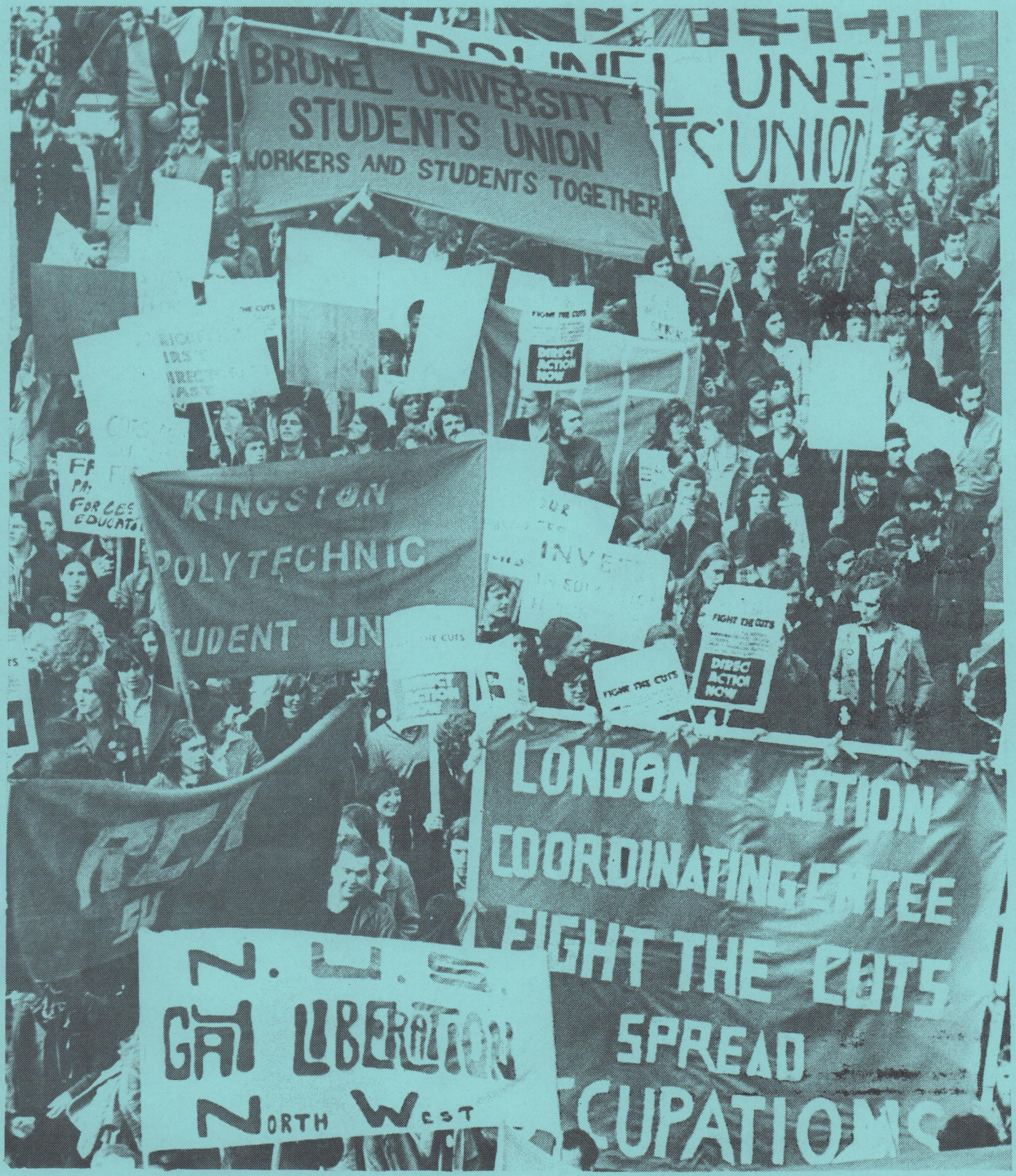
MARXIST STUDENT

Student bulletin of the Workers Socialist League



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Bulletin of the Workers Socialist League Student Societies

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VOTE LABOUR
SACK CALLAGHAN

In the last year the repercussions of Labours five years of wage control have been seen in a wave of pay struggles. Working class resistance, beginning with the Ford's strike and more recently with the Civil Service pay dispute, only goes to show that workers are willing to take up the fight against Callaghan's vicious attacks on living standards. Indeed, never has the working class confronted the Labour leadership so directly or acutely as over the last few months.

The turning point came with the lorry drivers' dispute where the power of the strike lay in the way strikers themselves controlled the delivery of urgent supplies through local strike committees, despite strong disapproval and blatant threats from their union bureaucrats. This element of workers' control hammered it home that the working class did have the power to control and influence affairs, thus precipitating a serious crisis for the Government. This came as a drastic blow to Callaghan, who in a frenzied speech, declared that he would not tolerate the lorry drivers' militancy, and appealed for "citizens" to cross picket lines. Now we can see where the Labour traitors really stand on class issues.

Since Callaghan has been in power he has offered nothing but plunging living standards, crumbling social services and growing dole queues. This minority Government has only continued to rule by making reactionary deals and alliances. The anti-socialist lib-lab coalition and the deals with Ulster unionists to legislate the consolidation of British Imperialist rule in the occupied six counties, are but two examples of this. In the student movement, the Broad-left Executive of the NUS attack student autonomy, remain silent over the overseas students quota issue, and blame sell-outs on its membership. They are thus following in the same treacherous foot-steps of the 'grown-up' trade union bureaucrats.

General Election

Today, with the General Election set for May 3rd the Labour leaders' policies contain nothing whatever for the working class. Electoral propaganda will focus on the reactionary TUC/Government 'concordat', which proposes further attacks on trade union rights and calls for permanent wage controls. This bankruptcy is the Tories' greatest weapon. Confident that Callaghan has driven away sufficient Labour votes, the way has been prepared for the most reactionary government of the century. The Tories are already talking of cutting at least £700 million off public expenditure while increasing spending on the armed forces and the police. No doubt, these lackies of the state will earn their 'blood' money by implementing the Tories proposals to smash trade union rights. Students will suffer even more acutely under their reign of terror. The Tories' further cutbacks in education and living standards, coupled with policies to drastically stifle student democracy, represents only the beginning. All in all a Thatcher government would make Callaghan's policies seem like over-indulgent handouts. No worker or student in their senses would lend any support to the reactionary, racist Tory crew.

The problem then posed is what alternative is there? We say that it is necessary to return a Labour Government as a class vote against the Tories. It is only if we are in a position to expose the labour traitors that we will be able to raise the possibility of an alternative leadership. This is why it is absolutely crucial to challenge the labour leadership in order to open up the whole question of an alternative programme capable of defending workers' interests.

If the Tories get in, the fight will be diverted from this struggle. In a similar vein, by totally rejecting the labour Party in favour of socialist unity or other left-wing propaganda candidates, workers will be led away from confronting the present leadership,, and duped into thinking that gains can be won by ignoring the dangerous manoeuvres of the Labour bureaucracy. However, the only way to fight the enemy is to face it - not forget it.

Recall Conference

Of course, no problems will be resolved while Callaghan and his sympathisers remain in office. Socialists in the labour movement must campaign for a recalled Labour Party Conference to provide the platform to kick out the existing leadership and wage a struggle for socialist policies. Socialists should also demand that their C.L.P. draw up it's own election manifesto, based on the policies necessary to defend the interests of the working class. Candidates in each area must then be forced to support such policies, or have Party backing withdrawn in favour of a candidate who will! At the same time, Labour 'lefts' who profess to oppose Callaghan must be pressurized to lead a campgaign for the removal of the present leadership and the adoption of a socialist internationalist policy. Those who refuse to mount such a fight reveal their inability to fight for socialist policies and must be ousted from their positions and replaced.

Therefore, socialist students and workers must lead the fight against the Labour leadership. This means that we don't let these traitors off the hook by ensuring Tory victory. As long as there remains even the slightest illusion in Labour's ability to fight for the working person, no significant political gains will be made. Workers are just beginning to turn against their <u>own</u> leadership. This crucial development must be encouraged, not stifled. The most effective way of doing this is by exposing the Labour and trade union leadership - both 'left' and 'right'. Only then will the question of an alternative socialist programme be taken up by the working class.

* *

FOR MORE DETAILS about the Workers Socialist League, write to:

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EDUCATION CUTS: the fight goes on

The recent low pay campaign among public sector manual workers contains many important lessons for students and their grants campaign. After fiery left rhetoric about the plight of the low paid and his determination to fight government pay policy tooth and nail, NUPE leader Alan Fisher ignominiously urged his members to accept a measly offer. The 'low pay campaign' dominated by the Executive doing their utmost to isolate any action taken by the members, and to confine it to [illegible] here and there. This limited, isolated form of protest got a national/of a basic 9%. In stark contrast to this, in Camden, where all-out strike action was taken by the council workers, the full £60 and 35 hours was won for the lowest paid.

Students are involved in the same basic fight as these public sector workers: against the Labour government's determination to keep down living standards, and to cut back public expenditure. As capital spending is cut, the public sector workers are the ones to lose their jobs, and where colleges are cut back, students numbers are restricted. As cash limits are imposed, workers are told that their pay claim is in conflict with spending on equipment for schools, or on medicine, and students are told that higher grants or capitation fees conflict with spending on educational facilities.

However, in the student campaign for higher grants and mandatory grants for all students, the present Broad Left Executive is obviously determined to play much the same role as Alan Fisher has done in NUPE. Trevor Phillips and co. continually bemoan the lot of FE students without grants. They continually assert their determination to lead the student movement forward in the fight to persuade the Government to give us some more money. But the farcial G-day and a single demonstration last term are not the way to win our demands. If the government refuse our demands we need a national campaign of rent strikes, marches, occupations. We need to get the support of public sector workers at a local level, including AUT and NATFHE as well as NUPE and NALGO. So long as our leadership keep us isolated from the trade union movement we are in a weak position.

Inadequate Programme

Militant action is necessary to win our demands, but we should also recognise that these demands are inadequate. The Workers Socialist League is fighting for a sliding scale of grants - for grants to be protected against inflation by automatic rises in line with a price index worked out by committees of students, workers and housewives. The fight for the replacement of discretionary grants by mandatory grants for all students must be combined with the struggle to effectively unionise the students in smaller, weaker colleges.

The grants campaign is of course, only one side of the fight against the erosion of living standards. Last term's wave of rent strikes highlighted how the government is determined to take away in the one hand what little it has given with the other, It also highlighted the unwillingness of our present leadership to even co-ordinate that fight, let alone call on other colleges to join in and extend the action.

The NUS leadership should be forced to call nation-wide rent strikes to keep rents in college and university accommodation within the rent element shown by the NUS breakdown of the grant. Such action should also be taken until local authorities are forced to stop their racist policy of charging over-seas students extortionate differential rents.

Housing Shortage

For many students, however, the immediate problem is not high rents, but being faced with no housing at all! Students should not be in the position of begging for "hard-to-let" housing that no-one else wants. County Council's must be forced to provide housing for single young people, including students as part of their housing programme. A crash programme of house-building could solve the problem of homelessness, and provide socially useful jobs for the unemployed. All rents in private housing should be controlled and assessed by committees of tenants and local authority workers. Short-let tenants should have the same rights as long-term. Underused property should be taken over by local authorities for the use of the homeless.

All these policies require a consistent fight against government cuts. With the prospect of a Tory government, cuts and closures will be stepped up as the capitalist crisis bites deeper. The Workers Socialist League has a principled record of fighting the cuts whenever they appear - a fight that is based on the following policies:

- Occupy to prevent closures - back up the occupations with strike action in public sector unions.
- Open the books of LEA's - let committees of students, trade unionists, school-students and housewives see what the LEA's are doing with the money.
- Open the books of educational suppliers - who's making profits out of state education?
- For a campaign based around student occupations and strikes, and strike action by campus trade unionists, to stop racist quotas and fee increases and any cutbacks in courses or facilities.

The New Leadership

The Broad Left will not fight for these demands - their inaction on all these vital issues and their betrayal over union autonomy expose them as incapable of defending the student movement. They can only be removed in a fight for transitional demands and for the building of a new revolutionary leadership in NUS. The WSL is the only movement capable of undertaking that task.

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SOCIALIST PRESS

SOCIALIST PRESS is the weekly paper of the Workers Socialist League. Every week it contains extensive coverage of international news, industrial news, and feature articles.

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IRELAND

The Bennett Report which released embarrassing details of interrogation procedures used in the six occupied counties of Ireland came at an inopportune moment for Mason and the rest of the treacherous Labour Party leadership - prior to the beginning of the general election campaign. Although exposing certain (widely-known) facts about the ill-treatment of prisoners, the Report's main objective is to excuse the RUC for the 'excesses' of 'young' and inexperienced prison officers. But the Report has caused enough attention to be drawn to the very important questions involved in the struggle against British imperialism in occupied Ireland to be of some significance - despite the fact that it is a calculated cover-up of the real nature of repression in Northern Ireland.

The Report comes at a time when attention has already been turned towards the problems of Northern Ireland in relation to the Castlereagh and Gough interrogation centres as well as the 'blanket' protest for political prisoner status in H-Block of Long Kech Concentration Camp and the mass demonstration through Newry organised by Sinn Fein on the H-Block issue. Castlereagh was the place in which prisoner Brian McGuire was supposed to have 'committed suicide' and which has now become a major headache for the ruling class in Britain and N. Ireland since the resignation from the Police Authority Complainst Commission of Mr. Jack Hasard andindependent Protestant Councillor from Dungannon. Declaring that

"in my opinion the police authoirty is guilty of a massive cover-up. They simply don't want to know whats going on",

a Loyalist Mr. Hasard revealed something of the true nature of the role of the RUC thugs and the supposed machinery to oversee its activities.

Even further, two Protestant police doctors revealed some of the torture being meted out in the interrogation centres. Dr. Irwin claimed that 150-160 prisoners in Castlereagh had received injuries that could not be self-inflicted and Dr. Dennis Elliot from the Gough interrogation centre publically requested to be transferred as he could no longer comply with the 1975 Tokyo Convention obliging doctors to expose cases of torture.

Revelations of this kind are bound to worry the Labour 'Minister for Torture' Mason who continues his campaign to justify the continued barbarity which is being carried out in the name of the Labour Party. But since the execution of Airey Neave, Tory spokesman on N.Ireland, which will have thrown thousands of votes into the Tory camp on the 'law and order' vote, the recent accusations of RUC brutality have been thrown into the background. This assasination has not advanced the struggle of the Irish people for self-determination: in fact it has made the conditions for campaigning for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland much more difficult. Nevertheless, as Trotskyists we defend the right of the Irish to wage their liberation struggle as they decide, and we stand in the forefront of the fight to defend democratic rights against the inevitable backlash.

A crucial part of the election campaign should focus on the role of British imperialism in N.Irelandand especially in the role of the Labour government in continuing and extending the reactionary policies of the Tory Party both in the six counties and in the rest of Britain. The demand should be for the ousting of the Callaghan leadership clique and the implementing of a socialist alternative. This demand is especially relevant in relation to Roy Mason who is an NUM-sponsored MP from the heart of 'Scargill-land' and who has not had to face a whimper of criticism from this 'left' NUM bureaucrat.

The role of the Irish 'Free' state's pro-imperialist government should also be exposed - for while Lynch poses as a supporter of a unified Ireland and condemns the 'ill treatment' of prisoners in the North, his government sanctions equally barbaric activites in the South. The demand should be taken up for a unified workers republic in Ireland with full rights for all minorities; the prerequisite for this is the building of a truly independent working class movement based upon the principle of revolutionary socialism.

NUSS

Just as the NUS is important to all students, the National Union of School Students is important to all school students.

It is very easy to see that most of the problems that students have, also apply to school students. Grants, cut-backs in education spending and attacks on democratic rights face everybody in the education system. But it is obvious that there are massive differences between the two unions. NUS is massive, while NUSS is tiny. NUS is recognised by trade unions while NUSS isn't.

The radicalisation of school youth which is taking place because of the economic crisis does give the NUSS a good basis to grow rapidly but the Stalinist leadership have never been able to tap the vast potential which exists in schools. At the 1978 NUSS Conference, the leadership had to admit they had actually lost members, at the same time as this youth radicalisation was taking place.

This vacuum was filled partly by the now disintegrated "Skool Kids Against The Nazis" (wing of the Anti-Nazi League) but this grouping had no serious policies to win youth - and in most cases did not take up the question of unionisation.

In a period of education cuts we have seen not only students taking action in defence of education, but also school students. Schools threatened with closure have been occupied and demonstrations against the cuts always have large numbers of school students on them.

The Stalinist leaders of NUSS, past and present, have always talked (usually with great demagogy) about the importance of building 'links' with the students' movement and even the workers' movement in such action. But their conception of 'links' is very different to ours.

Support and sympathy for the NUSS has to be fought for and of course the best time this can be done is when action is taking place. Most union bureaucrats are hostile to the NUSS and even some branches of the NUS have taken a reactionary position.

School students and students have a common interest. Both groups can help each other in their struggle to an extent which has never been realised in Britain. The oppression which capitalism inflicts on all oppressed sections affect youth extremely sharply.

Workers Socialist League students have been in the forefront of giving practical assistance to school students struggling to build a union in their area. All student unions should pledge to open their facilities to NUSS, and to support local NUSS branches.

The Logic of Stalinism

The April NUS Conference will be remarkable from at least one point of view; the Communist Party will be publicly announcing their intention of winding up the Broad Left - the alliance of Communist Party, Labour and 'left' independents that has dominated the student movement in recent years.

According to the "Morning Star" (March 16th) the Stalinists want to lead a new organisation which will compose of individuals rather than an alliance of political parties. It will be modelled on the predecessor of the Broad Left, the 'Radical Student Alliance', a movement that included Liberal students.

This move is the logic of the strategy that the Stalinists have pursued in the student movement over a number of years. The Stalinist Popular Front policies have been epitomised in the 'democratic strategy' - the strategy that Sue Slipman developed to a fine art. The central feature of this orientation has been the move to "involve" the Tories in NUS - by adopting their policies wholesale and making gifts to them of places on the National Executive. The adoption of Tory policies by the Broad Left has centred on the question of student union democracy. Sue Slipman, in particular, led a vigourous campaign against general meeting sovereignty and in favour of campus-wide secret ballots - both of these policies are central planks of the Federation of Conservative Students' platform. They also came to fruition in the proposals of the Constitutional Review Body which will also be discussed at the April Conference.

The Workers Socialist League has always stressed that the Stalinists' policies in NUS are far from unique - in fact, they simply represent the counter-revolutionary policies of international Stalinism. The Popular Front policy of building alliances with so-called "progressive forces" is pursued by Stalinists throughout the world. The Stalinists call it an alliance to build "peace and socialism". In reality, it is an alliance with bourgeois forces to hold back, suppress and eventually crush the struggles of the working class and oppressed groups.

In NUS in Britain the Stalinists court the Tories in order to outweigh the left and hold back militant struggles. In Italy, the massive Communist Party under Berlinguer propped up a viciously reactionary Christian Democrat government until pressure from its furious working class supporters eventually forced the CP to withdraw from the "historic compromise". In Spain Carrillo's "Euro-Communists signed the 'Moncloa Pact' (the Spanish social contract) with the government of former Francoists. In Chile the disastrous military coup which toppled the Popular Unity government and installed one of the most violent military dictatorships in the world was a direct result of the failure of that government, led by the Chilean CP to draw class lines and of its deliberate overtures to the Christian Democrats instead of relying on the independent strength of the working class.

The " democratic strategy" is, therefore, the encapsulating of the reactionary policies on international Stlinism - and it is no less counter-revolutionary for being on a smaller scale. The establishment of a new "democratic alliance" to which the Stalinists obviously want to attract "progressive Tories" as well as radical young Liberals, is simply the logical outcome of the "democratic strategy" - the Popular Front is beginning to take on an organisational frame.

The Broad Left has obvicusly lost a great deal of influence at a local level over the past two years. The Stalinists euphemistically refer to this turn away from the Broad Lefts' rightward path as "apathy". Steve Palmer writes in "Morning Star"

> "The Broad Left at a local level has been considerably weakened as students have increasingly turned away from activitiesin their students unions and the NUS"

The reality is of course, that the Broad Left's reactionary policies have alienated militant students who have turned instead to the available "left alternative" in the Socialist Worker Student Organisation and the Socialist Students Alliance. Already, the announcement to consolidate these reactionary policies has provoked dicnsich within the Communist Party, and it will inevitably provoke a major crisis among militants drawn towards the Broad Left.

The task for those who reject this move is to examine the whole record of the Broad Left, and to see that the establishment of this new alliance is the culmination of a long history.

The SSA, are clearly incapable of understanding the manoeuvres of Stalinism - they present no political analysis of the role that the Broad Left play and, in order to preserve unity their programme is based on the lowest common denominator of agreement. Similarly the SWSO have only countered the Broad Left with apolitical cries for more militancy, presenting no alternative programme.

The Workers Socialist League, as part of the Trotskyist movement which was built out of the struggle for principled policies and practice in defence of the international, independent class interests of the working class, is in a unique position to challenge and defeat the Stalinists. We urge all those who wish to do the same to join us in the fight to build an alternative, revolutionary leadership in the NUS.

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— Workers Socialist League —

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist organisation which fights to build a revolutionary leadership that can politically prepare and mobilise the working-class and its allies for the taking of state power and the construction of a socialist society.

The fight of the WSL in Britain is a part of the struggle for the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the World Party of socialist revolution, founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky. The basis of this fight is the theory and practice of the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

The WSL puts forward a programme to defend the interests of the working class today against the attacks of capitalism in crisis. The aim of the programme is the independent political mobilisation of the working class towards the overthrow of capitalism and its state machine in the capitalist countries.

The fight for socialism is impossible without the fight to expose at every step the misleaders of the working class: the Labour and trade union leaders (both 'right' and 'left'), the Communist Party Stalinists and the petty bourgeois nationalists who derail anti-imperialist struggles in the underdeveloped countries.

Only through such a struggle can the working class find a road out of the capitalist crisis--falling living standards, unemployment, denial of basic rights, colonial repression as in Ireland, and the threats of fascism and war.

SUSSEX OCCUPATION

The Student Union at Sussex University moved into occupation of the main administrative building on March Ist, against a 'quota' system of entry restrictions against overseas students, implemented for the first time this year.

Alongside the attacks on SU financing, the quotas are a further form of the well-disguised education cuts of the outgoing Labour Government.

Even though overseas students must pay for being 'foreign' - 30% extra in fees and up to £20 per week for residential accomodation - their courses particularly in the science areas, are subsidised.

The government hopes to cut the total cost of these subsidies by cutting the numbers of overseas students, which is why by the beginning of this academic year the UGC sent instructions to all university administrations to implement the quotas on pain of financial sanctions.

At Sussex the matter was handled in an especiadly bureaucratic and underhand manner. The decision to implement the quotas had been taken without a word of discussion taking place on all the participatory committees of the Broad Left and the Administration, and, further, without a word of information being passed back to the student body by the Broad Left Executive.

This 'passivity' of the Broad-Left grew into active opposition as the campaign against the quotas grew, culminating in an hysterical resignation by a leading communist Party member from the Executive as the Union passed a motion calling for direct action. The great weakness of the situation as students moved into occupation, was the absence of any comittment and active co-operation from the trade unions on campus.

Trade Union Delegation

However, led by members of the Workers Socialist League an agreement was reached at a meeting with trade union delegates, to take a joint delegation to the Vice Chancellor on the limited demand that quota instructions be withdrawn immediately, pending further research by all concerned parties.

On meeting the delegation - which had been fought against by Anarchists and the SWP caught up in the early euphoria of the occupation - the clique of reactionary bigots running the University Administration stated their intentions clearly. Undoubtedly enthused by the national climate of attacks on strikers and pickets, and the vicious confrontation taking place between the Tory Council and public sector workers in Brighton, (see elsewhere in this issue) the delegation was informed that the students union "must be taught a lesson", and that legal means were to be used to smash the occupation.

In response, the Union took the correct course by turning to the mass of students and demonstrating its ability to withstand the use of police force by the Administration, countering the misguided perspective of certain sections who wished to defend the 'right' to occupy, and the Anarchists-ironically enough - who took to using legal counter-measures.!

Accordingly, there was a highly successful closure of the University for one day, and when some days later, confronted with 200 students refusing to vacate the occupied building on bailiffs' instructions, the University Administration baulked from bringing coach loads of police onto campus and withdres their injunction.

The success around the minor issue has not been matched by progress on the removal of the quota system. At a local level the matter rests for the moment at a stalemate, while nationally little was been done to fight the quotas at other institutions and expose the betrayals of the Broad Left-dominated National Executive.

The Easter Conference must be the area to begin these moves. The government and the Broad Left seriously hoped that the quotas by picking on overseas students, would be a quiet way of imposing the cuts with the least resistance.

A national mass movement of students rejecting both the cuts and their disgusting racist character, will make sure their hopes are decisively undone.

REVOLUTION IN IRAN

THE NUS estimate that there are some 10,000 Iranian students in Britain. At least, there were. Since the fall of the Shah many students have returned to Iran hoping to help in the building of a new society there. The question is - what sort of society will be built? And the answer is by no means clear. The position at the moment is that a religious lunatic acts as one nominal head of the country whilst a dyed in the wool defender of bourgeois (that is, capitalist), normality acts as the other nominal head. Somewhere below them and as far as we can tell on a patchy and uneven basis, committees of soldiers, workers and peasants actually run the country. An uneasy relationship exists between the three.

The large demonstrations of women, supported by left-wing groups, together with the continuing struggle of the several national minorities in Iran, reveal most graphically that the mass movement is not ended with the establishment of an Islamic republic under the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Nevertheless the workers and peasants of Iran are easy prey to the Ayatollah's left wing rhetoric. This can only be remedied when a leadership is provided which can point a way forward to the socialist republic which can satisfy the demands of workers and peasants. No such leadership exists at present in Iran.

Such a leadership would have to be built around demands for a constituent assembly based on the workers and peasants committees which already exist in some areas and which should be built in others; for an armed and organised workers and peasants militia to replace the standing army; for a complete separation of state and mosque; and for an economic programme to meet the needs of workers and peasants based on planned production and common ownership under workers' control.

The Workers Socialist League remains prepared to discuss the building of such a leadership with anyone who is in sympathy with such a programme.

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Trotskyism Today

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