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THATCHER TARGETS INNER CITIES

THATCHER BEGAN her third term with the promise that the inner-cities would be receiving special attention. The meaning of her promise is now taking shape. She has declared war on the workers — employed and unemployed — in the big cities.

The Tories' motives in attacking the cities are all too clear. The major cities are Labour bastions. In Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow and Manchester, no Tories were returned.

The *Financial Times* ruefully commented that, *'Merseyside as a whole shifted emphatically leftwards, even in the Wirral'*. Thatcher's plans are to reproduce her very own 'London effect' in these cities. In Battersea, London, a once working class Communist and then Labour bastion, returned a Tory. The constituency had, effectively, been colonised by the middle classes courtesy of Thatcher's inner-city policies. A block of council flats, for example, was taken over and the working class residents rehoused. It was then turned into a £180,000 per unit block of luxury flats.

Another of Thatcher's calculations is that the inner-cities are, in their present state, a seed-bed of revolt. There is no doubt that she is haunted by the fear of another outburst of urban riots. Poverty and unemployment is at its most acute in the inner cities, especially in the council estates.

The unemployment rate amongst owner occupiers is 4% as compared to 25% amongst council tenants. The bosses have begun to talk contemptuously of inner-city 'reservations' and 'dependency ghettoes'. And they know that such concentrations of poverty are always in danger of exploding in their smug, greedy faces.

The final consideration that has prompted the Tories to make the inner- cities target number one is their belief that, provided Labour councils are stripped of any power, they can become boom towns for the profiteers.

The model Thatcher is planning for four of the major cities is based on the experience of Liverpool and London. Development agencies have been set up to stimulate the setting up of small businesses, to organise the transformation of industrial areas become boom towns for the profiteers.

The model Thatcher is planning for four of the major cities is based on the experience of Liverpool and London. Development agencies have been set up to stimulate the setting up of small businesses, to organise the transformation of industrial areas into tourist attractions and, of course, to oversee the best get-rich-quick racket of all, property development.

Free from any political control, businesses can profit from such redevelopment. As the repulsive Liberal councillor and local businessman in Liverpool, John Jones, put it:

'The great thing is that we get no interference from the Labour City Council — they cannot touch us. Marvellous.'

Needless to say the Merseyside Development Corporation has done little to ease unemployment in the region. The businesses being set up employ ones and twos. The factories they replace employed thousands. The docks — once a source of jobs for thousands — are now the dinky dwelling places of a handful of yuppies.

Thatcher's means of bringing the cities to heel involves financial aid combined with massive cuts. The aid will go to big and small businesses via the development corporations. The cuts are aimed at welfare services and will hit the working class hard. Services will be cut through the poll tax, the further selling off of council housing or handing it over to private landlords, privatisation and cuts in benefits.



The new Local Government Bill gets rid of the notion of services being there for welfare altogether. They are to be undertaken 'only if they can do so competitively'. Housing benefit cuts will mean £12 a week less for the two million council tenants on benefits.

One aspect of the 'Fowler Review', which comes into operation in April, will remove the rights of claimants to get lump sum payments for furniture and clothes. They will instead be given loans which they have to repay at the rate of 15% of their weekly benefit.

Thatcher wants to make sure that councils cannot wage a fight against those attacks. The Local Government Bill stipulates that any campaigns undertaken by a local authority have to receive the unanimous backing of the whole council, Tory, Labour or whoever!

Last, but not least, contract compliance — which was aimed at ensuring that at least some workers who lived in inner cities, got jobs in the grant aided businesses — is to be abolished.

Thatcher's plans for the cities are far-reaching. Their efforts will be devastating. In one inner-city area in London, Lambeth, the average standard of living per household fell by 5% between 1979 — 1984. If Thatcher's plans go through it is estimated that by 1991 each household will suffer a fall in real income of £1,900 per year. The picture is the same in other inner-city areas.

But there is no reason why any of Thatcher's plans for the cities should go through. The whole of the working class in these areas is her target. The whole working class must respond.

Labour councils must be forced to launch mass campaigns of resistance to the Housing, Poll Tax and Local Government Bills. If any of them are passed the legislation must be defied.

The unions, — inside and outside local government — must be won to non-compliance with the Tories' plans and strike action against them. Tenants' organisations must be built on every estate, and the unemployed must be organised to fight the attacks on benefits.

Each and every person involved in such campaigns of resistance, faces a common enemy. Each and every campaign must share a common cause. To fight that enemy, to fight for that cause each and every strand of resistance must be united into democratic, borough and city-wide committees of action.

Only if such committees are built, only if they comprise real representatives of the mobilised working class, can resistance to Thatcher be united and successful. The debacle of the anti-rate-capping campaign last time round stemmed from total reliance on Labour councils. The lesson must be learnt:

- **For committees of action in every city!**

EDITORIAL

SINK HER FLAGSHIP

Margaret Thatcher has declared the proposals to introduce a Poll Tax as her legislative 'flagship'. There will be no backing down, no U-turns, she told rebellious Tory back benchers in her best Iron Lady style. Yet outside of her circle of uncritical adorers the proposal has been almost universally condemned.

The Economist calls it a 'bad new tax'. The Tory Councils are against it. The Treasury is reported to consider it 'barmy'. Doubtless the churches will declare it unChristian.

So why is Thatcher so determined to press ahead with her proposals? She sees it as the completion of her plan to destroy the capacity of local councils to provide any sort of resistance to the effects of her nationwide 'free enterprise' economic policies. It was no good her creating millions of unemployed, running down the welfare state, opening the masses to the icy blast of the laws of the market, if the councils then tried to mitigate or offset the worst effects of all this and did so, moreover, at the expense of local businesses and factory owners hit by the rate increases needed to pay for it.

Now Thatcher wants to take away the last shreds of power that locally elected bodies have to 'tax' business in their areas. The new proposals will take the locally set business rate and replace it with a nationally set uniform national rate. At one stroke this frees the capitalist class from any financial obligation to the communities they exploit.

Then comes the poll tax itself. It will hit every adult, unlike the present rates which are only paid (directly) by half the 35 million electors in England. Even those on the dole will have to pay since the new Social Security Act (1986) which comes into force next April will make them responsible for 20% of rates (which most do not directly pay now) and will apply thereafter to the poll tax (which everyone will have to pay).

The poll tax will be a sharply regressive tax. It will take from the poor and give to the rich. Thus Dennis Thatcher's rate bill for his four bedroomed mock-Georgian mansion in Dulwich is £2,856 a year — not crippling you might think for a millionaire. Under the poll tax he would see this cut to £568 each for himself and his wife. More than halved! Round the corner Morris Hale and his wife Joyce and their two sons, Glyn (21) and Ricky (19) now pay £742 a year would pay £2,272 — a trippling of their tax burden. The deprived inner city areas would be hit hard.

POLITICAL AIM

The political aim of this vicious anti-working class tax is to force local Labour councils to make ever more savage cuts. Thatcher aims to force every Labour council to pose the vicious choice to working class families — defend services and raise the tax or cut the tax and close down the services.

It is another device from Thatcher to divide the labour movement in the cities. She can them look forward to extending her rule to them too. An added bonus is that the tax will be based on the electoral register so it will act as an incentive not to vote to the very poorest — a cynical reversal of the old cry 'No Taxation without representation' and a step nearer to the 'property owning democracy' i.e. democracy *only* for those with substantial property.

Once before the ruling class in England tried to introduce a poll tax: in the 1380s. It led directly to the Peasants Revolt. Can we expect a modern re-run? Labour's spokesman on the issue is Jack Straw who shares his name with one of the leaders of the famous uprising. Alas our Jack has none of the fire of his famous namesake. If he has his way the authors of this infamous tax will not end up with their heads on pikes. Our Jack has promised a 'crusade' against it. This bodes ill. Excited doubtless by the revolt of the Tory wets (and not so wets — Heseltine and co), seeing the forebodings of the Tory journalists and the Churches, his idea is doubtless a holy war of words in the House of Commons and in public meetings. He believes that a Kinnockade of wind will blow the poll tax down. In this he will doubtless have the support of the Eurostalinists at all levels of the trade unions. At the end of the day and after a surfeit of wind we will all end up paying the tax.

The labour movement needs a different perspective. The ruling class is divided and hesitant. Good! Onto the offensive! The only force capable of dividing them further, of really setting them at each others throats is the masses — the masses on the streets. The only starting point for such a mobilisation is the trade unions and the local Labour parties. A mass campaign needs to be launched now — demonstrations must aim to turn out hundreds of thousands, millions eventually, onto the streets. The mass anti-tax demonstrations in Ireland a few years ago show that it can be done. But demonstrations alone won't force the Iron Lady to back down. They must be rallying points for strikes against the tax.

Then the very survival of the government will come into question. If the tax were to be steamrollered through by the massive Tory majority then millions of working class people will have been roused to a level where mass defiance and non-payment can become real possibilities.

The more cautious heads in the ruling class sense that on this one the Tories could be in trouble. Thatcher characteristically has 'hardened her heart' and ploughed on relying on the fact — so often demonstrated — that the Labour and trade union leaders are men of straw. The rank and file of the labour movement need to turn directly to rousing the oppressed millions of the cities, wasted by unemployment and cuts, by the decay of housing and say enough is enough. If we can sink Thatcher's flagship then her whole battlefleet of anti-working class measures can be sent to the bottom.

DOWN WITH THE POLL TAX!

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NEW MODEL PARTY

IN 1979 Labour's defeat sparked a major assault by the left against the record of the Callaghan Government and the corrupt undemocratic regime in the party. It was directed against the system that enabled the PLP to trample on conference decisions and on the wishes of the membership.

But the reformist left and their pseudo-Trotskyist supporters stopped half way with their 'democratic revolution'. They feared the right's threats to destroy Labour's electoral chances. When debacle came in 1983 the post mortem was totally different to the previous one. With bowed heads the left helped Kinnock into the saddle and then let him unload all the blame and shame of that defeat onto their unoffending heads. For four years they shut up and put up with Kinnock's incessant moves rightwards, all in the name of unity needed to win the 1987 election.

But Kinnock, alone and unaided, lost that too. The scale of his defeat was only marginally less humiliating than that of Michael Foot. Surely now was the left's chance to counterattack; to draw the lessons that a no promises no hope programme, that a sickeningly sycopantic cult of Kinnock's personality couldn't win and didn't deserve the credibility of millions of working class voters.

But no. The onslaught did not materialise. Kinnock could scarcely believe his luck. He led the party to defeat, yet within a short while he was able to start congratulating himself and his clique of advisors that they had had a 'successful campaign'. He was able to do so without fear of contradiction. Where was the challenge to his leadership? Where was the campaign to break the new system of policy making that makes a mockery of conference decisions? Where was the principled fight to challenge the right in the PLP? Where is the fight to re-capture control of the NEC and to stop the witch-hunt? Not a sign of it! The deepest and most profound silence!

The results of this passivity are becoming clearer and clearer. The Shadow Cabinet elections provoked a split between the Campaign and Tribune group of MPs. Good! The idea of smuggling four lefts onto a slate of Tribunite fake lefts never sat very comfortably with socialist pretentions. However, all the criticism levelled at the Tribune group has been for its sectarianism in breaking from the joint slate with the Campaign group.

The rise of the youngish, upwardly climbing Kinnockites (Yuckies) in the party has not been at all impeded by the election defeat. The only obstacles to the Kinnock loyalist came, paradoxically, from the old guard right wing. Whilst he may have come top of the pops in the NEC election, Gould has a long way to go before he can outflank Hattersley. Nevertheless, despite their protestation, it is quite clear that this new right are more at home in the world of Hattersley machine politics than amongst the relative political innocents who populate the Campaign group.

The witch-hunt was about the only internal party activity that wasn't suspended for the duration of the election. Kinnock's moves towards 'one member, one vote' (OMOV) are an attempt to consolidate the right wing's hold over the PLP and the PLP's over the party by destroying any direct connection between party activists and the MPs they work to get elected. The Sawyer proposals for the YS and the continued running to the media to denounce Black Sections show the leadership's contempt for any grass roots organisation outside their control.

One member, one vote is being seen as the key means to reduce the influence of the left wing constituency activists. Under the gloss of a formal increase in democracy



Gould, an immodest man with much to be modest about

FOOLS' GOULD

the right are attempting to submerge the voices and the votes of active party members. What is needed, according to Bryan Gould, is a kind of New Model Party which offers its members '. . . more by way of participation, information and entertainment than the periodic obligation to attend meetings'. To avoid these 'members' being distracted by boring things like policies — which should be left to the professionals — he is about to make sure that they don't read about them by closing down all the party's publications.

Be warned...the ghost of Gaitskell stalks the party in the guise of Neil Kinnock. Asked if he was considering changing Labour's social ownership policy he replied:

'Anything is up for grabs'

In fact the formal empty democracy of OMOV hides the real thrust of the proposals. Purely formal democracy restricts itself to the individual, isolated act of voting. It sometimes restricts the amount of money that can be spent by people attempting to influence voters, sometimes not. What it never does is step beyond the bounds of the vote to the questions of how influence can be brought to bear on the elected and selected after the ballot.

The working class has created a different tradition born out of the needs of struggle. Faced with the power of one boss, each worker as an individual is easily out gunned. That is why, from Tolpuddle to Telecom, workers have had to combine together to even up the odds. From that need for collective action has sprung the tradition of collective discussion, of participation, of mass meetings, of open voting and of honest debate.

It is this tradition (even though its highest point has certainly never been reached within the Labour Party, and only occassionally outside it) that is under attack. That is why OMOV must be resisted, why even the inadequate status quo must be defended, against this reactionary pseudo-reform.

Defence, however, is not enough. There are terrible defects in the present system of Labour Party democracy. We do not need to deny them to defy the right and resist a change for the worse. Neither do we have to renounce fighting for a qualitative change for the better. The present system chronically under-represents the largest section of Labour Party members — the affiliated union membership. These outnumber individual members by about twenty to one! Any real democratic reforms of the Labour Party would have to start by considering the problem of how to activate this mass membership — many of whom don't even realise that, via their contribution to their union's political fund, they have affiliated to the Labour Party. Where is the voice of this mass membership and where are the proposals to find it and heed what it says? Many constituency lefts mistrust the unions and indeed working class people. They are happy with the silence. We are not. For it is these silent millions who are essential to smashing Thatcher's attacks.

Kinnock is very careful in proposing, and winning support for, an electoral college system for selecting candidates that the 'unions maintain their present proportionate influence in the selection process'. By which he means, of course, that the union bureaucrats will continue to use their block votes like a steamroller to back up Kinnock and the PLP right wing majority. They are the real barrier to the increased participation of their members in political action and their representation in the Labour Party in any real sense. If their membership really did participate then their position as spokespersons would become a lot less tenable.

This 'conspiracy of silence' must be broken if the new right are not to turn the Labour Party into a glossy machine for winning opinion polls and doing deals with the Liberals. The key lies not in taking the vote out of the hands of those who attend meetings but in turning those meetings of tens into meetings of hundreds. It is not the activists that are the problem — it is the fact that there are so few of them. Democratisation for us must mean a move towards workers' democracy, and for that you need workers, workers and more workers.■

by Chris Ramsey



Our Norman — the credit card kid

UNION CHIEFS IN A SWEAT

THERE ARE some worried people at Congress House right now. In the run-up to the election the TUC leaders went into hibernation hoping to wake up to a Kinnock victory. They were sorely disappointed. Now they are trying to come to terms with some bitter truths.

The Tories have no intention of welcoming the TUC back into the corridors of Westminster for friendly and regular consultation. John Edmonds of the GMB has been hailed as a brilliant intellect in Congress House. He earned this accolade for making the not very startling discovery that after nine Thatcher years:

'We have to swallow the fact, unpalatable as it may be, that the government are no longer listening to us.'

What a clever man! Thatcher made that clear from the first day she assumed office. Three rounds of anti-union laws have proved it. The steel strike, the miners' strike and Wapping proved it. But there's none so blind as those who will not see.

ALARMING

Perhaps more alarming for the top union mandarins is that membership rolls continue to fall. In the early 1980s the drop was dramatic. Total union membership fell 600,000 in 1982, and 450,000 in 1983. Last year it was still dropping, recording a fall of 245,000. Such a drop is putting a big squeeze on the revenues of the unions. And with this necessarily comes a squeeze on the salaries, cars and expense accounts of trade union officialdom. Already many unions are having to slim down their offices and sack officials. Any further erosion in membership would begin to nibble away at the material base of several top officials.

The obvious answer to Thatcher's offensive, to declining rolls and to the bosses' attacks is to rally the forces for a fight back. Thatcher and the bosses will never have to pay any attention to a labour movement that is in headlong retreat. Why should the bosses not keep demanding and getting no-strike deals if they know that the EETPU can escape scot free from TUC discipline even after Wapping? Every time the EETPU leaders cock a snook at the TUC and get away with another no-strike deal more bosses join the queue to demand the same.

How can you expect to reverse the decline in membership if you don't organise to fight and win? For millions of workers right now union membership seems that much less relevant, if even the miners' and printers' unions went down to defeat. As unions signing sweetheart deals are finding, many workers can see little point in forking out for subs to an organisation that is in management's pocket anyway.

The new realists of the TUC don't see things this way at all. Edmonds and General Secretary 'Ramblo' Willis are pushing a new package in response to Thatcher's third term. In the face of the Tories' refusal to offer any more beer and sandwiches Edmonds wants to wind down the TUC's concern with what he calls macro-economic matters. By this he means the TUC should give up any pretence of opposing central government policy in the here and now.

INEFFECTIVE

True enough the form of the TUC's opposition to central goverment policy was ineffective. They dispatched streams of briefing papers that quickly hit the bottoms of the various ministerial bins. But that should be a cue to start organising and mobilising, a cue for cutting out the jaw-jaw, not for throwing in the towel.

Instead the TUC chiefs intend to prioritise a major recruitment campaign. The TGWU has its 'link up' campaign aimed at temporary and part-time workers. Willis and Edmonds want to establish a special TUC fund to aid recruitment with videos and adverts. Pity the media agency that gets the job of selling Norman Willis as a go-getting, dynamic and sweet talking guy.

They don't intend to fight to prove that the unions can defend and improve workers' living standards and rights. Willis, in a recent paper called *Developments in Trade Union Organisation*, argued that recruitment could be best secured if the unions were to offer such services to their members as financial advice and shopping discounts. He even suggested a union credit card with interest rates lower than the high street banks.

The mind boggles at the thought. Having been forced into headlong retreat by the bosses and the city our Norman intends to poach new members from Access and Barclaycard! The trade unionism of the twenty-first century will have the unions vying with each other over loan terms. They'd have their own unionised bailiffs to repossess the homes and cars of their indebted members.

EDUCATE

If the videos and the credit terms halt the decline in membership Edmonds has his own ideas about what to do with the recruits. They won't be sent into battle against the employers. Instead he intends to educate them. Willis and the TGWU's Ron Todd are also singing the praises of educating their members.

What all the talk of education boils down to is that the TUC chiefs want to get their members to vote Labour in five years time. In the meantime they have nothing to offer. That is what Ron Todd meant when he talked to the recent TGWU conference of the future being a

'long struggle to replace Thatcherism with a caring and compassionate government.'

It's also at the heart of Edmonds' argument for education:

'We need to go back to first principles and argue with our members and activists on three or four basics, such as the need for public expenditure.'

And what are the other two or three basics Mr Edmonds? Doubtless they will include the idea that nothing can be done to resist the bosses until Neil Kinnock crosses the threshold of Number Ten.

COMPETITION

While Edmonds and Willis dream of recruitment drives and education, the EETPU is still setting the pace in the beauty competition for slavish deals with the employers. The TUC have not lifted a finger. Willis' paper talks of cutting out union competition through the TUC granting certificates for individual unions to work with particular employers for a given period of time. This might be Norman's idea of how he can keep himself in a job. But it won't stop the EETPU's business unionism, particularly when, in the very same breath, Willis offers to certify 'agreements tailored to modern needs' and 'a flexible approach to standards in agreements.'

As the TUC brace themselves for an even 'newer realist' Congress there is a deafening silence from the left. For their part there is no shortage of breast beating about opposing no-strike deals and about the need to stick to what Ron Todd calls 'traditional trade union values'. Yet they are short on proposals for any meaningful action. At this year's Congress the TGWU will propose a special review body to develop:

'measures to prevent the use of no-strike clauses and lay down proper procedures for achieving union recognition.'

Hammond won't lose any sleep over this. The review won't even report for a year. And in the meantime...

This abject record of capitulation and delusion must alarm every union militant. Yet again we can see why it is so vital for militants in every union, and across the unions, to organise to hold their leaders to account. The union militants are the ones who are trying to hold the line for oganised labour in defence of their members' living standards. More and more blatantly the trade union chiefs are showing that their real concern is funding the union machines that pay their salaries and provide their perks.■

by Dave Hughes

FBU TAMED BY LAW

On 14 July, what looked like becoming the first major challenge to the third term Tory government came to an abrupt end.

Until that time firefighters in the West Midlands had been following the national policy of non-cooperation with the Home Office Inspectorate. This action, in response to changes in the role of that inspectorate, had been overwhelmingly supported at the recent May conference. In the past their job was to make sure that standards of fire cover were being maintained. Now they had been instructed by the government to see where cuts could be made.

On Saturday 11 July, firefighters escalated their action with a work to rule, answering emergency calls only. This was in response to the threat of an injunction being served on local officials. Two days later, the threat was carried out, but against the FBU as a whole. The writ was issued in the name of the West Midlands Labour-controlled Joint Board.

RESPONSE

The response of the local and national leadership was verbally defiant. They talked of fighting the injunction and escalating the action with a view to strike action. In court, the original injunction under Section 24 of the 1947 Fire Services Act claiming the dispute was in breach of contract was thrown out! However, the judge — as always willing to be helpful to the bosses — suggested that other laws would better suit their purpose. The dispute was declared illegal under the anti-union laws of 1982 and '84 because it was directed against the government and there had been no secret ballot. The fighting talk of the leadership immediately turned to abject surrender. The action was called off.

'JULY DAYS'

These few 'July Days' offer salutary lessons not only for militants in the fire service, but for the labour movement as a whole. This action was considered by the Chief Fire Officers' Association over a year ago. Many brigades had already carried out the policy of non-cooperation. It is only now that management feel confident enough to carry out their threats. All workers can expect still greater attacks on jobs, wages and conditions as a result of the bosses' renewed mood of confidence after the Tory election victory.

MOBILISE

If this dispute is anything to go by, we cannot sit back and hope Labour councils will take up the fight against Tory attacks. Of course, if they do, we must mobilise support for them. In the meantime we must take the initiative in defending local services against cutbacks. Furthermore, any Labour councillors siding with the Tories to use the bosses' law against workers must be booted out of the Labour Party.

In the FBU there is a commitment to convening a recalled conference to organise a national strike if one single firefighter is issued with a redundancy notice. If our leadership is prepared to stand by this policy and fight for its implementation we must give them every support. However, if they repeat the climbdown we saw in this dispute, it's no use just complaining about them. The rank and file must take the initiative and organise without them if necessary. Remember! In 1977, General Secretary Terry Parry was opposed to the strike. Only rank and file pressure won the day.■

by a West Midlands FBU member

DEFIANT AND UNBOWE

THE JULY conference of Cosatu registered the growing strength of black trade unions in South Africa. Hundreds of their leaders were arrested following the state of emergency declared in June 1986. There has been a constant onslaught on the unions by the state forces since then — Cosatu's headquarters has been raided and ransacked by police twice and now stands unusable after being bombed on the day of the whites only election.

by Liz Hunt and Sue Thomas

Despite all this the unions have succeeded in repairing and strengthening their organisation.

In the 19 months since Cosatu was launched it has grown from 430,000 paid up members to over 3/4 million. Already this year's strike figures have overtaken those for the same period last year, and 1986 was a high point of workers' struggle having double the numbers of strikes and strikers than any previous year in South African history.

Two crucial victories testify to the strength of the movement — the strikes at OK Bazaars and on the railways. 10,000 workers employed by the giant OK supermarket chain struck for nine weeks, led by the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA) which had been waging a two year long battle against redundancies and low wages. The strikers eventually forced the management to revise its 'final' offer having withstood intense police harassment combined with dismissal notices.

ATTACKS

One lesson from the dispute was the fact that 'progressive' bosses Anglo American, a major shareholder in OK, openly revealed that their 'progressiveness' was no obstacle to their support for poverty line wages and state attacks on strikers. *'Anti-apartheid bosses are not our friends'* said one CCAWUSA banner. Perhaps the key feature of the OK strike was the strength and breadth of organised solidarity. Support committees brought together Cosatu affiliates along with unions from the rival Cusa/Azactu federation and a wide range of community and political groups. A widespread consumer boycott was sustained. Workers organised in the Food and Allied Workers Union (Fawu) refused to handle packing and delivery of goods for OK stores. The whole experience gave a considerable boost to working class organisation.

When the rail union Sarwhu took on the state railway company, SATS, it faced one of the most fiercely anti-union companies in South Africa. But the commitment of rank and file workers was demonstrated right from the very beginning of the three month long strike. The initial walk out was in protest at the arbitrary sacking of one union member. Soon the strike not only spread but took up further issues of union rights and the scandalous conditions in the 'compounds', the workers' living quarters. At the end of the dispute the strikers defeated the lock out and won an upgrading of the hostels and permanent status for all employees irrespective of grade or race, a very significant gain. Union membership had also increased to 22,000.

INTENSE

The SATS strike was marked by intense police activity especially in the run up to the whites-only election in May. Six strikers were killed and many more beaten and detained. Partly in response to this, and partly in protest at the apartheid election, Cosatu together with the United Democratic Front (UDF) called a two day general stay away. Both this and the Soweto Day stay away were counted successes, with the latter observed by at least 1.75 million workers, making it even larger than last year's general strikes.

At the launching congress of Cosatu in December 1985, one of the aims of the new organisation was to see 'one union per industry' by the end of the first six months. Although mergers had been completed in a number of sectors such as the domestic workers, progress in many other sections was slower than expected and in its message to its members at the beginning of this year, Cosatu again stressed the importance of one union, one industry:

'Workers — make sure your union is coming together to form one big union in your industry!'

A few months later, on 23 May, South Africa saw the launching of a new merged union, the National Union of Metalworkers South Africa (Numsa), a union to cover the whole of the motor and engineering industry. At its formation, Numsa was 136,000 strong and represented 30% of all workers in the industry. Numsa was formed by the merging together of seven unions. These unions put aside their political and structural differences for the sake of 'workers unity' in the industry. The largest of the seven unions was Mawu, and its political influence can be seen in the structural and political resolutions passed at the launching conference, especially in a resolution outlining proposals for a *'democratic, mass-based socialist political programme.'* Numsa is now the second largest union in Cosatu, and therefore will have an important influence on the way forward for Cosatu over the next period.

The last year has also seen Cosatu strengthened in relation to the alternative independent federation,Cusa/Azactu. While some of the unions in Cusa/Azactu stress a strong shop floor base like the Cosatu unions, the rather more conservative approach of the Cusa affiliates — they looked to a joint approach with the bosses to the state after the crackdown last June — have made the federation less attractive to workers than Cosatu.

'Anti-apartheid bosses are not our friends'

The decline of Cusa/Azactu increasingly means that the key debates over the future of the working class movement will be fought inside Cosatu rather than between it and its nearest rival. Another sign of the strengthening of Cosatu within the working class was the dissolution of Tucsa, the old 'multi-racial' white dominated federation, as more workers and smaller unions have joined Cosatu and its affiliates

A more serious threat to the Cosatu unions is the United Workers Union of South Africa, UWUSA launched in May 1986 as a rival to Cosatu and to develop a workplace base for Chief Buthelezi's Zulu based and pro-imperialist movement,Inkatha.

In their early years in Natal province, the stronghold of Buthelezi, the Fosatu unions had been careful to adopt a neutral stance towards Inkatha. Many Inkatha supporters joined the emergent unions. But by mid 1985 some shop stewards, especially those of the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union in Natal were openly critical of Inkatha. At Cosatu's formation, the leadership of the new federation launched an attack on Buthelezi's collaboration. The uneasy truce in Natal's factories could not survive. In the first year of its existence, UWUSA quite clearly demonstrated that it is a scab outfit.

It launched physical attacks on Cosatu in Natal and is accused of being involved in the murder of strike leaders of the long running BTR Sarmcol strike. It has proceeded to 'organise' the 800 scabs there and received management recognition. It also attempted to sabotage the OK Bazaars boycott. A resolute struggle against UWUSA must be waged by Cosatu over the next period.

One of the issues to the fore in the Cosatu congress and in the union conferences leading up to it has been the question of the unions' attitude to the programme of the ANC, the *Freedom Charter*, and flowing from it the question of what 'alliances' Cosatu is willing to be part of in the struggle against the apartheid regime.

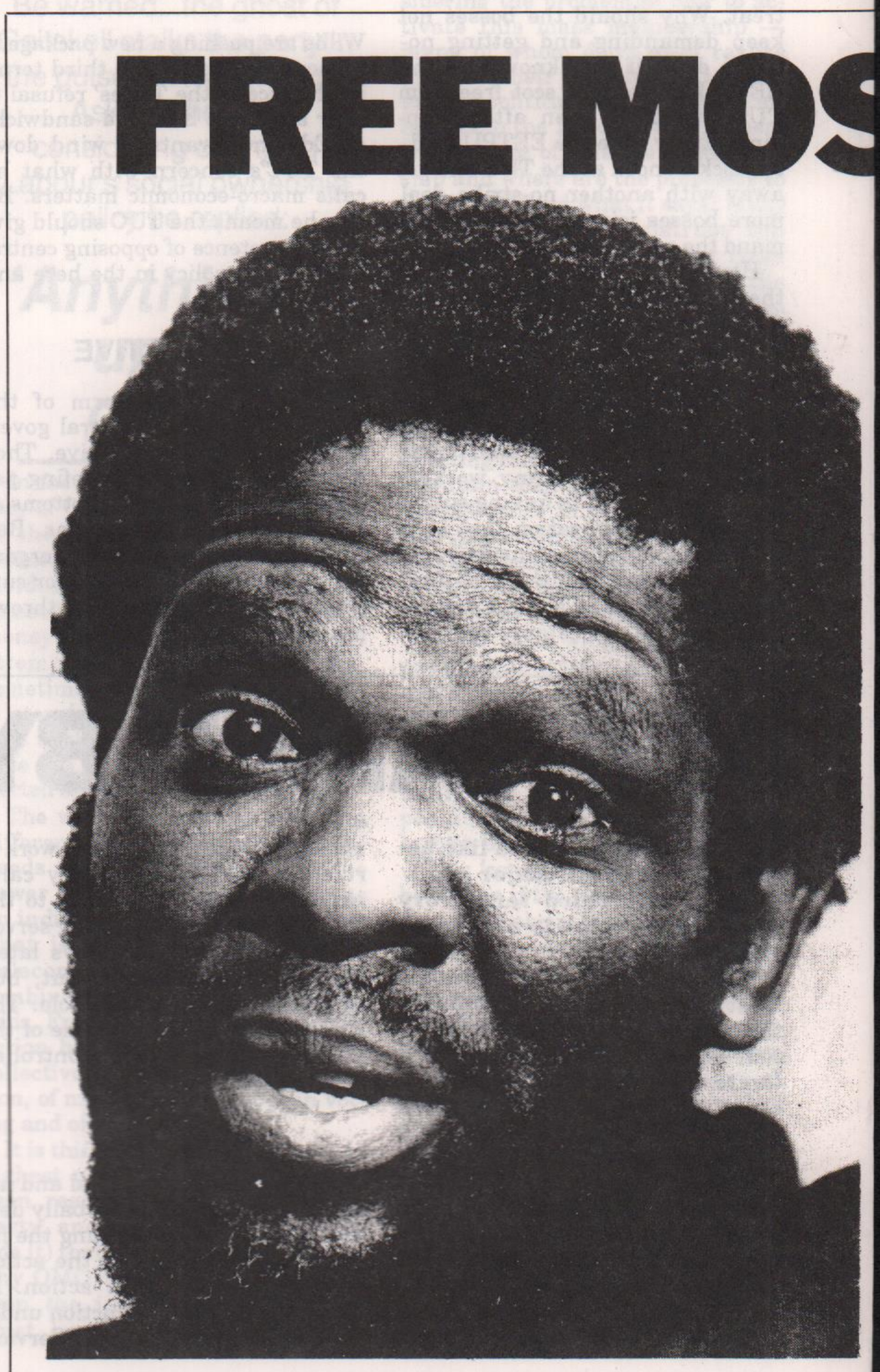
When Cosatu was formed in December 1985, it brought together two kinds of unions with rather differing perspectives. Those from the earlier federation Fosatu and politically similiar unions such as the NUM were industrially based and stressed shop floor organisation with strong shop steward structures while others, such as the

'WORKERISTS'

South African Allied Workers Union, were more openly political and community based. In the debates of the period the Fosatu unions were dubbed 'workerists', because of their insistence that the unions concentrate on workers' specific interests. There was a positive and a negative side to this. On the one hand, the stress on the independence of the working class and on 'worker control' within the unions meant firstly that the unions grew with a strong and resilient base in a climate of repression — a principle carried into Cosatu and illustrated by the survival of the union movement after the arrest of key leaders last year. Secondly, this principle reflected feelings that the workers should not be used as a 'stage army' by the middle class leaders of the nationalist movement in the ANC or its co-thinkers in South Africa such as the UDF. The most left versions of the 'workerists' argument stressed too, that workers' interests meant fighting for more than political reforms, because the working class needed thoroughgoing economic change. But at its worst 'workerism' meant a concentration on 'pure trade unionism' and a refusal to be drawn into the political struggle.

The 'populists', who had more support in the general unions, accused the 'workerists' of precisely shying away from the political struggle for national liberation and democratic rights. But the politics put on offer by the 'populists' were those of the Congress tradition (a





ED!



tradition enshrined in the *Freedom Charter*). They were the politics of the ANC. The ANC advocates a popular front alliance between the workers and 'other classes' including the 'progressive bourgeoisie'. Its programme means putting 'socialism' and workers' control on a back burner to ensure such an alliance could be struck.

While the 'populists' were less successful on the shop floor, their political influence nevertheless grew reflecting the black political resurgence from 1984, the strength of the 'Congressite' tradition, and the prestige of the ANC. To the extent that the 'workerists' had drawn back from entering the political fray, so they left a vacuum for the pro-Congress militants.

There is no doubt that the pro-ANC position has been gaining ground within Cosatu. The newly formed Numsa stands on the left in this debate, but it too has adopted the *Freedom Charter* (once referred to by the imprisoned Numsa leader Moses Mayekiso as a 'capitalist charter') albeit with reservations. Numsa declares the *Freedom Charter* a set of 'minimum demands' that 'could only be fully realised in a socialist system'. It goes on to call for the development of a 'workers' political programme'. In an oblique criticism of the existing UDF/ANC strategies it declares:

'the lack of initiative and the confusion which exists within the community itself on political issues arises from the lack of a working class programme'.

And on the question of alliances Numsa's political policy resolution specifically points to students, women and the unemployed as the natural allies of the working class, who need to be drawn into formulating a workers' programme for democratic socialism.

In contrast the NUM has unreservedly adopted the *Freedom Charter* declaring at its last conference that although the charter does not 'lay down a socialist programme, at the same time it is not pro-capitalist'. Cyril Ramaphosa, General Secretary of the NUM, criticised, in a recent interview, those trade unions calling for a workers' charter saying that it was the wrong time to start canvassing for 'this kind of socialism', while accepting that 'ultimately there has to be a system where there would be no exploitation by anybody — a socialist system'. Here we have the classic ANC line — the workers must wait for the right time to put forward socialist demands and of course now is not the time since such demands will only alienate 'progressive forces' which can be won to the struggle for democracy.

The debate is an important one particularly at a time when the exiled ANC leadership is once again meeting 'progressive' businessmen in Senegal and reassuring them there is indeed a place for them after the apartheid system has been dismantled. The adoption of the *Freedom Charter* by Cosatu will undoubtedly tie the trade union federation closer to the popular front perspective of the ANC/UDF.

Against this the militants in Numsa and other unions must press forward with the development of a 'workers' political programme' and must fight to develop a mass workers' party to struggle for its achievement.

PROGRAMME

An effective workers' programme should link the workers' everyday struggles with the goal of socialism, leaving no room for betrayal by the advocates of compromise with the class enemy. However the most militant and disciplined trade union, even one armed with a socialist programme, cannot do the job of a workers' revolutionary party which can win the vanguard of the workers in factories and communities to the perspective of seizing power from the capitalist class.

To say such things openly is of course treasonable in South Africa. The debate around these questions inevitably has to be conducted in disguised forms. But if these arguments are not advanced, the road to building a real working class leadership in the struggle against apartheid and capitalism will be longer and more fraught with difficulties and dangers.■

SES MAYEKISO!

MOSES MAYEKISO is rotting in an apartheid jail in Johannesburg. He has been behind bars for over a year now. His crime? He is a black militant, a class fighter and the General Secretary of the recently unified metalworkers union, Numsa. He represents what the white racist rulers of South Africa fear most — the power of the black proletariat.

Thousands of black workers have been detained under the Emergency regulations imposed in June 1986. Hundreds still languish in prison. But only a handful stand charged with offences as serious as those levelled by Botha's racist state against Moses and his comrades in the Alexandra Township Action Committee. In addition to charges of sedition and subversion, Moses and twelve others face the death sentence if convicted of the most serious charge of treason. Moses is on trial for his life.

Moses and four of his comrades could be brought to court in August. They are charged with being leading members of the Alexandra Action Committee. The indictment accuses them of trying:

'unlawfully and with hostile intent to coerce, overthrow, usurp and endanger the authority of the state.'

The charge sheet arraigns Moses for holding to the view that the working class:

'as the vanguard for liberation, should be in the centre of and in control of the struggle . . .'

In addition, that the workers should be:

'united against the capitalist system and the state . . . [and] *seize control of the means of production and of the residential areas.'*

Behind these charges — a brazen attempt to browbeat the working class — lies the racist state's fear of the Alexandra Action Committee. The Committee was accused by the authorities of being the force behind the pinning down of the security forces in Alexandra for several days in February last year. In fact it was the spontaneous and outraged anger of 60,000 local people that dealt this body blow to the security forces but it was used as a pretext to attack the committee and Moses was subsequently imprisoned.

In prison Moses has suffered hardship and torture. He has been kept in solitary, denied access to the outside — even books — and subjected to various forms of sensory deprivation. But Moses is tough. Before prison he survived the miserable conditions of everyday life that apartheid inflicts on the black masses — living with his wife and seven children in a single, tiny room, sharing toilet facilities with six other families. He fought back against these real crimes of apartheid and apartheid has charged him with trumped up 'crimes'.

There is a real danger that Moses, as a militant union leader, will find few friends amongst the liberal white establishment — elements who have in the past voiced support for the release of ANC leader Nelson Mandela.

Moses' critical support for the Freedom Charter and his past insistence on the need for a socialist programme and a workers' party which goes beyond the goals of the Charter and the ANC, means that there may be many who will give the campaign to release Moses and his comrades only lukewarm support.

Moses nevertheless enjoys the support of his own members in NUMSA. They have even courted dismissal threats for several token work stoppages which have raised publicity for Moses' plight. Workers and trade unionists in Britain cannot stand idly by while Thatcher's racist friend proceeds with its murderous plans. Physical torture against the detainees is very common, psychological torture is universal. Moses — as one of the best known opponents of apartheid and capitalism — must not be left to suffer.

Trade unionists in the car and engineering industries in Britain, industries in which NUMSA organises in South Africa, should take the lead. Send messages of support to NUMSA, invite representatives of NUMSA to speak to union branches. Now is the time to act!■

- **Free Moses Mayekiso!**
- **Free all detainees!**

by Keith Hassell

Sponsor the
Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign
Write to:
Terry Bell
Friends of Moses Mayekiso
Acorn House
314-320 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1 8DP

BUILD FOR WORKERS' SANCTIONS

THE CAMPAIGN for Trade Union Sanctions against Apartheid (CTUSAA) was launched in 1986 when a dozen trade union branches came together, prompted by a call from Birmingham Trades Council to lobby the July meeting of the TUC.

It was organised in response to the call made in June 1986 by James Motlatsi, President of the South African NUM, for the trade unions in Britain to impose sanctions against Apartheid.

A conference was held in December 1986. 73 delegates attended and 45 trade unions were represented. Seven trades councils and seven local anti-apartheid groups also sent delegates.

The conference overwhelming affirmed that trade union sanctions are the most effective form of solidarity action against the apartheid regime, and it recognised that there was a clear need for an independent campaign for trade union sanctions because of the low priority given to trade union sanctions by the AAM, and the fine-words-but-do-nothing record of the TUC.

CONFIDENCE

Speakers from the CTUSAA Steering Committee have addressed a number of trade unions and labour movement meetings up and down the country. Bringing news of action taken by other workers (recently by CPSA workers, Ford Dagenham workers, Leicester hospital workers, ACTT Grampian TV workers and LSE students) has been important in kindling the confidence of workers that they can take action.

Following a public meeting organised by Ipswich Trades Council and addressed by a CTUSAA speaker, USDAW members working for the Co-op resolved to raise the issue of the continued stocking of South African goods by the Co-op. CTUSAA organised meetings and campaigns have had similar positive results in Oxford and Lambeth.

The opening of a third term for Thatcher makes all the more urgent the need for a vigorous campaign in the trade union movement for workers' sanctions. The consistent vetos in both the EEC and UN by Britain against any effective sanctions show that we can place no reliance on the government to deliver solidarity to South African workers for us.

Nor can we rest content with the position of the TUC. At the TUC Congress last September a composite resolution was passed which called upon affiliated unions to:

'. . . investigate in detail within its sphere of influence evidence of employers cooperating with the apartheid regime in commercial relationships, research and training with a view to taking action in every practical way to secure the disruption and cessation of those relationships.'

Yet Norman Willis, in his speech to the National Convention for Sanctions organised by the AAM on 27 June, focused all his attention on putting pressure on the:

'British Government, on MPs, on business leaders and on decision makers generally to support the application of effective economic sanctions against apartheid.'

Not one word was uttered as to how the TUC intended to go out and campaign actively for workers' sanctions and the implementation of TUC policy. The nearest he got to mentioning trade union boycott action was to say:

'Any trade union which undertakes effective and deliverable *action to harm or disrupt trade with South Africa will have the support of the TUC'* [our emphasis].

In other words, the action must be successful before the TUC will raise its head above the parapet and support it!

In a recent interview Cosatu Education Secretary Alec Erwin confirmed that sanctions remain a weapon against apartheid. His remarks underlined the futility of relying on company disinvestment. He said it was:

'. . . not effective pressure. Their investments are either being held in trust by local managers or being sold to the Anglo-American Corporation'. (*New Nation* 9 July)

DESPERATE

To those who argue that sanctions cause unemployment he retorted:

'Apartheid capitalism is responsible for millions being unemployed . . . The longer this continues, the more desperate the situation becomes.'

The bombing of Cosatu House, the continued clamp down on all resistance, the continuing round-up of shop stewards and the detention of leading trade unionists such as Moses Mayekiso all indicate the need for international workers' sanctions.

CTUSAA is holding its second conference on Saturday 26 September in Birmingham. The task of the conference will be to assess the effectiveness of the work done and lay plans for how we can draw in wider forces not yet involved in the Campaign.

CTUSAA urges all those committed to fighting for workers' sanctions to get delegated to the conference as one step towards assisting our South African brothers and sisters and bring closer the ending of the racist apartheid regime in South Africa.■

by Ann Wackett
Member of CTUSSA Steering Committee
(in a personal capacity)

Conference

11 am Sat 26 September
Carrs Lane Church Centre
Carrs Lane
Birmingham
Delegates: £3
Observers: £1.50

Subscribe to CTUSSA Newsletter (six issues a year) £1.50
Ten copies of each issue: £6

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US DIRTY TRICKS

KOREA

THE MASSIVE wave of student revolt in South Korea, and the growing popular backing for the students, has badly shaken the regime of Chun Doo Hwan. But the radical wing of the student movement has yet to win any lasting gains from their mobilisations.

Chun Doo Hwan's military dictatorship has held on to power for seven years. It was set on ensuring that his chosen successor — Roh Tae Woo — took his presidential post through indirect elections.

Mounting opposition to this expressed by the Reunification Democratic Party (RDP) leaders — Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam — as well as the student actions caused alarm in Washington. Since its inception after the second imperialist World War South Korea has been a vital front line state for US imperialism. It was the recipient of massive US aid to bolster it against North Korea. It was used as the launching pad for the US war against North Korea and China in 1950. It is today peppered with US military and air bases, all directed at North Korea and the Soviet far east.

As Chun Doo Hwan held firm on his dictatorial course the US leaders increasingly feared he was precipitating his own overthrow at the hands of some form of radical mass movement. Hence there was mounting behind-the-scenes pressure on the regime to allow sufficient reform as to prevent a radical destabilisation of South Korea. Last February Assistant Secretary of State, Gaston Sigur, was urging Chun to move towards a 'more open system'.

As the student revolts accelerated so US pressure on the South Korean regime became increasingly insistent. Sigur was sent back to Seoul. Reagan sent a personal letter to Chun urging him to treat the demonstrators more delicately and to enter into negotiations with the opposition over constitutional arrangements.

As the South Korean middle class took to the streets it was apparent that the social base of the Chun regime was disintegrating. The problem for the US was, and is, how to replace a discredited regime which has served imperialism well in the past with one that can maintain the interests of US imperialism and South Korean capitalism, enjoy greater stability, while at the same time demobilising popular struggles and demands. As Schultz himself put it discussing South Korea:

'This problem of managing transitions . . . from one kind of government to a more democratic government is extremely tricky.'

What haunts the White House is the memory of the trusted Shah of Iran being overthrown by the Iranian masses and the trusted Somoza chased out of Nicaragua by the Sandinistas. Schultz wants reforms that will keep the masses off the streets, not embolden them. He would like to ease out the discredited rulers while maintaining capitalism. The defusing of the Philippines crisis through the use of the pro-US reformer, Aquino, is his favoured model. The problem for him is that the White House has no Aquino-type popular alternative for South Korea. The RDP leadership is split between the reputedly more liberal and doubtless more popular Kim Dae Jung and the more conservative Kim Young Sam. Both are thoroughly capitalist politicians and loyal to the US. However, the powerful South Korean military are intransigently opposed to Kim Dae Jung and his Tongyodong faction and the US would not wish a major conflict with such a crucial ally as the military. Kim Young Sam on the other hand lacks the credentials to prove a popular demobilising leader.

In this predicament the US has tried to keep the initiative for change coming from within the regime itself. In turn the South Korean military establishment was having its mind concentrated by the escalating popular mobilisations. To the evident pleasure of the White House Chun himself, as well as heir apparent Roh Tae Woo, announced their conversion to the principal demands of the democratic oppositions. On 1 July they announced that there will be direct elections to the presidency when Chun steps down next February. Press censorship is to be lifted and an amnesty for political opponents has been announced.

With this timely conversion Roh, the South Korean military and the White House hope to ride the storm of student protest and prevent it growing into an uncontrollable mass movement comprising far more than the students and discontented middle classes. They hope to win back the middle class base that seemed to be moving away from them. For the more radical elements of the student revolt it should mark an important political turning point, a break with the limited anti-Chun politics of the opposition, and a turn to the working class.

Establishment politicians and the opposition alike have accepted the reforms as a sufficient answer to the student campaign. Both Roh Tae Woo and Kim Dae Jung have signalled that their sights are now set on next February's presidential elections. Yet there are signs that there is a wing of the mass movement that is not satisfied with Chun's sops. Demands have been raised to free all political prisoners including those guilty of 'communist subversion'. So too has the call been raised to reinstate the untold number of 'dissidents' who have lost their jobs in the government and private sector as well as an end to all restrictions on labour unions.

Such demands must become the focus of an organised drive to mobilise the South Korean working class as a force independent of the middle class campaign of Kim Dae Jung. One million South Koreans are unemployed. Officially designated 'low income' workers make up 80% of the workforce. That is the force that must be organised to change the face of South Korean politics, not the Tongyodong faction of Kim Dae Jung. The answer is not a Korean Aquino and 'people power', but a workers' revolution to overthrow the dictatorship and establish workers' power.■



Dictatorship still intact despite 'reforms'

HANDS OFF IRAN!

THE DIPLOMATIC row between France and Iran is an indication of the deep distrust the major imperialist powers still feel towards the Islamic Republic. Moreover, the Franco-Iranian row has erupted in the context of increased US military presence in the gulf and the reduction of British diplomatic representation in Iran to one person. the principal imperialist naval powers are clearly ganging up on Iran.

French imperialism — like US imperialism as Irangate has revealed — has had a project of mending its bridges with the mullahs. It sold arms to the Islamic regime, expelled Khomeni's political enemies from France and repaid money to Iran dating from deals done under the Shah's regime.

Like US imperialism its aims are twofold — To get Iranian co-operation in combatting terrorism and to create the conditions for pressurising Iran into ceasefire talks with Iraq. It is clear that the Western imperialism also wished to stimulate the growth and dominance of a pro-imperialist wing of the ruling party. Above all, imperialism wants to see the war with Iraq ended and stability brought to the Gulf. Even deals with Khomeini were worth it to achieve that end.

But the problem for imperialism is that the Iranian rulers desperately need the war with Iraq as a means of sustaining themselves. That is also why they will ignore the forthcoming UN Security Council resolution attempting to impose a ceasefire with the help of an arms embargo. They do not have an interest in ending the war at all, despite the economic strain it involves. Thus the bridge-building between Iran and imperialism was necessarily short-lived. Iran's intransigent commitment both to the war and to maintaining its influence in Lebanon via kidnappings and bombings, frustrated the imperialist powers and were the underlying causes for the diplomatic rows.

The US, meanwhile, is trying to take advantage of the Gulf crisis by promising to 'reflag' Kuwaiti tankers that have been Iran's primary targets. This means that if Iran attacks a 'reflagged' ship it is attacking the USA itself and the Pentagon will unleash an attack on Iran. This apparent volte-face by Reagan is justified by laughable references to the Soviet threat. Weinberger said that without 'reflagging' the Gulf would be turned into a 'Soviet lake'. The real motive is that bombarding Iranian ports and oil installations or bombing Tehran would be a marvellous diversion from the internal problems of Irangate affair faced by the presidency. Imperialism is never more vicious than when it feels itself humiliated. United States' chauvinism has been nursing its bruises since the Carter regime's debacles over the hostages. A blow at Iran would be the equivalent of the Falklands War for Thatcher — a massive rescue bid to save the lame duck President.

Should the conflict escalate with US, British and French warships all moving into the Gulf and attacking Iran, workers in each of these countries must immediately raise the call — Hands Off Iran! Imperialism is set on taming a semi-colonial regime that will not automatically do its bidding. Workers have no interest in helping their bosses achieve this. They have every interest in helping Iran defeat such plans. Though Khomeini is indeed a bloody tyrant to the Iranian workers, Reagan, Thatcher or Chirac have no intention or capability to liberate them. A thorough and humiliating defeat for the British, US and French warmongers would on the other hand weaken Imperialism worldwide, and hasten the fall of these vicious anti-working class rulers at home. We must pledge unconditional defence of Iran against any imperialist attack and seek by class means to obstruct it and bring it to an unsuccessful conclusion.■

BRAZIL

'SARNEY OUT!'

WIDESPREAD AND at times violent demonstration have recently shaken President Sarney's already weak regime in Brazil. Sparked off by bus fare increases of 50%, demonstrators in Rio de Janeiro at the end of June confronted police in riot gear using tear gas and stun grenades.

Battles raged in the city for hours during which 200 buses were wrecked and more than 20 burnt out. Scores of people were arrested and many injured. Clearly blaming the government for the fare increases as well as other attacks on workers' living standards, the demonstrators chanted 'Sarney Out' and 'Death to Sarney'.

Panicking in the face of such a determined and spreading challenge the government quickly rescinded the fare increase.

Such opposition to Sarney's government is not unusual — vigorous opposition to Sarney had been growing apace for months. Only a few days before the uprising in Rio Sarney and a group of his advisors had been attacked while on a tour. Stones and bricks were hurled at the presidential bus with at least one member of the President's family suffering injuries as a result.

Sarney is about as unpopular now as the military generals were when he replaced them two years ago. In fact so great is his unpopularity he is increasingly having to rely on the military for support. Some bourgeois commentators think this is ironic; Marxists know otherwise.

Underlying the growing dissatisfaction with Sarney are the repeated attacks on workers' living standards carried out in the name of 'austerity'. Roughly translated 'austerity' means 'making the workers pay for the crisis'.

And crisis there certainly is. Inflation is rising with the annual rate already topping 1000%! The foreign debt, the largest in the world, currently stands at US $113 billion. Unable to meet the interest charges let alone repay the loans, the government has suspended all payments. Now the interest backlog totals $4.3 billion and the government says it can only pay half the interest due next year.

Faced with economic problems of such magnitude, Sarney has taken the path of any 'respectable' bourgeois government. To pacify the multinational companies and international bankers, the government has launched a vicious attack on the living standards of the working class and poor. As the *Financial Times* has noted:

'Brazil's programme . . . is as close to an austere IMF package as can reasonably be expected' (15 June 1987)

Wages have been frozen in an attempt to reduce real wage levels. Under a programme drawn up by the finance minister, Bresser Pereira, public expenditure has been cut. Public works programmes worth $35 billion have been shelved. Subsidies on wheat, milk and fuel have been scrapped, and the price of steel, telephones and electricity increased by 30%.

Ending the food subsidies alone is a vicious and, literally, deadly attack on the working class and poor. Already millions live in crushing poverty. Even those 'lucky' enough to be paid the legal minimum wage of $44.50 per month (one of the lowest in the world) have a daily struggle to keep themselves from starving to death. Food subsidies have been vital in keeping millions of poverty stricken Brazilians alive.

Sarney has decided that paying the banks is more important than the lives of Brazilian workers. Now he is facing their anger.

Luis Inacio de Silva's Workers' Party (PT), which stands much to the left of the governing PMDB and has the support of many of the most militant workers, has recently taken to the streets leading large demonstrations. A rally called by PT to demand immediate presidential elections brought thousands onto the streets of Sao Paulo at the beginning of July.

Speakers at the rally made plain the workers' anger with the government and its austerity measures and promised to continue fighting the government.

Clearly, Brazilian workers are willing to fight. As the economic crisis deepens more will have to fight. What is needed is a fight to the finish — a fight for socialism. For this a revolutionary party is desperately needed. As part of the process of constructing one, a key task for revolutionaries in Brazil is the fight inside the PT for revolutionary policies and leadership.■

by Steve Foster



Rick Matthews (IFL)

SLUMS FOR THE POOR

RECENTLY A one car garage changed hands for slightly less than £100,000. It was in Kensington. In London Docklands the property boom has meant that speculative buyers who bought riverside flats for £50,000 three years ago are now selling for £140,000.

Meanwhile in other parts of Britain former council tenants who bought their council houses whilst they had a job now find that if they lose that job they can't find a buyer for their house at a price that will allow them to move in search of work. More and more workers who are fortunate enough to find new jobs in new areas are forced to travel hundreds of miles to and from work simply because they can't afford the prices demanded for housing in the new areas.

Capital expenditure by local authorities on housing has been cut by 30% since 1980-81 and there are now 94,000 homeless as against 'only' 57,000 in 1979.

In June of this year the housing pressure group Shelter claimed that 1.35 million households were waiting for a council home in England alone. But only 16,137 council homes were built last year. Yet several housing groups estimate there is a need for 250,000 new houses per year. In addition 83% of dwellings need an average of £5,000 spending on them to bring them up to scratch.

CAPITALIST

At present the capitalist construction industry, including the building materials suppliers and the property development industry is convinced that the fattest profits are to be made by building homes for sale or, if necessary for Housing Association rental. They have plenty of influence with the present government and are hefty contributors to Tory Party funds.

This branch of capitalist production is looking to experiment with new types of profitable activity. The recreation of the private rental sector is seen as promising. An Institute of Housing (IoH) working party report noted that in schemes that employ a high percentage of private money, rents are up to 40% higher than currently prevail in the traditional public sector. A director in the very same IoH, Peter McGurk, speculated that a hundred billion pounds would be available from City of London brokers for privatised housing developments. The Tories have cottoned onto the beneficial effects for them that creating a vicious circle in the public housing sector can have. Increasingly the only local authority housing that is countenanced is for 'special needs',such as for handicapped or older people.

CONDEMNED

The great mass of local authority tenants are condemned to inhabit substandard accommodation because their local council does not have the resources to effect repairs to an adequate standard or to build new housing. The increasing dereliction of many council estates has given a spur to council house sales. Buying your own house may be an immediate solution for individuals with some savings, but it is no solution for those whose income precludes obtaining a mortgage, those who must be mobile to find work, those who lose their job and can't maintain the mortgage payments and for those who for whatever reason can't see to the upkeep of the property. But the disillusionment with public housing opens the way for a series of illusory 'ways out' for working class people that lead in the end to the private profit of big capital.

Given the chance, owner occupation appears at the moment to be very attractive to lots of households, being associated with 'better areas', income tax relief, the freedom to choose interior and exterior decoration and improvement, and lastly, the possibility of selling again at some kind of profit all the time that home prices keep rising. But those who choose this tenure become vulnerable to the vagaries of the interest rates dictated by the money markets. Elderly people occupying older housing stock increasingly rely upon friends and relations for the maintenance of accommodation in this sector. But only the top layers of the working class can permanently rely on home-ownership. Millions will still have to rent and here the profit sharks are already circling hungrily around the public housing stock.

It appeared that private landlords were totally discredited by the activities of Rachmann and his thugs in the early 1960's. In any case private capital, big or small, was unable to provide housing for rent at a reliable profit without massive subsidies from the state. Nevertheless' the Tories want to rehabilitate the private landlords. This time however the landlords will take the form of 'Housing Action Trusts' (HATS).

MONOPOLIES

They will be collective capitalists rather than individual exploiters. They will have virtual monopolies within the local area and the state will assist them in the extraction of rents from receivers of state benefits. Council tenants are to be lured into the web of this new type of exploitation in preference to their current plight.

The housing association experience has proved invaluable to the Tories in drawing up their detailed proposals for what will be a state subsidised, but privately profited from and administered, social housing. It removes the state from any apparent involvement in adjusting rents relative to wages and unemployment benefit levels. That is, it suppresses any remaining factor of need and ability to pay replacing it with the brazen rule of private profit. The landlords will be back with a vengeance but this time with the state fully integrated in enforcing their exactions.

Whilst the Tories plan to have 80% of households in the owner-occupier category by the end of the century, for those who can't get a mortgage or can't keep up with their mortgage payments there will be created new 'dustbin' categories.

POWERS

The Local Government Bill gives central government sweeping powers to follow through the cuts with a massive de-municipalisation of local authority estates. The enormous reduction of public housing stock will result, according to the Tories' plans, in marginalising this sort of tenure thus 'freeing the market' and obliterating the concept of a 'fair rent'. In addition there will be a political bonus, the Tories hope. When tenants can no longer even dream of protecting themselves or improving their conditions by voting in a Labour council then these 'bastions of the Labour vote' will fall to the inroads of the open and naked capitalist parties.

Faced with such appalling housing problems, the working class traditionally looked to the Labour Party for an answer. After all, wasn't the great house building programme, pre-war and post-war, launched by Labour councils and a Labour government? Today however the party is in a complete mess on this question. Nowhere was this more clear than during the general election. Jeff Rooker, Labour's Housing spokesman, is in favour of ditching the green belt policy so that speculative housebuilders can obtain more land for building for sale. He thinks that this might produce a housing glut so that prices would come down. But all that is likely to happen is that the builders will make extra profits. He further confirmed at the 1986 Labour Party Conference the party had no plans for the construction industry before the general election.

Those local authorities that have attempted to maintain their housebuilding programmes through all the cuts and rate-cappings were stabbed in the back by Rooker even before the election was announced. He said that a Labour government would not not bail them out of the debt crises inflicted upon them by the Tory government. Despite this, it was quite noticeable that where local labour councils did maintain their building programme to some extent, as happened in Liverpool, the Labour vote actually went up. Other local authorities who may have some resources to build for their communities have no suitable powers of land acquisition and this easily becomes an excuse for inaction.

DEBACLE

Labour has produced no new thinking since the debacle of the Community Land Act in the mid-1970s. Nationalisation of building land is a demand that must again be explained and popularised. The control exercised by banks and finance houses over both local authority finances and over development potential leads inexorably to the conclusion that the labour movement must explain and fight for their nationalisation without compensation and the institution of workers' control over them.

The scale of the attacks being launched and planned is such that a whole new approach to the housing question must be fought for in the labour movement. It must be a solution that meets all the crying needs of working class families today but shows that the only way to do this and avoid the disastrous after effects of past building programmes is to do it with the mass involvement of working people and at the expense of the millionaire property and building magnates, the landlords and the financiers. Today's rotten housing conditions, waiting lists and the mounting numbers of the homeless requires nothing less than a massive programme of public works centring on housing — new building and repair and the provision of the necessary associated facilities to make this system vastly superior to the isolated, atomised home-ownership schemes of the Tories. Each estate or housing block should have its nurseries, its health centre, its youth club, its shopping, launderette and restaurant services. It should have sports and other recreational facilities. Such a plan would take millions off the dole and provide permanent jobs — real jobs meeting real needs.

TRAINING

It would open up the need for massive training schemes to create the skilled labour needed to carry it out. It would present the real opportunity to overcome the racist and sexist bias embedded in present patterns of recruitment and training. But this massive programme should not be carried out in the bureaucratic authoritarian way that Labour and Tory governments carried out the expansions of the 1950s and 1960s. The plans for it should be democratically formulated by tenants and residents of the areas and communities and their implementation should be under permanent workers' and tenants' control. All labour must be unionised labour and the workers involved allied unbreakably with the tenants.

Nor can this programme be tied to the private profit of the Wimpeys and McAlpines. We must fight for the nationalisation of the building industry and its subsidiaries under the control of its workers and with no compensation to the parasites who have preyed so long off basic human needs.

Existing and future council estates need to be put into the collective control and management of their tenants. All the petty restrictions must be removed on people making what changes they want to their dwellings either individually or collectively.

FRAUDULENT

To combat the media's paeans of praise to capitalism and its ability to give everyone a home to own — the 'home-owning democracy' — we need to do more than simply expose its fraudulent claims. We need to show that there is a socialist solution to the housing question. Capitalism's bankruptcy is manifest.Such a solution must be part of the organised working class' struggle for power, for the creation of a planned economy where not only landlords are a forgotten nightmare of the past but where rents and therefore 'tenants' will also disappear and where everyone will have a high quality and entirely secure dwelling for as long as they and their children need it. Of course this struggle starts in the here and now with opposition to the Tories' assaults on council tenants.

Defence of local authority housing needs to be linked with a defence of other aspects of local democracy in reforging public sector alliances based on the direct action of trade unions, tenants organisations and Labour-controlled local councils.■

by Frank Owen

workers power

AFTER TAYLOR'S SELL OUT . . .

FIGHT ON !

THE YORKSHIRE NUM area executive has dealt a savage blow to every miner. At a time when British Coal was facing the most resolute resistance to its jackboot tactics since the 1984/5 strike, Jack Taylor has bailed them out. He has proved himself every bit as much a collaborator with the Board, as the South Wales leadership.

The Frickley miners have seen Taylor for what he is. There was a mass meeting there on the Sunday after the Executive's decision. Taylor, Sammy Thompson (remember him being billed as a militant in the recent elections?) Frank Cave and Ken Homer, all from the executive, pleaded to the meeting of 900 men to stop the strike. These traitors were booed and barracked by the meeting which voted 10 — 1 to continue the strike and to spread it throughout Yorkshire with flying-pickets. Other areas are to be visited. They too must be brought out.

The strike at Frickley has within it the potential to unify the miners in a militant fight back. It is the first test of strength with management in the dispute over the slave's charter disciplinary code that British Coal wants to impose. Acting decisively when British Coal sacked five miners for breach of the code, the Frickley miners were able to fire the anger of the entire South Yorkshire coalfield bringing 14 pits out in instant solidarity.

What was at stake was not simply a Frickley or South Yorkshire issue. The real issue is the urgent need for an offensive against British Coal's code and with it, its plans for six day working and further closures. Frickley is the potential start of that offensive. In North Yorkshire the code has been used to discipline the Stillingfleet branch secretary for urging his members to abide by union policy by cutting no coal in overtime. In the North East, branch officials have been warned after issuing leaflets against flexible working. In South Wales, 3,500 miners, over a third of the workforce, have received final warnings after striking against cuts in the quality of concessionary coal for old age pensioners.

Spreading out from South Yorkshire, reaching out to all the areas, the strike still has the potential to heal the regional divisions that British Coal has encouraged and the NUM area barons have thrived on. It has the potential to weld the miners together again into a confident and national fighting force. That new confidence can strengthen the resolve of miners to take on the other attacks that British Coal are making. And, as the UDM have, typically, accepted the code, it would also be an invaluable weapon in the struggle to smash the scab outfit.

The disciplinary code is aimed at giving management complete authority in and out of the pit. British Coal made this all too clear in the threatening letter they sent the entire Frickley workforce, saying that they would no longer tolerate men coming out of the pit whenever there was something they did not like. British Coal are determined to use the code to break the militancy of the miners particularly at a pit level, where local strikes have continued regularly since 1985.

Hand in hand with the code goes the plan for flexible working. This is not simply a South Wales issue. In Durham British Coal has plans to introduce a nine hour shift at Monkwearmouth. Those who resist or refuse to co-operate will be threatened with the code.

The overwhelming majority of miners oppose flexible working, longer shifts and a longer working week. Now was the time to turn that opposition into action. That was the way to wipe the grin off Des Dutfield and Terry Thomas' compromising faces.

British Coal's plans for closures are far from over. An all-out offensive against the code could breathe new confidence into those facing the chop. Polmaise voted to accept closure after the Stalinist George Bolton told them he was not prepared to lead what he called a 'cavalry charge' on their behalf. A confident and active fight spreading out from Yorkshire can counter Bolton's do nothing treachery. It could give heart to the North Derbyshire miners where Renishaw Park, Ireland and Arkwright all face closure.

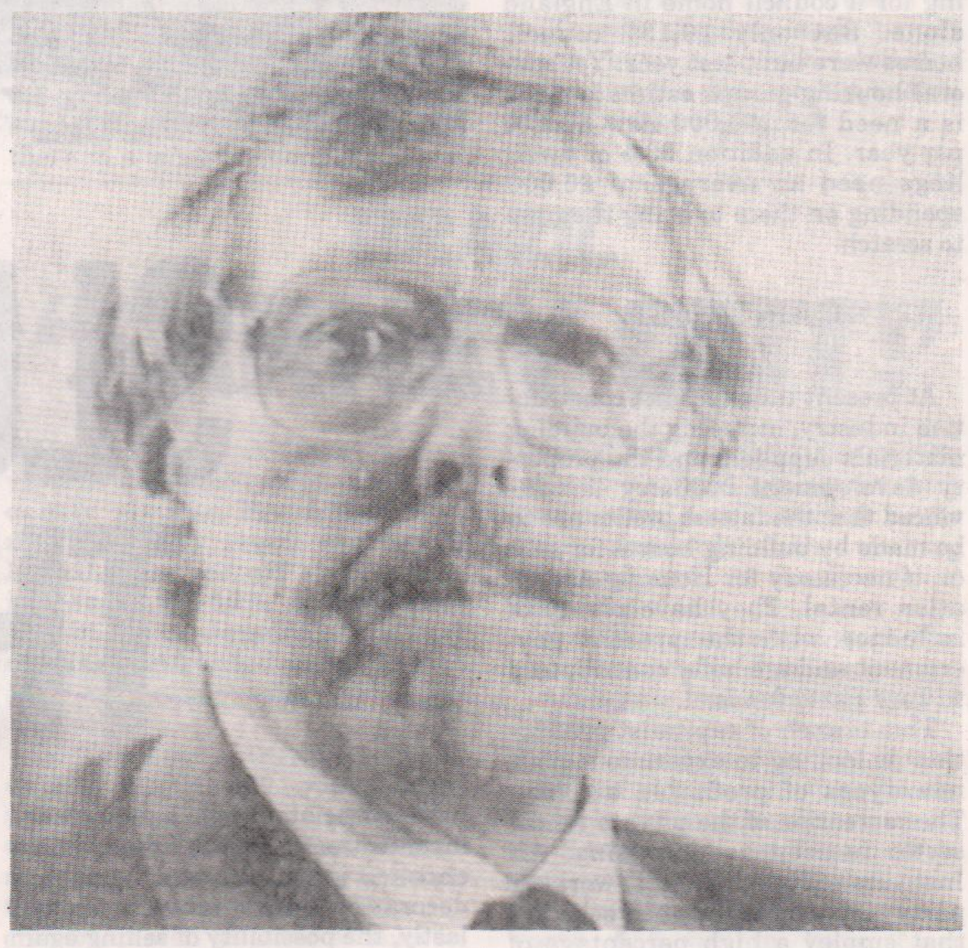
As the strike spread in South Yorkshire British Coal was all too aware that it threatened more than its code alone. It threatened all the plans which this draconian management are working to fulfill. That is why the action of the Yorkshire Area was so treacherous.

Jack Taylor couched his climbdown in the language of 'unity and discipline'. But this is 'unity' under the heel of British Coal and 'discipline' over those who want to resist. If the executive gets its way Yorkshire miners will have to wait for a ballot on action between now and 21 August. Not only would this mean treacherously taking the action off the boil now. It would also leave the Frickley men to the tender mercies of British Coal. And for what? For nothing more than the prospect of an overtime ban this autumn. *'We are not diluting. It was not a climbdown'* bleated Jack Taylor. Who are you trying to kid, traitor Taylor? The Frickley miners were not fooled by this guff. Neither should any other miner be. The lesson is clear. In every area of the NUM the rank and file need to organise themselves independently of the regional bureaucracies. And those officials who claim to stand for resistance must be put to the test of action by a cross coalfield rank and file movement. Regional loyalties must be replaced by loyalties to all who prove themselves to be class fighters against British Coal.

Frickley has shown what can be achieved by flying pickets and rank and file action. The Yorkshire Executive have shown that the leadership is willing to try and sabotage such actions. A rank and file movement can defeat such sabotage. It can organise to spread regional stoppages to the point where they can become real starting points for smashing British Coal's plans. The Frickley pickets must begin this process by organising direct links with the miners from other areas that they can bring out.

The Yorkshire coalfield has the potential to lead a national fightback against British Coal. It is still the largest, best organised and most confident. But its members dare not now sneer at the other area leaderships if they will not hold their own leaders to account. Defy the area executive, follow Frickley's example, spread the strike against the code, do not wait six weeks for a ballot for a pathetic overtime ban.

- **The code must be smashed!**
- **British Coal must be beaten!**
- **Defend Frickley NUM!**



Putting fighting unity in danger

AEU - FLEXIBLE BUREAUCRATS

While many of the top figures in the union bureaucracy are re-evaluating their relationship — or rather lack of it — with Thatcher, Jordan and Laird of the AEU are signalling their commitment to collaboration with the Tories. Following in Hammond's footsteps these right-wingers are setting the pace in the race towards business unionism.

General Secretary Gavin Laird has a good relationship with Margaret Thatcher and that is not simply because he happens to be a director of the Bank of England. Indeed it is rumoured that Jordan and Laird weren't invited onto Neil Kinnock's campaign committee because of their close links with the 'enemy'. In return the AEU leaders refused to lend their chauffeurs to leading Labour politicians during the campaign.

Jordan and Laird's hobnobbing with the Tories has been accompanied by a continuing class collaboration in industry. The union journal has been full of the 'need for union co-operation with industry' rubbish which was one of the main themes of Laird's address to the bosses at last years CBI Conference. In the 19 July 1987 journal, Brian Williams, chairman of the British Institute of Managers gets complimentary coverage. There is even an article on an AEU member who won a 'shop floor exporter of the year' award!

Jordan and Laird are prepared to go a long way to meet the bosses' needs in the highly mechanical, restructured industries of the future. The bosses will need highly skilled engineers and electricians to run the nuclear power stations, to operate computerised machinery and robots.

The AEU, along with the EETPU, are looking to create a common interest between the 'core' workers in their industries and the bosses, through sweetheart deals that will trade off vital working class interests for industrial harmony on the bosses' terms. Japanese-style business unionism is the in thing at the AEU. Another single union no-strike deal has been 'achieved' at Dunlop in the north east. As with Nissan, union membership will not be a condition of employment. But this is a problem for Jordan and Laird. The AEU has got de-unionisation difficulties at Nissan where only a quarter of the workforce have so far become members. And the bosses are quite prepared to take advantage of the AEU's dilemma. In order to get the flexible working practices they need to restructure engineering they are by-passing the AEU altogether. By doing this they are attempting to force Jordan and Laird to move even more rapidly towards explicitly adopting a new flexible working package.

Scottish Agricultural industries have introduced fully flexible multi-skilling working arrangements and withdrawn all rights to collective bargaining for its employees, by moving all 400 workers to staff status! Others, like Armstrong Engineering of Coventry, have got the unions and workforce to take on American-style share-ownership plans in which they have a capital stake in the company! It will not be long before the six-year pay agreement, no demarcation, 'worker responsibility for the machine' set-up — thought highly controversial even by AEU standards — at the Borg Warner plant in West Glamorgan becomes the norm!

The bosses' tactics are working. Jordan is arguing inside the AEU for a deal on flexible working. In his speech to this year's conference of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering (CSEU) Jordan attacked those delegates who were opposed to a deal with the Engineers Employers Federation (EEF) exchanging working practices for a shorter working week. He said:

'There is no Labour government lifeboat on its way. We are on our own in radical changing times. This agreement is of its time and will ensure that manufacturing industry shall have a place in Britain's future'

and

'. . . an agreement that promoted changes and competitiveness is the best defence we can put up against continued decline.'

The signs are that Jordan and Laird will carry the day in the CSEU. The negotiators led by these traitors are set to sign away decades of hard-won trade union rights in return for a 37.1/2 hour week even though the EEF have announced that another 77,000 jobs are to go!

Opposition from within the CSEU notably from Tass and from rank and file AEU militants, expressed at numerous well-attended lobbys of CSEU executive meetings have forced the negotiators to take a slightly firmer stand on recognition rights for smaller unions and the way the reduction in hours should be implemented. But these are only 'sideways' modifications and not a principled opposition to an unacceptable deal. The bosses knew that if any real opposition developed, their threats of closure — as happened at General Motors at Luton — would have the bureaucrats falling over each other to sabotage any action.

Rank and file opposition to the proposed flexible working package supported by Jordan and Laird is there — the Luton vote against action was extremely close, with a sizeable minority in favour of a fight. This opposition must be built upon. Those groupings of militants and stewards in every federated company who are opposed to any 'trade off', like Lucas Electrical Birmingham Senior Stewards Committee (Lucas are the largest federated company), must put the arguments and expose what lies behind a CSEU/EEF agreement on the shorter working week and flexible woking.

Motions calling for a termination of negotiations must flood the Executive Council. The Broad Left must be pressured into calling further mass lobbies and demonstrations opposing any deal. Common cause must be made with non-federated workers because big companies like Fords will move quickly when a decision is taken.

A rotten agreement will only be smashed by strike action. This must be argued for against all attacks on existing work practices, agreements, negotiating rights and jobs. Supportive action must be called for. A shorter working week without strings will only be wrenched from the bosses by militant class struggle. There is no other way!■

by an AEU member