, the Social Democracy's leading theoretician, decided the discussion could not be avoided. He wrote a polemic against Luxemburg, entitled 'What Now?'

In that article (published in WA 142-3), Kautsky argued that agitation for the mass strike was foolhardy. Better to wait for the Reichstag elections, due in a year and a half's time. To back up this argument he constructed a theory of the 'strategy of attrition' (wearing down the enemy). This theory — very similar to many of the notions of present-day 'Eurocommunism' — was supposedly based on Engels' last major political text, the Introduction to the 1895 edition of Marx's 'The Class Struggles in France': a text which, however, as Kautsky knew but Luxemburg didn't, had had its more revolutionary passages censored on the insistence of the ultra-cautious leaders of German Social Democracy. Kautsky's theory also harked back to the military strategy of the ancient Roman general Fabius Cunctator, from whom the Fabian Society got its name. ('Cunctator', in Latin, means 'the delayer').

Luxemburg opened her reply — 'Attrition or Struggle?', WA 143-4 — by pointing out that Kautsky's concept of the mass strike as "a slyly thought-out coup which is secretly constructed by the 'council of war' of the Social Democracy" is just the same as the old anarchist concept of the general strike. The only difference is that the anarchists conclude that the general strike should be used as a magic weapon, synonymous with the revolution, while Kautsky concludes that the mass strike should be avoided. Both consider political tactics in abstraction from the question which is central for Marxists: the logic of the class struggle, and the consciousness of the working class.

Underlying the disagreements between Luxemburg and Kautsky are two different conceptions of the relationship between revolutionary tactics and revolutionary strategy. For Kautsky, the fundamental choice between the 'strategy of attrition' and the 'strategy of overthrow' defines absolutely which tactics should be used. Participation in elections corresponds to the 'strategy of attrition' while the mass strike corresponds to the 'strategy of overthrow'.

In these final sections of 'Attrition or Struggle?', Luxemburg begins by attacking this conception. For her, given the overall aim of socialist revolution, the maximum tactical flexibility is necessary to respond to changes in the mood of the masses, the balance of forces and the political situation. For her, these factors, rather than abstract conceptions of 'strategy', decide whether the mass strike should be used or not.

Both in the day-to-day practice of the Social Democracy and in Kautsky's article great emphasis was placed on elections and on work in Parliament. Luxemburg sees this excessive concentration on one tactic as causing considerable distortions in the Social Democracy's politics. She does not oppose parliamentary tactics as such, but understands that in the minds of Kautsky and the Social Democratic leadership it is counterposed to mass action:

"The mass strike was not and is not conceived of by anybody as being in opposition to working in Parliament, but as its complement, indeed, as a means of achieving Parliamentary rights... [Kautsky] recommends, provisionally and in the present situation, nothing but parliamentarism... In opposition to the Social Democratic mass action of the proletariat for the achievement and exercise of political rights".

From 1905 onwards, Luxemburg realised that the trade union leaders and some of the party leaders were more interested in maintaining their organisations than fighting for socialism. They were therefore not willing to undertake any tactics which involved putting those organisations at risk. In replying to Kautsky she explains that the overwhelming emphasis on electoral and Parliamentary activity in the Social Democracy was merely

Nothing but Parliamentarism?

another expression of this conservatism and opposition to mass action, and she realises that all Kautsky's high-sounding theoretical arguments merely serve to justify that conservatism.

"The real effect of Comrade Kautsky's behaviour is therefore only that he has provided theoretical protection for those elements in the Party and in the trade unions who feel uncomfortable at the prospect of the further unchecked development of the mass movement, who would like to keep it in check and withdraw as quickly as possible to the old and comfortable habits of the day-to-day parliamentary and trade union work".

Kautsky helps to derail the mass movement by counterposing the existing potentialities of the mass struggle for the vote (which are 'dangerous') to the possibility of a victory in the elections to the Reichstag (which were a year and a half away). He argues that the mass movement can be maintained by demonstrations without escalating the struggle. This is partly a reflection of his conception that consciousness develops slowly and organically in parallel to the development of the economic conditions, but it also reflects a view that the working class essentially should express itself politically only through election campaigns.

Luxemburg, always close to the pulse of the mass movement, argues that it is impossible to sustain the suffrage movement at the same level over a lengthy period of time: "One should not fall victim to any illusions that... a mass movement or demonstrations can be kept going year after year without escalation and without determination to engage in the most acute struggle". She argues that, just as spontaneous mass movements emerge from a combination of a specific political situation and an awakening consciousness among the masses, so as these factors change the movement itself will either develop or collapse. She accuses Kautsky of abdicating from the most vital task of Social Democracy: to intervene in that movement in order to give it a conscious political direction.

"Such agitation for the mass strike provides the possibility of throwing light on the whole political situation, and the alignment of the classes and parties in Germany, in the sharpest manner, of increasing the political maturity of the masses, of awakening their awareness of their strength and their militancy, of appealing to the idealism of the masses, of showing new horizons to the proletariat".

For Kautsky, Parliamentarism is a better method of socialist education. He neglects, however, one aspect which is central for Rosa Luxemburg. In the mass strike the workers appear as an active force; unorganised workers take part alongside Social Democratic workers and workers who support other political parties; the workers advance through being actively involved in struggle. In the electoral arena, the workers are essentially passive, and participate (unless they are organised by Social Democracy to do election campaigning) only as objects of propaganda addressed to them by the Party.

Rosa Luxemburg: ATTRITION OR STRUGGLE?

LET US COME to the main question.

Comrade Kautsky attempts to pose the question of whether it is now possible to think about a mass strike in terms of a general theory of strategies. Until the Paris Commune the 'strategy of overthrow', according to Comrade Kautsky, was the norm for the revolutionary classes. Since then, however, the 'strategy of attrition' has taken its place. German Social Democracy owes all its growth and its outstanding successes to this strategy of attrition, and we have no reason now to abandon this victorious strategy with a mass strike, in order to go over to the strategy of overthrow. Obviously Comrade Kautsky's contention about the two strategies and the advantages of the strategy of attrition is the most important pillar of his argument. In particular Comrade Kautsky lends the greatest authority to his position by deriving his 'strategy of attrition' directly from the 'Political Testament' of Friedrich Engels.

Unfortunately the whole argumentation rests here on a new word, a new label for old, well-known things. If one lays aside this new and misleading name, then the point of controversy has very little to do with Friedrich Engels. What in concrete terms lies behind that supposed 'strategy of attrition' which is so valued by Comrade Kautsky and to which German Social Democracy owes its outstanding successes? The use of the parliamentary means of the bourgeois state for the daily class struggle, for educating, unifying and organising the proletariat. Moreover, the basis for this 'new strategy' was laid not just at the time of the Paris Commune, but in fact, in Germany, almost a decade earlier, by the agitation of Lassalle (*1) who was in this, as Engels says, only carrying out the directives of the Communist Manifesto. Friedrich Engels does indeed recommend and give reasons for this tactic in his famous introduction to 'The Class Struggles in France'.

Instead of putting forward general schemata of strategies as Comrade Kautsky does, Engels states quite clearly what the tactic recommended by him consists of — and also what other tactics it is directed against. "All revolutions up to the present day have resulted in the displacement of one definite class rule by another; but all ruling classes up to now have been only small minorities in relation to the ruled mass of the people. One ruling minority was thus overthrown; another minority seized the helm of the state in its stead and refashioned the state institutions to suit its own interests". Since all these revolutions were actually revolutions of the minority, they were carried out by means of sudden attack. In 1848 the hope existed of beginning the socialist revolution by the same means of a surprise attack by a revolutionary minority.

'Instead of putting forward general schemata as Kautsky does, Engels states quite clearly what the tactic consists of — and what other tactics it is directed against'

"History", says Engels, "has proved us, and all who thought like us, wrong. It has made it clear that the state of economic development on the Continent at that time was not, by a long way, ripe for the elimination of capitalist production", that it was "impossible ... in 1848 to win social transformation by a simple surprise attack". It became clear that the objective basis for the socialist revolution could be established only in the long process of development of bourgeois society, and the proletariat could prepare itself for its mission in this revolution only in a long, tenacious, daily class struggle. "The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they should fight for. The history of the last fifty years has taught us that. But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long, persistent work is required, and it is just this work that we are now pursuing, and with a success which drives the enemy to despair". And Engels stresses as the most outstanding weapon in this respect, the use of universal suffrage. "With this successful utilisation of universal suffrage, however, an entirely new method of proletarian struggle came into operation, and this method quickly developed further". On the other hand, Engels shows how at the same time the prospects for revolutionary surprise attacks in the old style had superficially deteriorated. "For here, too, the conditions of the struggle had essentially changed. Rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades, which decided the issue everywhere up to 1848, was to a considerable extent obsolete". After Engels has explained the military-technical side of barricade-fighting under modern conditions, he says: "To keep this growth going without interruption until it of itself gets beyond the control of the prevailing governmental system, that is our main task. And there is only one means by which the steady rise of the socialist fighting forces in Germany could be temporarily halted, and even thrown back for some time: a clash on a big scale with the military, a blood-letting like that of 1871 in Paris". Therefore the despairing bourgeoisie attempts to lead us astray to such an action. Proof: the subversion bill (*2).

This is the 'Political Testament' of Friedrich Engels as it was published 15 years ago, at the very moment when the 'Prison Bill' (*3) was presented to Parliament. Clearly, precisely, and concretely, he criticises the utopian socialism of the pre-1848 period, which believed it possible to begin the realisation of the ultimate goal by fighting on the barricades, and opposes to this the modern Social Democratic day-to-day struggle using parliamentarism.

And now I ask: What in the world has this 'Testament' of Engels to do with the present situation and the question of the mass strike? Has someone envisaged a sudden introduction of socialism by the mass strike? Or has it occurred to anyone to work towards fighting on the barricades, towards "a large-scale confrontation with the military"? Or, finally, did some individual inveigh against the use of universal suffrage, against the use of Parliament?

It is clear: by bringing into play Engels' 'Testament' against the slogan of the mass strike in the present Prussian suffrage struggle, Comrade Kautsky is again victoriously shadow-boxing with an anarchistic phantom of the mass strike, and it is obviously the timeless trumpet blasts of Domela Nieuwenhuis which have suddenly stirred him to this campaign (*). On the other hand, however, the 'Testament' of Engels, insofar as it criticises the outdated tactics of surprise attacks, is directed above all against Comrade Kautsky himself, who conceives of the mass strike as a surprise attack secretly hatched out by a 'council of war'.

How little the 'strategy of attrition' defended by Comrade Kautsky has to do with Engels' 'Political Testament' in reality is proved by an amusing fact. At the same time as Comrade Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein in the 'Sozialistische Monatshefte' opposes the slogan of the mass strike in the present situation. With the same arguments, in places with almost exactly the same words as Comrade Kautsky, Bernstein wants to see the protest strike sharply distinguished from the 'strike of compulsion', and the trade union strike from the political strike, and thunders against those 'gamblers' who now toss the dangerous slogan of a 'strike of compulsion' into the masses. Such a tactic is not suitable for 'representatives of the movement of the working class, which carries with it the certainty of its social elevation. For this class, unremitting organisational work has proved its value as the most certain means for the realisation of this elevation'. "There is in truth no reason" to get involved in the dangers of a mass strike, "since the German working class movement has come forward step by step, perhaps slowly, but constantly and safely, along the path it has followed". Bernstein, not Engels, defends here Comrade Kautsky's 'strategy of attrition'. This strategy of attrition means, however, something completely different from Engels' Testament.

The mass strike, as it is presently the subject of debate in the Prussian struggle for the franchise, was not and is not conceived of by anybody as *being in opposition* to working in Parliament, but as its complement, indeed, as a method of achieving parliamentary rights. Not as something in opposition to the daily work of schooling, educating, and organising the masses, but as an outstanding means of promoting exactly this schooling, education, and organisation of the proletarian masses. Since Comrade Kautsky now counterposes our old and tested tactic of working in Parliament to *this* mass strike, envisaged in this way, he recommends in reality, provisionally and for the present situation, *nothing but Parliamentarism*: not in opposition to the utopian socialism of the barricades, as Engels saw it, but in opposition to the Social Democratic mass action of the proletariat for the achievement and exercise of political rights.

Indeed, Comrade Kautsky emphatically directs us towards the coming Reichstag elections — and this is the central pillar of his strategy of attrition. Complete salvation is supposedly to be expected from these elections. They will certainly bring us an overwhelming victory, they will create a completely new situation, they provide us with a broader basis for the struggle, they alone can produce the conditions under which we can think about a 'strategy of overthrow', that is to say, simply about a mass action. They will bring 'a catastrophe for the whole existing system of government', they already place 'the key to this tremendous historical situation in our pocket'. In a word, the coming Reichstag elections are so promising for us Social Democrats that we would be criminally light-minded to think now about a mass strike in view of such a certain future victory to be gained at the ballot box, which is already safely "in our pocket".

I do not believe that it is either good or suitable for the party to see us paint our future victory in the Reichstag elections in such glowing colours. On the contrary, I believe that it would be more advisable to prepare ourselves for the Reichstag election, as always, with all possible zeal and energy, but without exaggerated expectations. We will then see whether and to what extent we are victorious. To taste future victories in advance is not at all in the nature of serious revolutionary parties, and I fully share the view of Comrade Pannekoek that it would be better not even to mention such fanciful perspectives as a doubling of our votes.

But above all: what has the future electoral victory to do with the question of the Prussian suffrage struggle today? Comrade Kautsky believes that the outcome of the Reichstag election will create "a completely new situation". What, however, the nature of this new situation will be, remains completely unclear. If we do not have the fanciful hope that we will suddenly win the majority of the seats, if we remain in the real world and look to the supposition of a growth of our fraction to 125 members (*5), then a revolution in the political situation is still not in question here. In the Reichstag we remain a minority which is opposed by a unified reactionary majority. Even Comrade Kautsky himself cannot believe that our electoral victory would have such an overwhelming effect on the forces of reaction in Prussia that they would suddenly give us equal suffrage in Prussia of their own free will.

The 'completely new situation' can therefore only consist of one thing — a coup by the authorities, the annulment of

[*] It is, however, interesting to investigate the position of the present-day anarchists on the question of the mass strike in Germany. At their most recent congress in Halle during the Whit holiday — it seems that a few dozen of this sort still exist in Germany — they served up the following gems of wisdom reported by the 'Berliner Tageblatt'.

According to the predominant opinion in anarchism, a mere protest strike is absolutely to be condemned. A seriously undertaken political mass strike in which there can be no return to work until the set goal has been achieved means, however, the beginning of the great revolution. Under present conditions, however, this would be a misfortune for the whole proletariat; for the ruling classes are not asleep... However it would hardly come to that, for Social Democracy lacks the human material for a serious mass strike. The General Commission cannot be won over for the serious mass strike, and what it does not want, the Party cannot carry out.

All the delegates were clear about the fact that a serious mass strike at the present time could only bring about a worsening of the social situation of the proletariat, while a protest strike contradicts the principles of anarchism.

One can see that this is the typical reasoning of the anarchists: the mass strike as a single great strike; the 'great revolution' of which the execution is dependent on whether or not the 'General Commission' is 'to be won over' for such a strike. And from such a conception one concludes today that the mass strike would be 'a misfortune' for the proletariat.

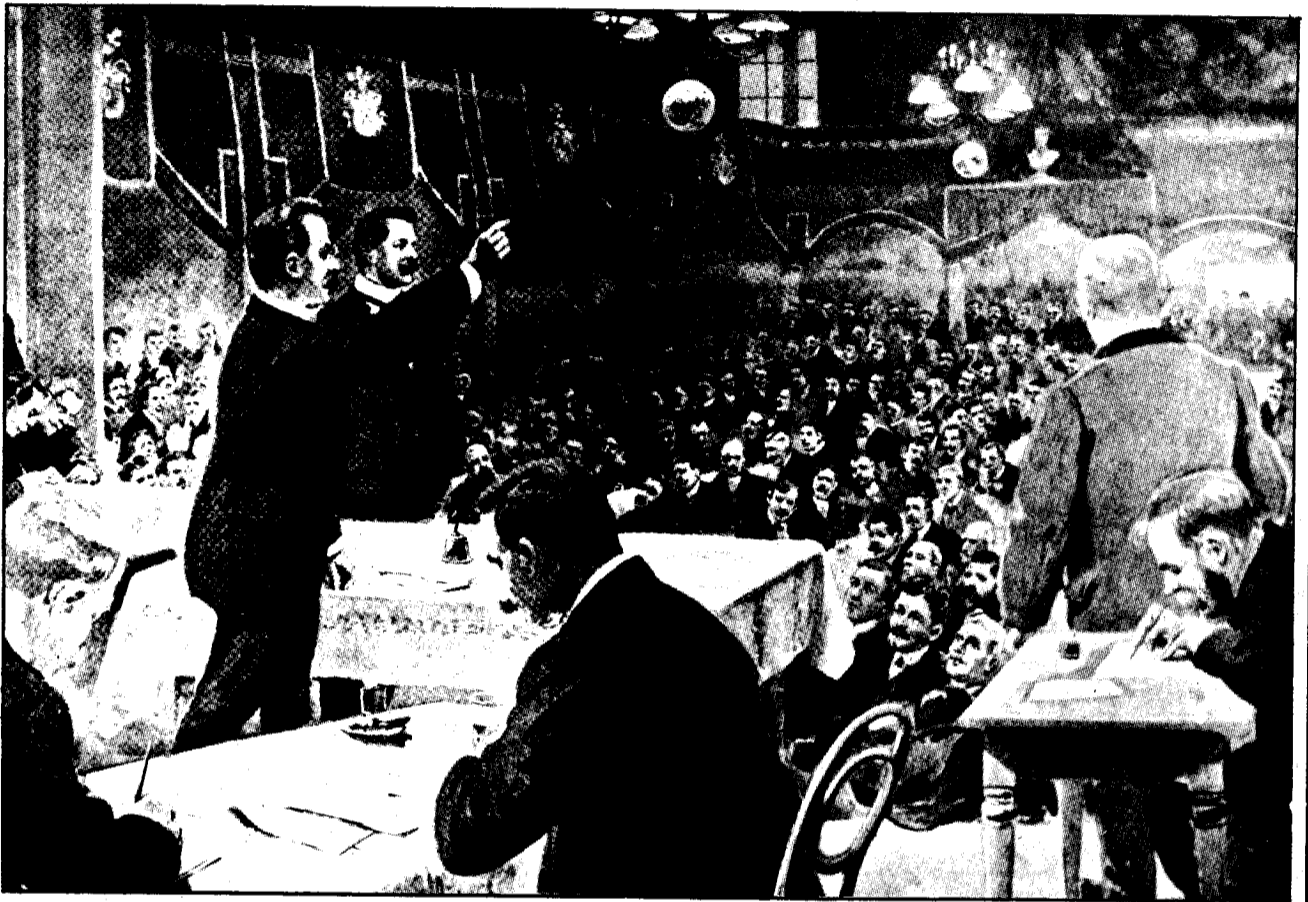
the right to vote for the Reichstag. Then, comrade Kautsky believes, we will proceed by all means necessary, even with the mass strike. The 'strategy of attrition' which speaks for today against a greater mass action is linked to a speculation about a coup, after which we will be in a position to undertake large-scale actions.

Now this speculation about the future has in common with all such speculations that it is just music of the future. If the coup does not take place, but things continue to muddle along in a zig-zag course as hitherto — and Comrade Kautsky himself must admit that *this* result of the Reichstag elections is the most probable — then the whole combination of the 'new situation' and our great actions collapses. If of course we do not seek to make our tactics reach a climax in the Reichstag elections and the coup, if we do not at all want to organise ourselves according to particular combinations of what may happen in the future, then the question of whether we win more or less seats in the next elections, whether or not the coup then takes place, can leave us rather cold. If we do our duty at every moment in the present in order to achieve in any given situation the maximum agitation and education of the masses and to be equal to the situation and its demands, then we will find our reward in any course of future events. If however one wants, like Comrade Kautsky, to base a whole 'strategy of attrition' for today on a prospect of great deeds of the 'strategy of overthrow' next year, in which those great deeds are also dependent on an

resolution is to mean, — and I want the Party Congress to interpret it as meaning — that we are resolved to use all means at our disposal". When these means should be used always depends on "the degree of fervour which has arisen in the masses as a result of our educational and agitational work. We must place the main emphasis on the fact that we must above all work to arouse the enthusiasm of the masses in the suffrage struggle".

The demonstrations which developed after the Prussian Party Congress were thus from the outset conceived in connection with the slogan of an eventual mass strike, as a means of achieving that level of "mass enthusiasm" at which the sharpest means would come to be used. These demonstrations therefore already went considerably beyond the framework of the 'strategy of attrition' into the territory of the 'strategy of overthrow', and led directly to the latter.

This is the case for another reason too. If it is a part of the 'strategy of attrition' to avoid any possibility of a clash with the military, in the sense of Engels' Testament of 1895, then street demonstrations in themselves, even more so than the mass strike, are already a break with that 'strategy'. Now it appears all the more strange that Comrade Kautsky for his part approves of demonstrations, indeed he admits that it is necessary "above all to continue with the street demonstrations, not to slacken in this, but on the contrary to organise it more and more energetically". But he wants demonstrations without any escalation and without



A general strike is proclaimed in the Ruhr coalfield, January 1905. The Ruhr struggle for the eight hour day and better wages was given a boost by the outbreak of revolution in Russia, but was soon called off by the cautious trade-union leaders.

eventual coup, then our 'strategy' becomes rather like that of the petty bourgeois democrats in France whom Marx so brilliantly characterised in his 'Eighteenth Brumaire': they used to console themselves for the actual half-measures and defeats in the present with the hope of great deeds at the next opportunity. "They consoled themselves... for June 13 with the profound utterance: But if they dare to attack universal suffrage, well then — then we'll show them what we are made of! Nous verrons!"...

IV

ON THE OTHER hand, Comrade Kautsky's protest in the name of the 'strategy of attrition', which places all its hopes on the coming Reichstag elections, comes very late. He should not only have directed his warning cry against the present discussion of the mass strike, but also against the street demonstrations, indeed against the whole style of the suffrage movement in Prussia as it was introduced by the Prussian Party Congress in January. At that Party Congress the basic standpoint from which the whole suffrage campaign proceeded was emphatically formulated, namely that the Prussian electoral reform could not be achieved by parliamentary means — neither by activity within parliament, nor by parliamentary elections, however outstanding the results might be — but only and solely by a sharp mass action outside of parliament. "It is a matter of creating a popular movement in the best style", the speaker explained to enthusiastic applause, "otherwise those deprived of rights will be lamentably duped and deceived. And, even worse, we ourselves would have to bear the guilt for the people being thus deceived".

At the Party Congress there were five motions — from Breslau, Berlin, Spandau-Osthavelland, Frankfurt a.M. and Magdeburg — which demand the application of more decisive methods, of street demonstrations and the mass strike. The resolution that was unanimously accepted held out the prospect of the use of "every means at our disposal" in the fight for the right to vote, and its proposer commented: "My motion has expressly distanced itself from mentioning street demonstrations or the political mass strike. But this

them coming to a head. The demonstrations are to be "more and more energetic", however they are not to "go forward at any price". They are "not to slacken", but they are not to move towards a climax. In a word: the demonstrations are to go neither forwards nor backwards.

Now this is a purely theoretical conception of the demonstrations, of mass action in general, which does not take into account very much the real practical conditions, the living reality. When we call great proletarian masses onto the streets for a demonstration, when we explain to them that the situation is such that the goal can only be achieved by their own mass action, not by parliamentary actions; when we are successful in enthusing the masses to an ever greater extent; when the street demonstrations become more and more powerful, and the elan and readiness to fight ever greater, then there arises in the masses of its own accord the question: what next? The demonstrations do not provide the solution. They are the beginning, not the end, of mass action. In themselves they create at the same time a further aggravation of the situation. And when the mass movement that has been built up by us calls for further directives, for further perspectives, then we must show it such perspectives or — if for this or that reason we are not in a position to do that — then sooner or later the demonstration movement will collapse. It *must* collapse.

Comrade Kautsky takes issue with this. He refers to Austria. "The struggle for suffrage lasted over a dozen years there. As long ago as 1894 the use of the mass strike was considered by the Austrian comrades, and yet they were able to keep their outstanding mass movement going until 1905 without any intensification and sharpening of the situation. In their struggle for suffrage the Austrian comrades never went beyond street demonstrations, and yet their elan did not disappear, their action did not collapse".

Comrade Kautsky is mistaken with regard to the facts in Austria, as he was mistaken with regard to the facts of the Belgian suffrage struggle.

The comrades in Austria were so little able to keep "their outstanding mass movement" going for over a dozen years that this mass movement, on the contrary, completely stagnated from 1897 to 1905, i.e. for some eight years. For



'Resolved to 'speak Russian' as they had been ten years earlier to 'speak Belgian'

this we have a reliable witness — in the form of all the Party Congresses of the Austrian comrades for this period.

From 1898 to 1905 complaints about the collapse of the mass action and about the stagnation of the suffrage struggle do in fact form a constant and predominant element in all the Party Congresses. As early as the Party Congress in Linz in 1898, Comrade Winarsky complained that in the speech about party tactics, "hardly a word was said about universal suffrage", and declared "a storming of this bastion must once more be undertaken". The same demands and complaints were to be heard at the Party Congress in Brünn in 1899. At the Party Congress in Graz in 1900 Emmerling confirmed that "since 1897 we have completely given up the struggle for universal suffrage". Skaret was of the opinion that "today it is up to us to create a movement for the right to vote, as from the Party Congress". Pölzer also stated: "The comrades say: since we have the fifth Curia (*6) it as if the generals were hypnotised, everything has become silent. I believe therefore that demonstrations and meetings for universal suffrage must be held everywhere". Bartel declared: "In the manifesto of the Party and of the federation there was a timid appeal to fight for the franchise. In the provinces we breathed a sigh of relief because we thought that at last something would happen. However, nothing happened and we are just where we were before the manifesto".

All the speakers spoke in the same fashion. The same complaints were repeated at the Party Congress in Vienna (1901), in Aussig (1902), and again in Vienna (1903). At the Party Congress in Salzburg (1904) there was, finally, a whole storm of indignation at the standstill in the suffrage movement. Pölzer cried: "Yes, what will actually happen, then? Comrades, this cannot continue. If we make threats then we must carry them out. It is a matter of intervening with all our power, for we have been merely threatening for long enough". Schuhmeier confirmed: "It cannot be denied that in our ranks the mood has ebbed away, that the fire of fighting enthusiasm has died away". The general depression was so great, the elan so negligible, that Schuhmeier — just a year before the successful struggle of November 1905 — could declare in Salzburg: "I am today convinced that we are further away than ever from universal suffrage". Freundlich pointed out that "among the masses, such despair and indifference towards political life prevails as has never been seen before". Pernerstorfer believed that not even street demonstrations could still be organised: we are called on "to go onto the streets, and call on the party comrades to begin the same type of demonstration as before. But now we believe, quite seriously, that we would only suffer a fiasco with such an action". Winarsky stated explicitly: "We have now waited seven years, and I believe it is necessary at last that this period of waiting should come to a close in the interests of the party".

Things seemed rather low, therefore, with this "outstanding mass movement" which was kept going in Austria for twelve years without its elan abating. The party leadership was not responsible for this, of course. Adler had shown the real cause exhaustively in Linz when he said: "You demand that a movement for the right to vote should be put in motion — obviously, a movement which comes forward with the same determination as the one we had several years ago. On this point I say to you: today we cannot do it. Tomorrow perhaps we will have to do it, I do not know. Such movements are not put into motion because one wants to create them, such movements must result as an inner necessity out of the actual situation". And after that the same reply was of necessity repeated at every Party Congress, for the "tomorrow" when a mass movement for suffrage again became possible in Austria did not occur until 1905, when, under the direct impact of the victorious mass strike in Russia, which had won the constitutional manifesto of the 30th October (*7), the comrades gathered at the Party Congress broke off the discussions in order to take to the streets, resolved "to speak Russian" as they had been resolved ten years earlier to speak "Belgian".

While therefore the proletariat in Austria in fact gained the franchise reform only in the two strong spurts of the mass movement which took place at the beginning of the 'nineties under the impetus of the Belgian mass strike and in 1905 under the impetus of the Russian mass strike, Comrade Kautsky rejects both the Belgian and the Russian example for Prussia in order to refer for an example to that eight-year period in Austria which lay between the two spurts and in which the movement for the right to vote was in reality completely stagnant as a mass action. And in both cases, both in the gaining of the Taaffe universal suffrage Curia (*6) and in the achievement of the most recent franchise reform, the mass movement in Austria was firmly linked with a resolute will for the mass strike. In 1905, as Comrade Kautsky knows very well, the preparations for the mass strike were made in the most serious fashion. It did not come to the mass strike only because in both cases the government, which was inclined towards the franchise reform, very soon made concessions.

It is also characteristic that in Austria, when a search was under way in the gloomy intervening period for methods of invigorating the mass movement, there emerged on every occasion the slogan of the mass strike. In Graz as in Salzburg the debate about the franchise movement turned into a debate about the mass strike. In fact the comrades all felt what had been expressed by Resel in Graz: "a movement for the right to vote can only be launched if one is determined to carry it through to its conclusion". Determination alone is certainly inadequate, for neither mass strikes nor mass demonstrations can be artificially produced out of nothing, if the political situation on the one hand and the mood of the masses on the other have not undergone a

corresponding escalation. However, one should not fall victim to any illusions that, conversely, a mass movement or demonstrations can be continued for year after year without being stepped up and without a determined will to engage in the most acute struggle.

How impossible this is, is proven by the course which our own movement for the right to vote in Prussia has followed. That the first demonstration movement was stopped two years ago after only a short time, although the elan of the proletarian masses was not at all ebbing, is indeed a well-known fact. But this year too the movement shows the same characteristics in one respect. In every large demonstration held in Berlin, one had the clear feeling that it had been undertaken with the thought: "But now an end to this!" After the magnificent demonstration in the Zoological Gardens on the 6th March (*8), which was a great step forwards from the demonstration of 12th February, the mood of the masses in Berlin was so elevated that it was the duty of the party, if it was really concerned with holding the demonstrations "more and more energetically", to use the next appropriate opportunity to hold a new, even more effective demonstration. Such an opportunity, an outstanding opportunity, offered itself however on the 18th March, or at least on the first Sunday after 18th March. Instead of this, and in order to avoid this demonstration, those three dozen meetings were arranged in Berlin on 15th March, which meant a lamentable retreat, in view of the mood of the masses and after the 6th March. The 18th March, however — a date which this year had achieved an importance and relevance for the mass movement as never before in any previous year, and the anniversary of the German revolution and of the Paris Commune, exceptionally well suited for agitating among the masses, for retrospective political and historical analysis, and for merciless criticism of the bourgeois parties — the 18th March was not celebrated at all in Berlin. Neither a demonstration, nor even mass meetings, nor a commemorative article. A dry leading article in 'Vorwärts' and not a line in 'Die Neue Zeit' — that was the way in which the excellent opportunity and the excellent mood of the masses in favour of "more and more energetic demonstrations" was used. And this is quite natural: if one does not approach the demonstrations with the clear determination to develop the movement further and further and not to draw back before the consequences, then that timidity develops which prefers to avoid the possibility of any tumultuous demonstration.

The Berlin meetings of 15th March, which killed off the 18th March, were a direct step backwards, measured by the mood of the masses in Berlin and of the party comrades in the provinces. If the militant mood and the determination had not been so great here, where the comrades used the 18th March where possible, and where the slogan of the mass strike was becoming louder and louder, then we could certainly not have got the demonstration of 10th April. A further fact shows how true this is. As soon as we had our great victory over reaction in Berlin on 10th April, by forcing through the right to hold street demonstrations — which meant a step forward beyond the 6th March, and was also without doubt the result of the 6th March — there arose for the Party the clear duty to make the maximum possible use of the newly acquired right to the streets, if it actually wanted to carry on with the demonstrations and to make them "more and more energetic". The next opportunity for this was 1st May. Here however, we had a remarkable experience. While across the whole country, even in the smallest places, there were street demonstrations on 1st May in one form or another, and while in the larger centres — in Dortmund, Cologne, Magdeburg, Frankfurt a.M., Solingen, Kiel, Stettin, Hamburg, Lübeck — the street demonstrations on the 1st May surpassed all preceding ones in numbers and mood and were a real step forward, no street demonstration at all took place in Berlin for the right to vote and for the May Day celebrations, neither a permitted one nor a banned one, nor even an attempt at one.

'Kautsky rejects both the Belgian and the Russian ex- ample in order to refer us to that eight-year period in Austria in which the move- ment was in reality completely stagnant'

Three score meetings was all there was, and the superbly militant mood of the Berlin workers was dissipated.

While the handling in parliament of the suffrage bill — the to-ing and fro-ing between the upper and lower houses — still offers an opportunity over a period of months for demonstrations, and while the mood of the masses does not show the least sign of ebbing, it does seem to be the case that we are moving towards a pleasant 'summer break' in which we are beset by other worries — Comrade Kautsky points to the coming elections for the Reichstag — and in which the demonstration movement can quietly and safely be put to sleep. That is the unavoidable logic of the matter. The party is confronted by a dilemma, not as a result of my culpable agitation as Comrade Kautsky believes, but by the objective state of affairs. Either one wants to create "a popular movement in the best style", put into practice the slogan "no peace in Prussia", and hold mightier and mightier demonstrations, in which case one must go to work with determination, ready to go as far as is necessary, without shying away from the escalation of the situation which might take place, and use all the great economic struggles for the political movement. For this one must place the slogan of the mass strike on the agenda, make it widespread in the masses, for only thus will the confidence, the combativity and the courage of the masses be maintained over a period of time. Or, alternatively, one only

wants to hold a few demonstrations, as a short parade functioning like clockwork and in accordance with commands from above, in order then to retreat in the face of an escalation of the struggle and in the end fall back on the old and tested preparations for the Reichstag elections.

In this case it would be preferable if one did not talk in terms of a "popular movement in the best style", announce at the Party Congress the use of "all means at our disposal", indulge in deafening sabre-rattling in 'Vorwärts' in January, and threaten the mass strike in Parliament. And one should not fall victim to any illusion that we will keep the demonstrations going over a period of time, and hold ever more immense ones. Otherwise we fall into the danger of again being somewhat reminiscent of the French democracy as portrayed in the 'Eighteenth Brumaire'. Marx says: "But the revolutionary threats of the petty bourgeois and their democratic representatives are mere attempts to intimidate the antagonist. And when they have run into a blind alley, when they have sufficiently compromised themselves to make it necessary to give effect to their threats, then this is done in an ambiguous fashion that avoids nothing so much as the means to the end and tries to find excuses for succumbing. The blaring overture that announced the contest dies away in a pusillanimous snarl as soon as the struggle has to begin, the actors cease to take themselves au sérieux, and the action collapses completely, like a pricked bubble".

V

WHAT THEN is the situation taken as a whole? For the first time we have in Germany a vigorous mass movement, for the first time we have gone beyond the mere forms of the parliamentary struggle and have managed to set the masses in motion. Unlike the situation which existed for almost a decade in Austria, we are not confronted by the difficult task of calling mass action into existence in the midst of general apathy, but we have only the rewarding and straightforward task of using the militant and aroused mood of the masses in order to give it political slogans, in order to transform it into political, socialist understanding, in order to go on in advance and point the way to the masses, in order to lead them forwards. The result of this situation is the fact that the slogan of the mass strike has come to the fore in the most natural fashion, and it is the duty of the Party to discuss it openly and clearly as a means of action which sooner or later must result from the development of the growing demonstration movement and the stubborn resistance of the forces of reaction. It is not a case of suddenly commanding a mass strike in Prussia from one day to the next, or 'calling for' the mass strike next week, but of making clear to the masses in connection with the criticism of all bourgeois parties and the explanation of the full situation in Prussia-Germany, of making clear historically, economically and politically that they are dependent not on bourgeois allies, and not on parliamentary action, but on themselves alone, on their own determined class action. The slogan of the mass strike thus arises not as an ingenious patent means of winning victories which is put on a pedestal, but as the formulation and summary of the political and historical lessons of present-day conditions in Germany.

Such an agitation for the mass strike provides the possibility of throwing light on the whole political situation, and the alignment of classes and parties in Germany, in the sharpest manner, of increasing the political maturity of the masses, of awakening their awareness of their strength and their militancy, of appealing to the idealism of the masses, of showing new horizons to the proletariat. Thereby the discussion of the mass strike becomes an excellent means of stirring apathetic layers of the proletariat, of winning over to our side proletarian supporters of the bourgeois parties, in particular the Centre Party (*9), of preparing the masses for all eventualities in the situation, and finally of carrying out preparatory work in the most effective way for the Reichstag elections too.

If Comrade Kautsky now opens a campaign against this agitation, declares the discussion of the mass strike to be dangerous, and attempts to focus the whole movement for the right to vote on the coming Reichstag elections as the only target, then that simply means dragging the Party movement, which has already encouragingly opened up new areas of activity, back into the old worn-out tracks of pure parliamentarism.

But Comrade Kautsky is indulging in the superfluous when he preaches parliamentary optimism and parliamentary action to us in Germany. We have in any case for decades focused our Party life on the Reichstag elections as our main activity, and our tactics are in any case influenced more than enough by considerations about the parliamentary elections. Periodic discussions about tactics are condemned with a reminder about the approaching elections for the Reichstag. Because of considerations about the elections for the Reichstag, a completely wrong policy was pursued by 'Vorwärts' in 1907 and all our guns were turned on Liberalism while the Centre Party, because it was part of the parliamentary opposition, was ignored. Only because our provincial press, especially in the western region, did not follow this policy was our position successfully maintained. The attention of our Party leadership is focused principally on the elections for the Reichstag, and while for example it is taken as a matter of course at such elections that an unflagging agitation is spread throughout the whole country, all the speakers are on tour, and countless meetings are held in every town no matter how small, now during the movement for the right to vote nothing of the like is done. The agitation carried out in meetings and leaflets is minimal. Because of parliamentary considerations the 18th March this year, among other opportunities, was not used for the purposes of agitation: the meetings in Berlin arranged for the 15th March were to be linked to the third reading in the Prussian parliament, not to the Revolution

(*10). Finally, because of considerations about working in parliament and because of parliamentary habits, the republican agitation is very much neglected by us, at the very moment when it is more pressing than ever.

Was what we needed right now in Germany, therefore, an even greater focusing of all our tactics on the Reichstag elections, an even greater enchantment of the masses by the prospects of the parliamentary elections?

I think not. The 'dangers' which had to be opposed could only exist in the imagination of those who have not been able to free themselves from the anarchistic conceptions of the mass strike. The real effect of Comrade Kautsky's behaviour is therefore only that he has provided theoretical protection for those elements in the Party and in the trade unions who feel uncomfortable at the prospect of the further unchecked development of the mass movement, who would like to keep it in check and withdraw as quickly as possible to the old and comfortable habits of the day-to-day parliamentary and trade union work". Since Comrade Kautsky, through reference to Engels and Marxism, has provided these elements with a means of calming their consciences he has at the same time provided a means once again to ruin for the period ahead the possibilities of the same demonstration movement that he would like to make more and more energetic.

It is clear, however, that the further prospects of the suffrage movement now demand, on the contrary, a continuation and more powerful development of the mass action. The parliamentary collapse of the suffrage bill means the bankruptcy of both the government and the conservative-clerical bloc. The action of the enemy has temporarily run out of ideas, the action of the proletariat must be applied all the more forcefully. The enemy is on the retreat, for us the offensive is called for. Not consoling expectations about the grandiose revenge in one and a half years at the ballot box, but blow for blow right now; not weariness, but struggle along the whole front — that is what we need. And I repeat, if the mass of the party comrades understand and feel this, then our leaders also will pay attention. 'It is numbers that count'.

'Simply dragging the Party movement back into the old worn-out tracks of pure parliamentarism'

Finally, a small historical reminiscence which, however, is not without parallels to the present. Comrade Kautsky rejects for Prussia the examples of other countries in which the mass strike has recently been used. Russia was not valid as an example, nor Belgium, nor even Austria. In no way is it "possible to refer to the example of other countries in order to strengthen one's case about the present situation in Prussia". Comrade Kautsky himself, however, in order to find the right model for our tactics, goes back to the ancient Romans and Hannibal. Here he finds the example by which the German proletariat should be inspired, in Fabius the delayer, with his supposedly victorious 'strategy of attrition'. It seems to me that referring to the ancient Romans is going back a bit too far, but since Comrade Kautsky does indeed do this, I would like to point out anyhow that here too the facts are not quite accurate.

The fable of the necessary and victorious strategy of the Cunctator has already been destroyed by Mommsen, who points out that the "natural and correct use" of the Roman forces would have been a determined offensive right from the outset, and that the hesitant attitude of Fabius, which Mommsen describes as "methodically doing nothing", was not the manifestation of some deep strategic plan dictated by the actual situation, but flowed from the whole conservative, senile policy of the Senate.

"Quintus Fabius", says Mommsen, "was an old man, whose caution and steadiness appeared to not a few people as hesitation and stubbornness. An enthusiastic admirer of the golden age of the political omnipotence of the Senate and the authority of the civil leaders, he expected the salvation of the state from, after sacrifices and prayers, methodical conduct of the war". "There cannot have been a leading statesman who possessed an understanding of the situation as a whole", he says elsewhere, "everywhere either too much or too little had happened. Now the war began, at a time and place determined by the enemy; and, despite being justifiably quite aware of their military superiority, the Romans were at a loss with regard to the goal and course of the immediate operations". An offensive in Spain and Africa was the first law of tactics, "but what advantage commanded was neglected no less than what honour commanded". "That the Spanish allies of Rome would be sacrificed for a second time as a result of that hesitation could be foreseen just as clearly as the fact that the hesitation itself could easily be avoided". "However wise it was on the part of the Romans to adopt a defensive stance and to expect the main victory from cutting off the enemy's food supplies, it was nonetheless a strange system of defence and starving into defeat in which the enemy had laid waste the whole of central Italy in full view of a numerically equal Roman army without being hindered, and in which the enemy to a large extent had collected sufficient supplies for the coming winter in its well-planned foraging expeditions". "Finally, as far as the Roman army was concerned, it was impossible to say that this type of war was forced on the generals. The army certainly consisted partly of enlisted peasant militia, but its core was formed by the experienced legions from Arminum, and, far from being discouraged by those recent defeats, it reacted bitterly to the scarcely honourable task which its leader, 'Hannibal's lackey', allotted to the army, and loudly demanded to be led against the enemy. There resulted the most vehement speeches in the civic assemblies against the stubborn old man". In this fashion Mommsen continues at length.

It was "not the 'delayer' who saved Rome", he says in short, "but the well constructed organisation of its confederacy and, perhaps as importantly, the national hatred with which the Phoenician was received by the Occidentals". This was so obvious that finally even "the majority of the Senate, in spite of the quasi-legitimation which the most recent events had given to Fabius' system of delay, was firmly resolved to abandon this form of war, which was slowly but certainly destroying the state". [Theodor Mommsen's Roman History, vol. 1, 3rd edition 1856, pp. 551-7].

Such was the situation of the victorious 'strategy of attrition of Fabius Cunctator'. In fact it is a legend which is preached in our schools to the grammar school pupils in order to drill them in conservatism and warn them against 'rashness' and 'revolutionaries', in order to hammer into them as the spirit of world history the motto behind which the veteran reserves march, 'Always slowly forward'. That this legend is now to be valid for the revolutionary proletariat, today, in this situation — that is one of the unexpected twists of fate.

However that may be, the spirit of the noble Quintus Fabius, who expected the salvation of the state from, after sacrifices and prayers, the methodical conduct of the war, is, it seems to me, adequately represented in our supreme Senate of the Party and of the trade unions. So far as I know, we have not yet suffered much in our Party leadership from a lack of caution, from youthful presumption and rashness. As Comrade Adler said at the German-Austrian Party Congress in Graz: "The whip always has a positive effect, and I admit that speeches at this Party Congress which complain that too little is happening are far preferable to those which advise prudence and circumspection. We already have circumspection, perhaps too much. We do not need you as a brake". And it is, I believe, much the same with us. That Comrade Kautsky lent his pen and his historical knowledge to endorsing the Cunctator's strategy was a waste, to say the least. As a brake, comrade Kautsky, we do not need you.

Translated from the German by Stan Crooke.
Next week: Kautsky's second article, 'A New Strategy'.



Berlin police out against a Social Democratic demonstration, February 1910.

NOTES

1. Ferdinand Lassalle was one of the founders of the German trade union and socialist movement. In the early 1860s he led a movement for universal suffrage. Lassalle's programme was confused and unscientific, and his manipulative conception of politics led him to try to make an agreement with the Prussian Minister Bismarck to the disadvantage of the liberal bourgeoisie. (See Engels' article, 'The Prussian Military Question and the German Workers' Party'). Lassalle's followers eventually unified with the German Marxists in 1875 to form the Social Democratic Party. (For a critique of Lassallean politics as represented at that time, see Marx's 'Critique of the Gotha Programme').

2. In December 1894 the government introduced a bill which punished "attempts at subversion" with imprisonment without trial and insulting remarks about religion, the monarchy, the family, marriage or private property with up to two years' imprisonment. The bill was rejected on its second reading in May 1895 because of mass protests and divisions among those supporting it.

3. The government introduced a bill in June 1899 to 'defend the relations of labour in industry', which effectively removed the workers' right to organise and strike. It became known as the 'Prison Bill'. The Kaiser spoke in support of the bill, saying "Unless the government acts, everything is lost... One cannot expect an improvement until the Social Democratic leaders are taken from the Reichstag and shot. We need a law which makes being a Social Democrat grounds to be deported to the Caroline Islands". The bill was not passed by the Reichstag in November 1899 because of the strong protest movement.

Luxemburg seems to confuse this Bill with the 'Subversion Bill' mentioned above, as Engels' 'Testament' was published in 1895.

3. Eduard Bernstein was the foremost representative of the 'revisionist' tendency in German Social Democracy, which believed that the contradictions of capitalism were getting milder and that therefore it was possible for capitalism peacefully to evolve into socialism. When his views were first published in 1899, he was opposed by both Kautsky and Luxemburg, and his views were rejected by the majority of the party, though he remained a member. 'Sozialistische Monatshefte' was the journal published by the Revisionists.

5. In the election of January 1912 the SPD won 4 1/4 million

votes and 112 seats in the Reichstag. It became the largest single party in the Reichstag, but still lacked a majority.

6. In 1895 a new electoral law was passed in Austria. Previously there had been four different classes of voters: the new law simply added a fifth — the 'fifth Curia'. The vote was thus given to all male adults (except for personal servants), but although they by far numbered the largest section of the electorate, the fifth Curia only controlled 78 out of 425 seats in the Parliament. Luxemburg also refers to this as the Taaffe Curia, though by the time the 1895 law was passed Taaffe had been replaced as Austrian Chief Minister by Count Badeni.

7. In October 1905 the Tsar issued a constitutional manifesto which aimed to head off the mass movement by granting a constitution and establishing a legislative Duma. Though this satisfied most of the middle-class liberals, the working class movement continued the revolution.

8. On 12th February there were mass demonstrations against the minimal changes proposed to the restricted three-class suffrage. Despite the statement of the Berlin police chief that, "Streets only serve the traffic. Resistance to the forces of the state will result in shooting", over 200,000 people took part in Berlin, and there were demonstrations throughout Prussia.

On 6th March, the SPD called a mass demonstration in the Treptower Park in Berlin. This was banned by the police, who blocked all roads to the park. Instead the demonstration was led to the Zoological Gardens, where the 150,000 demonstrators held a rally outside the Reichstag. There were also large demonstrations in all the major towns in Prussia.

The 18th March was the anniversary of the start of the German Revolution of 1848 and of the establishment of the Paris Commune.

On 10th April there were again mass demonstrations throughout Prussia and other parts of Germany, which re-established the right to hold outdoor meetings and demonstrations.

9. The Centre Party was a Catholic confessional party founded in the 1870s which had a large following in the Catholic areas of the country. It was strongly opposed to Prussian domination of a united Germany. The Centre Party had some support among Catholic workers (many of whom were in Catholic unions), particularly in the Rhineland.

10. The Revolution: i.e. the German Revolution of 1848.

Workers' ACTION

Iran: A constitution for autocracy

IRAN'S Ayatollah Khomeiny has denounced the call for a Constituent Assembly as the work of the devil.

The new Constitution, published on Monday 18th, will be submitted only to a committee of 75 'examiners' [elected, but how is not clear] before going to a referendum. In effect, Khomeiny is short-changing the Iranian people in the same way that he did with his referendum on the 'Islamic Republic': people have the choice of voting for Khomeiny, or voting against and being branded as supporters of the Shah.

Since before the Shah's downfall, Khomeiny has promised a Constituent Assembly. Now he has gone back on that promise.

The Khomeiny Constitution does include clauses providing for women and men to be equal before the law, and for freedom of political organisation. But other clauses could nullify those rights.

Great powers are vested in the president. All "political, social, and economic affairs" must be "based on the spirit

and ethics of Islam", and a Supervisory Council, dominated by Muslim leaders, is empowered to ensure this.

The freedom of political parties is conditional on them 'not acting against the foundations of the Islamic Republic'.

The Constitution also refuses to grant the right of self-determination to Iran's ethnic minorities. But resistance to Khomeiny's drive to tyranny is growing, not only among the minorities. Bigger and bigger splits are appearing in the ruling circles of the 'Islamic Republic'.

Ayatollah Shariat Madari deplored the cancellation of the Constituent Assembly, and had his objections branded by Khomeiny as 'communist'.

The paper Ayandegan, sharply condemned by Khomeiny and harassed by Islamic militiamen, has seen its sales go up from 250,000 to more than 350,000.

Discontent is growing, especially among the huge numbers of unemployed. Iran's workers have not said their last word.

Islington Council votes but the fight's not over

ISLINGTON'S Labour council, meeting on Tuesday 19th, approved sweeping cuts in funds for voluntary groups and other services.

The majority was 26-22. A Labour group meeting had failed to decide to apply the whip, so councillors had a free vote. But the right wing faction which seized control of the Labour group earlier this year pushed through its plans.

Outside the Town Hall, several hundred people protested, with banners from tenants' associations, ACTSS, NALGO, NUJ and other unions. Islington ACTSS struck for the day.

The fight will continue. An anti-cuts campaign meeting has been called for Thursday 26th, 7.30pm in the Central Library, Holloway Road.

BRUCE ROBINSON

Stoke strikes escalate

AFTER nine weeks on strike, workers at William Boulton's Engineering have eventually succeeded in pressuring their national officials in the T&G and AUEW to make the strike official. The decision came after mounting anger at the lack of official backing and just as a delegation was about to set off to occupy the national offices in protest.

The strike has had a tremendous amount of support in the area from other engineers who have held protest strikes and provided financial aid.

The union decision also comes just as two more major disputes in the area have broken out, at Dorman Diesels in Stafford and Rists Wires and Cables at Newcastle-u-Lyme.

The strike at Dormans in-

volves 550 workers who walked out after six months of discussions over a £5 a week cost of living claim, and at a time when the workers have been put on a four day week.

At Rists Wires and Cables, who make car components, shop floor workers and staff have united in a strike over a productivity deal. It came to a head on Friday 1st June when 1500 workers walked out after talks over the deal broke down.

On Sunday union negotiators agreed to put a company productivity bonus offer of £1.50 to a workers' meeting on Monday. Jeers of derision met the offer when it was put to the workers by T&G convenor Les Dawson.

National negotiations for the national wage claim for the cable industry took place

on Tuesday 5th June, but local productivity deals are left to the local unions. Hoping that this would be sufficient to satisfy the workers, Dawson commented after the workers had voted overwhelmingly to continue the dispute "If the revised national wage offer is realistic and substantial it could put an entirely new complexion on the situation".

A separate claim was submitted on Wednesday 13th June by the firm's engineers. Now production workers, engineers, staff and drivers are out, and despite an unknown national claim being settled the feeling is such that Dawson announced the day after that the strike could go on for another month.

ARTHUR BOUGH

NALGO conference:

Behind the bluster

THE CONFERENCE of the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) took place last week, June 11th-15th. It came in the aftermath of the Tory general election victory, with the budget coinciding with Day 2 of the conference and with the local government white collar pay claim for 15% still to be negotiated. There was a great deal of bluster, but nothing in the way of organising for the fights that are ahead.

General Secretary Geoffrey Drain declared that the Budget was "despicable, mean, diabolical and directed against the working people of this country", and that "We will fight and fight and fight until we have reversed the policies thrust upon us this week".

Support was promised for branches taking action to stop redundancies, and "a very hot summer" was promised to overshadow the "last winter of discontent". The threat of unemployment caused by new technology and the need to fight this threat were also mentioned.

However, any national leadership for the fight was lacking, and local struggles were effectively discouraged in various ways. While subscriptions were increased, and the target for the strike fund was upped, NALGO strike pay has been reduced

from 55% of gross earnings to a meagre £4. The idea of a levy on the membership in the event of industrial disputes was dismissed.

Furthermore, although NALGO disputes procedure was criticised in the light of the social workers' strike, any proposals to change this procedure were postponed until after the consideration of a National Executive white paper on the subject at a future conference.

One encouraging decision was the one to change the effective date of future salary settlements to a common date with local government manual workers, which will make joint wages struggle against the local authorities possible.

Conference voted against proposals for local negotiations to cover gradings for typists and residential social workers. For these groups, as for the social workers who struck last year, nationally-determined gradings mean lower pay than other groups who can win extra locally.

NALGO members are therefore now faced with a year in which severe attacks must be expected, with a national policy encompassing fine words but with obstacles still in the way of action. If those obstacles can be overcome next year's conference will reflect a different picture.

ALAN CHERRETT

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.

SATURDAY 23 JUNE. 'Defend our Unions' conference, sponsored by Acton Works LT AUEW shop stewards' committee and several other trade union bodies. 11am, New Century Hall, Manchester. Special train from London leaves Euston 7.35am.

FRIDAY 22 JUNE to SUNDAY 1 JULY. Gay Pride Week: events include a Grand Carnival on Saturday 30 June (assemble 1pm, Temple Place, Embankment, EC4).

SATURDAY 30 JUNE. 'Health not cuts' conference organised by 'Fightback'. 10am to 5.30 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq.

SATURDAY 30 JUNE. Demonstration against recognition of Muzorewa's government. Assemble 2.30pm, Smithfield Market, London.

SATURDAY 30 JUNE. Day school on new technology organised by Fleet Street Women's Voice. 10.30am at Central London Poly, New Cavendish St, W1.

MONDAY 1 JULY. Planning meeting for mass picket of Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Heathrow, to take place on Saturday 21 July, at 2pm, with the slogan 'Smash all immigration controls'. Organised by Revolutionary Communist Tendency, supported by black and anti-racist organisations. 7pm, Club Room, Conway Hall.

TUESDAY 3 JULY. Southall Defence Committee picket of Barnet Magistrates' Court, 9.30am — all day.

SATURDAY 7 JULY. Campaign against Immigration laws: pickets outside all prisons and detention centres where detainees under the Immigration Act are kept, from 2pm.

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Labour activists debate the cuts

JAMES DAVIES reports on last Saturday's conference on Labour councils and the cuts.

LABOUR Party ward or GMC delegates from 27 out of London's 32 boroughs were among nearly 250 people attending the conference on Labour councils and the cuts last Saturday, 16th.

Everywhere government cash limits are forcing councils to choose either to cut back on vital social services or to plunge their hands into the pockets of rent and rate-payers just to keep up minimal standards of provision. The attack started by Labour is being stepped up with a vengeance by the slash-happy Tories.

The conference was called by Socialist Organiser so that left-wing councillors, tenants and labour movement militants could thrash out an alternative to this choice of more cuts or more cash.

The conference was backed by 40 London Labour councillors, and was one of the biggest affairs of its kind, despite a disappointing turn-out from

trade union and tenants' organisations.

Opening the meeting, Camden councillor Ken Livingstone saw the attendance as a sign of a shift to the left in the London Labour Parties.

"The last time we tried to do this was four years ago, when the 'Labour against the Housing Cuts' campaign held a meeting. We sent an invitation to the Greater London Council Labour group. They debated the motion for hours, finally agreeing not to send anyone... presumably for fear of contamination."

"When the meeting started, the convening secretary read out a letter from John Keyes, who was and still is General Secretary of the London Labour Party. The letter told us that our meeting was unconstitutional, as only the London Labour Party can call a regional Labour Party meeting, and that we had better all go home."

"It is a mark of the change since then that our afternoon session today is going to be chaired by Arthur Latham, the chairman of the London Labour Party."

There are now, he said, "clearly defined left groups in

a number of councils in London", despite purges by the right wing in some boroughs like Haringey.

Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth council, told the conference that the Tories were cutting the rate support grant — which provides over half of local authority revenue — by £300 million for the current year. The Tories don't have to interfere directly in a local authority's affairs and instruct it to raise rates. They merely start out with an assumption that the authority will raise the money and pay out accordingly.

The cities are being particularly hard-hit now, with the shires getting their reward for Tory loyalty by being asked to bear less of the burden. Council house sales are not the main issue, declared Knight. The main issue is finance.

The Tories are also attacking municipalisation "at a stroke". Now, before a council can buy a property, it has to have the permission of the Department of the Environment. This means needless delay and cost increases. In many cases it will simply prevent councils from acquiring property at all.

Mike Ward, who followed

Councillor Knight, is an exponent of what the local press referred to as the 'ultra-Marxist' Wandsworth council. Unlike Ted Knight, Mike Ward spoke of the kind of tactics and programme needed to wage a fight-back against the central government freeze, the cuts, and the stranglehold of the money-lenders.

He outlined a thirteen-point programme as a minimum. Among his points were: a permanent commitment to low council rents, no town hall junketing and expense account joy-rides, no social service means tests, an extension of day-care facilities, an extension of democratic control, building up direct works, support for workers' struggles, opposition to government wage restraint, no support for cuts and redundancies, positive discrimination to see to it that blacks and women get a better deal, and no prestige programmes.

We have to decide, he concluded, "are we trying to fight for socialism, or to run local government?"

The central issue of the conference — dominating the

largest of the six workshops and the plenary session at the end of the conference — was rate rises. (There was general agreement that council rents should not be raised).

Proposing Workers' Action's motion, Andrew Hornung argued for a fight against rent and rate rises, mobilising local workers, tenants, and Labour activists "for an escalating campaign leading up to industrial action and councils refusing to pay debt charges". How long it would take for such a campaign to build up the strength needed to defeat the present system which places the burden of the crisis on the backs of the working class cannot be predicted. But, he said, it is necessary clearly to set our sights on a freeze of rents and rates.

Could socialists accept responsibility for raising rates as an interim measure, until the movement was strong enough to fight back with a good chance of success? Quite possibly; but this idea is being used as an excuse for actually failing to pull out all the stops to develop a fightback, and as a cover for a left-wing version of local government 'management'.

So long as there is no real

attempt to mobilise for a struggle, socialists have to oppose even those rate rises claiming to be mere interim measures.

Seconding the motion, Stephen Corbishley, a member of the CPSA National Executive (speaking in a personal capacity), argued for linking up shop floor workers, the trade union and the Labour Parties, councils and tenants' organisations in a united campaign against rate rises. So long as councillors fail to get behind that sort of campaign, they are "simply presiding over the pauperisation of the working class".

Some delegates, however, hoped to blunt the resolution by opposing its stand on rate rises. Foreseeably, these people, led by supporters of the Chartist journal, tried to make out that a firm stand on rate rises did not allow for the possibility of rises being used as an interim measure. By so doing, they tended to shield those councillors who had raised rates without waging an all-out struggle to prepare a fightback. They support the Lambeth rate rise, for example, without any serious

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