

GREAT BRITAIN

Firemen's strike puts torch to Labour wage limit

The Civil Defense has been sent in to help. But though trained to cope with nuclear war, they've had no luck fighting fires.

LONDON—The strike by British firemen that began Nov. 14 is the first major showdown between the unions and a government determined to limit all wage increases to a 10 percent ceiling. The Fire Brigades Union is a strong organization maintaining a solid union shop, but has never called an all-out national strike in its 50 year history. The decision to take strike action, reached at a delegate conference, indicates the strong resentment of men doing a skilled and dangerous job for a meager wage.

Firemen's pay was for many years pegged to parity with that of the police, but in the past decade this tradition has been abandoned; thanks to high-pressure lobbying, the police have been able to push ahead. A fully trained fireman with five years' service now earns 65 pounds (\$120) a week before tax, a notch below average industrial earnings. Many groups, such as bus drivers, are better paid. The working week is 48 hours before payment of overtime (for most workers it is 40 or 42). The FBU is now demanding a 30 percent raise. The employers—strictly speaking the local authorities, in effect the government—refuse to grant more than 10 percent.

Can't find fire hydrants.

When the strike became inevitable, the government decided to mobilize Civil Defense fire-fighting equipment manned by troops. Though supposed in theory to cope with nuclear war, the CD force has turned out to be utterly inadequate for the ordinary run of fires. The engines, produced in 1950 and mothballed ever since, have no modern equipment—for instance, they use only water and not foam—and press pictures remind us of old-style fire-fighting as depicted in children's books. The soldiers are unfamiliar with city streets and often can't find the hydrants. Where a fire would normally attract three modern engines arriving within five minutes, it now burns for 20 minutes before one antiquated engine is on the scene.

Some sections of the press have launched attacks on the firemen, described as heartless and irresponsible, which reach a new low in bias. They are waiting, it seems clear, for a death that can be clearly ascribed to the strike.

Happily, as I write, no such death has occurred. Union leaders have wisely allowed members to use their own initiative in emergencies. On several occasions strikers have quit the picket lines to help the soldiers where life was in danger, notably in helping to rescue patients in a hospital blaze. But the Army teams are on their own when only property is at stake.

So far the most destructive fire has been in a large modern power station, starting in a cable duct in the turbine hall. Local firemen say that they could have killed the fire in an hour. It defeated the CD equipment and burned for two days; the power station will be out of action for at least a year and the repair cost will be immense. Other fires in factories and warehouses have similarly got out of con-

trol and the total loss of property runs into millions of pounds. The despair in insurance offices is easy to imagine.

Tempers have so far remained cool, the firemen feeling nothing but sympathy for the unfortunate soldiers. There are signs, however, of anger at some alleged underhand tricks. At one London station, firemen who had left the picket line to rescue a girl trapped in an elevator returned to find items of modern equipment removed from the station.

Astonished by support.

Tory spokesmen and Tory newspapers are demanding that the troops should be empowered to enter the fire stations, by force if necessary, and bring out the modern engines. Home Secretary Merlyn Rees, the man responsible for government strategy, has refused this demand on the grounds that it would exacerbate the dispute. He is also advised that such action would be pointless, since sophisticated equipment can be used only by fully-trained professionals. The Tories, however, have an obvious political need to find something to say other than simply backing the government.

FBU men have been genuinely astonished by the sympathy they are receiving from the public. It seems that many ordinary people have suddenly recognized the debt they owe to men whom they normally take for granted. Fire stations are adorned with large banners—"NERO REES FIDDLES WHILE LONDON BURNS" is typical—and passing motorists are urged to toot their horns in token of support. The tooting in some places is continuous.

At Euston fire station, near my London home, pickets are collecting signatures to a petition urging acceptance of the wage demand. Signatures, mainly from office workers who pass the station, are coming in at the rate of 1,000 a day. Collection boxes at this one station have been filled with 800 pounds (\$1,440) for the strike fund in the first week. Similar news comes in from other cities, including a rather piquant incident in Cardiff, where a prostitute walked in with a bottle of whisky for the firemen, remarking that her nightly earnings exceeded their weekly wage.

Government unyielding.

Though the strike is solid, except in some rural areas where regular firemen are outnumbered by part-timers who are not FBU members, the government remains unyielding. As Rees and Callaghan see things, their entire wage policy is being tested. Certainly, if the firemen win anything like a 30 percent increase, it will be hard to resist similar demands—notably from the miners. The unofficial strike by power station workers has ended, but the leader of the electricians' union has let it be known that there will be militant action—in his words, "an awful bloody battle"—unless adequate raises are secured when the current contract runs out.

It must be remembered that the TUC now endorses no part of government wage policy, except the pledge of a 12 month interval between demands. The 10 percent ceiling is a unilateral government policy buttressed neither by the force of legal compulsion nor by TUC endorsement. Yet for Callaghan everything depends on enforcing the ceiling—the confidence of foreign investors and the IMF, and also the alliance with the liberals which is keeping the government in office. Political leaders who have repeatedly stated that there can be no exceptions naturally find themselves with no room for maneuver. *Mervyn Jones writes for the New Statesman.*



Striking firemen picket outside London fire station Nov. 14.

CP opts for pluralism

The Congress of the British Communist party, held on Nov. 12-14, has predictably resulted in endorsement of the "Euro-communist" policy urged by the leaders. Quotation marks are in order because these leaders sedulously avoid the label, stating that mere coincidence accounts for their adoption of a line of thinking that parallels that of Berlinguer and Carrillo.

Hard-line delegates from some branches put up numerous amendments to the party's policy document—the newly revised version of *The British Road to Socialism*. The key vote was on a proposal to delete the pledge that a Communist government would resign office if defeated in a subsequent election. The issue may

well be called unreal in a country whose CP isn't within hailing distance of electing a single member of Parliament, but it was taken as the litmus test of belief in pluralistic democracy.

The amendment was defeated by 300 votes to 66. Victory for the leadership was never in doubt, since the majority of hard-liners (known in CP circles as "tankies" from their support of Russian tank invasions) had earlier quit the party to gather in the so-called New Communist party. Taking this into account, the minority vote at the Congress was surprisingly large and reveals the reluctance with which Britain's Communists have come round to the new ideas.

—Mervyn Jones

G&W and Dominicans

Continued from page 10.

island. Bluhdorn tried and failed to get Paramount's production of *Islands in the Stream* to film in the Dominican Republic. He also initiated the idea of filming the Miss Universe contest last July (which took place in Santo Domingo) for possible use in a later production. (The Miss Universe pageant could provide benefits for Gulf and Western in more ways than one. Gulf and Western subsidiary clothing manufacturer Kayser-Roth owns all the rights to the Miss Universe contest and receives payments from each host country. Kayser-Roth also has a plant in the Dominican Republic.)

Perhaps the most fitting Gulf and Western/Dominican/Paramount collab-

oration was *Godfather II*. A key scene in the film is set in the last dying days of Batista's Havana, with the glitter of the casinos, the tourism, the mob, the armed soldiers, and the plush decadence that characterized the city prior to Castro's rise to power. Present-day Santo Domingo was in fact a "natural setting" for that scene; as the travel writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* declared: Santo Domingo is "perhaps on its way to becoming a replacement for once gay Havana." With the troops on the streets, the casinos in full swing, the dominant foreign company in a cozy relationship with the government, the film's image and reality blend. For Gulf and Western that reality means extraordinary profits and a lush island of their own. ■

German lawyer

Continued from page 9.

politics, but more profoundly, to the ideology of the famous Trilateral Commission." (The 1975 report to the Trilateral Commission on *The Crisis of Democracy* recommended more authoritarian government in the Western democracies, and in particular, measures to curb "value-oriented intellectuals" who carp about injustice and abuses of power.)

Admiral Antoine Sanguinetti, who objects to the American-imposed substitution of "security" doctrine for national defense, expressed indignation against "the violation of right of asylum in my country" and concern over "the rise in Europe of a phenomenon of South Americanization."

As if to confirm the Admiral's fears,

President Giscard's personal envoy, former Interior Minister Michel Poniatowski, last month visited Argentina where, in an interview with the newspaper *La Nacion*, he declared that: "The first condition for human rights as well as for freedom and progress is the uprooting of terrorism to which we are all subjected; that is the *sine qua non*. Terrorism is a state of war in which all States are in solidarity..."

Whether called "Germanization" or "Americanization," Western Europe is suddenly faced with the development of a process in which political issues and conflict are shoved aside to make way for a "war on terrorism" that is self-perpetuating because it breeds the very evil it claims to combat. ■

THE BIKO



Demonstrator holds a picture of Steve Biko on the steps of the Pretoria old synagogue where the inquest was opened Nov. 14.

STEVE BIKO WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADER OF OPPOSITION TO THE SOUTH African apartheid system of recent years. His organizing, until he was banned, and the powerful influence of his ideas, which reached all over the country, made him feared by the Pretoria regime. Some gruesome details of his death at the age of 30 while being interrogated by the Secret Police came out during the inquest into his death.

He was kept naked in a cell for 19 days, most of them in chains, and was taken naked and unconscious 750 miles in a jeep just before he died. His case has roused international attention, memorial meetings are being held all over the world and his ideas, expressed in the Black Consciousness ideology, are being carefully studied.

This interview with Steve Biko is one of the few firsthand recordings of his thoughts in the last years of his life. The tape of this interview has been circulating underground in South Africa. It was recently smuggled out. Because of its clandestine nature, both its origin and the identity of the interviewer are unknown.

The tape begins with the conclusion of a statement by a third party. In response, Biko gives a history of black resistance in South Africa.

—Dennis Brutus, exiled South African poet,
professor of English, Northwestern University

[INTERVIEWER: What are the origins of the Black Consciousness movement?]

STEPHEN BIKO: The history starts off after 1963-64. If you remember this era, there were many arrests in this country which stemmed from underground activity by PAC (Pan Africanist Congress), by ANC (African National Congress), and this led to some kind of political emasculation of the black population especially, with the result that there was no participation by blacks in the articulation of their own aspirations. The whole opposition to what the government was doing to blacks came, in fact from white organizations, mainly student groups like NUSAS (National Union of South African Students), the Liberal party and the Progressive party.

When I came to university, some time in 1966, in my own analysis and that of my friends, there was some kind of anomaly in this situation where whites were, in fact, the main participants in our oppression and at the same time the main participants in the opposition to that oppression. The arena was controlled by whites in what we called "totality of white power."

We argued that changes can come only as a result of a program worked out by black people. For black people to be able to work out a program they need to defeat the main element in politics working against them,

a psychological feeling of inferiority, which was deliberately cultivated by the system. So, equally, the whites in order to be able to listen to the blacks needed to defeat the one problem they had, which was one of superiority.

Now, the only way to come about this, of course, was to look anew at the black man and what is lending him to denigration so easily. So first of all, we said black students could not participate in multi-racial organizations which were by far white organizations because of the overwhelming number of white students at university. Second, these organizations were concentrating mainly on problems affecting the white student community.

And third, of course, when it came to political questions, they were far more articulate than the average black student because of their superior training, and because of their numbers they could outvote us on any issue. This meant that NUSAS gave political opinions that were largely affected by the whiteness of the organization.

So in '68 we started forming what is now called SASO, the South Africans' Student Organization, which was firmly based on black consciousness, the essence of which was for the black man to elevate his own position by positively looking at those value systems that make him distinctively a man in society.

To what extent have you been successful?

To the extent that we have diminished the element of fear in the minds of black people. In the period of '63 to '66, black people were terribly scared of involvement in politics. The universities were putting out no useful leadership to the black people, because everybody found it more comfortable to lose himself in a particular profession, to make money. But since those days, black students have seen their role as being primarily to prepare themselves for leadership roles in the various facets of the black community.

There is far more political talk now, far more political debate, and far more condemnation of the system from average black people than since 1960 and possibly before. I'm referring to the oppressive educational system that the students are talking about. And [the] police, in fact the government, wants to further entrench what the students are protesting about, by bringing police saracens, and dogs, and almost soldiers, so to speak. (Saracens are armored cars. —ed.)

Now the response of the students then was in terms of their pride. They were not prepared to be cowed even at the point of a gun, and hence, what happened, happened. Some people were killed and these riots just continued and continued, because at no stage were the young students, nor for that matter at some stage their parents, prepared to be scared.

Everybody saw this as a deliberate act of oppression to try and cow the black masses. Everybody was determined equally to say to the police, to say to the government, "We shall not be scared by your police, by your dogs, and by your soldiers." Now, this kind of lack of fear I see as a very important determinant in political action.

Since last June something like 400 young blacks were killed. . . .

499, actually.

499. . . And do you think this will not be a deterrent?

No. I think it has been a very useful weapon in merging the young and the old. Before then, there was obviously a difference in the outlook of the old generation to the younger generation. The younger generation was moving too fast for the old generation. The old generation was torn between Bantustan politics on the one side, old allegiances which were not progressive, you know, to groups like ANC, PAC, without any resultant action. And there were those who were simply too scared to move.

TAPES

Do you condemn Bantustan leadership altogether?

Yes, of course. We condemn Bantustan leaders, even the best of them, like Buthezi.

Well, just say a few words on that.

Our attitude here is that you cannot, in pursuing the aspirations of black people, operate from a platform which is meant for the oppression of the black people. Now we see all these so-called Bantustan platforms as being deliberate creations by the Nationalist government to contain the political aspirations of the black people and to give them pseudo political platforms to direct their attention to. Now men like Buthezi, Mafanzima, Mangope, and so on are all participants in the white man's game of withholding the aspirations of the black people.

They are leading black people to a divided struggle, to speak as Zulus, to speak as Xhosas, to speak as Pedis, which is a completely new feature in political life of black people in this country.

We are of the view that we should operate as one united whole towards attainment of an egalitarian society for the whole of Azama. And therefore any entrenchment of tribalistic, racialistic or any form of sectional outlook is abhorred by us. We hate it and we seek to destroy it. It is for this reason, therefore, that we cannot see any form of coalition with any of the Bantustan leaders, even the so-called best of them, because they destroy themselves by virtue of the kind of argument that they have put up.

Do you believe that by means of disturbances like the one in Soweto you will bring about a real change of this society?

I see this as only one form of discontent. I'm of the view that the change process is going to be protracted. It depends entirely on the degree to which the Nationalist government is prepared to hold on to power. My own analysis is that they want to hold on to power and fight with their backs to the wall. Now, conflict could be avoidable only if they would be prepared to avoid it. Those who are at the seeking end, that is those who want justice, who want an egalitarian society, can only pursue their aspirations according to the resistance offered by the opposition.

Now, I am a member of the Black Consciousness Movement. I was a member of BPC before I was banned, and now I have been, I'm told, appointed as honorary president of BPC (Black Political Congress). The line of the BPC is to explore, as much as possible, non-violent means within the country. That is why we exist. But there are people, and there are many people, who have despaired of the efficiency of non-violence as a method. They are of the view that the present nationalist government can be unseated only by people operating a military wing.

I don't know if this is the final answer. In the end there is going to be a total effect of many agencies for change operating in South Africa. I, personally, would like to see fewer groups. I would like to see groups like ANC, PAC and the Black Consciousness Movement deciding to form one liberation group. It is only when black people are so dedicated and so united in their cause that we can effect the greatest result.

When you speak of an egalitarian society, do you mean a socialist one?

Yes. I think there is no running away from the fact now that in South Africa there is such an ill distribution of wealth that any form of political freedom which does not touch on the distribution, the proper distribution of wealth, will be meaningless. The whites have locked up within a small minority of themselves the greater proportion of the country's wealth.

If we have a mere change of face of those in governing positions, what is likely to happen is that black people will continue to be poor, and you will get a few blacks filtering through into the so-called bourgeoisie. Our society would be run almost as of yesterday. So that for meaningful change to occur, there needs to be an attempt at reorganizing the whole economic pattern and economic policies within this country.

BPC believes in a judicious blending of private enterprise which is highly diminished, and state participation in industry and commerce, especially in industries like mining, gold, diamonds, asbestos, and so on—like forestry and, of course, complete ownership of land. Now, in that kind of judicious blending of the two systems, we hope to arrive at a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Clearly you see a country in which black and white can live amicably on equal terms together?

That is correct. We see a completely non-racial society. We don't believe, for instance, in the so-called "guarantee for minority rights," because guaranteeing minority rights implies an evolution of portions of the community on a race basis. We believe that in our country there shall be no minority, there shall be no majority—there shall just be people. Those people will have the same status before the law, and they will have the same political rights before the law. So, in a sense, it will be a completely non-racial, egalitarian society.

But will the vast number of blacks after all their experiences be able to live a life without giving vent to feelings of revenge?

We believe it is the duty of the vanguard political movement that brings about change to educate people's outlooks. In the same way that blacks have never lived in a socialist, economic system, they will learn to live in one. In the same way that they've always lived in a racially divided society, they've got to learn to live in a non-racial society. There will be many things to learn, and all these things must be brought to them and explained to the people by the vanguard movement leading the revolution.

There's no doubt in my mind that people—and I know people in terms of my own background, where I stay—are not necessarily revengeful nor are they sadistic in outlook. The black man has no ill intentions for the white man. The black man is only incensed at the white man to the extent that he wants to entrench himself in a position of power to exploit the black man.

As you know, the main argument of the government always has been that the black man isn't on a civilizational level at present to pull his full weight politically. Now, do you think of a one man-one vote franchise?

Yes, we do. Entirely one man-one vote, no qualification whatsoever, except the normal ones that you find throughout the world.

And you think that the black man in fact is perfectly well able...?

The black man is well able, and the white man knows it. The irony of that situation is that when the white government negotiates so-called independence for the so-called Transkei, they don't speak in terms of the qualified franchise. In the Transkei, every Transkeian votes, and you get white Nationalist politicians arguing that this is a system that is going to work for the Transkei. But somehow, when it comes to the broader country, the black may not vote because they don't understand the sophisticated economic patterns out here—they understand nothing.

This is all fascinating. As an outsider, I can only say my feeling is that this is bound to be a very long and probably very bloody road.

There is that possibility. But as I said earlier on, it will be dictated purely by the response of the Nationalist party. If they've been able to see that in Rhodesia, Smith must negotiate with the leaders of the black people. I think conflict is unavoidable, given the predictable response from the present system. And this conflict can be pretty generalized, and extensive and protracted. My worst fears are that, working on the present analysis, conflict can only be on a generalized basis between black and white. We don't have sufficient groups that can form coalitions with blacks. But, the more such groups come up—that is groups from the whites at the present moment—the better to minimize that conflict.

Mr. Biko, thank you very much.

PROTEST IN THE U.S.

By Harold Baron

CONTINUING STRUGGLES BY BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS ARE BEGINNING TO GENERATE support in the U.S. Major campaigns have developed against banks that make loans to South Africa and against university investment in corporations that operate in South Africa. The public marketing of South African Kruggerand coins has provided another target.

No less than 47 American banks have made loans to South Africa. The bulk of the funds comes from eight giant multi-national banks: Citibank, Chase Manhattan, Manufacturers Hanover, and Morgan Guaranty in New York; First National Bank in Boston; First National Bank and Continental Illinois in Chicago; and Bank of America in California. American banks account for \$2.2 billion of the \$9.3 billion that South Africa owes to transnational banks. This vital support to the troubled economy of South Africa is the target of a national campaign by The Committee to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa.

To date the campaign has brought about the withdrawal of at least \$30 million from the major banks. The biggest withdrawals have been made by trade union and religious bodies. The National Council of Churches declared on Nov. 11 that they were undertaking the "withdrawal of all funds and closure of all accounts in financial institutions that invest or make loans to the South African government or businesses and urge constituent memberships to adopt this policy."

Several NCC checking accounts at Citibank have been closed, a \$6 million pension fund that is administered by Morgan Guaranty is being reviewed. United Electrical Workers and the Furriers Joint Board have withdrawn payroll accounts of \$4 million from Chase Manhattan and \$8 million from Manufacturer's Hanover, respectively. The Executive Board of the United Automobile Workers has voted to withdraw its deposits from American banks that are supporting South Africa.

In a parallel move the Congressional Black Caucus is pushing the Carter administration to eliminate Export-Import Bank guarantees to U.S. companies trading and investing in South Africa. While as of Aug. 31 the Eximbank does not extend loans for U.S. exports to South Africa, it did guarantee \$215 million in bank and other loans.

Last May 9, 294 students were arrested at Stanford University sit-in. They were demanding that the university trustees vote their proxies for over 90,000 shares of Ford Motor in favor of a church-sponsored resolution that the company withdraw from South Africa.

Students at the University of California, at the Berkeley, Santa Cruz and Davis campuses, have held sit-ins

protesting that about one-third of the University's investment portfolio was in companies operating in South Africa.

Anti-apartheid campaigns are underway at the University of Minnesota and the University of Wisconsin (Madison). The trustees of the University of Illinois were forced to vote in favor of a stockholders' resolution to have General Electric withdraw from South Africa. In New England, protests have been organized at University of Massachusetts (Amherst), Dartmouth, and University of Connecticut, among others.

A variety of groups have attacked the sale of the Kruggerand. In New York and Chicago the NBC and CBS television affiliates have been pressured to stop running ads for its sale. Some members from the defunct African Liberation Support Committee have formed a "Ban the Kruggerand Coalition." After several weeks of their picketing, Carson Pirie Scott & Co., the Chicago department store, has withdrawn the coin from sale.

For information on the bank withdrawal campaign contact: Committee to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa (COBLSA), 305 E. 46th St., New York, N.Y. 10017, or COBLSA c/o CALC, 198 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10038. For information on college and university campaigns write Campuses United Against Apartheid, c/o Associated Students of Stanford University, 205 Tressider, Stanford, Calif. 94305 and Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Room 566, 475 Riverside Drive, N.Y. 10027.

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The Houston women's conference

In the history of American women's struggle for equality, the National Women's Conference at Houston, Nov. 18-21, must rank as equal in importance to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, which gave birth to the modern women's movement. In recent times the Houston conference far overshadows any other single such event relating to women's role in American society.

Indeed, in the potential implications of its program and in the number, diversity, and representative authority of the delegates and observers in attendance, the Conference is unparalleled in American political experience.

The Conference was also unusual in that it was mandated and paid for by Congress to advise it and the President on women's rights and affairs, but was not controlled by either the President or Congress.

Over three-fourths of the delegates were elected at public state and territorial conferences. Unlike the "counter-conference" delegates who were self-appointed, they represented substantial constituencies. Along with the 10,000-15,000 observers (who paid their own way) the conference participants comprised a congregation of unprecedented diversity—in age, income levels, occupations, racial and ethnic origin, opinion and creed—to such an extent that the phrase commonly heard among participants was "a rainbow of women."

Rumors of death dispelled.

This diversity did not prevent an efficiently run conference or the adoption by solid majorities of a "National Plan of Action" for presentation to the President, Congress, and the American people. It encouraged and facilitated, on the other hand, a rich exchange of views, the striking of new friendships and organizational networks, and the emergence of new women political leaders.

The conference laid to rest all rumors of the death or decay of the women's movement. It made poor prophets of Phyllis Schlafly and her allies who had predicted the movement would come to an end at Houston, and who belied their own prediction by later complaining about the conference's unity. Against the diversity and heterogeneity of the delegates, the ideological and social homogeneity of the "counter-conference" delegates stood out in stark contrast. If anything died at Houston, it was the myth of the power or popularity of the anti-feminist right.

The unity on program at the conference rests on solid social circumstances. First, the inequality of opportunity, treatment, and condition that all women suffer. Second, the accelerated entry of women into the world of work outside the home (49 percent of all women 16 years of age and older are in the work force, and 41 percent of the full-time work force are women), and the fact that the overwhelming majority of working women are wage or salary earning employees, not capitalists or employers. These two circumstances operate powerfully in generating common needs and common programmatic responses.

The recent movements of blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans have also had their educative effect. From their own experience as well women are especially sensitive to the injustices suffered on account of circumstance of birth, and the conference delegates were particularly receptive to the programmatic proposals of minority delegates (who made up one-third of the total, a larger minorities' representation than at any previous comparable gathering).

The prevalent class composition of

can women, and increasingly of the women's movement (as Liz Carpenter of ERAmerica said, "We can no longer be accused of being a middle-class white women's cause"), was punctuated by the prominent role of labor movement women, especially the Coalition of Labor Union Women, not only at Houston, but also at the state conferences that selected delegates. The conference will very likely strengthen the bonds among general women's organizations, the labor movement, and minorities' movements.

The 25-point National Plan of Action is indicative. Most of the resolutions passed were addressed to the conditions of working women. They ranged from demands for a full employment economy, a national health security system, social security and welfare reforms, a guaranteed annual income, unionization of unorganized working women, and transfer of spending from military to social purposes, to programs concerning child care, homemakers, educational opportunity, older women, rural women, the disabled, the battered, the imprisoned. Other programs such as those concerning the arts and humanities, the media, credit, insurance, victims of rape, and aid to small business women appeal to working class and non-working class women alike.

But the general thrust of the National Plan is toward social goals facilitated by a government (at all levels) to be made into one that is of, by, and for the people, as against market values and corporate investment priorities. In the debate on conference resolutions, the opposition delegates within the conference, like the "counter-conference" participants, were responding to something real when they defended the "free enterprise" system as

much as "pro-family" or "pro-life" themes.

The opposition delegates and the "counter-conference" rightists focused their attack for media purposes on the ERA (which the conference overwhelmingly reaffirmed), abortion, and homosexual rights. The conference majority were not intimidated. "Moderates" and "militants" joined in upholding principle against the temptations of a convenient opportunism. This demonstrated the maturity and growing self-confidence of the women's movement, among newcomers as well as veterans.

The challenge to the corporate system implicit in the National Plan will inevitably draw resistance from the legislatures and Congress as now constituted, and from President Carter. It will also lead to division in the women's movement. Such resistance and division, however, need not weaken the equalitarian wing of the women's movement, which is potentially the majority. They may, on the contrary, strengthen it by further clarifying the issues and the real stakes in fully achieving women's rights, and by quickening alliances with the poor, minorities, and labor.

Learning from feminists.

As the National Plan focuses on legislative programs and hence on electoral politics, the challenge implicit in it will require the emergence of new political leaders rooted in working class interests (a process already evident at the conference), and the transformation of the legislative branches by the election of such leaders, both women and men. Karen DeCrow, ex-president of the National Organization for Women said as much in observing:

"Everybody was saying, 'Why do we have to go through Carter to the Congress? We could be the Congress.'" Easier said than done, but saying is a first step to doing.

The National Plan will now serve as a program around which to organize, just as the conference itself re-energized the women's movement and established new political alliances and networks within and among the states. It represents the adoption by a "mainstream" coalition of organizations and individuals of what was five years ago the Feminist agenda.

The feminist movement has shown how to achieve unity in diversity, and more, the greater strength of a unity that welcomes and sustains diversity. The feminists have also shown that the way to spread new (or revolutionary) ideas and to build organized strength around them is not to hide them in a closet or defer them until a future that never comes, but to talk about them with others, write about them, agitate, persuade, and convince. They have shown how to reach out to people in popular style without forsaking principles. Not being afraid of the American people, nor of ridicule or temporary rejection, they have persisted in the courage of their convictions while submitting them and themselves to popular judgment.

The feminists have shown that it is politically wise and realistic to have confidence in "the hearts, minds and moral consciences of men and women and what they [may] do to make our society truly democratic and open to all." ("Declaration of American Women," Houston Conference).

"We socialists have a lot to learn from the feminists."

