

**BRENT MARXIST INDUSTRIAL GROUP**

**LEGISLATION and  
CLASS STRUGGLE**

**IMMIGRATION,  
RACE RELATIONS  
and RACIALISM**

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**COMMENT**

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**THE  
MARXIST**

## PROGRAMME

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The liberation of the proletariat is the task of the proletariat itself.
2. The proletariat cannot liberate itself without liberating all the classes which are oppressed by finance capital.
3. The liberation of the people can only be achieved by the people themselves.
4. We are opposed to the creation of elites who see themselves as liberators of the people. Such concepts arise from a lack of faith in the ability of people to liberate themselves.
5. The people can only liberate themselves under the leadership of the industrial working class and that class can only fulfil this role when its most politically advanced elements are brought together as a collective leadership which understands and applies the laws of historical development as discovered by Marx and Engels and further developed by Lenin, Stalin and Mao.

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## LEGISLATION and CLASS STRUGGLE

### BRENT MARXIST INDUSTRIAL GROUP

Anyone with a critical turn of mind will no doubt have pondered why the ruling class should, in recent years, have become concerned with what they call strengthening industrial democracy and collective bargaining.

After more than a century and a half of undisguised hostility to organised labour, we have witnessed what is apparently a conversion that outshines the one undergone by Paul on the road to Damascus.

We are virtually snowed under with acts of Parliament that purport to guarantee protection to workers against unfair dismissal, the right to belong to a trade union, payment for time lost on union duties, and 'independent' arbitration in case of disputes.

To crown it all, a discussion is now in progress concerning the way in which workers can be given a bigger say in the running of the enterprise in which they are employed.

According to the T.U.C., the authors of the Social Contract, these reforms are the price the Government was forced to pay for union backing for wage restraint.

Put in this way, it is made to appear as though hard bargaining at top level had succeeded in imposing limitations on the power of a capitalist class that was vehemently opposed to the reforms.

It is our view that, apart from titbits such as payment for pregnancy leave and guarantee of re-employment afterwards, the 'rights' conferred by the Act adds very little to what has already been established by direct struggle in organised factories.

Furthermore, the type of 'collective bargaining' that these measures are intended to strengthen is the kind that places more power in the hands of the officials and limits the freedom of action of the rank and file. In fact, the more 'enlightened' employers, i.e. those who look a bit further ahead, consider these reforms to be good business practice.

At a conference in the London borough of Brent in May of this year, Mr. J. Grant, M.P., Parliamentary under secretary in the Department of Employment, in reply to a statement that recent legislation restricts the employers' freedom of action, replied:

"Legislation such as the Employment Protection Act, Health and Safety at Work Act, etc. have added to labour costs, but they are socially desirable and, to enlightened employers, commercially beneficial."

This certainly proved to be the case in respect of the Redundancy Payments Act enacted several years ago. In the early post-war years redundancy was sharply resisted, partly as a result of the memories

that still lingered of the mass unemployment of the 1930s.

After the Act came into force the number of disputes on this issue fell off dramatically as workers plumped for cash rather than struggle.

The official purpose of the Act was to help workers displaced by technological advance to tide over until they found a new job commensurate with their skills. In practice, it had the effect of undermining resistance to redundancies and was a major factor in allowing progressively higher levels of unemployment to become socially acceptable.

Just as that Act took redundancy outside the arena of direct struggle, so there is a danger that arguments over these other issues may become centred around the interpretation of the codes of conduct required by the Act instead of relying on the tried and tested method of direct struggle.

Utterances by some supporters of this legislation leave little room for doubt that this is their hope and intention. If they are successful, issues in dispute will be taken out of the factory where the workers are active participants and decision-makers and put through a system of 'independent' arbitration in which workers are mere spectators.

A further development of this approach is the idea of 'joint decision taking' which is at the heart of the proposals emanating from the committee set up in 1975 under the chairmanship of Lord Bullock and composed of representatives from the C.B.I. and T.U.C. plus a complement of academics.

The Committee completed its findings in January 1977 with a majority and a minority report.

The terms of reference of the committee were as follows:

"Accepting the need for a radical extension of industrial democracy in the control of companies by means of representation on boards of directors, and accepting the essential role of trade union organisations in this process, to consider how such an extension can best be achieved, taking into account in particular the proposals of the I.U.C. report on industrial democracy as well as experience in Britain, the E.E.C. and other countries. Having regard to the interests of the national economy, employers, investors and consumers, to analyse the implications of such representation for the efficient management of companies and for company law."

#### Majority Recommendations

The proposals are meant to apply to every company employing 2,000 or more people in the U.K. and, in any group of companies, to the holding company and each subsidiary and 'sub-subsidiary' company employing more than 2,000 in the U.K.

1. A recognised union(s) may request 'board level representation' on a one tier board: such a request is valid if made by a union(s) representing grades which constitute 20% of the company's employees.
2. A secret ballot will be held on the principle of union directors; the ballot to be jointly administered by the company

and union(s) involved and all employees may vote.

3. If a majority representing at least one third of the eligible employees votes in favour, the process of reconstituting the board begins. If there is no majority, no further ballot may be claimed for two years.

4. A Joint Representative Committee (J.R.C.) is set up composed of representatives of the various unions in the company.

5. The J.R.C. (a) negotiate with the existing board;  
(b) decide how the unions select the employee directors.

Disputes can be referred to the Industrial Democracy Commission.

6. After deciding on a list of employee/union directors the employee/union directors meet with an equal number of shareholders directors and decide on the number and names of co-opted directors. This is the so-called  $2x + y$  formula.

The board thus set up would have the legal powers to make virtually all decisions within the Company. Also it would have the exclusive right to submit resolutions for consideration at the shareholders' general meeting on the following crucial issues:

- a. Winding up the Company
- b. Changes in the memoranda and articles of association.
- c. Recommendation to shareholders regarding payment of dividends.
- d. Change in the capital structure of the Company
- e. Disposal of a substantial part of the undertaking.

On the surface this appears to offer a challenge to the shareholders' control of companies, but in reality it only restricts the rights of smaller shareholders, a process that has been under way for some time. This development is a reflection of the changing pattern of shareholding in Britain.

The percentage of shares owned by persons, executors and trustees resident in the U.K. declined from 59% in 1963 to 42% in 1973. The percentage of shares owned by British financial institutions, insurance companies, banks, unit trusts, investment trusts, pension funds, increased from 28% in 1963 to 42% in 1973.

The remainder are held by charities, non-financial companies, the public sector, and overseas holders.

Whilst these figures do not show an arithmetical majority of shares held by institutions, the fact that the latter can wield theirs as a block through nominees gives them the advantage over individual shareholders who may collectively own the same number of shares but who lack cohesion and single mindedness.

In practice, therefore, it is the institutional shareholders who effectively control most of the bigger companies.

This control is exercised by means of their power to nominate the directors responsible for the overall conduct of the company. This has been a big factor in creating the situation where companies are run by professional managers who owe no particular loyalty to the company as such. They are employees and the measure of their success is the profitability of the company they manage.

Because of their somewhat unique position and their development as a distinct class, they tend to have less of a hang-up over certain questions than the old type of boss who tended to regard 'management's right to manage' as a kind of divine right that must not be weakened at any cost.

The more pragmatic approach of the professional managers is in no small measure to them being in the front line, so to speak. Page 23, paragraph 8 of the Report puts the problem facing them very clearly:

"The effect of these (post war) social changes has been an increasing desire among employees to control their working environment and to have a say in decisions which affect their working lives. They have become less prepared to accept unquestioningly unilateral decisions by management, and have shown a readiness to challenge a decision if it seems to have ignored their point of view or to affect them adversely. Traditional management prerogatives have, therefore, to come under attack and the modern manager has had to develop a style of participative management which has recognised the necessity and benefits of involving employees in decision making, rather than imposing decisions on them without consultation."

Even the Confederation of British Industry had to recognise this development:

"The responsibility of the board to its employees are today different from but no less important than those which it must accept to its shareholders. It might be said that they are even more important, at least in the short term, as failure to achieve satisfactory work-

ing relationships with employees can put a board in a position where it will have great difficulty fulfilling its obligations to its shareholders."

The Responsibility of the British Company final report of the company affairs committee, C.B.I. (1973)

The differences concerning the way in which this 'problem' should be tackled stem from the class position of those concerned. That of the managers is shown in the minority report.

#### The Minority Report

This was signed by the three management representatives on the Committee and questions the remit given to them. They would have preferred to consider whether, not how, board level representation should be introduced; but, in the circumstances, they proposed the following:

1. A requirement upon companies to agree participation arrangements below board level within four years.
2. Permissive legislation providing for supervisory boards to monitor activities of management boards.
3. Amend the Companies Act to oblige boards of all kinds to have due regard to the interests of shareholders, employees and other interested parties.

They would obviously like to preserve 'management's right to manage' untrammelled by interference from non-professionals whilst being in a position to tap the ideas and 'inside knowledge' accumulated by the workforce.

It is important to note that both Reports favour a change in Company law to the effect that boards should be obliged to have due regard to the interests of employees as well as shareholders. This is an expression of the class position of the professional managers. As things stand at present they are responsible only to the shareholders but, as we have seen, the efficient running of a company makes it necessary for them to consider the views of the workforce. The suggested changes in law would give them a little more room for manoeuvre.

As far as the workers are concerned, this is clearly a matter of involvement without power. This also applies in respect of the Majority Report but here it is clouded by the introduction of a balancing or moderating element in the shape of the directors comprising the y part of the formula. It is highly likely that they would be professional people such as accountants, lawyers, academics, maybe high level technical experts whose background and general class position would incline them towards acceptance of capitalist ideas, standards and values, albeit perhaps of a liberal variety.

This being so, the worker-directors would, at critical times, find themselves in a minority (even if they had been able in the meantime to withstand the blandishments, brainwashing and effects of isolation from the shop floor and taken a principled stand. Nevertheless they would be bound by the 'democratic' decisions of the board.

It may be thought that, even if all this were true, the worker-director could assist his mates by supplying inside information. This could be blocked by the simple device of classing any relevant facts as privileg-

ed information. Disclosure of such information could render the director concerned liable to being charged with a breach of his statutory obligation to the Company.

The Trade Union leaders who support the idea of worker-directors do so on the basis that they should be trade union nominees. Presumably this is to ensure that the trade unions have some influence over their activities but it does not alter the fact that this concept is one of joint decision taking in which the sellers of labour power (themselves or their representatives) should have equal representation on company boards with the buyers of labour power, the shareholders' nominees.

This is not a recipe for Socialism but, on the contrary, it contains the seeds of a corporate state in which workers are expected to peacefully submit to management decisions on the basis that they have been taken jointly.

The C.B.I. has made it clear that such equality is not on as far as they are concerned as it would only complicate the function of management. It is certainly not in the interests of the working class to get involved in this argument at the present time when the sole point at issue between the T.U.C. and C.B.I. is how best to make the British industry more 'efficient' whilst still retaining a market orientated economy.

Apart from this question of worker directors, there is no significant difference of opinion within the ruling class over this mass of legislation. What opposition there is comes from the small businessman for whom the practical return will be far outweighed by the direct and indirect cost en-

tailed. For big business it is an exercise which, if successful in containing the growth in industrial democracy, will pay high political dividends.

This growth in the power of workers to influence their conditions of labour is a source of irritation to those who wield economic and political power but as yet it has not presented a serious challenge to the continued existence of the system. Its continued growth carries with it this potential.

The idea that industrial democracy can be indefinitely extended without incurring a backlash from the owners of capital presupposes one of two things; either the interests of labour and capital are complementary to each other and there is no basic conflict of interest - or the capitalist class will willingly relinquish power step by step. Both these notions fly in the face of experience.

For the working class there is only one real option - to continuously assert its independent class interests in every aspect of economic, social and political life in the knowledge that, sooner or later, the issue will have to be settled by a contest for state power. The struggle to extend industrial democracy has a very important role to play in this respect.

The continued decline of British capitalism is bound to lead to further attempts to increase the exploitation of the working class. This is incompatible with an extension of genuine industrial democracy, therefore a positive struggle for the latter can become a way of rallying opposition to the former. The question is - How?

In our view it can best be achieved by extending the process of collective bargaining. This term means different things to different people, so let us set out our definition of it.

The conflicting interests of labour and capital are reflected in a perpetual struggle at factory and national level, primarily to determine the price at which labour power is bought and sold, and to determine conditions of labour.

The present situation regarding industrial democracy has been brought about almost wholly by activities at factory level. Although the struggle is as old as the Trade Union movement itself, it has been given a great impetus by the upsurge of anti-authoritarianism that has been such a feature of post-war society, and it is the shop stewards at plant level who have, in the main, provided it with practical leadership and the vehicle for its most positive expression. In considering how this can be further developed we need to pay attention to two related factors; one is the reinforcement of this anti-authoritarian spirit, and the other, the development of correct methods of work that will give it an anti-capitalist orientation and gather mass support.

In our view the condition in which this will flourish is that provided by the broadest, most extensive democracy within the working class and its allies. The best arena for this activity is at shop floor level for it is there that workers can exercise the most direct control over their conditions of labour, and by taking their own decisions, can learn from their own mistakes. It is also a natural training ground for the development of cadres.

We can draw some guidelines for future activity from a generalisation of the way in which the present level of industrial democracy has been achieved.

The inroads into what used to be called management prerogatives has been brought about by what could be classed as a prolonged series of guerrilla struggles in which the individual battles were of short duration because at the time the workers felt strongly about the particular issue and exerted heavy pressure on management, whilst the latter's will to resist was weakened because, in the general atmosphere of the time, the demands appeared to be reasonable and devoid of any great long term significance.

In the initial stages the 'man in the middle' was the foreman or other immediate supervisor. This was to be expected for it is at this level that management directives are put into effect, and worker resistance to them first encountered.

In retrospect, it was also predictable that this confrontation should be most pronounced at the actual point of production where bread and butter issues such as job timings, belt loading, and shop discipline had to be fought out.

The little tin god image was shattered as it dawned on workers that his word was not always law and could be over-ruled if the opposition were sufficiently determined. The undermining of his old authority based on fear set him on the road to re-thinking his position in relation to both those 'above' him and those 'under' him. This led to a gradual rejection of his former role as an obedient tool of management and a more critical questioning of their dir-

ectives.

Over a period of time it has resulted in a weakening of the management chain of command as the next higher level of management was faced with the problem of trying to enforce instructions from his superiors on a rebellious workforce via demoralised foremen, and so on. We do not imply that this process has been universal or uniform, but it is a pretty accurate generalisation that could be described as typical.

One of the consequences of this rethinking has been the unionisation of not only foremen but some levels of middle management. Alongside this, and to a certain extent arising from the same process, has come the unionisation of technical and office employees. Such a set-up makes it difficult for the top brass to re-establish the old type of discipline but, more importantly, it opens up the possibility of establishing a broad unity of all employees so that collective bargaining can be widened to encompass every aspect of company activity.

Of course, even using this method of extending industrial democracy carries with it the danger that parochialism will predominate and everything centre around the fortunes of the company concerned as it adapts its policies to the vagaries of the market. If this is allowed to happen, it is the interests of the employers that will predominate both within the firm and on a national scale. Any real extension of industrial democracy is impossible unless we have an independent economic and political strategy of our own to guide us.

Such a strategy must have a perspective that is relevant to the problems facing the British people in this period and must em-

body proposals that appear to them to be both reasonable and realisable. The major problems facing the British people at the present time are unemployment, falling living standards, and (unfortunately not yet recognised) the danger of a new world war.

An unavoidable precondition for solving the first two and preparing for the eventuality of war is that the decline in manufacturing industry must be reversed and, in the process, the economy restructured so that it becomes more self-reliant and responsive to the needs of the people.

The implications of this strategy are manifold; for example, capital would have to be directed into socially desirable, although not necessarily profitable, projects such as housing and public transport. Socially useless enterprises would have to be heavily penalised by taxation in order that socially necessary ones could be given tax relief. Export of capital would have to be banned or more rigorously restricted than at present.

The lack of industrial balance in the economy, as manifested in the undue reliance on the automobile industry for instance, would have to be changed.

Food production would have, as its first priority, the supplying of our needs before exports could be considered.

To the employers' claim that wages must be held down to allow capital to be accumulated for investment, we would reply that the industrial workers are already producing an adequate surplus for this purpose; it is up to them to take steps to prevent it being squandered in many kinds of socially unnecessary and unproductive ways,

therefore if they wish to have industrial peace they should do something about this instead of greater exploitation of the goose that lays the golden egg.

This is by no means an exhaustive list but it should indicate the direction in which we think the struggle should develop. With this kind of perspective, the workers and employees at factory level can adopt an independent stance in relation to the policies that should be pursued by the company by whom they are employed.

### Tactics

Whilst it is important to propagate the idea of such a strategy by means of resolutions to national bodies, the main emphasis must be on winning support at the grass roots. We do not conceive of this as being merely a propaganda exercise, for such a strategy has implications for activity at factory or company level, for instance, on such questions as investment policy, product range, purchasing of raw materials, sub-assemblies and components. (A good example of such an initiative was the proposal by the shop stewards of the Lucas combine that the company should go in for developing what has come to be known as alternative technology. Amongst other things this means, for example, the generation of power from tidal flow, wind, sunlight, etc.)

These things affect employees directly and consequently there is always the possibility that pressure can be built up to force the directors to change some aspect, however small.

The underlying principle of struggle at this stage is for each unit to rely primar-

ily on its own internal strength so that it does not bite off more than it can chew, thus being driven into the position of having to rely heavily on the possibility of outside forces coming to its aid to avoid defeat.

For instance, a propoganda campaign within a particular company opposing its investment of capital abroad instead of at home is one thing, but to attempt to prevent it from doing so by direct action would lead to almost certain defeat unless sufficient basic work had been put in to ensure overwhelming support for the action as well as investigating the forces outside the company that would become involved in this event.

Propaganda campaigns to demonstrate how the policy of a particular company is unpatriotic (i.e. goes contrary to the interests of the mass of the people) are a very necessary means of preparing people for action at some appropriate time, this depending upon the specific issue involved. For instance, if it means fighting to maintain the production of certain items in Britain in opposition to management's decision to have them made abroad, whilst declaring workers redundant at home, then the appropriate time would be determined by the degree of mobilisation that could be achieved at that particular time to fight that particular issue.

The only true guide regarding the validity of this mobilisation is that the people concerned must give it their overwhelming support. For this to happen they must first be convinced that it is a correct course of action.

Temporary successes may be achieved by

dragooning and misinformation, but sooner rather than later it is certain to rebound, often with drastic negative results for the workers' organisation.

We reiterate - the type of struggle we envisage as being the most advantageous to the working class at this stage are those within a factory or firm. Later the scale will have to change; the guerrilla type of warfare that is limited to skirmishes and battles between more or less isolated detachments of different classes will, when the conditions are favourable to us, be superseded by battles between larger detachments and, ultimately, between whole classes.

To provoke the latter kind of battle at the present time would be to court almost certain defeat, an event that would provide the enemy with the opportunity for a counter-attack that would destroy the gains we have made at factory level in the post-war period.

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## IMMIGRATION, RACE RELATIONS and RACIALISM

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It is fair to say that the propaganda of the fascists and racialists in this field is far more potent than anything put out by the Marxist left. The Left has failed to tackle the problems of immigration and race relations squarely, with the result that its propaganda is generally 'counter-propaganda' reduced to the level of militant bourgeois liberalism.

Consequently it cannot combat racialism within the working class because it is hamstrung by the notion that racialism really has no base within the indigenous workers but that it is something pulled out, as if from a magic bag of tricks, by the ruling class every time a crisis looms.

It is hoped the following will lead to the development of a line which is not militant bourgeois liberalism dressed in Marxism.

The problems of immigration, race relations and racialism stem from one root cause - imperialism. To view them as distinct problems is naive and will founder. It should become evident that we cannot have a line on one without a coherent understanding of, and line on, the other. For the sake of brevity, however, the subjects are approached here as far as possible under separate headings.

#### Immigration

The conventional 'Marxist' wisdom here calls for an end to all immigration controls. That this slogan has gained currency in the M.L. movement probably has many causes. The principal cause is the laudable desire to counter the view that immigrants are responsible for unemployment and bad social conditions. It is felt that any other call would give succour to racialism and would, by implication, tend to the view that there is a causal relation between immigration and the crisis in capitalist society.

Only the Trotskysts can have fooled themselves into believing that such a slogan is valid; they would seriously hope to implement it if ever the 'workers' state' materialised.

For communists, however, that excuse is not at hand. They should know that a socialist state could not entertain such a policy; that immigration controls would be necessary not only to counter subversion but to plan society's future development and ensure that its population would be employed in socially necessary labour. A fundamental consideration would be the ability of the society to assimilate different racial groups and minorities on a

basis equal to the indigenous population and not on the 'ghetto assimilation' under capitalism. Clearly, these requirements transcend the gain to be made from capitalist slogans such as "End immigration controls".

These 'pure' slogans, ostensibly internationalist, in reality are used as an escape route from hard investigation and are indicative of liberalism on the Marxist left. The question of immigration is undeniably difficult but we must face it at some juncture.

It is often asserted that Britain has either no immigration policy or else a very liberal one. Both notions are unfounded. Moreover, they betray the misconception that British imperialism somehow holds a benign attitude towards its subject peoples. To counter this view it is necessary to put British immigration law in its historical context from which the general principles may be derived.

Large scale immigration was unknown before the 19th century. Although there were black people in Britain in the 18th century these had been brought over before the abolition of slavery and the slave trade and were mainly employed in domestic service. At this stage Britain's distance from her colonies prevented any large scale immigration, although the laws were far more liberal.

The large scale immigration by the Irish in the 19th century was a direct consequence of the destruction of Ireland's economy under rule from Britain. For the Irish it was simply a life or death issue, as they could not derive sustenance from the domestic economy. The indigenous workers,

who saw their wage levels being depressed, resented the newcomers. For the capitalists the Irish presented a large labour force to man industry, which would, at that stage, tolerate poorer conditions than the English. Ireland has 'enjoyed' a peculiar status in British imperial history, whereby it was excluded from definition within the Nationality Acts; the Irish were neither U.K. citizens nor aliens, and even prior to the E.E.C. were not subject to immigration control.

The settlements of Jews and Europeans in the cities may have initially been mainly of petty bourgeois entrepreneurs. The particular migratory history of the Jews, due to widespread persecution in Europe, added to the working class element within the Jewish communities.

As a declaration of its sovereign right to rule its colonial possessions, the British imperialists had bestowed the status of subjects of the Crown on the colonial peoples. Theoretically, they could 'look to the Crown for protection'; however risible this may be, it gave constitutional form to the plunder of the colonies, warning off other imperialists, and is important historically as 'British subject' status governed immigration laws after the second world war.

It is important to note that other West European imperialist powers of long standing have immigrants from their colonies; that the Dutch have Indonesian communities within Holland has recently been brought dramatically to world attention. Algerians in France provide much unskilled labour in the South. (It is interesting to note that the constitutional form adopted by France was different to that employed by British

imperialism - Algeria was part of metropolitan France and had a Minister in the French Cabinet.) In comparison, the nexus between Germany on the one hand, and Turkey and Yugoslavia on the other is more tenuous and Germany does not grant settler status to its immigrant 'gastarbeiters' who only have the status of contract labour.

At the end of World War Two there was a serious labour shortage in the U.K. which was not entirely to be solved by the half a million displaced persons, refugees and returned P.O.W.s who settled here between 1946 and 1951. The Ministry of Labour recruited directly from Europe and between 1945 and 1957 more than 350,000 European nationals settled here. This was mainly on a permit basis and presented problems of state barriers.

This same problem did not exist with regard to the colonies. As one writer-describes it: "It worked, in effect, like any internal migratory movement of population from the periphery to the centre, as and when the need arose." By the creation of the Commonwealth and the British Nationality Act of 1948, citizens of the 'U.K. and Colonies' had virtually unrestricted rights to settle here. The description above was virtually synonymous with the term 'Commonwealth citizen'.

Free market forces evidently determined the scale of immigration in this early period, although there was recruitment by London Transport and the British Hotels and Restaurants Association in the West Indies. The general demand was for unskilled labour in foundries and engineering, textile and clothing industries, transport and communications, and as waiters, porters and kitchen hands.

Although this period was one of expansion for the British economy, there was an acute shortage of housing and as the immigrants settled in the already overcrowded urban areas, their presence gave rise to much antagonism from the indigenous workers. In this connection, it is worth citing one passage at length from the Institute of Race Relations document "Race, Class and the State" by A. Sivanandan:

"To put it differently, the profit from immigrant labour had not benefited the whole of society but only certain sections of it (including some sections of the white working class), whereas the infrastructural 'cost' of immigrant labour had been borne by those in greatest need. That is not to say that immigrants (qua immigrants) had caused social problems - Britain after all was a country of net emigration - but that the forced concentration of immigrants in deprived and decaying areas of big cities high-lighted (and reinforced) existing social deprivation; racism defined them as its cause. To put it crudely, the economic profit from immigration had gone to capital, the social cost had gone to labour, but the resulting conflict between the two had been mediated by a common ideology of racism."

The disadvantage of commonwealth immigration for the capitalist class was that immigrants had automatic right to settle here, and not just to work. As the need for labour declined towards the end of the 1950s the U.K. government saw the need to regulate their entry. Had it declared all commonwealth citizens 'aliens' it would have severed the connection between the metropolitan country and its dependencies to its detriment. The need was to move towards

the contract labour model employed by the European states, to permit immigration as and when required.

The history of immigration legislation from this point is the story of this transition, highlighted, of course, by the sharpening economic decline.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 (which applied to citizens of Commonwealth countries and colonies, not to U.K. citizens) restricted admission to those who had been issued with employment vouchers which were dispensed to either those who had jobs to come to or had "skills and qualifications likely to be useful in this country". This effectively restricted admission from the 'New Commonwealth'.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 followed Kenyatta's Africanisation policies when the British Asians in Kenya declined to take Kenyan nationality. Although possessing U.K. passports, they were made subject to control under the voucher scheme. The Act extended control to citizens of the U.K. and colonies except where one of their parents or grandparents had been naturalised or adopted in the U.K. - i.e. principally white Commonwealth citizens.

The Immigration Act 1971 effected the full change to contract labour status; it divided Commonwealth citizens into 'patrials' and 'non-patrials'. Patrials are those who have rights of abode in the U.K., having obtained this by having U.K. citizenship by birth, adoption, naturalisation or registration and they enjoy unrestricted access to the U.K. Non-patrials who enjoy the right of abode must be persons of whom at least one parent was born in the U.K. or was a citizen of the U.K. or colonies and

of whom at least one grandparent was born in the U.K., or otherwise a person who has been ordinarily resident in the U.K. for five years or more. All non-patrial Commonwealth citizens need permission to enter Britain.

The immigrant who does not enjoy the right of abode can enter only to do a specific job for no longer initially than 12 months and if he wishes to apply to the Department of Employment for an extension he is dependent upon his employer's recommendation.

The above statutes clearly distinguish between black and white and are clearly not just concerned with 'immigrants' in the general sense. For example, it is fair to say that when the nationalists overthrew the Rhodesian regime, most of the white Rhodesians, being patrials, would have the right of abode in the U.K. if they chose to exercise it.

The present position is that the commonwealth citizens enjoy the same rights of entry as E.E.C. nationals; whereas the living standard in the U.K. renders it unlikely that many Europeans will seek work here, this same consideration obviously weighs less with New Commonwealth peoples. Distance, however, renders their migration less likely.

From the above, the following principles could be deduced:-

A. The root cause of large scale migration is imperialism, the gross exploitation and under-development of the subject states by the metropolitan country (i.e. Britain), leaving the colonies, as one writer expresses it, "with a large labour force and no

capital with which to make it productive".

B. Immigration in no way benefits the country of the immigrant's origin (save for the foreign exchange remittances which, for example, Yugoslavia obviously finds so important), but is for the exclusive benefit of the host country.

C. Immigration is welcomed by the capitalist class of the host country principally as a source of cheaper (and generally more docile) labour. The reason for the preponderance of black and Asian immigrants in this country is Britain's particular colonial exploits in the past. (This may seem obvious but is worth stating because of the slogan about the black invasion.)

D. Whereas liberalism obviously features in the minds of social-democrat law-makers, this is principally a reflection of how they determine ruling class interests, in economic and social terms. The idea that immigration was, or is, allowed by the 'liberal establishment', as the National Front purports to see it, is phoney.

How, then, is a coherent immigration policy to be determined?

Many on the Left feel that the principal factor to be accounted for is Britain's inglorious past which has left us 'morally indebted' to the third world.

One method of atonement is to permit uncontrolled immigration to the U.K., particularly from the ex-colonies. Naturally, those who hold this view identify it with internationalism and do not consciously see it as expiating guilt. However, that is what it is.

Moral right or responsibility is not a factor and breast-beating morality in particular has no place in proletarian politics.

Any responsibility we have to third world countries is political and is far better fulfilled by treating such countries as sovereign states and by equal trading relationships than by providing an outlet for individuals dissatisfied with conditions of life there.

There are two principal factors of equal importance to be weighed in devising a coherent immigration policy for any society. One is that immigration levels should be consistent with the needs of the host country. The other is that immigration levels should be consistent with the capacity of the host country to assimilate immigrants on a basis equal to the indigenous population and not as an under class.

Anyone who argues that the first is chauvinistic or that the second can be squared with unrestricted immigration is not a materialist. (There will undoubtedly be instances where, for humanitarian reasons, stateless persons and those whose lives are in danger should be permitted entry. These however, are exceptional.)

We can only lay the general guidelines for an immigration policy. It is not our task to set specific numbers limits nor do we possess the information to do so.

Generally, our influence on present immigration policy is likely to be minimal. Our main area of operation should be to ensure that immigrants enjoy the same rights as the indigenous population and are therefore fully integrated into the class struggle.

## RACIALISM AND RACE RELATIONS

"We want to eliminate racial and national oppression not just on grounds of humanitarianism, but also because such oppression is against the fundamental interests of the working class and the toiling masses all over the world; because it promotes disunity among the ranks of the toilers and therefore inevitably hinders - slows down, indeed makes it impossible for real revolutionary work to be carried on. Such oppression serves as a diversion for the working class from its real tasks. We want to end national and racial oppression with the real aim of establishing working class unity for the overthrow of monopoly capitalism and for the establishment of socialism."

"Against Racism" (Indian Workers' Front) 1976

The above passage concisely summarises our interests in this field. We should be aware from the start, however, that racialism is deeply rooted in the bourgeois ideology, the ruling ideology in society. It will not be 'eliminated' before the proletariat has been in power for some time, for man's consciousness lags behind objective reality, in other words, ideas persist after the material basis which gave rise to them has ceased to exist.

Our task is to diffuse racist sentiment as far as possible, so that the contradictions between different races in this country do not become antagonistic; so that class, no colour, is foremost in people's minds.

### Origins of Racism

The fundamental cause of the feeling of racial superiority in Britons is Britain's colonial past. The Jews had borne the brunt of this antagonism for several centuries; they had been constrained by law to work in certain occupations, principally moneylending, with the result that the terms 'Jew' and 'usurer' became synonymous terms of disapprobation.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the British merchant class justified the enslavement and trade in Africans by equating blacks with a lower form of life; indeed, they had the status of 'chattels' in English law, enabling their owners to treat them as such. This ideology permeated the mass of the people and was reinforced there. There was every reason for conquering troops to consider themselves 'superior' to those they butchered and whose lands they seized with impunity.

That Britain had not been invaded since the 11th century by a foreign power strengthened national chauvinism and a feeling of invincibility; physical separation from Europe augmented this.

The disastrous effects on the colonies of imperialist plunder reinforced the notion of superiority. To many people, taught only the positive aspects of the British Empire, the abject poverty and destitution within the third world is proof that the indigenous people have no idea how to run their countries. This 'fact' is, of course, often cited by friends of Rhodesia and South Africa.

Furthermore, racialism is not confined to

the English. Playing on ignorance and fear, the depth to which racialism has permeated the mass of the people can be gauged from the outlook of many of the Irish in Britain. There is little solidarity here between the victims of imperialism.

In the post-war period, the movement of labour from the old cities to the New Towns resulted in a shortage of labour in the former; the immigrants were attracted to unskilled jobs in the decaying urban areas. The choice of city was determined by the work available, so few settled in Wales, Scotland or (relatively) the North West.

Their means limited their choice of residence and discrimination by landlords prevented any dispersal. It was, of course, 'natural' that immigrants would head for areas in which they had already established a presence.

Therefore they were concentrated in areas of existing deprivation. The fact that there has always been a housing shortage was lost on the people already in these areas who could only see the further overcrowding in the private sector and the lengthening council waiting lists. Conditions of life will deteriorate inevitably when there is overcrowding, but this deterioration was attributed to their 'lifestyle'.

The increasing levels of unemployment in the 1970s has given the slogan "British jobs for British workers" far greater currency and the cutbacks in education and social services are now tools in the hands of racialists.

If the racist propaganda were simply of the reactionary Monday Club variety, our

work in opposing it would be much easier. What gives racialism its cutting edge is that it combines all too easily with the undercurrent of anti-establishment feeling among the working class, produced by unemployment and other social miseries. A prime example of this is the National Front's attack on bureaucracy in Government.

The fact that racialists are often of working class origin and purport to stand for the workers' economic interests assures them of an audience among those affected worst by the crisis. Moreover, their politics are of the basest variety which people find generally easier to understand and therefore assimilate.

(That so many in the Marxist-Leninist movement succeed in making Marxism-Leninism appear a 'foreign ideology' by their mindless repetition of slogans coined elsewhere and are unable to offer the workers any analysis connecting scientific socialism with the U.K. hardly helps.)

It follows that as the crisis intensifies and living conditions are further eroded, racist sentiment will tend to intensify. Naturally, racialism helps to diffuse the class struggle and is therefore useful to the bourgeoisie.

However, institutionalised racialism no longer serves the needs of finance capital.

Those who fail to understand this and who identify the National Front as the naked political wing of monopoly capital will be capable of only liberal or social democratic opposition to racialism. They will be unable to explain why the Tory cabinet is generally as scathing about the N.F. as Labour politicians and will attribute this

to Public Relations or hypocrisy. They will ascribe the Race Relations Acts only to radical social reformers and will pin an undue amount of faith in the bourgeois initiative against racialism - the plethora of Boards and Commissions. But, most importantly, they will be incapable of countering the populist anti-establishment appeal of the National Front which makes that organisation dangerous.

### The Race Relations Acts

The main purpose of the Race Relations Act of 1965 was, as one writer describes it, "to educate the lesser capitalists in the ways of enlightened capital". The danger of a cultural or racial minority becoming disaffected with the social system because they are deprived of participating fully in it is plain to see. The race riots in America conferred no benefit on the capitalist class; there were large sectors of the population who had no respect for 'law and order' and the status quo, and whose actions led to social instability.

Racial discrimination and incitement to racial hatred offends the humanitarianism and sense of fairness of most social democrats and obviously for many, the prohibition of racial discrimination was as desirable as it was necessary. The fact remains, however, that the Labour Party only showed serious interest in the idea after the Notting Hill disturbances in 1958, even though it had been promoted by people such as Lord Fenner Brockway since the late 1940s. This is not to demean the positive essence of the race relations legislation which has, albeit to a limited degree, meant the gaining of democratic rights by the immigrant population.

This bourgeois initiative was ahead of public opinion and it cannot be claimed that the legislation was popular. The Trade Union movement had done little to counter discrimination at the workplace and showed little interest in so doing.

There had been no attempt to integrate the immigrants who had come in the post-war period and the creation of the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council in 1962 was the first measure in this direction. As there was lacking a legal framework within which to operate, the Council was like a head without a body and achieved nothing. It was replaced in 1965 by a similar body, but with greater funds at its disposal, the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants.

In the same year the first Race Relations Act was passed, rendering unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin in places of public resort; and discriminatory clauses in the assignments of leases.

The Act established the Race Relations Board (R.R.B.), the main organs of which were to be the local Conciliation Committees, empowered to receive complaints and investigate their substance. The Committees' duty was to effect a settlement where possible between the aggrieved party and the wrongdoer. Where persistent violations occurred, the Attorney General could bring civil court proceedings to obtain an injunction; but these enforcement provisions were of secondary importance.

From the beginning, much play was made by the media and the backwoodsmen in the Tory Party of the loss of 'freedom' for

the Englishman brought about by the legislation. The right to 'choose', i.e. to discriminate, was equated with a civil liberty of which the English had been deprived by the immigrant population.

The 1965 Act did not touch upon housing and employment, the two most important areas. The Race Relations Act 1968 prohibited discrimination in these areas, with certain major exceptions, and extended the cover to the provision of goods and services, business premises, advertisements and notices, and membership and benefits of Trade Unions, employers' and trade organisations. The principal aspect was still conciliation, but the R.R.B. was empowered to seek damages in a civil court for a complainant who had suffered loss by reason of discrimination.

The fact that the enforcement powers are rarely used and have achieved little success is underplayed by the media. The image of the R.R.B. as a type of Thought Police, ready to pounce on the 'small man' for the slightest innocent violation, has been deliberately nurtured by the popular press. Typical of this was the Robert Relf saga which might have assumed dangerous proportions had it not backfired - when Relf was revealed not as the ordinary citizen standing on his dignity, but a Nazi fanatic with a history of petty crime.

Because the emphasis was placed entirely on the 'loss' to the Englishman and the enforcement powers of the Board, most people failed to see that the legislation would, if properly applied, lead to the democratic advancement of a significant number of working people. It is worth remembering, when the capitalist press cries out for 'the rule of law' at times of industrial

unrest, that they have fostered considerable disregard for it in respect of the Race Relations Acts and the R.R.B., and thus rendered more difficult the attainment of those democratic rights.

The field where discrimination has persisted most strongly is in employment. Frequent surveys show that few employers strive to counter discrimination and it is still widespread in selection for training and promotion.

#### Discrimination in Employment

The Trade Union movement has always opposed intervention by the law both in industrial relations and supervision of their own internal organisations, even when that legislation purports to be beneficent. There are sound reasons for this as historically the legislature and judiciary have acted to curb the power of organised labour.

So the unions were unhappy about the possible intervention in their field of operation by the R.R.B. Consequently, a provision in the 1968 Act assured that all complaints would first have to be dealt with by internal machinery within the industry. This would be the ideal position as it would prevent control passing to outside bodies. But, until fairly recently, the official leadership failed to see the problem as transcending a trade union problem, with the result that immigrants rarely achieve success by using the internal machinery. The obvious negative result is that many immigrants will look outside the workshop organisation for assistance, thereby weakening the organisation.

The other important feature of the 1968 Act relating to employment was that dis-

crimination would not be unlawful if used to secure a "reasonable balance of persons of different racial groups" within the undertaking or a particular section of it. The immigrants' groups have generally interpreted this as a concession to racialism but there is little foundation for this. Theoretically, the clause would help dispersal of the immigrant population but in practice, the problems caused by it are obvious. What is a reasonable balance? How can one be secured in an area where immigrants are concentrated and where the wage rates are so low that only immigrant labour is attracted? Generally, the clause conferred little benefit on the capitalist class as it was inoperable.

#### The Race Relations Act 1976

This Act, which came fully into force in June 1977, abolishes both the compulsion to use internal conciliation machinery and the "reasonable racial balance" clause.

It re-defines 'discrimination' in accordance with the Sex Discrimination Act definition, i.e. treating a person less favourably on racial grounds or applying a condition which is unjustifiable and which is less likely to be met by persons on account of their race. Racial grounds include colour, ethnic or national origin.

The most radical provision of the Act permits positive discrimination by employers and training bodies in favour of racial minority groups who are under-represented in a particular occupation.

The argument for positive discrimination is that the racial minority groups will always be in an inferior position without it; the decades of racial discrimination will

not be countered by simply removing the handicap.

Against this, it is said that positive discrimination breeds racial hostility in those who have never enjoyed a privileged existence under capitalism.

In evaluating the merits of positive discrimination, many immigrant leaders look towards the U.S. as a shining example, as in many fields there it is mandatory and not just permissive. This is ironic as the U.S. is hardly a shining example of peaceful integration of the races, nor of the well-being of the vast majority of the black population.

The Act also renders unlawful discrimination by private associations of persons, with certain exemptions. This clause was framed to deal with the interpretation of the 1968 legislation by the judiciary who enabled working men's clubs to operate a colour bar on the grounds that they were not offering facilities to a section of the public.

#### The Commission for Racial Equality

The 1968 Act set up the Community Relations Commission which was given the task of "encouraging the establishment of harmonious community relations". It was largely an advisory body with powers to dispense funds to local organisations appearing to be concerned with community relations. It generally received attention in the media only when its distributions of money came under fire.

By the 1976 Act, the Community Relations Commission and the Race Relations Board had both been abolished and replaced by the

Commission for Racial Equality, which has the following task:

"To work towards the elimination of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups."

Its powers are wider than its forerunners'; it may conduct broad investigations as it sees fit, compel disclosures of information, issue 'non-discrimination notices' and take civil proceedings to stop persistent breaches of the law. It need not take up individual complaints, as the right to institute proceedings has now been conferred on the individual.

There is not much one can say about such a body; commissions are particularly in favour with the present administration, which has created three such; its defined tasks are certainly grand enough to satisfy the immigrants' bourgeois leaders, but it is unlikely that it will be of more significance to young unemployed blacks than its predecessor. It will certainly strive to identify the cause of black discontent and accommodate this within the system. The British ruling class know too well from Northern Ireland the dangers of allowing discrimination and discontent to go unchecked.

### Incitement to Race Hatred

This aspect of the Race Relations legislation has provoked the most opposition. Its history lies in the Public Order Act of 1936, framed mainly to deal with marches by the unemployed and by Mosley's fascists.

The famous Section 5 deemed that any person who, in a public place or at a public

meeting, uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent to provoke a breach of the peace or whereby such a breach was likely to be occasioned would be guilty of an offence.

Under that clause, communists were convicted in 1936 for shouting "Release Thal-mann" and "Andre executed by Nazis"; in 1956 a Communist Party candidate was convicted for heckling Duncan Sandys at a meeting; it was also the section under which Colin Jordan was convicted for his diatribe in Trafalgar Square in 1962.

The Section was amended by the Race Relations Act of 1965 which prohibited 'incitement to racial hatred'. Intent to stir up hatred "against a section of the public in Great Britain distinguished by colour, race, ethnic or national origin" had to be proven, and convictions were notoriously difficult. To cite one well known case, National Front members who distributed a handbill slandering a couple on a council estate who had fostered black children were acquitted on the ground that the couple were not a "section of the public".

The 1976 Act has further amended the section so that intent need no longer be proved. The material factor is "where, having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up against any racial group in Great Britain by the matter or words in question."

This is the 'ominous' clause whereby Mr. Powell is to lose his freedom of speech and various left-wing and immigrant leaders are awaiting the first opportunity to invoke it.

However progressive and humanitarian the new provision appears, the fact remains that

for communists its existence is largely irrelevant. That its invocation against Powell would create the martyr's charter that he seeks seems apparent to most people, not least the Labour politicians, but the immigrant 'leaders' seem unaware of this. Their constant calls for Powell's prosecution reveal their petty bourgeois outlook - in this case, first reliance on the law to deal with a political problem.

### Fighting Racialism

The race relations legislation, for all its shortcomings, has meant the attainment and consolidation of many democratic rights for the immigrants, the vast majority of whom are working people. It has thus had an indisputably positive effect. Many of the rights secured relate to the individual and in the present context could not have been attained in any other way. The main drawback lies in the fact that the legislation resulted from a bourgeois initiative; racialists are therefore able to oppose it from a populist stance and show that it was imposed from above.

The negative aspect of the legislation is that in the absence of an initiative from the organised working class, immigrant workers will more and more look to the state as their protector. The consequences of this on working class unity need not be spelt out. The most important area wherein the application of the law should be restricted is employment. This is obviously not to say that we should oppose the substance of the law but that we should render its application unnecessary. Needless to say, where the law conflicts with the objective interests of the workers as a whole, it should be opposed.

Whilst not hesitating to use all forces available, reliance on the forces of the state tends to the negative result of undermining self-confidence and unity. The relevance of this to workshop organisation is evident.

It is also relevant to racialist propaganda and incitement to racial hatred. It may be desirable for bourgeois immigrant leaders to have the racialists prosecuted for inflammatory speeches but this problem can best be countered on a propaganda level. It is noteworthy in this context that, despite the legislation in the past decade, support for the extreme right wing has increased. Racialism is a political problem faced by the working class and to defeat it we will have to establish our own Leadership rather than rely on the coercive measures set down by the ruling class.

Over the past two or three years, political work against fascism and racialism has been equated with attendance on 'counter demonstrations' whenever the National Front etc. hold a public march. This undoubtedly had its origins within the student unions where the proposal of 'denying fascists and racists a platform' was first mooted by the Trotskyists. Since then, the Trotskyists, revisionists and various Marxist Leninist groups have been vying with one another to proclaim their support for this proposal.

What should be realised is that opposing fascism and racialism involves first and foremost working amongst the masses. This is the primary arena of our struggle, not Speakers' Corner or Red Lion Square. A street battle naturally attracts not just 'militants' but those who have no base in the working class as this is the only area

in which they can demonstrate their politics.

Fascist marches through working class areas, especially where there is a large immigrant population, are a different problem and obviously require different tactics. The tactics, however, should give first consideration not to whether a particular march is successfully halted or re-routed, but to whether local or national support for the fascists is diminished at the end of the day. The two considerations are not identical, and it is fair to say that the masses generally view such proceedings as one set of extremists fighting the other, leaving them largely unaffected.

Patient mass work is, of course, far less exciting for revolutionaries than street fighting but is far more productive in the long term. Those who claim to be the political heirs of the Cable Street anti-fascists fail to see that, without the work on the ground, the mass mobilisation that stopped Mosley would never have been possible.

No blue print exists for refuting racialist propaganda but there are some 'ground rules' that should be followed. For example one is that the National Front has appeal not primarily to the bourgeois elements hankering after the good old days or those who are happy with the status quo but mainly among the youth and unemployed, sections of the working class faring badly at present. To gain their sympathy, the Front cloaks its ideology in anti-establishment rhetoric. Skilful handling will not attempt to destroy the seeds of disaffection already sown by the National Front but will use this as a springboard. Sometimes National Front sympathisers have a relatively

advanced class consciousness and this has led to their attraction to the 'radical' politics of that organisation.

Secondly, the mass appeal of racialist propaganda is that it is rooted in the current situation. It is very simple to compare the number of immigrants to the number of unemployed or homeless. Once that basic formulation has been accepted as the ground for the argument, then we are fighting on their territory. Immigrants obviously cause council house waiting lists to lengthen because most are council tenants. Likewise, the argument that immigrants occupy jobs that would otherwise be done by British people is not one we can effectively counter. Some have tried to answer the latter by saying that blacks and Asians have generally gone to those jobs where there was a shortage of white labour due to the low wages or poor conditions. This is true historically but by citing it in argument we are implying "So they're really no threat" - i.e. as long as they keep their place.

It is not our task to devise an equitable 'points' system for council house waiting lists. Sufficient evidence exists of the scarcity of decent housing from the early 19th century onwards, of the number of empty houses at present and of the nature of the property market to avoid an argument about distribution and allocation of existing housing stock.

Likewise, it should be easy enough to show that there was no sizeable immigrant population in the 1930s when unemployment was at its highest. And that unemployment is a permanent feature of capitalism in decay and that the arrival of the immigrants coincided with the post-war boom and mater-

ial advancement of the mass of the people.

More subtle tactics such as use of the phrase 'the people in Britain' to counter the description 'the British people', abound but they depend on the place and style of work and are best left to the comrades involved.

Finally, it should be said that the liberalism on the Left shows itself most clearly in a reluctance to criticise immigrants' leaders as this would be 'racist'; some of the immigrant spokesmen appear militant but in reality they are only militant bourgeois and are concerned only to establish their rights within that class. There is a feeling that immigrants are best organised in immigrant organisations, regardless of the class line of the organisation.

For example, after the murder of the Indian youth in Southall last year, it became obvious from the pronouncements of some of the Asian leaders that they were more representative of the 'elder statesmen' within the domestic community than anything else. With this type of official leadership it is no surprise that the more militant Asian youth will see the problem in race terms only.

Again, there is an even greater lack of leadership within the West Indian community - particularly the youth. This was obvious from the events at the Notting Hill carnival last August, and the fiasco over this year's Carnival. The 'leaders' see the problem only in terms of police provocation and fail to take a position on the violent street robbery that occurred there, which should be condemned on political grounds as it is an anti-social crime, the main victims of which are working class

people within the indigenous and immigrant population.

The older West Indians may feel generally antagonistic towards the police but they see that no alternative policing arrangements are being proposed by the radical leadership which refuses to accept that a problem exists which cannot be explained away with reference to the higher unemployment and general deprivation within the black community. This effectively legitimises the hooligan elements within black youth who face no criticism from 'Left' groups desperate to outdo each other in liberalism and to show their 'anti-racism'.

The fact remains that it is here that racialists are best able to exploit the fears of the white population which, with every justification, has no desire to this type of lawlessness. While the 'leadership' within the black community remains rooted in civil libertarianism and sees the struggle as black youth versus police, racial hostility will only increase.

Marxists should rid themselves of the notion that only the immigrant leaders may point to weaknesses within their community and condemn behaviour which leads to antagonism between races. In this connection, it is to be noted that the Communist Party's policy in combating anti-semitism in the East End of London in the 1930s exhibited none of this timidity. Harry Pollitt took part in discussion with Jewish leaders where he quite clearly specified the areas that needed firmer control by them so that the indigenous population in the East End could clearly see positive action arising from within. Specific examples included Jewish sweat-shop employers,

## COMMENT

### THE T.U.C. AND AFTER

In the few weeks that have elapsed since the T.U.C. Annual Conference it has already become evident that the General Council majority made a pretty shrewd assessment of the situation, both in the Conference and in the Trade Union movement as a whole.

Although the majority of the General Council members had tried to hold their own unions to continued support for a further period of wage restraint, they bowed to pressure from the active membership, as expressed at their respective policy making conferences. The declaration by Murray and others that there was no question of accepting a Phase 3 was an acceptance of the inevitable rather than an expression of leadership.

Although the General Council could, in the circumstances, do no other than reject the 10% ceiling demanded by the Government, they opposed commitment to a target figure for a national minimum wage that would at least have given moral support to those at the lower end of the wage scale.

The prediction of a 'wage explosion' shows little sign of becoming realised at the moment. Big battalions, such as the dockers, B.L.M.C. workers, electricity workers on whom militants were pinning their hopes of making a breakthrough, have retreated and 'moderate' elements amongst the miners and railwaymen's leadership stand a good chance of gaining control of the wages movement at that level.

The media are, as is to be expected, making the most of the situation by crowing over the setbacks suffered by the militants but every dog has his day and events are moving against those who desire to stabilise the situation. Nevertheless it will not do to just sit back and await developments.

Many of us thought that the frustration built up over the past twelve to eighteen months would begin to boil over by this time. People were grumbling about rising prices and asking what the unions were up to in agreeing to wage restraint. It was logical to assume that this frustration would increase with time.

One of the first signs that what is logical if not necessarily correct in terms of real life came when it became evident that militant calls for action to demand an end to wage restraint, such as were issued by a well attended meeting called by the Cttee. for the Defence of Trade Unions in April of this year, did not find a ready response from the membership.

More recent meetings of shop stewards have exhibited an awareness that, as yet, the mass of the membership are unwilling to back up demands that may involve them in large scale and difficult battles.

Unfortunately this has rarely been expressed in an open handed manner but rather in statements that clearly show that the problem of finding out the reason for this reluctance is being avoided. Some are looking for loopholes or justification for in-

action in the White Paper issued by the Government in which the 10% limit is mentioned. Others see the answer in making more vociferous demands in order to push workers into action in the direction and at the speed determined by the most militant elements.

The first trend reflects the attitude of the more backward elements who are fearful of challenging authority. The other reflects the attitude of the more militant and, in a sense, advanced sections who are unafraid of authority or struggle and who want to grasp the bull by the horns but are frustrated by the apparent reluctance of the not so advanced elements who make up the vast majority of the membership.

The obvious problem is how to achieve a situation in which the majority are willing and eager to take action in defence of their own interests.

Addiction to a legalistic approach will hold the movement back and play into the hands of both Government and employers. On the other hand, attempts to browbeat or inveigle the membership into taking action will rebound on those responsible and, more likely than not, result in the replacement of 'militants' by 'moderates'.

The golden, obvious but all too often disregarded, rule when trying to exercise leadership is that the starting point for any struggle is precisely at the point where they are, not where we would like them to be.

The resolve to completely disregard the Government's limits has, to a certain extent, been weakened by the skilful propaganda campaign of the news media over the

last six months as it attempted first and foremost to influence the policy-making bodies of the unions. The sunshine stories about the beneficial effects of North Sea oil, improvements in the exchange value of sterling, and the reported slackening in the rate of price increases all play a part in confusing the less advanced sections of workers and casting doubts on the wisdom of entering into actions that may prejudice these 'improvements'.

This is strengthened by the lack of perspective offered by those who act as though 'a return to free collective bargaining' is the cure for all our ills. The factor that will tip the scale is most likely to be the workers' assessment of the sacrifices they will need to make in terms of time lost to win victory.

At the present time there seems to be a feeling that the combined forces of Government and employers, coupled with the doubtful loyalty of the union leaders, presents a formidable obstacle.

The determination of the Government to crunch firms who break the twelve months' rule or the 10% limit indicates that it is fighting a desperate rearguard action in the knowledge that it is in a very weak position. Its attitude towards the increases agreed at Mackie's in Belfast also reveals its priorities. According to statements by Government leaders, increased exports are necessary for our survival. Taking them at their word, one may ask why then sabotage the efforts of a firm that exports 90% of its output by denying it export credit guarantees because it will not keep the workers' wages down? The conclusion can only be that keeping wage costs down in order to increase profits is the first pri-

ority of the Labour Government.

### Prospects

The mass of the working class cannot afford to sit back in the hope that one or more of the big battalions will make a decisive breakthrough. In the first place, it is the big battalions that are subject to the greatest pressure to make 'reasonable' settlements so as not to prejudice the Labour Party's election chances. Secondly, there is no reason to suppose that even if there was a breakthrough by, say, the miners, that it would make things any easier for the smaller fry who negotiate at a lower level.

At factory level the Government-Employer front will be breached at its weakest point where the contradictions are greatest, i.e. where the employer's profits are being affected by an inability to attract certain categories of labour, even with a 10% increase, but rarely as decisively as at Mackie's, Heinz, Kodak. Therefore we do not generally favour attempts to make a breakthrough on a grand scale by means of all-out strikes, at least at the present stage.

It is better that pressure should be built up on a broad front so that some breaches, however small, may be made that can be exploited further by others. The question of differentials is a very volatile issue that can create the ferment necessary to start the mass moving. This has two aspects. One is a contradiction amongst the workers, the other a contradiction between employers.

The first is the conviction among certain categories of workers that they should

be getting a bigger difference in wages over other employees in the same firm.

The other is when an employer finds it difficult to attract certain categories of labour from outside the firm. In this case the differential to be considered is that between the wages offered by two different employers.

In this event the tactic of the employer is to play on the contradiction between the workers so that he can increase the wages of those workers who are in short supply, whilst leaving others out in the cold.

The key thing for us is to refuse to alter internal differentials until the general level of wages has been raised, thus exploiting the contradictions between employers.

At factory level workers can more easily assess the obstacles to, and the possibilities for, advance in their local conditions. This is because they are operating in an environment that they understand.

Although the confusion created by the mass media has some impact at this level, the influence is much less because it is tested against the workers' direct experience.

It is in this area that capitalist propaganda is most vulnerable and, given correct leadership, small but in total significant victories can be achieved, both in the field of ideas and of action.

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Continued from page 23  
the behaviour of Jewish teenagers in the West End, the carrying of lethal weapons and membership of the protection rackets and race course gangs operating in the area.

The work contains valuable lessons for us today.

September 1977