

BEFORE the 1979 general election, top Tories drew up a secret 'hit list' of relatively weak and poorly-organised workers to be taken on and defeated. Four groups were singled out: steelworkers, British Leyland, the rail unions and the civil servants.

The idea, of course, was to move on to the big battalions — miners, dockers and so forth — on the basis of victories over these weaker groups.

Setback

The militancy of rank and file steelworkers took Thatcher by surprise. But in BL things have gone very much according to plan so far — and employers everywhere have begun copying Michael Edwards' anti-union methods.

As with BL, a defeat for the civil servants would give a massive boost to the Tories' attack on effective trade unionism everywhere.

And it would be a major setback for all public sector workers. Already, the Tories have set a 5 per cent ceiling on the next round of public sector pay rises. Nurses and ambulance

SUPPORT THE CIVIL SERVICE STRIKERS

men are currently up against exactly the same arrogant Tory intransigence that the civil servants have been battering against for the last 16 weeks.

Hitting

Clearly, it is in the interests of all workers that the Tories' strategy for the public sector is

defeated. But so far, the weak-kneed approach of the civil service union 'leaders' has kept the struggle isolated from other trade unionists. Instead of hitting the docks and airports with an all-out strike, and appealing to other workers for support, the leaders went instead for selective action with high strike pay, involving

very small numbers in complete isolation from the rest of the trade union movement.

Vague

Largely as a result of these tactics, many trade unionists do not identify with the civil service struggle as strongly as they should do. There seems to be

'Forget the white collar, bowler hat image. They are as dedicated trade unionists as anybody...

'Do not be gulled by the media. They are fighting for the right to negot-

iate which was set up 25 years ago. The Government has not only taken that off them but also the right to arbitration'

Emlyn Williams,
President, South
Wales Miners.

a vague feeling, even among militants, that this isn't a 'proper' strike and that civil servants are not 'real' trade unionists.

To counter this, we need to stress that most

civil servants are low paid workers. Two-thirds earn less than the average wage.

Clerical Assistants are on between £59 and £72.60 before tax.

They are claiming a

15 per cent increase (with a minimum of £10) — hardly enough to keep up with inflation. The Tories, after unilaterally tearing up the civil servants' pay comparability agreement and refusing even to release the results of the official comparability study, have offered seven per cent.

The average civil service pension — contrary to popular myth — is only £29 a week. And 37,000 civil service jobs have been slashed since May 1979 — with another 65,000 scheduled for the chop if the Tories have their way.

And as for their right to be considered 'real' trade unionists — 45,000 CPSA members voted for an indefinite strike (with no strike pay), as did 20,000 in the other civil service unions.

Despite the cowardice and incompetence of the leadership, there is no doubt about the guts and determination of the rank and file.

The civil service strike is the central anti-Tory fight taking place at the moment. A victory for the civil service workers would be a massive blow to the whole anti-working class strategy of this Government.

HOW TO WIN

by Stephen Corbishley

FOR OVER 15 weeks the national leaders of the civil service unions have argued that carefully selected strikes, with high rates of strike pay, would defeat the Tories.

The key weapon was going to be the blockage of tax, VAT, and other revenue to the Government. And over £5 billion has been blocked.

But Thatcher has not given in. In desperation the national union leaders made feeble attempts to step up the selective action, and combined that with going cap in hand to the Tories, begging for a compromise of 8 or 8½ per cent.

The Tories said no.

'Unity'

The CPSA leaders had already consulted their members through the annual May conference, and had been instructed to immediately shut down the airports and the docks.

The Council of Civil Service Unions (COCSU) refused. Instead they just brought out the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) and Department of Employment (DE) computer centres.

And they consulted the members again. The CPSA leaders agreed to

recommend all-out strike action, strongly expecting to lose the vote and thus have an escape route for giving in.

But CPSA members voted 45,336 for all-out action, 24,124 for escalating selective action, and 33,744 for giving in. In other unions the votes were weaker for 'all out', but decisive against the 7 per cent. The Inland Revenue Staff Federation voted 22,923 to 18,371 against all-out. But when those who voted against all-out action were polled again on escalation or giving in, 17,328 voted for escalation and only 3,199 to give in.

The Major Policy Committee of COCSU, on Thursday 18th June, voted to step up the selective action. And the CPSA leadership, under the guise of 'unity', went along with it.

But militants and socialists must prepare and build for all-out action now. If the leaders will not lead, then action must be initiated by the rank and file.

Militant

We should call for the selective action to close docks and airports immediately. These are the crucial areas: strikes in driving tests, DE/DHSS benefit computer centres, etc, are not

designed to, and cannot hope to, decisively hit the bosses, the bankers and the Tories.

The strikes need to be backed up by mass pickets. The COCSU full council, at its meeting on July 2nd, should pledge to make any action decided by rank and file members official — and mobilise the militant striking offices for flying pickets.

In areas like Scotland and the North, very high votes were registered for all-out action, particularly in the DHSS and DE offices.

Failure

More demonstrations and publicity — especially for claimants — are also needed.

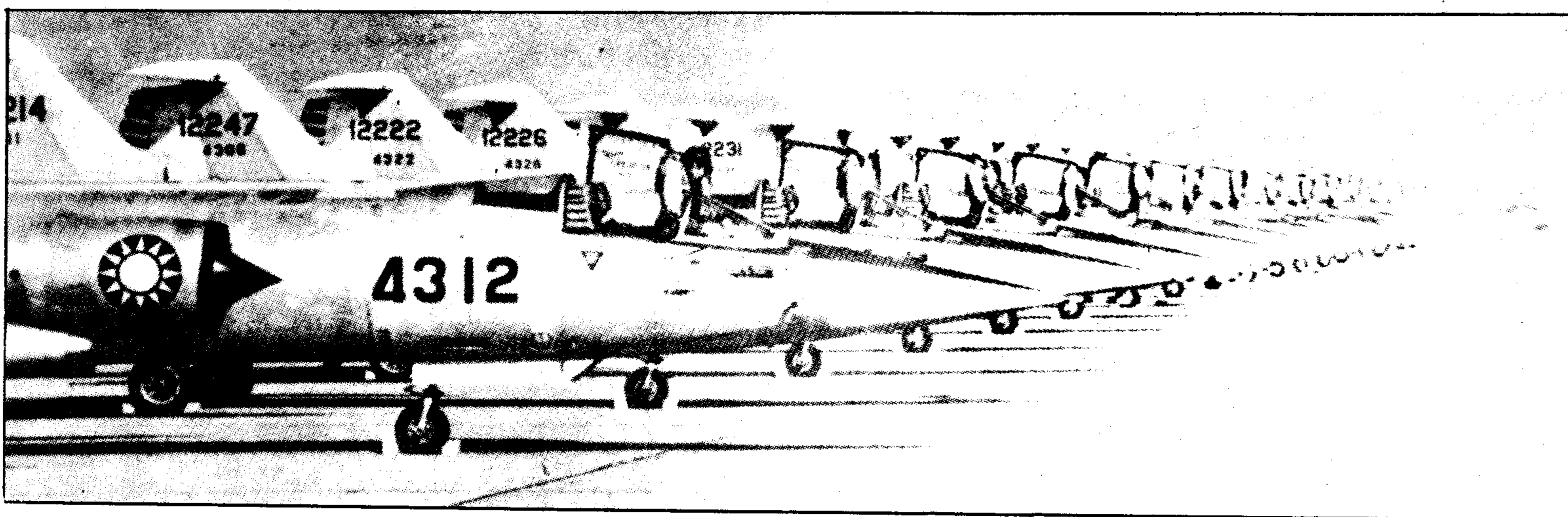
The local COCSUs must be democratised, made more accountable, turned out towards the wider labour movement, and linked among themselves.

The first step towards links, with the national meeting of COCSUs in Manchester on June 6th, were very important. The failure to hold the agreed meeting on June 20th was a setback.

From now on these meetings must be held weekly, thus providing the basis for leading the rank and file despite the dithering of the bureaucrats.



Pictures
this page and page 4
TESSA HOWLAND (IFL)
page 16, ANDREW
WIARD (REPORT



The power to cripple state power

by John Lister

TOP SECRET radar tracking stations have been forced to close. Monitoring stations vital to the British intelligence services have been strike-bound.

Lethal cargoes bound for nuclear submarines have been halted, and warships kept paralysed at dock-sides. NATO communications and rehearsals for war in Europe have been disrupted. Customs checks in British and Irish ports have been suspended.

Flow

The legal system has been dogged by the closure of courts and the pile-up of paper work. And the flow of cash to central government from taxation has dropped to a trickle.

Many of these actions have been partial and temporary — carried out as part of a wave of militancy that has swept through the civil service unions. But the implications are wide-reaching.

Many civil servants bemoan the fact that they had no industrial muscle to bring to bear against the Government. Yet the fact is that seldom before has a group of workers had such capacity to take action striking right at the nerve centres of the capitalist state machine.

The extension of trade unionism into the bureaucracy of the state poses new

questions not only for the Tories, the capitalist class, and the military elite, but also for the workers' movement as a whole.

Who can doubt now that trade unionists have it in their power to control, disrupt or halt some of the most basic repressive and aggressive activities of the state?

They can interfere with war plans, block surveillance mechanisms, impede or even halt air and sea traffic, prevent the operation of immigration restrictions and customs searches, and strangle the government economically.

Indeed, the potential power of the civil service unions is far greater than has been shown so far, since the selective action that has been imposed has enabled the armed forces and non-union members to focus their strike-breaking efforts on particular operations. An all-out stoppage would pose far greater problems to the government.

Six

The determination of the Tories to uphold their six per cent public sector pay limit has alienated and antagonised a section of workers until recently regarded as completely integrated into the state apparatus.

The state is no neutral body, impartially administering to the needs of all. On

public services — social security, health, education, airports and roads, post and telephones, etc. Some of these public services have been won by working class struggle; all reflect the inability of pure capitalist market economics to provide for society's basic needs. But all are also trimmed and adjusted to capitalist control.

Rule

The functions of the state bureaucracy are dictated by the material and political requirements of the capitalist class. Seeking a low-wage workforce and minimal expenditure on public services, for instance, the Tories have chosen to spend on unemployment benefit and social security rather than creating jobs through programmes of useful public works.

Some sections of capitalists and most Labour politicians would prefer a different strategy — by which the state would levy increased taxes and use that revenue to create additional jobs and thus defuse the mounting anger over unemployment.

But in either case the state acts as the instrument of capitalist rule, and its repression is aimed at those who challenge the rule.

The police on the streets of Brixton, the troops on the streets of Belfast,

the contrary, the state rests first and foremost on the conflict of interests between the ruling minority capitalist class and the exploited majority which forms the working class.



Now they're trade unionists... civil servants in Brixton.

Central to the state is the necessity for the defence of the private property of the capitalists against the demands of the working class. The two inseparable bases of this defence are the operation of a judicial system of law based on private property and the repressive powers allocated to special bodies of armed men — police and armed forces.

To staff, supply and finance these, a state bureaucracy is required to levy taxes and administer the day-to-day operations of the various wings of government.

The state bureaucracy also administers a range of

immigrant officials harassing blacks, social security spies harassing claimants, and Special Branch spies compiling files on trade unionists, all play their role in the preservation of the system of exploitation which brings prosperity to the few and poverty to the many.

Yet the civil service unions have shown that this can be undermined by determined actions.

A refusal by immigration officials to enforce racist laws could undermine the government's strategy to divide black workers from white.

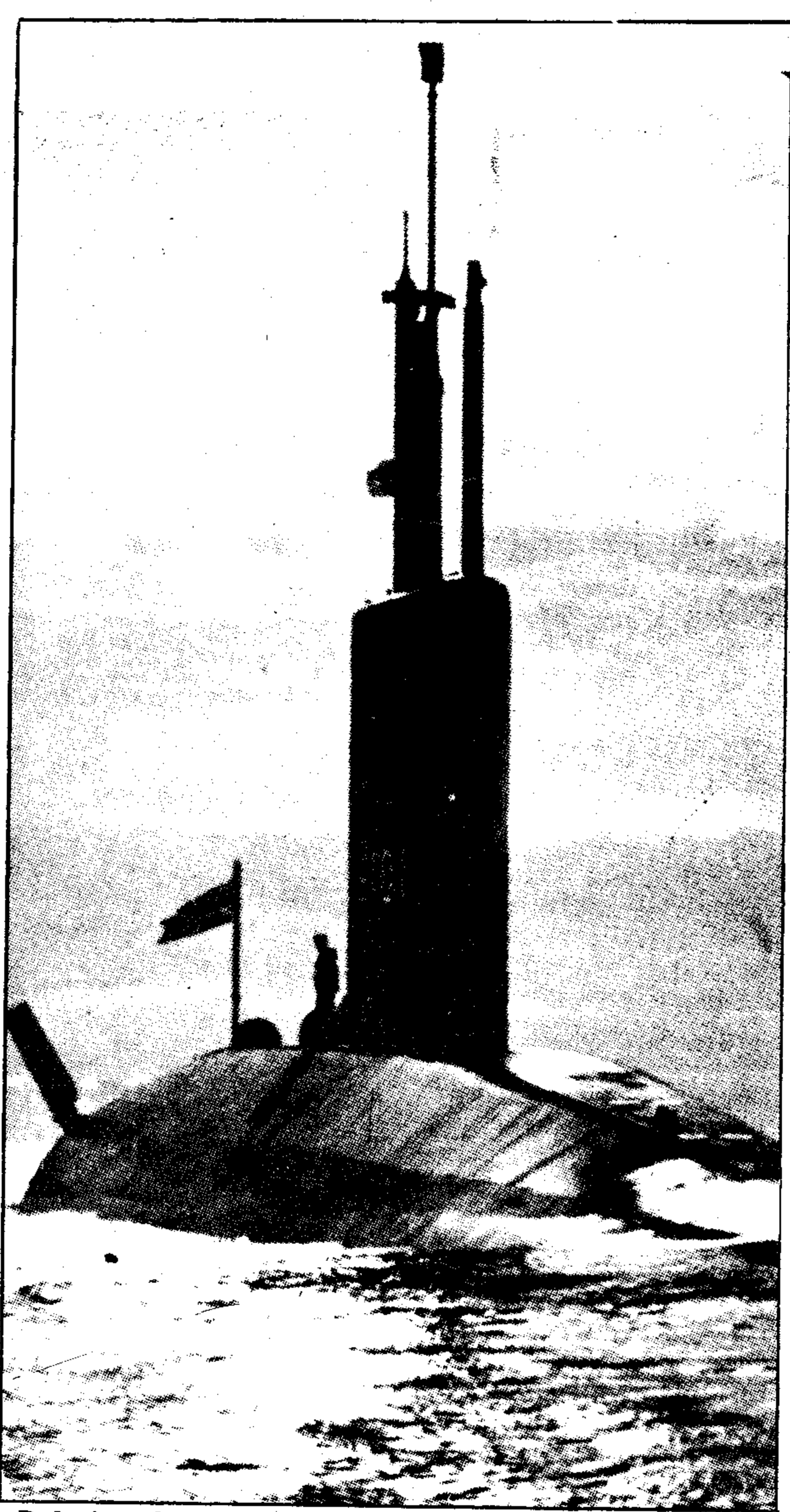
Strike action by key workers in defence establishments could cripple Thatcher's reactionary war drive.

Join

The more that civil servants recognise that they, too, like other trade unionists, are exploited and oppressed by the state machinery which they operate, the greater the chances that they will see the need to join with the working class in the struggle to overthrow the existing system.

And thousands of civil servants know from their own experience how much the state machine is tied to the existence of capitalism.

Visions of simply moving from capitalism to socialism through reforms legislated



Polaris submarine

through Parliament and administered by the state are no more than deluded pipe-dreams.

Marx, Engels and Lenin all stressed that there is no way in which the exploited majority can simply take over the state and wield it to their own advantage. History — in particular the Chilean catastrophe of 1973 — has proved them right.

State

Only mass action by the working class can overthrow capitalist exploitation. The basis of the capitalist state machine must be smashed — the standing army and the police disbanded and replaced by workers' militias as the basis of a workers' state.

Private ownership of the banks, trusts and major industries must be replaced by nationalisation, without compensation, under workers' management. And a new system of law appropriate to these property relations must be established.

The majority must assert its rule over the old minority of exploiters.

And in the drawing-up of a workers' plan to utilise and expand the productive forces left languishing by the capitalist class, sympathetic experts from the present civil service must be enlisted alongside rank and file trade unionists.

Only then can the apparatus of the state — a workers' state — become an instrument genuinely operating for the benefit of the mass of the people. Civil servants must play their role in this fight.

THE PICKETS MUST FLY

By Simon Temple

STRIKES have to be won actively. If you just walk out, go home and hope for the best, you'll probably lose.

The bosses have every chance to get at you as individuals, divide you up and convince you that there is no possibility of winning, while the union bureaucrats get a free hand to fix up a sell-out.

But there's been plenty of experience in the last ten years of how to win.

It was obvious from the start of the 1979 lorry drivers' strike that picketing the transport depots was not going to achieve much. The management could simply sub-contract the work to owner-drivers and scab firms, and hold out more or less indefinitely.

So the factories, warehouses, docks and railway yards that the drivers normally loaded out of and delivered to were picketed. In each area, strike committees were set up to run the action with delegates from each TGWU road transport branch in the district.

The Hull strike commit-

tee succeeded in virtually sealing off the town, while the Warrington committee got national publicity as a result of its careful vetting of the issue of exemption certificates. (Issued to allow the movement of medical supplies.)

But where the full time officials got control of the committees there were problems. For instance, drivers picketing the Cadbury's chocolate factory in Birmingham were surprised when the union told them to go away because they were holding up vital food supplies! (They kept the picket on anyway.)

The drivers won even though there weren't enough of them to go round the thousands of places that needed picketing. When scabs turned up determined to cross the line, they usually couldn't be stopped.

But back in 1972 the miners were able to mobilise thousands of flying pickets during their strike and concentrate them on the places where coal was still moving. They took the trouble to explain their case

to workers in the local factories and mobilise their support.

At Saltley Coke Depot in Birmingham 700 miners fought for several days to stop cowboy drivers taking loads out, and didn't quite succeed until local transport and engineering workers struck for the day and several thousands marched down to join in.

The police and the scabs knew they were beaten, and the depot stayed shut for the rest of the strike.

The key to that victory was that the miners saw what they had to do to win, and then went out and did it. They refused to be bound by the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act or the furor about 'mob rule'. Other workers saw that they were serious about winning their strike, and supported them.

Likewise when the Southampton dockers were locked out last March they went out and picketed all the ports (as far away as Hull and Felixtowne) through which their work was being diverted. They took no not-

ice of the laws against 'secondary picketing' and were able to get the support of other dockers and lorry drivers in most areas, and they were quickly re-integrated.

The Civil Servants should be in a really good position to put the screws on the government if the lessons of the past ten years are learned.

While picketing city centre offices is obviously worthwhile, it shouldn't be the main priority. The places to hit are the ones that affect the economy of the country.

Large-scale picketing of docks, airports, inland container depots and the like would soon have the government crawling for a settlement.

But it isn't enough to leave it up to the small number of customs and air traffic control staff to picket their workplaces. There are not enough staff.

What it needs is workers from the sections with a large membership, such as the DE and DHSS, to join in.



Steelworkers picket in last year's strike

The unemployed

ORGANISING

SUPPORTING THE STRIKE

The millions of claimants are some of the most important allies the civil servants can win by explaining that this pay battle is part of the fight for decent wages for all workers, and closely linked to the fight for jobs and for public services.

But the civil service unions' leadership has not tried to make any link with claimants. **STEPHEN CORBISHLEY** reviews the issues.

The TUC, working hand in glove with the Manpower Services Commission, has succeeded in its bid to 'tame' the Newcastle Unemployed Workers' Centre.

The Centre was set up in 1978, financed by the City Council Urban Aid fund and the MSC. It was, in fact, the inspiration behind the TUC's plan to set up a national network of unemployed centres.

However, the activists (mainly trades council delegates) behind the Newcastle centre had a very different idea from the TUC about the aims of such a centre and how it should be run.

They wanted an organisation controlled by rank and file trade unionists and the unemployed themselves, with the emphasis on campaigning — leafleting dole queues, supporting workers in struggle, demanding free public transport for the unemployed, and so on.

They also worked closely with the local Unemployed Workers' Union. Last January, the Newcastle centre called a conference to discuss establishing a national federation of unemployed centres. It was at this conference that a TUC representative turned up with a set of 'guidelines' for the centres.

The guidelines were not up for discussion — they were a fait accompli from the TUC Organisation Department. The Guidelines effectively rule out any campaigning activity. They limit the objectives of the centres to

counselling and advice, opportunities for training, channeling requests for assistance to tribunals, educational classes, and promoting schemes under the MSC's programmes.

Firm rules for the make-up of a centre's management committee are also laid down: half from the TUC Regional Council and half from the Local Authority. 'Representatives of the unemployed' have no voting rights.

The document also includes the following menacing passage: 'Should any trade union body seeking to establish a centre or any management committee of an established centre act outside TUC guidelines in any way that damages the interests of the unemployed or the trade union movement or could put at risk the funding of centres, it would be for the TUC Regional Council concerned to inform the TUC and the appropriate local authority'.

The Newcastle conference was split between those who wanted a concerted campaign against the guidelines, and those who favoured attempting to manoeuvre within them. Newcastle Trades Council voted to oppose the Guidelines as 'ill-conceived and negative', but shied away from a confrontation with the TUC over the issue.

Meanwhile, the Newcastle centre continued with its campaigning activities, and maintained its link with the Unemployed Workers' Union.

The crunch came at the end of April.

Newcastle Trades Council received a letter from the MSC telling them that unless the TUC Guidelines were adhered to, their funds would be cut off from May. In particular, the MSC objected to the centre's links with the UWU, and demanded 'no further physical contact with the Unemployed Workers' Union'.

One of the leading Newcastle activists told us: 'We felt weak because there had been no real campaign against the Guidelines after the January conference. It would have been an unequal fight between us and the MSC, given that they control the purse strings,

and were clearly acting on behalf of the TUC as well.

'So we've had to temporarily knuckle under and accept their demands. We've had to agree to a new management committee, including four councillors, someone from the Careers Advice Service, an MSC representative, and someone from the Regional TUC.

'And we've had to cut off all formal links with the UWU. We even have to exclude them from our new premises. How we'll be able to work as a campaigning organisation I don't know.'

The lessons of Newcastle must be taken to heart by all those who want to build a fighting movement

against unemployment. The TUC want these centres to be tightly controlled, limited to recreational and welfare activities and, at most, 'respectable' pressure politics.

And they'll make sure their wishes are obeyed — unless we organise an all-out, national campaign against the guidelines, and for democratic, rank and file control of the centres.

Most importantly, any money from the MSC or local authorities must be on a 'no strings' basis. If this proves impossible, then the local labour movement must organise and raise the necessary finance itself.

TUC straitjacket

THE T.U.C.-appointed organisers of the 'People's March' have decided to keep the campaign going — but it will remain firmly under their bureaucratic control.

The major proposal is for a 'Youth Festival for Jobs' combined with a lobby of Parliament in November. There will also be a trans-Pennine march from Leeds to Blackpool, to lobby the Tory conference.

The marchers are being encouraged to turn up in their green 'uniforms'

and march as a contingent on the Cardiff demonstration on July 4th, and local demonstrations are planned in most major towns the 'People's March' passed through.

All these initiatives must be supported, but we must ensure that they aren't used by the TUC to channel the anger of the unemployed into a futile round of protests, divorced from the fight against closures and redundancies.

The national 'Coordinating Committee' and the

local support committees must be made accountable to the rank and file of the labour movement [at the moment they are appointed by the Regional TUCs] and — most important — the campaign must be thrown behind struggles like Lee Jeans and Rover SD1.

In the West Midlands, for instance, rank and file marchers are pressing for maximum support for the 'Save Rover SD1' march called by the BL Combine Committee for August 15th in Birmingham.

UWU aims

THE Statement of Aims proposed by the Leicester Unemployed Workers' Union states:

"The capitalist method of production can only offer the working class one crisis after another, and never any long-term gains in their standard of living. It needs to be replaced by a planned socialist economy, under the control of the working class, to produce for the needs of the majority, not the profit of the minority."

The UWU, it says, will "help the unemployed with any problems they may have regarding their benefits, rights, etc. We also campaign for facilities to be opened to the unemployed... We reject all proposals that the unemployed should do voluntary work in return for their dole money..."

"We demand that all the unemployed have jobs with wages at Trade Union rates. Temporary working schemes are being cynically used as a means of cheap labour for the employers... We demand all such schemes be under strict control of the Trade Union movement..."

THE PEOPLE'S March for Jobs fired the enthusiasm of workers and unemployed, especially those who lined the routes of the March or joined it when it passed through their towns.

But now the TUC and its unemployment centres offer no prospect of a real fight against unemployment.

Before the March many local unemployed action groups and unions were set up. One of these unions, in Leicester, has decided to carry on the initiative set in motion by the unemployed workers' centre in Newcastle in January this year, and to call a national conference of Unemployed Workers' Unions, to take place at Leicester Polytechnic Students' Union on June 27th.

Pam Owlawe, secretary of the Leicester UWU, told us:

"The Newcastle conference was originally called to discuss the problems of organising the unemployed, but became dominated by a discussion of TUC guidelines for unemployed workers' centres. This effectively split the conference down the middle.

A union for the unemployed

The employed in the trades councils and trade unions were prepared to try and negotiate within the guidelines. The unemployed and the organisers of the conference wanted more independence. They also decided that a recall conference was needed to discuss the original tasks of the conference.

Leicester was chosen because of its geographical location and because the Leicester delegates had won respect at the conference because of their contributions on the need for independent organisations.

The People's March, and the experience of Leicester UWU members on the Eastern Leg of that march especially, have made us realise more than

ever that if we're going to get more than cups and tea and sympathy from the TUC centres, then an independent National Unemployed Workers' Union is needed.

The NUWU will aim to unite the employed with the unemployed to actively campaign against unemployment and to support those workers taking direct action to save jobs.

A major aim of the union will be to campaign for all trade unions to accept the unemployed into their ranks and to have dual membership of the NUWU and the appropriate trade union.

An Unemployed Workers' Union is needed because some sections of the unemployed can't be taken into the present trade union structures,

e.g. some unions only keep members on their books for twelve months after they have been made redundant.

At the conference, amendments will be taken to the main resolution drafted by us, the 'Statement of Aims', and the Draft Standing Orders, already circulated to over one hundred groups and to contacts made on the People's March.

We've also allocated plenty of time for discussion on the fight to democratise the TUC unemployed centres, and how the UWU relates to the task of organising YOPs schemes and jobless youth.

To help link the UWU with employed workers' fights for jobs, speakers from British Leyland and Ansell's (the latest victims of trade-union sell-outs of rank and file action to defend jobs) and from the National Union of Mineworkers will be speaking in the afternoon session.

Over 50 groups have replied and will be sending delegates. All indications are that this will be the take-off point for the building of a mass national unemployed workers' union. 99



National conference

WE'VE HAD THE MARCH—NOW LET'S ORGANISE!

Organised by Leicester Unemployed Workers' Union

SATURDAY 27 JUNE 10.30—5.00pm

Leicester Polytechnic Students Union

Sessions on Organising the Unemployed and The Fight for Jobs

Accommodation available on the Friday and Saturday night

Social events on both nights

Further details 52 Wyville Row, Leicester or phone 0533 857828

CPSA leaders cop out

the conference agenda from them pointing the way forward and in fact they opposed every single motion coming from branches that called for any stepping up of action.

EXERT

If we are to win this campaign, CPSA members will have to exert the maximum pressure possible. The result of the ballot was a good one but it will be wasted if it is merely left up to the NEC to make the decisions.

The ordinary members up and down the country will have to lead by example. It will be the only way to win this campaign.

was the wrong result. The consultative exercise had fairly obviously been a manoeuvre to engineer a return to work vote — or at worst a close result on a low poll, that could then be discounted.

ALL-OUT

This much had been obvious from contributions made by several right wingers during the NEC debate on whether to hold a consultative exercise in the first place.

Fortunately for the right wing, the other eight unions on COCSU came to their rescue, as every one of them rejected the call for all-out action. This allowed the senior vice-president, Pat Womersley (in the President's absence) to make a ruling forbidding any discussion of CPSA going it alone with all-out action.

Her reason for this was that this was a COCSU campaign and members had voted for an all-out strike of all civil servants, not just CPSA members!

On being challenged, her ruling was upheld by 13 votes to 7. (Len Lever, the only 'independent' on the NEC, voting with the Broad Left.)

UNREAL

The debate which followed on from this ruling therefore took on a quite unreal air as, in spite of the large majority of members in favour of all-out strike, the NEC were not allowed to discuss such action except in

the context of bringing out all COCSU unions.

The NEC were not even allowed to discuss a motion calling for a deferral of all-out action pending further discussions with the other unions. CPSA members have shown clearly where they stand on the issue of furthering the fight on pay.

PACK UP

They want all-out strike action. It is absurd to argue

that CPSA members were saying they would come out only if everyone else did. If that was the case we may as well pack up now. It doesn't take a genius to realise that the FDA or AIT or even IPCS are not going to go down that line.

The right wing NEC have been completely out of their depth throughout this whole dispute. At CPSA Annual Conference this year they failed to give any kind of lead. There was no motion on

Help to change the Labour Party

THE Tories have cut 37,000 civil service jobs and plan to cut 65,000 more. There will be even harsher cuts if the Tories win the present struggle over wages.

But the cuts didn't start in 1979. The previous Labour government blazed the way.

How can civil service workers make sure that the next Labour government does not continue the cuts? How can they avoid the cuts struggle becoming just one long fighting retreat in face of aggressive governments?

Paper promises from notorious arch-cutters like Denis Healey mean nothing.

Strong industrial action is vital. But by itself it is not enough: the state is a strong, centralised emp-

loyer, able to choose the time and place for battle.

The industrial action must be clearly linked with political action.

The fight for Labour democracy is all about getting a government committed to the labour movement's policies and willing and able to carry them out. It is about making the conference decisions on better public services not just pious soft soap, but binding commitments for a future Labour government, backed up by mechanisms of accountability which have real teeth.

That's why the civil service unions should be affiliating to the Labour Party and throwing their weight behind the fight for democracy.



NUPE workers fight to hold Labour to their promises

The need for a new leadership

by Ted Eames

THE national leaders in our pay campaign have shown a complete mixture of incompetence and naivety", declared one rank and file union member on an Oxford tax office picket line last week.

"More than that", added another, "they have been trying to sell us out and the only reason they have not succeeded is that Thatcher won't give them room to do it".

It would scarcely be possible to make a clear assessment of the leadership's role from the day last October when the Tories broke the civil service pay agreement for the day last week when they totally 'mishandled' the consultation with the membership on whether to go for an all-out strike.

Fuel

The problem of leadership can be traced back to the root cause — the complete failure of the Council of Civil Service Unions (CCSU) to achieve even minimal political understanding of their Tory opponents.

This was apparent right from the outset, when the setting up of the Pay Research Unit was present-

ed to the membership merely as fuel for moral indignation. The whole orientation of the union bureaucracy was to keep the question of pay separate from the other big issues affecting civil service workers, issues such as the cuts, new technology, and victimisation.

The effect was to allow a political onslaught by the government to gather momentum while the union leaders were desperately trying to turn the clock back by deploring the 'intrusion' of politics into civil service industrial relations.

They even complained publicly that Thatcher was acting just as the Trotskyists in the unions said she would, and that her tactics were playing into the hands of the 'reds'.

This failure to understand the nature of the Tory government was the fundamental failing from which sprang a series of tactical mistakes both before and after the campaign began on March 9th.

The decision by the leadership to stick by the PRU and ignore the fact that it was a corpse was one such blunder. They were able to hold onto this position in the CPSA only by the narrow-

est of margins.

In addition, the claim of 15% with a £10 underpinning had only just been launched when Kate Losinska, right-wing president of CPSA and chairperson of the COCSU, went on TV to reveal that the union leaders might be willing to accept an offer in the region of 9 per cent.

Fetish

On the surface one strength in the union leadership's approach was to arrange an unprecedented unity between the nine civil service unions on the pay campaign. This was desirable for obvious reasons, but it soon became clear that the bureaucrats had created a fetish of unity, and that the problems inherent in maintaining unity with management associations and ultra-moderate groupings were being ignored.

So when the IPCS insisted that members should be given the option of voting to continue selective strikes in the consultation process on an all-out strike, the CDCSO went along with them, for the sake of unity, ironically producing waves of confusion and disillusion in the rank and file.

Most crucially the right wing assumed that a more intensive version of the tactics that had been used against the Labour government in 1979 would be sufficient against Thatcher in 1981.

However, selective action against a Labour government reeling from the wages offensive of the working class in 1979, and with an election imminent, is very different from selective action against the determination and confident class programme of a Tory government not half way through its term of office.

Despite this the union leaders maintain a desperate adherence to the selective action policy, right into the 12th week. The CPSA leadership, for instance, went into the union's Annual Conference without even a recommendation of any kind on the pay campaign. As a result of the mauling they took there, and the continued unwillingness of the Tories to up the 7% offer by even a half per cent, the CPSA lurched to a position of recommending all-out strike with just one membership circular to argue the position, after weeks of official propaganda had boosted the merits of the selective action.

At the same time, es-



Ken Thomas

calation of the campaign was presented as an option, with acceptance of the 7% as a third possibility. This was done despite the fact that the levy to support the strikers on 85% pay was known to be in dire trouble, and that it would have to be increased eight-fold.

This resulted in the confusion which led to a strong 'all-out' vote being weakened by a substantial vote for acceptance, and about a third voting for the unrealistic continuation of the selective action policy.

In addition to these points other more sinister manoeuvres have been carried out by the likes of Alistair Graham, would-be heir-apparent to CPSA General Secretary Ken Thomas.

Graham saw the in-

volvement of the DHSS/DE section in the escalated action as an opportunity to isolate and witch-hunt the Broad Left leadership in these sections.

This is why the whole question of the leadership is so central, and why the lessons must be drawn at each stage.

If it were only a question of the 1981 pay award, it would be important enough. But at stake in this campaign is also the future mechanism of pay dealing, the fight against the cuts, the battle over new technology, resisting victimisation arising out of the strike, and a whole list of Tory proposals like

regional pay, merit payments, and re-grading.

This is also why the victory won at CPSA conference on the election of senior full-time officials is such a breakthrough in the fight to establish a democratic and accountable leadership. The conditions for overthrowing the present leaders in the main civil service unions are clearly ripening.

The membership is rapidly learning that only a politically strong and well armed leadership is capable of defeating the Tories, and that only socialist policies can defend our living standards and win improvements.

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