

Socialist Challenge

**THEY MUST NOT FIGHT
ALONE**



SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER

Join the National Demonstration

Called by the London Region of the Fire Brigades' Union

10am Assemble: Speakers' Corner

Editorial

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Britannia Rules - OK?

THE SCOTLAND and Wales Bill has been saved from the ignominy of a defeat at the first hurdle. A combination of sticks and carrots helped reduce the Labour rebellion on the vital guillotine vote. But in the last analysis it was not the taming of their own backbenchers that got the Cabinet through, but Liberal support.

The Tories remain as firmly opposed as ever. They were against both guillotine and second reading. A Tory backbench rebellion never materialised, confirming the triumph of Thatcher's Unionism. Significantly the Ulster Unionists voted with the Tories this time round. Conscious ruling class opinion is acutely aware of the need to deal with Britain's capitalist crisis in the most centralised way possible. Thatcher understands the danger for a future Tory government of allowing any serious political challenge from Cardiff or Edinburgh.

BIGGEST PRIZES

The electoral risks of outright opposition have divided ruling class opinion on how to handle the issue tactically. Thatcher's offensive has begun to crystallise their opposition: if they cannot inflict an open defeat, they will extract all the political concessions needed to see that the British state holds full sway throughout the British Isles. Much has already been won. The success of Thatcher's stance can be measured by the growth of the Tory vote in Scotland and the strong possibility that the Welsh Bill will fall by the wayside. But the biggest prizes have been handed them by their opponents.

The SNP's 'recognition' of the Queen was not just a symbolic gesture. It completed what the media call its 'coming of political age': in short its formal recognition of political expediency and constitutional 'order'. To get crumbs from Britannia's table, it must first accept that Britannia rules: and now it says so.

Above all it is Labour's own approach which offers so much of what the bosses need. The Assemblies' powers are not settled by the peoples of Scotland and Wales, as they would be in a genuine Constituent Assembly election. They are to be parcelled out in meagre Christmas boxes by Westminster's committees and backstage dealers.

Three guarantees are offered: first, the Assemblies will be unable to enact measures in the interests of working people. Second, separate taxation is out, above all on oil. And thirdly, if any threat to these principles emerges from Cardiff or Edinburgh, the veto remains in Westminster.

The stage is set. The Unionists, ably assisted by Labour's anti-devolutionists, will chip away at the Bill and then throw what remains to the tender mercies of the Lords.

Robin Cook, Edinburgh MP, has shown at least some respect for democracy. He now opposes the Bill, but says he will fight it at the referendum stage.

SWEET IRONY

But he is mistaken in his opposition. True, this mangled Bill will not benefit working people in material terms, one jot. Indeed the Tories, with sweet irony, will play on this to mobilise opposition in the referendum. But the Bill offers, for the first time, a chance for Scottish and Welsh people to discuss and decide themselves, in however limited a way, the policies put forward for those countries by the different parties. It will also let them see those policies in action: a chance which could be used to destroy the SNP by a socialist Assembly group committed to half decent internationalist and working class policies.

Such policies would have to rely on working class action and not parliamentary deals. Because Cook sees Parliament only as a place to do deals, he sees no future in an Assembly in which there is nothing to deal with. For socialists the choice is clear: fight for the whole British labour movement to put its weight behind the principle of elected governments in Scotland and Wales without restriction on their powers; and behind a 'yes' referendum vote for any bill which concedes this principle.



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

The price of money

THE SCRUTINEERS from the International Monetary Fund returned to Britain on Monday. In the year since they were last here, Denis Healey has taken over Sir Keith Joseph's policies wholesale. They can feel well pleased.

As a reward one of the policies which the IMF will permit Healey to carry out is the expansion of credit as part of the so-called 'reflation'. This means that the fall in the price of money — interest rates — will probably be a long term one.

Many on the left have argued that high interest rates have been one of the causes of British capitalism's problems. So will things be any better now? CPS, a group of socialist economists, explains.

An historical example may help to clarify matters. In the early nineteenth century, when the capitalist system was establishing itself in England, the ruling class was divided over the burning policy issue of the day: Free Trade or Protection.

The landowners and farmers, and the Tory Party which represented their interests, wanted protection (restrictions on the import of corn) so that the price of corn would not be driven down by the competition of foreign imported corn. Protection would mean that their profits and rents remained high — the higher the price of corn, the higher their incomes.

CHEAP CORN

On the other hand industrial capitalists wanted a low price for corn, and so were in favour of allowing its free importation. Why did they want cheap corn?

Because they had to pay wages to their workers to keep them alive and working, and the cheaper the price of bread in the shops, the lower these wages could be.

This conflict between agricultural and industrial interests was not finally resolved in favour of the latter until 1846 when the Corn Laws were repealed and the Tory Party split.

Today we find a similar division of opinion among the ruling class — not now about the price of corn, but about the 'price' of a much less nutritious, though equally important, commodity: money for investment. What we are talking about here is the rate of interest.

For interest is the money paid by one section of the capitalist class, the industrial capitalists, to another, the loan capitalists, for the use of money. Of course there are many different interest rates, paid for borrowing money in different conditions, but to

simplify matters we can think of them as following just one, the Marginal Lending Rate.

SETS THE TONE

MLR is the rate at which the Bank of England is prepared to lend money for short periods. It is fixed at 0.5 per cent above the market-determined rate which the Government pays on the money it borrows for short periods (Treasury Bills), in order to finance that part of its expenditure which is not covered by tax receipts. From an all-time high of 15 per cent in October 1976, MLR has fallen to 5 per cent today. And MLR sets the tone for the movement of all interest rates in the economy.

Now it is clearly to the advantage of industrial capitalists that interest rates are low, for they want to borrow money for productive investment as cheaply as possible. On the other hand, loan capitalists, who live on interest, and middle-men, such as bankers and financiers, who take their cut from the loan system too, want interest rates to be as high as possible.

PIRATES

But while these two sections of the ruling class may differ over this issue, it is important to remember that they don't differ at all on the fundamental issue of exploitation. They both live off the surplus value produced by the working class, and they are both interested in preserving a system which perpetuates this exploitation.

For if there were no profits produced by workers for industrial capitalists, there would be nothing with which to pay inter-

est charges, and loan capitalists could not exist either. It is simply a question of the division of the spoils between two bunches of pirates.

Now this is not to say that the working class does not benefit at least in the short run from lower interest rates. First, many workers pay interest charges directly, through hire purchase agreements or mortgages on their homes. Secondly, lower interest rates do make investment more profitable, and while much of this does not lead to increased employment, some of it might. Thirdly, more profitable conditions may lead to higher wages than would otherwise be the case.

SMALL PICKINGS

So just as their ancestors could benefit from cheap corn in so far as they could prevent wages being pushed down proportionately, today's working class may be able in the short run to win some small pickings of the gains of industrial capitalists from lower interest rates. Generally it is slightly easier to gain from the direct exploiters, industrial capitalists, than it is from the more indirectly parasitic groups, landowners or loan capitalists.

Nevertheless in the long run the interests of the working class are only served by the abolition of the system as a whole. In a society in which exploitation through the wage system is abolished, disputes about the rate of interest will be relegated to the pages of history books.

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trades unions offer solutions that are in the interests, not of the workers, but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

* To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the revolutionary class.

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of the workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Euro-communist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

Help!

Thanks to the comrades who have already responded to Socialist Challenge's appeal for equipment. We now have almost enough functioning typewriters to produce the newspaper!

Our requirements for the following remain: a radio, TV, cassette recorders, typing paper, envelopes, filing trays, and just about anything else you

can think of that a technologically advanced, highly efficient editorial office ought to have. (That's what we want to be — not what we are!)

Please drop by with anything you have available. Or drop us a line if you would like transport arranged. Our finance manager says we can pay a modest price for equipment. EDITORIAL BOARD

Union bosses threaten Grunwick strikers

The shame of the labour movement

This is the shame of the labour movement.

Four Grunwick strikers — Jayaben Desai, Yasu Patel, Johnnie Patel and Vipin Magdani — have gone on hunger strike outside the TUC headquarters at Congress House. They are doing so 'to focus attention upon the lack of positive action by the TUC and the Unions providing essential services to the company'.

The trade union leaders have responded with threats and blackmail.

The Executive of the strikers' union, APEX, met last Saturday.

Afterwards strikers were told that anyone who went on hunger strike would be suspended from the union for four weeks pending a meeting of the Union's General Purposes Committee which would then consider further action.

They were further told that if any more mass pickets were organised, or a mass lobby of the TUC on 21 December, the strike committee would be abolished and a new one established.

When the strikers turned up to Congress House at 11.15 on Monday morning to go ahead with the hunger strike, they found that there was no end to the bully-boy techniques of the trade union leaders.

They were immediately whisked off by APEX officials Len Gristley and Tudor Thomas to the office of Norman Willis, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC.

For four and a half hours these bullies tried to prevent the hunger strike taking place. At 1pm they were joined by APEX General Secretary, Roy Grantham. Len Murray also attended the meeting for some time to add his weight to the proceedings.

NO GOODS

Not once did any of these gentlemen even hold out vague promises that Wednesday's General Council would come up with the goods.

Grantham summed up their

attitude best when he threatened: 'If you go ahead with the hunger strike, then the strike's finished tomorrow'.

The rank and file strike leaders continue to show great bravery and resilience in the face of such treachery from the trade union bureaucrats.

Jayaben Desai told me as she took up her position outside Congress House:

'We want to put the finger on those who are responsible for the failure of our strike to win.'

'We do not expect the General Council to come forward with any action. For four months they have failed to implement even the weak resolution passed at the TUC Congress. If they come up with nothing then we will be making a direct appeal to the rank and file'.

More than ever the rank and file support for the Grunwick strikers needs to be organised. In response to the sabotage from the TUC and the APEX leaders regional labour movement conferences like the one being organised by the South-East region of the TUC must be turned into the first step to a national solidarity conference.

A network of local support

committees coordinated nationally, committed to building mass action is the best answer to the inaction of Len Murray, Roy Grantham and Co.

It would also put us on the road to building a movement that can kick out these class collaborators and replacing them with leaders prepared to fight.

by Jonathan Silberman

Picket jailed

DEREK BROUGH, a student at Middlesex Polytechnic, has been jailed for 21 days because of his support for the Grunwick strikers and police solidarity with George Ward.

Derek, who is a Socialist Challenge supporter, was charged with assault and obstruction on 11 July, the first national day of action, and is now in Pentonville. At least three pickets have been jailed, one with a three month sentence.

With cases now being dealt with by the notoriously reactionary Willesden magistrates, many more prison sentences can be expected.

News from nowhere

Jaded

SIR RICHARD Racist Dobson touched down to a spot of bother when he finally flew in from his Canadian hide away a few days ago. Walking jauntily along the 'Nothing to declare' channel at Heathrow, he was stopped by a black customs official. And lo and behold inside 'I'd say it again' Dobson's bag were jade antiques for which he'd coughed up £16,000.

Customs were not impressed. Their experts told him the imperialist pillage was worth only £5,000, and they are considering prosecution for evasion of duty. Our experts say this could be avoided if the 'jade' is promptly donated to the Grunwick strikers.

ship the news that '£50 minimum still NUPE aim'. News because this conference demand had until then been kept in cold storage in favour of the leadership's vague demand for 'a substantial rise'.

All of which brings News from Nowhere to the real point of this story — a competition, no less. A desirable prize will be sent to the first branch or other union body which places on the agenda of the next round of union conferences a motion calling for the regular election of the editor of its union journal.

Getting it right

ONE OF our readers began his column in the Financial Times on 15 November: 'Having just been described by Socialist Challenge as "a leading commentator for the ruling class", I feel particularly well qualified to address a question to that very class today. We leading commentators know when to take advantage.'

The question Joe Rogaly was dealing with in his 'Society Today' column was the growing strength of the National Front and racial discrimination, against which he called for 'determined leadership from the top'. He concluded: 'The path to less inflammable race relations is not easy to find. We will not begin to approach it until what Socialist Challenge calls the "ruling class" develops the courage to do what it knows is right.'

So what's right? According to Rogaly — author of the Penguin Special on Grunwick — it includes letting everyone know the extreme right is the same as the left. Seems he spotted the same faces and 'rhythms' among the mass pickets as the supposedly fascist-inclined football crowds. Just shows the appropriateness of our description of Joe.



QUESTION: Which organisation has just produced this anti-fascist poster? The answer is at the foot of the next column.

First aid

THOSE OF us with the opportunity to peruse the trade union journals are guaranteed many a dull moment.

The front-page headline of this month's Health Services is blunt enough: 'Chancellor's budget "nowhere near" enough, says COHSE'. Leaving aside the mysterious prejudice which has shrouded the phrase 'nowhere near' in quotation marks, and turning the page, we find general secretary Albert Spanswick's comment column, again on the subject of Henley's box of tricks. Here the headline asserts: 'A step in the right direction'.

Press freedom, we might presume, has bravely asserted itself. While the boss has his way in his own column, the editorial team has struck out on page one. Not so. Closer inspection reveals that Bro Spanswick simultaneously holds both views of the mini-budget; one to placate a membership reeling from the health axe and cut living standards; the other, half a dozen paragraphs later, to head off their growing militancy.

And so to NUPE's Public Employees (cannot these journals think of more exciting titles?), which currently records the departure of Ken Lomas MP after 12 years as secretary of the union's Parliamentary group. Bro Lomas explains that he took this step because his views were 'in conflict with the views, aims, and objects of NUPE'.

And to reveal this honest MP's own views, aims and objects, Public Employees goes on to list his other posts: vice-chairperson of the Animal Welfare Group, vice-president of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, secretary of the Ex-Royal Marine Friends of Cycling, and treasurer of the Anglo-Icelandic Group.

We shall pass over the fact that it was the illustrious Lomas who took the decision to go (rather than receiving the order of the boot) and move on, briefly, to the journal's front-page article on the local authority manual workers' claim. It was this item which brought to the member-

In print

From the UK Press Gazette — without comment!

'RELATIONS between the police and the press sometimes give rise to problems. I am writing on behalf of all our members to express a collective "thank you" to, literally, hundreds of journalists who have rallied to our support during the current pay campaign.'

'We are deeply grateful for the publicity given to our case in national, regional and weekly papers and I am in no doubt that this played a major part in persuading the Government to set up an independent inquiry, whose findings they are committed to accept.'

'I hope this letter will be seen by many of the journalists who have helped us over recent months.'

JAMES JARDINE, chairman (sic), Police Federation of England and Wales.'

Write on

WE CAN now confirm the judges for our short story competition. They are Fay Weldon, feminist author of *Down Among The Women*, whose latest book, *Little Sisters*, is due out next year; John Fowles, author of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Magus*; and Terry Eagleton, Marxist literary critic, fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

Entries, maximum 3,500 words, must reach us by first post on 1 December. Send them to: Short Story Competition, Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1. The first prize is £25-worth of recently published books. If other entries are published, they too will be handsomely rewarded.

ANSWER: The poster is being put out by the Federation of Conservative Students.



The Grunwick hunger strikers outside Congress House.

Steel: cut hours not jobs

Way back in November 1974, the then head of the British Steel Corporation, Monty Finniston, commented: 'Once our house is in order there's no need for BSC to remain nationalised.' GEOFF BELL explains what has happened since.

This week BSC announces half year losses of £190m, a figure that is expected to rise to £400m by end of the financial year. Clearly Finniston's 'house' has not been in put 'in order', and the prospects of Private enterprise rushing to reclaim the British steel industry is very dim one.

RESCUE

Finniston's comments are worth remembering all the same, especially as the present boss of the Corporation, Sir Charles Villiers, is dropping hints that 60,000 jobs may have to go.

As Finniston was implying, when the Wilson Government nationalised steel it was not some great socialist measure designed to ensure that the industry was run for the benefit of those who worked in it. Rather it was a rescue operation intended to bail out the private owners of the industry.

As worthy a source as the *Sunday Times Business News* commented in July 1976: 'When steel was nationalised most of the industry's plant was clapped out.'

Accordingly, nationalisation was expected to re-organise the

industry and obtain via the State the capital necessary for modernisation, which private enterprise was unwilling or incapable of providing.

But things have not worked out like that. Steel production has slumped, jobs have gone, and modernisation plans have been delayed time and time again. Only the banks are smiling; approximately a quarter of the losses BSC faces this year come from having to foot the bill for interest payments.

The BSC bosses don't talk about such things as interest payments. They prefer to quote the productivity rate in the industry, which is certainly very low compared to that for steel in other countries.

BACKWARDNESS

But the reason for this low productivity has nothing to do with laziness or strikes — the usual scapegoats for management's failures. It lies in the historic backwardness of the industry — the fact that, for example, it failed to adopt the oxygen steel-making methods after the last war. Instead the private owners clung to the

outdated open hearth process. Accordingly, the demand that Villiers is now making for mass redundancies means that steel workers are required to pay for a crisis not of their making. Certainly modernisation of the steel industry is necessary, and such modernisation would cut labour time.

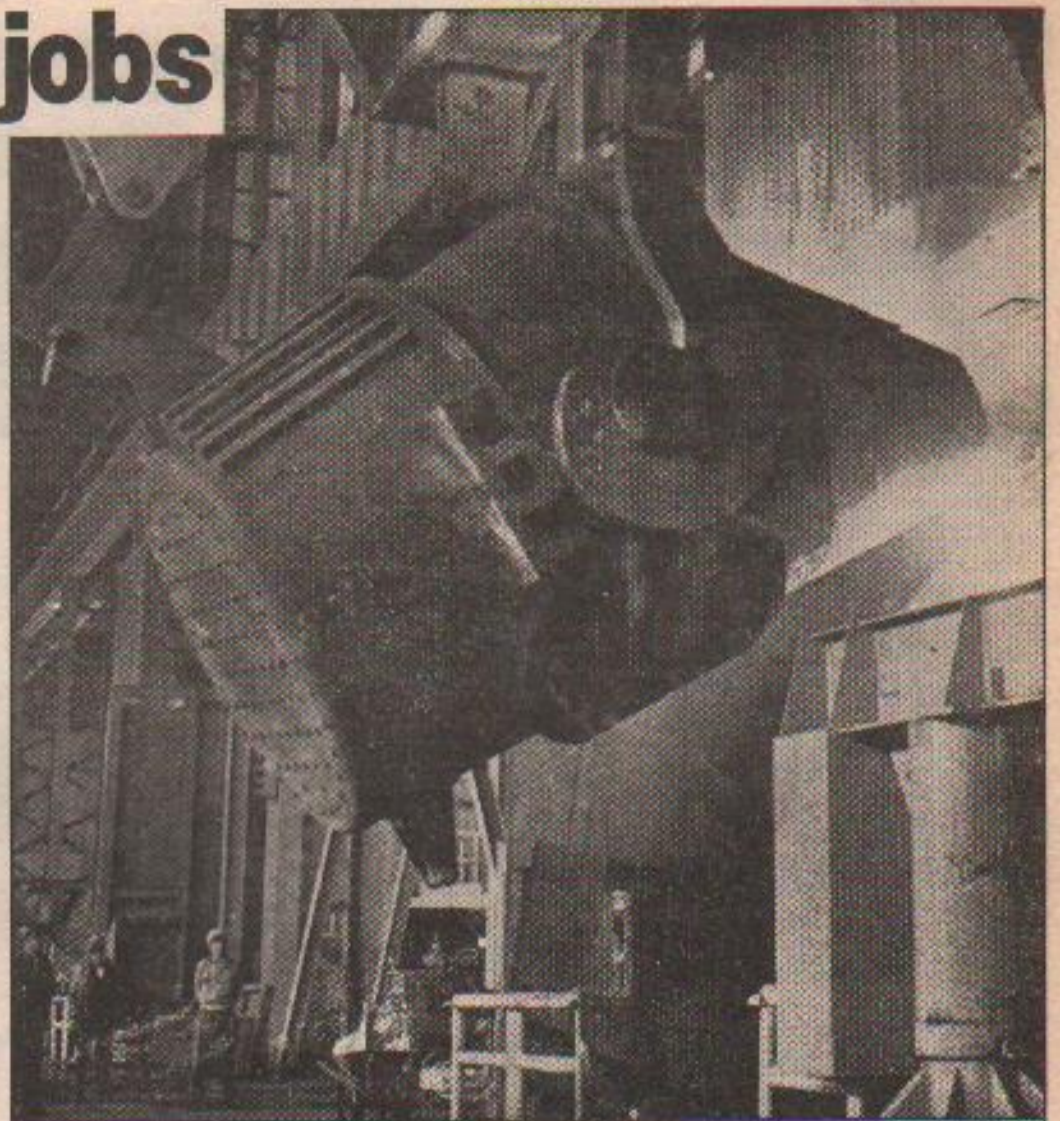
It is an ideal opportunity for steel workers to insist on a cut in the working week, without loss of pay and without mass redundancies.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Such a policy would be entirely counter to that being adopted by Bill Sirs, chairperson of the TUC steel committee and leader of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. Sirs said earlier this month: 'We recognise there is a crisis and we are prepared to help.'

Being 'prepared to help' might mean the union giving the go ahead for the closure of steel plants at Shotton, East Moors, Clydebridge, Ravenscraig, Hartlepool and Hamilton, all of which are areas already suffering from heavy unemployment.

Such a 'solution' is a good example of current crisis in British capitalism as a whole — making the workers pay for something which is neither their fault or their responsibility.



Edwardes' green light for Leyland confrontation

THE EXPECTED 'break up' of Leyland has now been revealed. The four divisions of the company, Leyland Cars, Truck and Bus, Special Products and Leyland International are to be consolidated as subsidiary companies complete with their own boards and non-executive chairpersons. Apparently the aim is to make them self-contained and more manageable.

But as the *Economist* makes clear this week: 'More — particularly within bothersome Leyland Cars — is promised within the coming 12 months.' The re-organisation is another step in clearing the decks for an offensive against Leyland workers. PAT HICKEY, shop steward at Rover Solihull explains:

The plan, drawn up by new Leyland chairperson Michael Edwardes, will mean separate accounting within the cars group. This will enable management to point the finger at the main loss makers and concentrate the attack on the workforce there. Longbridge and Cowley will almost certainly be the first in the firing line.

The reorganisation follows management's success in the ballot on corporate bargaining, which aims to take negotiating rights out of the hands of stewards and puts them in the hands of trade union bureaucrats.

In the company paper *Leyland Mirror*, under the heading, 'Full Speed Ahead', managing direct-



MICHAEL EDWARDES

or Derek Whittaker called the victory for corporate bargaining ballot, a 'tremendous boost'. Within three days of the result the working party which prepared the sell out has been reconstituted as the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee.

This body is scheduled to handle much of the bargaining for the group's 100,000 hourly paid workers. So the old negotiating bodies are dead in all but name, even though the funeral will be postponed until 1979.

Management has changed its presentation of the agreement since the 'yes' vote. They now describe an incentive scheme in the original package as giving employees a 'chance' of a bonus on top of their wages. The parity scheme is now seen as a staged increase — 'provided productivity targets are met.'

ATTACKS

The company sees the package as the green light for attacks on the workers. Edwardes said: 'If we have to take tough action in respect of some people to protect the future of many many thousands of people, logic says it has to be done.'

The implication is clear: Leyland workers face redundancies,

speed up and closures. When the Dolomite car reaches the end of its production run at Canley for example, there will be no new model to replace it.

The Speke plant will not get a replacement for the Stag. This is going to Solihull where management will attempt to introduce a night shift. The conditions of Rover workers will therefore deteriorate while unemployment in Liverpool will rise.

BOOST

Edwardes strategy of plant by plant confrontation was given a boost by the right wing in the Cowley unions. A new T&G branch has been formed at Cowley with Cy Blake as chairperson. He is also a deputy senior steward and has attacked 'irresponsible minorities in trade unions'.

Reg Parsons, senior steward for 4500 assembly workers, supported him and declared that 'our main objective is to see that this plant survives and Leyland prospers.' He threatened 'to sift out the outside forces that are working against the well being of this company.'

These statements must give Edwardes great comfort. But Cowley workers will have some questions to ask these gentlemen in the not too distant future.

They will not forgive those who trespass against them

PIERS CORBYN reviews the situation leading up to the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law conference in Birmingham this weekend.

THE CRIMINAL LAW Act, aimed at curbing all occupations and squatting, comes into effect on 1 December. This is a threat to the sort of action firefighters have taken in occupying stations in a number of towns. But squatters in London might be the first to feel the full force of the new legislation.

The London threat comes as the sting in the tail of the Tory GLC's offer to give tenancies to the 5000 squatters in its properties. George Tremlett, Tory spokesperson on housing in London, has threatened a crackdown starting in December using both the civil and the new criminal law.

The London Squatters Union welcomed the offer of tenancies which they explained (and Tremlett admitted) was the result of mass squatting in the past. But they are demanding that the GLC drops the idea of a crackdown on the homeless people who happened to squat after the arbitrary 25 October cut-off date.

The GLC 'purge' points to squatters as the first target for the Trespass Laws. The Government has also consistently presented the new laws as being primarily anti-squatting. The press has enthusiastically taken

up the theme.

If they succeed in 'legitimising' the new laws with lurid tales of old folks being deprived of their homes the legislation can more easily be extended to workers' occupations, student sit-ins and some types of picketing.

Already the Tories have been able to get an extra anti-squatting amendment snuggled in at the final stages of the Bill because of the lack of an effective counter to the anti-squatting crusade.

This weekend's CACTL conference will take stock of these facts and past experiences. The campaign has had an impact. Without it the Trespass Law would have been much more like the all-embracing law originally envisaged by the Law Commission, which was asked to draft it by the Heath Government.

But the Bill may not have got through at all if the fight against it had been made an explicit part of the fight by the labour movement against the Govern-

ment's austerity Social Contract package.

Over 100 trade union delegates are expected at the conference, as well as those coming from community organisations. Delegates will be proposing that liaison committees of trades unionists, squatters, and others organise and mobilise against any attempts to put the new laws into force.

Part of that fight is the demand that local authorities, particularly those with Labour majorities, do not use the Trespass Laws. Some successes have been notched up in London already with Lambeth Labour Party committing the council to such a course. While in neighbouring Wandsworth the Labour Party has been lobbied by trades unionists and squatters demanding that this party takes a similar stand.

The new legislation aims to blunt vital weapons of the labour movement. There is no time to lose!

CACTL NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Saturday and Sunday, 26 & 27 November
Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham

Plenary session on Saturday to include speakers from: squatting movement, and industrial, hospital and student occupations. Various workshops on both days.

Registration: £2.50 (relatants £1.50). Creche and transport available.
For full details and briefing documents, contact CACTL, c/o 35 Wellington Street, WC2. Tel: 289-3877.

Charter trade union school

The Working Women's Charter Campaign has organised a trade union school on 26 November at Friends Meeting Place, Church Street, Reading.

It is designed to help women trying to organise and raise the question of women's rights on the shopfloor and within the unions; or for women who may just be interested to know more about what rights exist and how other women have fought to improve them.

The morning session will include speeches from women from major struggles. Workshops will be held on topics such as maternity leave; nursery provision; legislation; part-time workers and organising within

the unions.

There will be a special session at the end where people can discuss the situation that exists within their different unions. The school is not seen as a 'one-off' event, but as the first in a series to try and consolidate and build on the important work that has been done by many women in the unions.

To this end there will also be a discussion around the monthly newspaper of WWCC — *Women's Fight*.

*Further information from Anita Turnbull, Flat 2, 3 Coleridge Road, London N8 01-348 1760.

Rank & File Conference

Militancy is not enough

National Rank and File
Delegate Conference
Saturday, 26 November 11.30am
New Century Hall,
Corporation St., Manchester



Michael Fenn

The National Rank and File movement first came into existence in 1974, when a number of 'Rank and File' papers in various unions and industries sponsored a national conference of trade union delegates.

In 1976 the Rank and File Organising Centre faded into the background when it spawned the 'Right to Work Campaign', which organised a series of marches by the unemployed demanding the right to work. The first of these marches was viciously assaulted by police on its way through Hendon in North London.

Now the National Rank and File movement has re-emerged to call a national conference of trade union delegates against the Government's income policy, taking place in Manchester this weekend. RICH PALSER asks why the conference is necessary and how it can meet the massive task of building a united left-wing opposition.

EACH GROUP of workers starting the fight to defend living standards doesn't just confront the bosses and the press witch-hunts. It runs slap bang into the Government and the TUC.

The rank and file needs a centralised response to overcome the isolation of each group of workers in struggle and promote united action. The Communist Party-led Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions hasn't met this need. With a national FBU strike, and the miners and local government and ambulance workers negotiating their own claims over the 10 per cent limit, the LCDTU is not meeting until February — and then only to discuss unemployment!

Only the Rank and File Conference is trying to fill the gap. Michael Fenn, Secretary of the Rank and File Conference

Organising Committee, in an interview with the paper of the Socialist Workers Party (the main force behind the conference), sees the aim of the conference like this:

'The people who represent the workers are the shop stewards... They should have the say over wages, the cuts in the hospitals, schools, racism or anything else. That's why I believe in rank and file trade unionism and the rank and file conference.'

So: 'Rank and File militants have got to organise so that we can get back to trade unionism as it was before the Jones and Fishers and Scanlons took over. We have got to go back before we can go forward. It can be done.'

An example of what Fenn means is the work he's been involved in in his own industry — the docks — rebuilding the National Port Stewards Commit-

tee, which has been active against the closure of Preston docks and trying to launch an unofficial pay claim.

Of course this sort of work is essential. In the docks the TGWU leadership's bid to overthrow its own conference policy of opposition to the 12 month rule had to be met by action from stewards.

But is Michael Fenn right? Is it really just a matter of 'getting back to trade unionism as it was before the Jones and Fishers, when the shop stewards led the way and the officials stood by?'

The problem today has nothing to do with the union officials standing by or not. The problem is that they step in actively to break any action by the stewards on wages, in the name of the Social Contract.

The left has to organise in the unions to fight against the class collaboration of the union leaders, remove them and replace them with militant leaders. They won't just go back to the sidelines.

This fight against class collaboration also has to be fought out within the stewards' movement itself. It isn't that the stewards' movement has ceased to exist in the past few years. Instead, the left among the stewards has been unable to offer a clear alternative to the Social Contract — not least because those, like Jones and Scanlon, who were previously seen as leaders by the militant stewards have deserted to support the Social Contract.

If the Rank and File Conference is to play its part in fighting for alternative, class struggle policies, inside the unions and stewards' movement, it has to elect an organising commi-

tee involving representatives from different groupings of the left in each union, along with representatives from major stewards' bodies.

It must call for action committees on pay in each town, to mount solidarity with any workers in struggle. Today it is the firefighters. Tomorrow the miners and local government workers?

Fenn correctly says that the LCDTU failed to mount the fightback because 'their attitude was that they were the governors and everyone had to do what they said. We, the Royal Group of Docks, were one of the founders of the LCDTU. But we withdrew because they were completely undemocratic.'

Democracy is crucial if all those who stand against the policies of the Labour Government and the TUC are to be united for common action. But the signs are not good for the Rank and File conference.

Michael Fenn himself was elected at a meeting of unnamed sponsors — a meeting never advertised in advance to involve all those who wanted to sponsor the conference. The draft statement for voting was not available until a week before the conference. There has been no indication as to whether the Rank and File Organising Committee is to be elected by the conference, which means delegating bodies can't discuss whether to put forward candidates.

We hope these trends will be reversed at the conference, but it reflects a deeper problem. If an organised left is to be built within the unions, there must be a consistent fight for united action with those who state their oppo-

rial action, and kept stressing academics' 'professional' status, which sets us off from other workers, instead of linking our case with others like the firefighters' which are frustrated by the pay policy.

The December Council of the AUT will have to decide on a programme of militant action — for example disrupting student admissions, GCE as well as university exams, and other key activities — or we can say goodbye to our claim for another three years.

It will also have to take a firm stand on the right-wing witch-hunt launched from within its own ranks by Julius Gould.

A motion from Hull AUT asks the Council to 'deplore' the Gould report, and instructs the Executive 'to remain vigilant in case of any new attempts, in the wake of this report, to exercise political censorship over teaching, in the making of appointments, or in other aspects of University administration'.

The Times (14 Nov) reported that: 'A candidate for a recent appointment at Oxford was rejected when it was discovered that his book had been published by the Pinto Press, a publishing house associated with the Socialist Workers Party.'

This information, on top of the anti-marxist campaigns against the Open University and the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies, makes action by the AUT urgent.

The left among university academics is divided and ineffective. The Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy does a useful job in documenting issues — a reply to Gould is in preparation — but is not a vehicle for broad-based action.

Nor, any longer, is the ASTMS, which still contains a small number of left-wing academics in a few universities. There is a vital need for concerted action in the AUT.

*Activists in Hull would welcome contact with those elsewhere, over the issues raised here. Contact: M. Shaw, 67 Salisbury St., Hull.

Lecturers lobby for 35 per cent

A 'genteel' protest



by MARTIN SHAW [AUT]
SEVEN THOUSAND lecturers, almost one quarter of the whole membership of the Association of University Teachers, lobbied Parliament last week. The lobby was demanding 'rectification' of our pay 'anomaly', dating back to 1974.

has recognised the 'justice' of our case — similar to the air traffic control assistants — it has little intention of giving us any more than the 10 per cent maximum. The claim itself, which includes a cost of living increase, amounts to a demand for 35 per cent.

dilemmas of the AUT. Despite the impressive turnout, there was no demonstration in London, nor any strikes back in the universities. The action, aptly dubbed 'genteel' by one newspaper, did not even win significant publicity.

Platform speakers at the two rallies explicitly ruled out indust-



Ambulance workers sound pay siren

by STEVE POTTER

AMBULANCE DRIVERS in West Glamorgan discussed backing the firefighters with strike action last Sunday. Other drivers in Merseyside are balloting for a 48-hour strike this week in support of a 20 per cent pay claim.

The strike action comes as unions representing 18,000 ambulance workers submitted a claim last week for a 'substantial' increase in basic pay and inflation proofing of wages. The claim follows a similar submission by 240,000 NHS ancillary workers last month.

Both groups of workers' pay settlements usually follow the lead of the million local government manual workers, who are also due to settle in December. But the whole future of the pay negotiations turns on whether the fire fighters can smash through the Government's intention to 'hold the line' on the 10 per cent limit in the public sector. This is part of the price the Liberal Party demanded, and Callaghan willingly gave, for keeping Labour in power.

The same ferocious response that the fire fighters got from Rees will be aimed at these workers if they go into action for their claims. The same press barrage about strike action endangering lives will be used to justify scabbing.

For the ambulance drivers and attendants the fire fighters' strike has come as a massive boost. Their basic pay ranges between £32 to £40.52 for a 40-hour week.

Because all these wage claims are so tightly bound together the need for pay action committees among public service workers

Today inflation is steadily running at 15 to 20 per cent. We cannot 'go back' to the days when it was 10 per cent, or when most workers thought that wages militancy was enough.

We need an across-the-board increase to put pay back to where it was before the Social Contract, but this rise must be automatically protected against inflation through immediate increases in pay.

So too we must fight for a minimum wage which can defend the low paid and weakly organised who most feel the inadequacy of wages militancy alone.

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PAT ARROWSMITH
I am delighted to see that Socialist Unity is going to put Ireland on the map at election time, unlike the Labour Party and the Communist Party, and parts of the far left.

KEITH RUSSELL [Hull]

There is no disagreement that Socialist Unity can play a vital part in recomposing the revolutionary left. But we haven't yet got roots among working class militants. We have to build through the next elections. We have to have the utmost flexibility in organisation at the moment and at the next conference to get down to the nitty gritty of how Socialist Unity can be organised. We must have no organisational proclamations.

LEEDS SOCIALIST UNITY WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Education, unemployment, public spending cuts, the rise of fascism affects women in many particular ways. Locally and nationally we have so far failed to draw in women from the women's liberation movement and working class women.

It is vital that a socialist feminist position is integrated into the election programme of Socialist Unity. We must have a version which addresses itself to people's everyday concerns in the factory and in the home.



PAUL THOMPSON [Big Flame]

An alliance of socialist organisations and militants to exist just around elections is inadequate even for an effective electoral intervention. There has to be a continuing presence of Socialist Unity.

We must not be the same as the rest — here for three weeks and gone, or parachuting some star candidate in to an area simply to recruit. We must encourage Socialist Unity groups to be set up.

Socialist Unity meets in London

'One of the best things on the left for some time'

By Colin Smith

'Socialist Unity is one of the best things that has happened on the left in this country for some time. We are all going to learn a tremendous amount', is how Neil Duffield greeted the first national conference of Socialist Unity held in London last weekend.

Duffield, a member of the Marxist Workers Group, was one of over three hundred people, including observers from most of the far left organisations who were at the conference to discuss the programme, organisation and next steps for Socialist Unity leading up to next year's municipal elections and the next General Election.

The conference showed the potential of the Socialist Unity to involve large numbers of socialist militants in united activity. One of the most positive features of the debates at the conference was the way in which it was conducted within a range of general agreement. Despite differences, all participants contributed in an open, serious and comradely manner.

As Martin Shaw from Hull said in one of his contributions: 'Socialist Unity should show in its own workings the open democratic structure we are committed to'.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

The first major debate was around the Draft programme for Socialist Unity put forward jointly by the IMG and Big Flame. The overwhelming majority of the conference accepted this draft as the basis of Socialist Unity election addresses.

Paul Thompson from Big Flame argued:

This programme is the beginning of a popular anti-capitalist programme. It cannot be an endless list of everything revolutionary socialist would agree to. At election time, you can't argue for a programme that has to be carried around in a wheelbarrow.

At the same time the conference recognised certain weaknesses in the draft, particularly around the question of women's oppression and the right to self-determination for the people of Scotland and Wales. It was agreed follow-

ing the proposal from the Leeds Socialist Unity Women's Committee to set up a working party to consider the draft in relation to the particular effects that unemployment, public spending cuts, racism and fascism have for women.

In summing up this section of the debate Davy Jones of the IMG made the point that, although the draft programme was a good basis for a short election programme, there was a need for a more extended presentation of the objectives of the Socialist Unity campaign in pamphlet form.

This would need much more discussion among its supporters but could hopefully be finalised, together with the election programme, at a re-call conference before the local elections next May.

Socialist Unity is in business to build a socialist alternative to the reformism of the Labour Party, one that can reach out to militants and activists beyond the restricted confines of the revolutionary left. But there are thousands of people who are prepared to struggle against the policies of the Labour Government, on questions of pay, unemployment, cuts women's rights and so on, but are not prepared yet to take the step towards such an alternative.

How to tackle the problem of the Labour Party and build the support for Socialist Unity dominated the debates at the Conference.

SETTLE ACCOUNTS

Ted Coxhead for the IMG argued that Socialist Unity must call for the return of a Labour Government at the next elections because, 'an alternative to the Labour Party will only be built to the extent that the masses have begun to settle accounts with the

Labour Party and its leadership.'

He went on to explain that the Labour Party in office is the most effective propaganda for the need for a practical socialist alternative. The growing interest of workers in struggle for the demands put forward by the revolutionary left would be set-back by the return of a Tory Government.

STRUCTURE

Comrades of Big Flame on the other hand argued that whether Socialist Unity called for the return of a Labour Government was purely a tactical problem that should be decided nearer the date of the general election.

It is not a question of having a governmental slogan but of building a socialist alternative at the grass-roots argued the comrade introducing the Big Flame resolution. The IMG resolution was carried with 137 votes for and 40 against, with 6 abstentions.

The final debate of the afternoon discussed what structure Socialist Unity should build to attract the active involvement of all those who see the need to fight against the policies of the Labour Government.

The whole conference agreed that the purpose of Socialist Unity was not simply getting the biggest possible vote in elections. The main job was to fight for independent action by the workers' movement to show in practice that, not only is there a chance to build a socialist alternative to the policies of the Labour Party, but that it is possible for different organisations and individual militants to work together around a commonly-agreed programme.

It was also generally agreed that the objectives of Socialist Unity meant an ongoing structure which would not simply spring to life for an election campaign and then disappear. Delegates welcomed

Socialist Unity, as a political and organisational step towards revolutionary regroupment.

The differences which were expressed during the discussion centred on how quickly this move towards regroupment could or should take place and what organisational structure would present the least barrier to drawing in much wider forces.

While there was some confusion in the debate, one clear danger was to let the organisational structure of Socialist Unity run ahead of its political coherence.

The conference finally voted for an open structure of Socialist Unity Committees open to all who agree with the standing of class-struggle candidates and are prepared to actively work for such candidates campaigning on the programme of Socialist Unity.

Such committees will not be restricted to areas where the standing of candidates is probable.

A national steering committee will be set up consisting of representatives of local committees and the affiliated political organisations.

WOMEN'S CAUCUSES

Importantly the conference passed unanimously two resolutions concerning the problems faced by women comrades in fully participating in all aspects of building of Socialist Unity and the necessity of developing a strategy for building Socialist Unity in the black and Asian communities.

It was agreed to encourage the formation of local and national women's caucuses and to organise a conference of black and immigrant workers.

Socialist Unity was greatly strengthened at its first conference. As Paul Thompson said in the debate on the structure of Socialist Unity:

Socialist Unity is already attracting forces which we can develop further. The kind of unity we are getting should be spread with caution but with confidence.

JOHN BANGS [Workers League]

I take a very practical approach. If someone knocked at my door during an election and they said it didn't matter who won the election — I'd shut the door. We have heard how the Labour Government has been more successful in keeping down wages, cuts, etc. It is true the working class has reformist illusions. We cannot dodge out of this by abstaining.

Many working class people and activists still identify with the Labour Party because they are not aware of any alternative. We have to have a clear and definite attitude to voting Labour. Abstention is nonsense.



MARTIN SHAW [Hull]

I would argue very strongly that Socialist Unity will not be built around elections. In a situation of mounting struggles Socialist Unity cannot live simply on a diet of local elections. Socialist Unity should be involved in building struggles such as the firemen's strike...

The SWP will be convinced only when we have sufficient forces to make the SWP say what is in their hearts — that their politics are close to us... Forward to a united revolutionary party.



BOB PENNINGTON [IMG]

Socialist Unity is not a party building exercise which says that the only way to serve the interests of the class struggle is to sign a membership card. We want to group all those among the working class and its allies who want to fight against Labour's pro-capitalist policies.

MARTIN YARNETT [Big Flame]

We have to break the hold of the Labour Party. We will do it by building working class power and struggle, and not by calling for the return of a Labour Government. Large sections of the working class have never voted Labour because Labour has never represented their interests; women and immigrant workers, for example.

There are situations when you can say abstain. Don't close the options now.



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

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Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

ABC committed for trial **'There should not be any public discussion of Britain's SIGINT activities at all'**

As Merlyn the Arsonist plotted against the firefighters last week, an episode from earlier in his wretched career returned to the news with the committal of the ABC Three to the Old Bailey on secrets charges. JULIAN GREENE, who attended the hearings, reports.

A defence lawyer described the intelligence community as an 'Alice in Wonderland world' at Tottenham magistrates court last week. This is little comfort for Duncan Campbell, Crispin Aubrey and John Berry who have been committed for trial under the Official Secrets Act. If convicted, Campbell and Berry could face up to fourteen years in jail.

The three men — Campbell and Aubrey are journalists, Berry is a former army corporal — are charged either with receiving, collecting or communicating information which could be harmful to the 'safety or interests of the state'. Aubrey is also charged with aiding and abetting Campbell.

SUBJECT CLASSIFIED

The information in question relates to the existence of SIGINT, the army's electronic signals intelligence network, whose very existence was secret before these hearings. As one witness, who was until recently in overall charge of the Army's SIGINT effort, a Colonel B, put it:

'Any reference to SIGINT in the media is damaging — and the things I have said I think are also damaging.'

'There should not be any public discussion of Britain's SIGINT activities at all. The whole subject is classified.'

Although SIGINT is supposed to be secret — indeed, the rule

that it's secret is itself secret! — some light was thrown on this

organisation by a statement made by Berry before his arrest to the National Council of Civil Liberties.

The statement, which was read by the prosecution in open court, claimed that SIGINT makes up half of the army's entire intelligence corps, and that it is

supported by 4,000 civil servants and a huge budget.

Also, not only is it effectively run by the American National Security Agency, but its 'targets' include not only 'hostile' countries but also 'friendly' countries and even commercial companies.

The statement went on to



THESE THREE PEOPLE SPENT AN EVENING TALKING TOGETHER.



EACH OF THEM COULD NOW GO TO PRISON FOR FOURTEEN YEARS.

SCRAP THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT!

attack the 'paranoid reaction' of the Government to the disclosures of Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball, and its 'fear that certain facts... which may lead to exposure of the apparatus which could transform Britain into a police state overnight, are not so far from the public eye as it had previously thought'.

The hearings certainly revealed that much of the 'secret' information the accused had collected may be found in published articles and public sources. But, according to Colonel B, the secrecy of SIGINT had long been national policy, decided at 'Prime Ministerial level'.

Apart from Berry's statement, the only clue to the state's evident sensitivity about SIGINT was given by Colonel B, who referred to the electronic spy network's activities as the collection and analysis of communications from enemies real and potential.

Although no definition of

'potential enemy' was offered, the implication of the prosecution is that this is a very wide category going far beyond the Russian Embassy.

Aubrey, Berry and Campbell face an almost impossible task in defending themselves against a charge of damaging the national interest since the real nature of this 'interest' cannot be discussed in court.

It is a classical Catch 22; their only defence in law is that 'potential enemies' of the state have not gained as a result of their journalistic activity — yet no-one will say who the enemies are, or what is secret about the information!

When the three men do eventually appear for trial, it is to be hoped that the smokescreen of the Official Secrets Act will start to be blown away, and a blow struck for press freedom and against the systematic, secret construction of the strong state in Britain.

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DEMONSTRATE WITH THE FIREFIGHTERS

The London Regional Council of the Fire Brigades' Union have called a national demonstration for this Saturday in London. The demonstration is the best opportunity so far for working people to show their support for the firefighters' strike.

A spokesperson for the organisers of the demonstration told *Socialist Challenge*, 'everyone is welcome on the demonstration. All regions of the FBU are invited, all trade unionists will be welcome.'

The demonstration starts from Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park at 10am. It will march to Downing Street to hand in the petition the London region has organised in support of the claim. A special feature of the march is expected to be a contingent of strikers' wives.

The decision to call the demonstration was made last Sunday at the end of a week in which it became clear that despite the immense public support the strike has attracted, Callaghan and Rees are determined to resist the firefighters.

DETERMINATION

But while last week displayed the callousness of the Government, it also saw a strengthening of determination on the part of the firefighters. A week that began with the pickets appearing almost em-

barrassed at being out, ended with plans to step up the picketing of emergency fire stations being used by the troops.

At the same time attempts by 'moderates' on the FBU executive to recall the delegate conference failed at the weekend.

SYMPATHY

For a union that has never been on strike before, and for an FBU executive which opposed the strike in the first place, the militancy of the strikers has shaken the Labour Cabinet. Undoubtedly this determination stems from the many displays of sympathy and backing the firefighters have received.

The tens of thousands who have signed the London petition, and the thousands who have given money to the strikers have completely upset the plans of Merlyn Rees to slander the strikers as 'baby burners'.

It is also apparent that it is the display of public support which has persuaded the

London Region to call the national demonstration. Even before the demonstration was announced, many rank and file members of the FBU voiced support for any such national action. John Arrenderg, the FBU representative at Euston fire station in London, said that any call for a national demonstration would be welcome and 'about time too'. Brian Steele, a spokesperson at Plaistow firestation, said he would support a demonstration, 'not only of firemen, but also of sympathetic trade unionists, including students'.

The demonstration will achieve what the petition could not — show support in an active way on the street. For it is such marches, and similar events like rallies, workplace meetings and mass lobbies of local councils which can be decisive in winning the strike. They can display the mass support in the labour movement for the firefighters' strike.

SUPPORT COMMITTEES

Such support needs to be organised. Support committees, with the participation of FBU members, are the best way of building for Saturday and beyond. In Birmingham

the Public Sector Alliance, and in London the National Rank and File Movement, are to the forefront in such organising. Their efforts need to be duplicated and broadened in very major town and city.

Certainly the official leadership of the labour movement will not involve themselves in such activity. When *Socialist Challenge* asked the TUC if it would be supporting the

demonstration, we were told, 'It's very unusual for the general council to give backing to any demonstration'. On their general attitude to the strike, the spokesperson said, 'It is unlikely we will be making any statement'.

Similar evasions came from the Labour Party, whose press department commented on the demonstration, 'Members have their individual opinions.

We will not be taking official attitude'.

Thousands of trade union and Labour Party militants have the opportunity to show these 'neutrals' in their place Saturday. A massive demonstration could have a significant impact. In reality can effect not just the outcome of the firefighters' strike, the whole future of the 10 cent guidelines.

The firefighters must not stand alone Why Labour plays with fire

Merlyn Rees said on television last week that the Government is after 'neither victories nor defeats'. He is a liar.

The firefighters' dispute is a decisive test for the Labour Government. The Liberal Party has indicated that if the Government gives way on the 10 per cent guideline then the days of the Lib-Lab pact are numbered. And however much the 'special case' argument is used over the firefighters the Cabinet knows that a defeat for them at the hands of the FBU, will give the green light for other workers to push ahead with their claims which threaten the pay guidelines.

Local government manual workers will see anything gained by the firefighters which is over 10 per cent as the go-ahead for their demand for a £50 minimum wage. The ambulance workers are preparing their claim for December and will likewise be looking to the FBU outcome. Most decisive of all would be the impact of a victory on the miners' £135 claim, now on the table with the rejection of the productivity ballot.

Merlyn 'The Wizard' as the Strathclyde firefighters call him, realises what is involved. Which is why — while admitting the FBU has a strong case — he is willing to make an example of them, and to sanction death and arson in the process.

AVOID CONFRONTATION

To date the Government has been forced by pressure from within the labour movement to try to avoid open confrontation with the firefighters. While hints have been dropped he has resisted appeals from some Tories for an all-out assault on FBU picket lines to grab fire brigade appliances.

But the political importance of the strike, as well as the industrial property under threat of fire, has not ruled out such possibilities. Already, Rees has added to 11,000 troops deployed, by calling up 132 Royal Air Force fire

specialists. These new scabs moved into 13 cities throughout Britain last Thursday and were joined the next day by 60 sailors trained in the use of breathing apparatus. The presence of the Special Patrol Group at the scene of fires indicates that Rees isn't merely concerned with property, and that every arm of the State is gaining experience in both the supervision and breaking of strikes.

Inevitably these State forces have caused the type of conflicts Rees was hoping to avoid. Last week police lured picketers to the Tilbury B power station fire, claiming that 12 FBU members were trapped in the flames. When the pickets returned a foam tender had disappeared.

Some fire stations have taken precautions against such raids. Twenty-four hour pickets have been mounted at fire stations, and there are reports of the disappearance of such essential parts of fire engines as steering wheels and batteries. But by themselves the pickets cannot be expected to maintain an effective defence. The best way to guard against raids by the State forces is the occupations



A jubilant response to support for the Kingsland Road firefighters in East London.

of the stations. Allied to that, the willingness of support from the local labour movement on the picket line and in occupations needs encouragement.

Yet the real way workers can best show their solidarity with the firefighters is to fight alongside them on their own claims. Whether it be miners, ambulance workers or power workers, their fight is essentially the same as the one being waged by the FBU — the overthrow of the 10 per cent guidelines. If, say the miners and ambulance drivers struck now, Government capitulation would come in a matter of hours.

Never in a thousand years will the leadership of the FBU make an appeal for such assistance. Even while the strike goes on the union bigwigs continue to sit around the negotiating table discussing 'fu-

ture' wage structures. Until an improvement is made on the current offer, FBU members should demand their negotiators refuse to continue in these diversionary talks.

This leadership has been equally useless on the ground. It is the London region, not the FBU leadership, which called the demonstration for this Saturday. It was the rank and file who demanded this strike, and it is the rank and file who have carried it.

INTRANSIGENCE

They have done so with very little assistance from the 38 Labour MPs who voted against the intransigence of the Government last Tuesday. The Scottish Labour Party MP Jim Sillars who placed

himself as the standard bearer for the firefighters cause has now the best way out is for the Government to set up an enquiry and to abide by it. But there have been four separate enquiries into the FBU case in the last couple of years, and if the Government abided by only one of them the strike would not be taking today.

The dilemma for Sillars and the Labour left is obvious. Continued support for the Lib-Lab pact and indeed for the Lib-Lab pact means they are reluctant to actually do anything to threaten these pacts, other than to moan in Parliament.

With very few exceptions our MPs have been absent from the picket line. If the left were concerned as they claim to be helping the firefighters to vi-

Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

The shape of help that's come

The amount of public support for the FBU has clearly shocked the Labour Government. It has come from workers, students, and shoppers on the High Streets. It has taken the form of:

*Petitions — For instance, according to union rep John Arrenberg at

Easton station 5,000 signatures were collected in the first 48 hours. At Stratford station in East London 2,000 signed in the first three days, at Hemel Hempstead 1,000 in the first two.

*Money — Workers at Heathrow airport donated £100, as did shop stewards at Highland Fabricators in Inverness, Scotland. A factory gate meeting at Prescolds — part of Leyland — in Reading voted a donation of £200. Crawley Trades Council has given £25, Wakefield Trades Council £50, and Camden £30. £105 was given by workers at a bus garage in East Ham, and firefighters at East Kilbride collected £200 in just two hours. Lucas shop stewards have given £100, strikers at Rolls Royce Mulliner £43 and building workers at Bailey's site, Liverpool, collected £87.

*Demonstrations — Marches have been held and widely supported in many areas including Dundee, Glasgow, Southampton, Liverpool, St Helens, Battersea and Oxford. Building workers in North East London held their own solidarity demonstration when 300 of them marched to Kingsland Road Fire Station.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Last Saturday's south London march called by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council in support of firefighters.

How they marched in South London

Firefighters from Battersea and Crawley marched with supporters from the labour movement through the streets of South London last Saturday. Despite a circular from the Fire Brigade Union leadership branding the march 'politically motivated', two hundred and fifty demonstrators demanded the full 30 per cent now.

Battersea fire station got Fleet Street coverage last Wednesday when members used radios to broadcast information from the *Rank and File Fireman* bulletin to other stations, once the phones had been disconnected. The Greater London Council admitted to jamming four wavelengths to prevent these broadcasts — vital when the union has failed to co-ordinate actions and information. The phones have since been restored.

These firefighters have a militant reputation in London stemming from their struggle last year against the Victorian discipline imposed by station master David Callingham. In this tradition, the firefighters have provided a tremendous

example of how to safeguard the strike's interests by occupying the station in shifts. The use of the radio aided in this, by warning firefighters of attempts to lure pickets away from stations, and by organising flying pickets in preparation for snatch operations by the state.

This is exactly the type of lead the executive of the union isn't prepared to accept. But for the local FBU members, it has paid off.

Over £700 has poured into strike funds from local factories, schools, and direct works departments. The Trades Council — whose sub-committee called Saturday's march — called a public meeting on Tuesday to launch a broad support committee. But a problem already confronted by the Trades Council — the decision of the FBU marchers not to allow banners or leaflets on Saturday's march — must be overcome if effective support activity is to be broadened.



Women march through the streets of Romford in Essex.

Striking out across Britain

★ Strathclyde Region

Strathclyde region is one area where firefighters have a formal strike committee. It includes representatives throughout the region from both fire stations and branches of the union. Whatever its shortcomings, this structure seems to have served local firefighters well.

Tam Tiernay of the Strathclyde Region FBU strike committee told *Socialist Challenge* reporters that support from trade unionists on the FBU march last week was broad. 'Glasgow transport workers have donated money. So have Anderson Quay shop stewards. There are three cigarette factories, Templeton's carpet factory and Laird's are all supporting us... In East Kilbride we collected £200 in 2 hours.'

Appealing to *Socialist Challenge* readers for much needed donations, Tiernay said they can do something else as well: 'They should talk to trade unionists about our case. Bona fide trade unionists should join the picket lines, and there should be wide representation on support marches.'

Battersea is another fire-station with an elected strike

committee. But the stimulus behind the committee did not come from the station's most militant members. Instead, the right wing called for the election in order to take the initiative away from Rank and File Fireman supporters.

The policies put forward by Rank and File supporters for a militant pursuit of the claim will only be won inside the FBU membership through a consistent fight for elected strike committees, and thoroughly democratic organisation of the struggle. Building Rank and File cannot substitute for elected strike committees.

Democratic bodies to organise the strike can only help militant supporters of Rank and File in winning other FBU members to policies that point towards victory. As such, they can't be left to the right wing.

★ Nottingham March

The Nottingham Fire Brigades Union has given its backing to Saturday's local march called by the trades council against the 10 per cent norm. Firefighters will be marching alongside strikers from the Stanton and Staveley plant of the British Steel Corporation. Metal mechanics on strike at Raleigh's have also been approached to support the march.

This initiative by the trades council — announced by its vice-president Brian Simister at a local anti-cuts conference — is a shining example of how to forge a united fight against Labour's pay policy.

Workers from Stanton and Staveley are fighting for a claim that can help protect wages from inflation. They are demanding a £15 across the board increase, plus 40p for each threshold crossed in a cost of living index.

Women in the front line

Firefighters' wives up and down the country have joined with Fire Brigade Union members to give Merlyn Rees a message loud and clear: 'Rees is taking on not only the firefighters, but also their children and wives.'

In many towns — including Liverpool, Leeds, South London, Oxford and Romford — women have marched to demand the full claim of the FBU is met. In Romford women staged their own march through the town — many with children in hand. Liverpool's march last Saturday won the active support of over 350 women.

To date the 1,000 women

members of the FBU have shown similar determination. Amongst the 1,250 union members employed in the control rooms, the strike has been almost 100 per cent effective. According to the union, only one or two places 'like Surrey', have not gone on strike.

It is this kind of united action — especially mustering support for the women's con-

tingent at the national demonstration called for Saturday — which will guard against a return to work thanks to pressures of family commitment.

Active campaigning for support throughout the labour movement by women will not only strengthen the firefighters' struggle, it will also ensure that women emerge from the struggle as a strong fighting force against the Government's pay policies, not just the sandwich and tea-makers on the picket line.

they would use their influence in the factories and streets to mobilise working class opposition to the 10 per cent death trap.

10 PER CENT

But they have not done so, and so Rees is left free to follow his 'no compromise, no surrender' stance. For the Labour Government the firefighters strike is a matter of life and death in more ways than one. People must die, so the 10 per cent policy lives.

Militants throughout the trade union movement can turn that round. By killing the 10 per cent policy, not only will lives be saved, but working class living standards can thrive and prosper as well.

Communist Party speaks on New problems facing NAC

NEW PROBLEMS face the National Abortion Campaign. Since its formation three years ago, the Campaign has had to tackle what relationship it has to the Women's Liberation Movement and the labour movement and whether to campaign for positive legislation for abortion rights.

BETTY UNDERWOOD, for the Communist Party of Great Britain, contributes to our ongoing series of interviews debating the way forward in the abortion rights campaign.

What role do you see positive legislation playing in a strategy for building the National Abortion Campaign?

The National Women's Advisory Committee of the Communist Party is on record as supporting the Abortion Law Reform Association draft Bill. I certainly think pro-choice campaigners need a proposed Bill to give us something to work for instead of against, and to bring together all the various shades of opinion within the campaign. I would like to see the discussions around positive legislation consider not so much what we would 'ideally' like, but include more about whether it's a realistic step forward in the light of the balance of our forces.

I personally think that there is a point at which abortion becomes induced birth, and I'm not against a time limit of 24-28 weeks, which I believe would be more acceptable to most women than abortion 'up to any stage'. However, we would be prepared to discuss any proposed amendments to the ALRA Bill.

It's nonsense to refer to the ALRA draft Bill, which would give women the Right to Choose up to 28 weeks of pregnancy and put an obligation on the NHS to provide the facilities, as a 'compromise'.

Women who want abortions are requesting them much earlier and if we were given this right in law, it would be a major improvement on what we actually have at the moment, not a compromise. Of course we know from experience of the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act that Parliamentary legislation doesn't open all doors, but it can help to change public attitudes and strengthen our hand in campaigning — providing we don't give in to cynicism and feelings of defeat.

Sections of the Women's Liberation Movement have voiced criticisms of NAC stressing the need to integrate into its work the question of sexuality. Do you share the view that the National Abortion Campaign has not put across a feminist perspective adequately? Do you feel that the involvement of the WLM is vital?

Without the involvement of the WLM the abortion campaign wouldn't exist today. It grew out of the Movement, and, certainly in my experience in Bristol (which I don't believe is unique), initiatives at a grass roots level are generated by women in the WLM.

Understanding that abortion rights are closely connected to our right to enjoy sex for pleasure, to be free to express ourselves sexually, and not to be seen only as mothers or potential mothers, is important. What I'm more interested in is how we can

counteract our image as 'child-haters'. I'm not always sure we 'get across' the idea that we want every child to be a wanted child, and it's one of the reasons (but not the only one) why I prefer the slogan 'A Woman's Right to Choose' rather than 'Abortion on Demand'.

We need to show that we want the right to have children when and if we want them, as well as to choose not to have children if and when we don't want them.

I talk to a lot of women who, while agreeing that abortion should be available, don't feel that they would ever want an abortion themselves, and this seems to prevent them from wholeheartedly supporting the campaign.

We've still got a long way to go in turning our potential support into active campaigning, but I think we can do it best by showing clearly that a 'feminist perspective' means extending choices in every area of women's lives — at work, at home, and in their personal relationships.

How do you see involving the labour movement beyond simply resolution passing?

Involving the labour movement is a two-way process, and it's precisely because of that that I see it as important. For instance, unless the trade unions are able to see the importance of the abortion campaign to women's lives, then all the other demands which are made to improve the conditions of women are weakened, such as equal opportunity, equal pay, etc.

If you're involved in the abortion campaign, you can't help becoming aware of the deficiencies in the National Health Service and the acute need to stop the cuts in expenditure, and the connection between that and women's health generally.

But any broad campaign can only benefit from involving the labour movement. It's composed of organised workers — it has a structure which enables it to reach hundreds and thousands of people. NAC has done excellent work in helping activists in the labour movement to win support for resolutions at union conferences, in the Labour Party, etc., for a Woman's Right to Choose, and it seems to me to be fully aware of the need to underpin that support by working in a determined way at local level amongst the rank and file.

I don't think there are any magic solutions to this — it's just up to all of us to turn 'wishing' into 'doing'.

Has the Communist Party been involved in NAC nationally? How would you reply to the charge from some feminists that NAC is left-dominated and therefore they are not willing to become involved in it?

There's been a CP representative



from the beginning, but not always able to attend on a regular basis. However, we've always been in touch with the NAC office, and known what was going on and what was expected. There are some CP members working at local level in the abortion campaign on a regular basis, and we ask all comrades to support, where they can, particular events such as local and national demonstrations and events.

Nationally, the CP has been one of the sponsoring organisations for demonstrations; many of our comrades fight to get their trade unions to respond and our paper, *Morning Star*, has been the only daily paper to give support to the campaign for Women's Right to Choose. But like most other organisations, we have not yet succeeded in winning our members to play their full part at local level.

I see the responsibility of the left in the Campaign to recognise that this is a feminist issue and also to be sensitive to the fact that it's a broad campaign. If we want to make progress we must involve women and men with many different attitudes and views on all kinds of political and social questions.

Adele Faccio: 'Even the police come to us for abortions'

ADELE FACCIO, a Radical Party deputy [MP] in the Italian parliament and a founder of Italy's abortion centres, talks to Pam Hurst about the nature of the abortion campaign.

The Radical Party is a small grouping concentrating on civil rights issues and with a long history of co-operation with the women's movement. Apart from the far left, it was alone in opposing the recent six-party governmental agreement and has tried to disrupt the Christian Democratic Government by introducing a number of issues over state powers to a referendum.

Nevertheless, it sees its role as confined almost exclusively to Parliamentary and pressure group politics — which has occasionally led it into some strange and undesirable contortions. For example, its alliance with the right-wing Catholics — who don't want an abortion bill for quite different reasons — has sparked off a big debate among pro-abortion campaigners!

ABORTION in Italy is strictly forbidden by the law. But every year there are 1½ million women who have an abortion. It is a class question. For bourgeois women there are clinics and doctors. For the others, there are sisters who do dilation and curettage, with kaiting needles and bleach, and a few doctors who insert a catheter; still fewer use the Karman method.

The price of an abortion depends on the quality you can afford. It varies from a million lira for the richest women, to the cheapest at 250,000 lira. Some families pay for them on hire purchase and have not finished paying for the first abortion when they have to have another.

KARMAN

We founded the Information Centre for Sterilisation and Abortion (CISA) in 1973, and we do abortions by the Karman method. We now have 18 centres in Italy. The price we usually ask is 50,000 lira, but the majority of women that come to us are poor and we don't ask them to pay anything. All the abortions that we do are by women and not doctors.

If women are more than nine weeks pregnant we cannot deal with it, so we send them to England and pay the fare if they can't afford it. This is why CISA is so broke all the time...

At first the centre was supported by many men and women, but now we have only two or three men, and it is more a feminist collective with a feminist perspective. CISA was originally founded by the Radical Party but now its membership is formed of women of all tendencies.

IMPRISONED

We have had problems with the law and some of us have been in prison — some for a week. I was imprisoned for 36 days in early 1975. Now, however, the Government leaves us alone because it is useful to the State that someone does abortions. Even the police come to us and ask us if we can give their wives an abortion.

The Christian Democratic Government ignores the problem. They say that there are 'only' 200,000 women who have an abortion every year, a 'minority' as they call it.

ADELE FACCIO



Photo: MARK RUSHER (IFL)

A proposed law for abortion was discussed by the Chamber of Deputies between November 1975 and January 1976, but two months later it was rejected by the Senate. This law will be re-discussed by the deputies this winter.

THREE POINTS

We would like it to include three points: A guarantee of abortion on demand, allowing women, not doctors, to decide whether or not they have an abortion. We want any woman aged over 16 to be able to have an abortion. And we want the consultories, which presently offer advice on contraception, to be centres of abortion. Both the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party disagree with this. For electoral reasons they seek the support of doctors who, of course, want to preserve their privileges.

If these three points were included in the new legislation, CISA would support it, but it is most unlikely that our demands will be met.

The truth is that the Christian Democrats must placate the bishops and the Pope. The CP on the other hand must placate the Order of Doctors, a strong organisation in Italy. And it is very difficult for women to convince the doctors that the best method of abortion is the Karman method, because the doctors resent being told how to do an abortion. Giovanni Berlinguer, national secretary of the Italian Communist Party, recently declared that women must not teach doctors how to do their jobs.

REFERENDUM

The Radical Party believes the main axis now should be a referendum. In 1975 we collected the 80,000 signatures necessary to organise a referendum. We could not repeat the operation last year because the Government fell on the question of abortion, and you cannot organise any referendum in the year of government elections.

Referenda in Italy can only be organised between 15 April and 15 June, which means that we must try and block any law being passed in the Senate before the time allocated. If a law were passed before next April, and no doubt it would be a restrictive law, then it would be illegal to organise a referendum.

With a referendum, we can break the old law that says women should not have abortions. If you ask people the question: Is abortion a crime? and a majority say No, then the old law is repealed. It would mean that non-Catholic doctors have the possibility of performing abortions.

We are supported in Parliament by several groupings, among whom are the Catholics who oppose categorically the three progressive points that I have mentioned. They are in favour of the old law against any abortion, and people attack us for joining with these reactionaries.

Spanish workers fight 'historic compromise'

Babcock-Wilcox: shining example

You wouldn't know it from the British press, but the Moncloa pact between the Spanish Government and opposition parties has come under heavy fire from the workers whose living standards it aims to cut. All over the country there is a wave of strikes and occupations which go further than anyone has dared for several months. Perhaps the most important is the month-long occupation of the Bilbao factory of Babcock-Wilcox, the British multi-national. GORI BENGOCHEA visited the factory in the first week of the occupation.

Babcock-Wilcox is in crisis. The management owes each worker an average of 90,000 pesetas, totalling 450 million pesetas, as extra pay for August and September's wages. It also owes between 800 and 1,000 million pesetas to creditors and 3-4 billion pesetas to the banks. Management announced that: 'We must solve the crisis together', and proposed: 'a cut in jobs; 750 sacked to start with; a division of the company into two new units, which would allow the business to be moved out of the Basque country; a wage freeze.

The blackmail is obvious: the workers must accept these draconian conditions or they're faced with the closure of the plant. The Babcock-Wilcox workers replied: 'The bosses alone are responsible for the crisis. We demand the maintenance of our jobs, and the back payments. If not, its up to

the Government to nationalise the company,' and began to organise the struggle.

EXAMPLE

What's going on at Babcock is vital for all workers in the Basque country and the Spanish state. These last few months there have been dozens of factories, each employing several hundred workers, which have declared themselves 'in crisis' and sacked all or part of their work force. If Babcock-Wilcox wins this will be an example for millions of workers in the state as a whole, particularly as the struggle comes at the moment when the Government, the bosses and the union leaderships want to implement the Moncloa accords — 'the historic compromise, Spanish-style'.

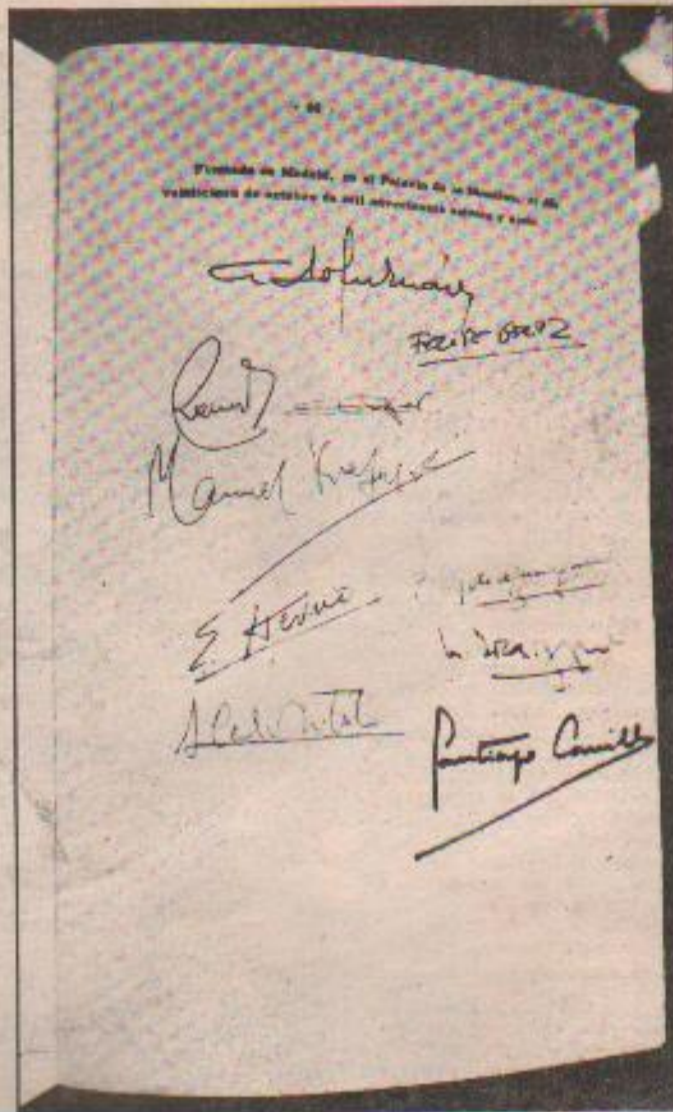
On 13 October, 4,000 out of the total of 5,000 workers

occupied the factory. All night they discussed and decided upon a plan of struggle, to inform public opinion and above all to coordinate with the other 'crisis' factories in Vizcaya. By an overwhelming majority they voted for a 'communique to all the workers of the Basque country'. This appeal details the workers demands to protect their jobs and win back wages, but also argues for 'a general plan of action against the capitalists' plan.

The central points are:

- *no sackings and no job reductions;
- *wages to be increased automatically in line with an accurate cost of living index;
- *no overtime;
- *40-hour week, 35 in factories in crisis;
- *retirement at 60, 55 in factories in crisis, on full pay;
- *nationalisation of bankrupt companies;
- *nationalisation of the banks and credit facilities.

The occupation has undertaken the implementation of workers' control over two important aspects of the running of the factory. The assembly has imposed on the management the opening of all the financial accounts and other company records as the basis for a workers' solution to the crisis. Secondly, they refuse to allow any transport of materials in and



The fatal document. Ten signatures on the Moncloa pact.

out of the plant without workers' authorisation, so that the company's creditors cannot be paid in kind.

These measures have received widespread support. On 17 October all 5,000 workers marched from the Babcock factory at Galindo to Baracaldo. On the way the march picked up another 3,000 supporters. This first demonstration was part of an overall plan of struggle decided by the workers' assembly, which

was to culminate in a central demonstration of a few days later.

On 19 October there was another demonstration, this time at Sestao. This time there were 15,000 people. At the front was a banner carried by the children of the Babcock workers: 'We support them too.' Many workers' wives joined the demonstration from the factory gates: 'Fathers, husbands, brothers, resist.'

French left split deepens Cutting off your nose

by Murray Smith

SIX MONTHS ago the victory of the Union of the Left (an alliance of the Communist Party, Socialist Party and the Left Radicals) in the coming legislative elections (due in March 1978) was regarded as a near-certainty by all shades of political opinion.

The evidence of by-elections, opinion polls, and most of all the municipal elections in March, showed that it had a majority in the country. The Governmental majority was weak, divided, and widely discredited.

Indeed, mass action of the working class could have swept it from office long ago, but for the stubborn insistence of the reformist parties and trade union leaderships on diverting the militancy of the working class into electoral channels. Their influence was used to divide and restrain struggles against the Government's austerity plan, within the perspective of an electoral victory in 1978.

QUESTIONABLE

Today, that victory looks highly questionable. The Union of the Left is split and its components are engaging in campaigns of mutual denunciation.

The split came in September over the updating of the Union of the Left's Common Programme, first adopted in 1972. It seemed a simple affair of a few minor changes, with one or two contentious points that would involve some hard bargaining followed by suitable compromises. The political strategy of both

PCF and PS rested on their alliance and a split appeared out of the question.

The crisis was precipitated by the PCF, which took a very hard line over the number of nationalisations, a substantial increase in the national minimum wage, and the limitation of the hierarchy of wages to 4:5. Most of the heat was generated over the nationalisation issue which involved some extra nationalisations and the taking over of subsidiaries of companies whose nationalisation had been previewed in the original Common Programme.

RESISTED

The PCF's proposals were strenuously resisted, both by the Left Radicals (a bourgeois group) and the PS, since they were seen as endangering the relations the Union of the Left had been developing with sections of the French employers. There followed some rather squalid attempts at horse-trading over the exact number of companies to be nationalised — the workers in these firms were never consulted — and the talks broke down.

Why was the PCF prepared to let this happen rather than compromise? One rather fanciful explanation at the time was the 'hand of Moscow' — that the PCF was acting on Moscow's orders to sabotage the Union of the Left, as it did not want a left government in France that would destabilise the political situation in Western Europe.

Of course, it has been clear at least since 1974 that that was Moscow's position — it made

clear then that it was in favour of Giscard beating Mitterrand in the Presidential election. And no doubt the Russians are very pleased at the latest developments. But they did not engineer them. They no longer have the power to do so, and the whole course of the PCF over the last few years proves that its actions are motivated not by Moscow but by its own bureaucratic interests.

Another reason put forward is that there is some more principled difference involved, that the PS is intent on running capitalism, while the PCF has a socialist perspective. But, as PCF leader Marchais said at a Central Committee meeting after the split: 'Were we trying to put through a project of building a socialist society? Obviously not!'

Obviously indeed. The PCF's strategy does not involve a break with capitalism. To prove this the French ruling class it has made it clear that it accepts the 'strong state' constitution of 1958 and would serve under Giscard as President. It has recently abandoned its traditional opposition to the French nuclear bomb and to direct elections to the European Parliament. It has dropped the dictatorship of the proletariat.

REWARD

The split occurred over the nationalisation of firms which represented less than 0.5 per cent of French industry. The real reason lies elsewhere. The PCF knew it was going into a government which would have to run capitalism, and capitalism in



FRANCOIS MITTERRAND at the recent Socialist Party convention.

crisis at that. It was ready to do it, but it wanted to be sure of its reward in terms of places in the government and state apparatus.

Those places depend largely on electoral performance, and here the PCF has been steadily losing ground to the PS for the last three years. It's easy to see why. Confronted by two reformist parties with an electoralist perspective, many voters chose the more electorally credible, since there seemed no principled differences. And the more the PCF tried to shed its Stalinist past and its links with the Soviet Union to gain popularity, the less it appeared different from the PS.

This shift on the balance of forces within the Union of the Left created continual tensions. The PCF seemed in danger of being electorally marginalised by the PS, hence not being able to pursue its project of integration into the bourgeois state, and at the same time it was starting to feel the pressure, in the unions and even electorally, from the far left.

So it decided on a 'left turn' to try and re-consolidate its working class base, taking up issues on which it could gain popularity, like the nationalisations and the minimum wage. Whether it expected that its turn would lead to a split is hard to say, but confronted with the possibility, it put its party interests first, at the risk of seeing the left defeated electorally.

Neither side will make serious concessions. The PS held a national convention and proposed the re-opening of negotiations. The PCF rejected this without prior concessions from the PS. It now accuses the PS of having made a 'right turn' and of being a party in the service of the bourgeoisie.

It is possible that both parties will go into the elections waving the Common Programme and blaming the collapse of the Union of the Left on each other. According to the latest opinion poll, they still have the support of 53 per cent of the electorate. It is possible that, failing any agreement on mutual transference of votes, the left could win the majority of votes and lose the election.

LOSER

Whatever the parties' manoeuvres the real loser has been the working class. For the last five years, from a desire for unity against the right, it has placed its faith in parties which have restrained its militancy for the sake of an electoral victory around a programme over which it was never consulted.

What is needed now is real workers' unity around a programme to fight the attacks on its organisation and living standards, a programme decided democratically by the workers themselves which would really threaten capitalism. It is this that revolutionaries are fighting for in the debate that is taking place in the workers' movement.

In Brief

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: 'An effective information service is indispensable and no-one can pretend that it can be carried out in a perfectly legal manner. Asking a secret agent to work with formal respect for the law and in broad daylight is contradictory and ridiculous. The Director of the CIA? The prosecution in the ABC case? No. Ugo Pecchioli, a leader of the Italian Communist Party.

NORWAY: Thirty-two women's organisations have begun a campaign under the slogan: 'Women are not Sex Objects'. The aim is to clear pornography out of the country's bookshops.

USSR: Sergei Polikarpov, a leading nuclear physicist and Communist Party member, has denounced restrictions placed upon his professional and personal life by the state. He has been refused permission to take his family with him on a year-long research trip to Switzerland.

CHILE: Police broke up a peaceful protest of 100 people in Santiago last week, arresting forty of the protesters and several bystanders including the bureau chief of the UPI news agency. The demonstrators were members of the Relatives of Disappeared Detainees organisation, set up to demand international action on the many Chilean prisoners whose whereabouts are unknown.

NETHERLANDS: Talks between employers' and union representatives broke up last week over the question of wage indexation.

FRANCE: In a book published last week a British deserter from the French Foreign Legion described the torture techniques he had used. 'We used, for example, to hang people up by their thumbs inside the fort,' said 21-year-old Barry Galvin.

FRANCE: An extreme right wing group claims to have kidnapped two Algerian immigrants in reprisal for the holding of French hostages by the Polisario Front, the Sabar-an liberation organisation.



KARAMANLIS

GREECE: The Greek Government has banned demonstrations to mark the fourth anniversary of the Athens Polytechnic uprising which began the overthrow of the colonels' regime. This follows the arrest of five newspaper editors who opposed Greek support to West German repression of the Red Army Fraction.

AUSTRALIA: Phillip Lynch, the Federal Treasurer, has been forced to resign after revelations of the involvement of his family firm in corrupt land dealings. This constitutes a considerable electoral threat to the ruling Liberal-County Party coalition.

USA: Santiago Carrillo, general secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, crossed a picket line at Yale University last week to give a lecture, to denunciations as a scab. Vincent Sirabella, a leader of 1400 striking maintenance workers, said that Carrillo 'spits in the face of workers'. 'I am astonished that he came', he said. 'As a communist, he ought to have some sympathy for the worldwide struggle of workers.'

Shah's US visit - an unprecedented sight Tears in the dictator's eyes

No scene could have depicted the hypocrisy of President Carter's 'human rights' campaign more vividly than his welcome to the Shah at the White House last week, while only a few hundred yards away his police were launching a tear-gas attack on anti-Shah demonstrators demanding 'human rights for Iran'.

Carter has tried to present himself as a champion of 'human rights', but he hasn't made any criticism of one of the world's most barbaric regimes: the Iranian dictatorship. Instead, the Carter administration has made a big effort to whitewash the constantly deteriorating public image of the Shah's dictatorship. The Shah's two-day official visit to Washington last week marked a high point in these efforts. Carter was publicly giving the Shah a clean bill of health on the question of 'human rights'.

When the Shah arrived at the White House Carter didn't denounce him as the butcher he is, but praised him as an 'enlightened leader'. The tears that came to Carter's eyes weren't for the thousands of innocent people

who have been murdered, tortured and imprisoned by the Shah's dictatorship, but were brought to his eyes by tear-gas being used to suppress anti-Shah demonstrators just outside the White House.

The real business of the Shah's visit wasn't 'human rights', but the sale of US arms to Iran. As usual the Shah arrived in Washington with a long shopping-list for all the latest US weapons. There is no doubt that he left Washington satisfied that Jimmy Carter is just as good a gun-runner as any of his predecessors, and reassured that the noisy objections of Democrats in the US Senate last year about the enormous sales of arms to Iran by the Nixon/Ford administration were nothing but pre-



Iranians in Grosvenor Square, protesting at the Shah's US visit.

election demagogy.

As the Shah arrived at the White House there were large demonstrations of Iranian students denouncing Carter's collaboration with the dictator. Anticipating this the Iranian regime had tried to organise its own rent-a-mob demonstration in favour of the Shah. Iranians all over the United States were offered free tickets and \$300 in cash to go to Washington and cheer the Shah. Iranian military personnel being trained in the US were also flown to Washington to join the pro-Shah demonstration.

Inevitably there was a clash between rival demonstrators. Many of the pro-Shah rent-a-mob crowd decided that the Shah

wasn't worth \$300 after all, dropped their flags and banners, and ran. The anti-Shah demonstrators were set upon by the police. More than a hundred people were injured and many arrested.

Protests of various kinds were also organised by Iranian students throughout Europe. In London the Committee Against Repression in Iran organised a picket outside the US embassy on Tuesday 15 November. About one hundred supporters including contingents from a number of different universities and colleges participated in the picket. The pickets then joined ranks with another demonstration organised by some of the

Iranian student organisations in Britain and marched to the Iranian Embassy.

Although the turn-out for the picket was good, it could have been much better had it not been for the sectarian attitude of most of the now very divided Iranian student groups who refused to accept CARI's proposal for a joint protest. The result was that there were no less than five separate demonstrations and pickets in London.

Over the last few weeks there has been a constant wave of demonstrations and strikes in universities and colleges in Tehran. While the Shah was in Washington thousands of students gathered at Aryamehr

University in Tehran to listen to a Sa'ad Solimanpour, a dissident poet, who has only recently been released from jail. The meeting was attacked by the police who injured and arrested many students. The students responded by occupying the university.

The following day thousands of students took part in a protest march. Again the protesters were attacked by the police and there were more injuries and arrests. A few days before, students at Tehran University protesting at the confiscation of books belonging to libraries organised by the students themselves were set upon by the police. Thousands of students went on strike and boycotted classes in response.

What's Left

Prices: 3p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3.00pm Saturday before publication.

NATIONAL Gay Socialist Conference. First planning meeting - Saturday 26 November in London. For details of venue ring Phillip on 01-451 0906.

GAYS for Socialism - yes! The badge you've all been waiting for. 3 colours and featuring 2 lavender moles. 20p + 7p p&p, or 15p for 10 or more post free. From Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1. Cheques, POs to 'The Week'.

WANTED: Own room in communally run socialist household, south or east London. Write to Jon, 85a Selkirk Road, London SW17.

NW LONDON UTOB meets every fortnight. For information on meetings write c/o UTOB, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

CABBI Open Conference of the Campaign Against British Brutality in Ireland. Saturday 3 December, 2-5pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Anyone interested in participating in the campaign is welcome to attend. For more details contact CABBI, 38 Middle Lane, London N8.

FIREMEN'S BENEFIT BOP. Saturday 26 November, 8pm. Nebula plus disco at Greengate House, Plaistow, Opp. West Ham Garage. Adm. 75p. Organised by NELP SU.

CATFORD GAYS Disco every Saturday upstairs at the Black Horse, Rushes Green, opp. Lawlham Concert Hall, profits to Gay Movement. **BIG FLAME and Trotskyism** - which political strategy for socialists in Britain today? Friday 2 December, 8pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube). Speakers: Paul Thompson, Chris Naephall. For further details write to Big Flame, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

CAMPAIGN Against A Criminal Trespass Law: national conference. 'Occupations & Criminal Trespass', 26 and 27 November, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham.

CACTL Benefit. 26 November, Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. Broadcast: Mobile Workers Theatre performing 'We have the power of the winds', and Banner Theatre performing songs. 8pm, adm. 75p (50p for claimants).

FREE! 'Big Red Dairy 1976' for every subscriber from December's *Liveller*. Out now with: Provisions IRA interview; Bader Meinhof prison writings; Italian Left; Hong Kong corruption; Advertising Industry; Farm drugs; the Politics of Punk; 60 subscription. 30p single copies from good newspapers or direct from us at: 155a Drummond St., London NW1.

HANDS OFF Ireland! No 3 out now! Articles include: Jackie Kaye - Irish Political Prisoners in British Jails; James Martin - The RUC and Torture; Diane Fox - Building an Anti-Imperialist Movement in Britain. 20p + 10p post from ROG publications (SG), 49 Pallion Rd., London SE24 6LN.

WOMEN'S FIGHT No 3, paper of the Working Women's Charter Campaign out now. Articles on Women in the GDF, 'Abortion Rights', 'Maureen Coiquhoun - Why was she sacked?', 'Sexism in the NUJ'. Order your copy now. 10p + 7p p&p from 43 Shaftesbury Rd., London N18. If you want to sell the paper to your friends or workmates, order 10 at £1.20 or 20 at £2.30. Orders of 50 or more on sale and return. Or £1.50 for 5 issues.

CLEVELAND ANTI-FASCIST committee demonstration in Middlesbrough on Saturday, 10 December, 1 pm. Linthorpe Road. Followed by rally.

RACISM - The need for black self-organisation. Anarchist Workers Association public meeting, Thursday 24 November, 7.30pm, Centreprise, Kingsland High Street, London. Further information from London AWA, 1 Pearson House, London WC1.

IMPERIALISM and Motherhood. Anna Davin, member of the editorial collective of *History Workshop*, a journal of socialist historians, will lead the discussion at a meeting organised by the Institute of Race Relations, Tuesday 29 November, 6.30pm, 247/249 Fentonville Road, London N1.

IMG FORUM - 'The Polish Working-Class Opposition'. Speaker: Peter Green, Friday 25 November, 7.30pm, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London.

SW LONDON Abortion Campaign Open Forum on Abortion and Women's Liberation. Saturday 17 December, 2pm, St. Matthews Hall, Brixton Hill, Brixton Hill. Topics include abortion and sexuality, a woman's right to choose, stability, abortion and lesbianism. Papers and contributions welcomed from any sister interested. Written contributions should be in by Saturday 10 December to NAC, c/o Women's Centre, North St, SW4. Phone Alison on 01-274 8258 for details. Creche provided.

RELEASE just out. 'Bust Card' List of points to remember when stopped by police in the street, taken to a police station, or 'reided'. Individual cards free from Release with sale. Bulk orders £1.50 per 100. Discounts available for larger quantities. Order from Release, 1 Elgin Avenue, London W9 3PR.

APPLICATIONS are invited for the post of **Manager of Bolton Institute of Technology Students' Union.** The person appointed will be responsible for the administration of, and all the trading services provided by the Union. This is a newly created post and with appeal to a person who is sympathetic to the needs of students and proven administrative ability. Financial experience would be an advantage. Applications, including a curriculum vitae should be addressed to the **President, BIT Students Union, Reference UMA, Deane Road, Bolton to arrive no later than 2 December 1977.**

North-West Peoples Festival

A celebration of popular culture and struggle
A day of fun and politics
Sun 27 November 11am-11pm
at Belle Vue, Manchester.
Tickets from £2, reduced for OAPs and others. Details from 28, Mathersage Road, Manchester T3. 081-224 5378.
Organised by the North West Communist Party.

Another German prisoner dies France extradites Croissant

by CHRIS O'BRIEN

RENAUD CROISSANT, lawyer to members of the Red Army Fraction, has been extradited from France to West Germany. The charges against him are designed to put the cap on the judicial repression of the German left.

Croissant has been labelled the villain of the piece, the person who provided the supposed system of communications which, by implication, enabled the three RAF prisoners to commit 'suicide'. In reality he is on trial for his politics. The logic of the witch-hunt demands that a left-wing lawyer defending left-wing clients becomes a 'terrorist sympathiser'.

The French part in all this has been as despicable as the German. After German accusations that the French didn't try hard enough to find the kidnapped Hans Martin Schleyer, the Giscard Government has bent over backwards to oblige in this case - even to the extent of contravening its own extradition agreement! But 'law' hardly comes into it. West German Chancellor Schmidt has already admitted that conferences between lawyers and their clients have been begged, and the charges against Croissant are a further violation of the right of confidence between lawyers and prisoners.

The attitude of the major French working class parties has been scandalous. They have managed little more than a few half-hearted pleas, leaving it up to the far left and individual branches of the Socialist and Communist Parties to organise the massive protests that greeted the news of extradition.

With news of the 'suicide' of another RAF prisoner, Ingrid Schubert, coming in the same week, we can only fear for Croissant's future. He has made a legally certified statement saying that he would not attempt suicide, and that if he died it would be murder. But Ingrid Schubert said that too.



INGRID SCHUBERT, the latest in a line of 'suicides' by West German political prisoners. No doubt her declaration that she would never commit suicide will be taken as just one more indication of 'terrorist' perversity.

But there are many unanswered questions. For example, the 'conclusive' prosecution evidence is the discovery of a rope in her cell only hours before her death. But 'for security reasons', this information was not released until two days after Schubert's death. Ingrid Schubert is about as likely a suicide as Steve Biko!

Paris women's meeting

THE FEMINIST socialist conference held in Paris last May had its first European follow-up meeting last month and another is planned for 11 and 12 December in Paris.

The meetings are discussing how to consolidate links made in Paris and as a first step - how to ensure International Women's Day in March is truly international. Last month's meeting was attended by representatives

from the women's movement in Belgium, Switzerland, the United States, Spain and France. Women from the feminist movement in Britain did not take part as details of the meeting didn't arrive.

The meeting discussed an international week of co-ordinated action around the broad theme of the struggle against all forms of daily violence against women - designed to include, amongst other issues, battered

women, rape, child care and abortion.

Plans are under way for a common poster and the need was felt to compile a list of campaigns and women's groups prepared to send speakers to meetings and rallies being organised throughout Europe.

In light of the need to tackle the attacks currently being launched against women's abortion rights in virtually every country on the continent, the National Abortion Campaign has agreed to send a representative to the next meeting in December. A work-shop on abortion has been scheduled for Sunday, 12 December.

Irish Republicanism Today by Bill Richards

The Provisional Republican Movement is branded by Westminster and the entire bourgeois political spectrum in Britain as 'psychopaths', 'thugs' and other such epithets. These characterisations are slavishly echoed by many in the labour movement who label the Provisionals as a variant of 'green fascism'.

The attitude of revolutionary socialists is of an entirely different order. Despite fundamental differences with the Provisionals, their errors are viewed in the context of a struggling anti-imperialist movement, to be discussed in the spirit of a struggle against a common enemy.

The 1977 Ard Fheis (National Conference) of the Provisional Sinn Fein, held on 22/23 October, presented the opportunity to look afresh at the Provisionals. Even prior to the conference expectations had been raised by a speech a leading Belfast Republican, Jimmy Drumm, made this June when he foretold Republican involvement in workers' struggles. What, then, emerged?

One of the most notable features of the conference was the participation of many men and women newly released from prisons both in the 'Free State' and the occupied North. While the majority of the participants were elderly and male, there was a scattering of young women from the Turf Lodge area of Belfast — which has been under a state of heavy siege for at least six months. To describe these fighters for Irish freedom as 'thugs' or 'fascists' is despicable.

1974: YEAR OF VICTORY?

Their struggle was partially reflected in the conference by the many resolutions and speakers on the plight of Irish political prisoners. One such speaker — a woman from the Belfast Relatives Action Committee — called attention to the Catholic minority's militant opposition to Westminster's attempt to criminalise political prisoners. Yet neither the Ard Fheis, nor speakers at it, were able to map out a concrete and realisable strategy for effective action on this issue.

This in itself illustrates one of the basic inconsistencies of the Irish Republican tradition. That is, while its fundamental strain is opposition to imperialist conquest, this is combined with a basically conservative ideology. This peculiar combination is expressed in the Provisionals' claim to be the legitimate heir and sole representative of the suppressed Irish nation. As such this leads to an inflated view of its own capacity to decisively defeat imperialism. Thus, for example, the Provisionals announced 1974 as the 'Year of Victory'.

But the most widely-held and dangerous belief of the Republican movement is that the struggle in Ireland long ago transcended the boundaries of the mass movement, and is now on a higher plane of a direct military war of national liberation. According to this view mass action is at best an auxiliary column supporting the front line 'war effort'.

AGAINST REPRESSION

The whole history of the Irish struggle and its most recent phase in particular have conclusively demonstrated that on the contrary the Republican movement possesses neither the military nor social weight necessary to defeat imperialism. Moreover, although there is at least a substantial minority of the Irish population which is sympathetic to the idea of a united Ireland, the vast majority are not yet prepared to wage an all-out fight against imperialism.

Recognition of this basic reality does not rule out the possibility of direct political action. Nor does it imply capitulation to the pro-imperialist politics of the reformist Social Democratic and Labour Party in the North. Experience shows that while remaining in the general political orbit of traitorous leaderships, the mass of the Irish people will respond to specific manifestations of imperialist oppression.

In this context when the civil rights



Photomontage: PETER KENNARD

movement exploded onto the streets in 1968/69 its strength resided in its mass participation, a participation not inhibited by identification with the overall programme of one or another political grouping.

This approach remains valid today when the task of the hour is to remobilise the mass of the Catholic population against the escalation of repression. In his presidential address to the Ard Fheis, Ruairi O'Bradaigh used the term 'the knot nearest the throat' when referring to the unifying role of a Republican election campaign against the EEC. Underlying this concept is the need to rally the maximum forces in a single minded effort against imperialism's weakest point. Today that weakest point is undoubtedly the issue of repression. Real mass mobilisations against this would represent a high step forward for the anti-imperialist struggle.

Yet it was precisely at this level that the Ard Fheis failed to offer a concrete policy. Indeed, while the conference was debating the issue, the Provisionals in Belfast put a motion through to exclude the participation of the SDLP from the RAC. This was apparently motivated on the grounds that the SDLP are traitors and to give them a platform would foster illusions in their treacherous politics. But broad layers of Catholics already have such illusions, and recently the SDLP have rediscovered the 'Irish dimension' and are occasionally adopting an anti-imperialist posture to brush up their credentials as representatives of the minority. The effect of this is double-edged.

On the one hand it can legitimise the aspirations of the most militant sections of the anti-imperialist population. On the other, it can enable the SDLP to present itself as a flexible and stronger opposition to imperialism. The real danger is therefore not

fostering illusions in the SDLP, but allowing this party to channel anti-imperialist sentiment into the dead end of reformist negotiations.

The image presented by the SDLP cannot be exposed by emotive denunciations and propaganda alone. Primarily this can best be achieved through the experience which the Catholic minority can gain in the field of struggle. Specifically a united front policy would put the SDLP and all political tendencies to the crucial test of action, thereby showing in practice who are the most consistent and effective fighters for the real interests of the oppressed. Above all the united front approach can unite the widest sections of the population in action thereby effectively defending their rights and ability to struggle as a whole. Any other strategy threatens to reduce the anti-repression campaign to an insignificant Republican ginger group.

The exclusionist policy of the Provisional leadership is also reflected in its general view of the Irish struggle which subordinates mass political action to the needs of the 'war effort'. Not only political action is subordinated, but political discussion as well: attempts at political clarification by the Provisionals can open up a series of contradictions.

One such occasion at the conference was the discussion on direct elections to the European parliament. Ruairi O'Bradaigh's 'knot nearest the throat' was considerably loosened by the more traditional precepts of the movement which regarded participation in elections as a sell-out of Irish sovereignty. Like other resolutions this discussion was referred to the National Committee to be resolved.

Thus those who saw the conference as making a shift to the left are fundamentally mistaken. Some cited the reception given to two anti-communist motions calling on

Sinn Fein to 'publicly dissociate from communism' and to affirm that 'Sinn Fein is a non-Marxist revolutionary party'. Although both these motions were roundly defeated and opposed by prominent leaders of the organisation such as O'Bradaigh and George Lynch, they did so in such a manner that would not alienate the 'old guard' of the Catholic morality. Their arguments were vague and populist. Both speakers took their distance from Marxism and in doing so stressed that Ireland had its 'own' socialists such as Lawler, Mellows and Connolly.

Whilst Irish (and other) revolutionaries have much to learn from Connolly, socialism is both a living and international movement which has been constantly refined and modified through the experience of more than 60 years of international working class struggle since Connolly's death.

BASIC CONSERVATISM

Moreover, the Provisionals' propaganda has recently tended to depart from the more radical Republican tradition of building a united Ireland completely free of the old religious communities. In its place they now place more emphasis on the concept of a federated state of four provinces.

The basic conservatism of this programme was illustrated in a recent leaflet issued by Sinn Fein. Entitled *Brits Out — Peace In*, it argues for the 'right of the people of Ulster to self-determination'. Although this referred to a nine, and not a six county Ulster, this position still indicates a dangerous conciliation with the Protestant settler caste and its interests.

More importantly, the implementation of this proposal is not seen as an integral part of revolutionary struggle in Ireland which will end the caste system, once and for all, but as part of a gradual process of economic reconstruction and negotiation following an equally gradual withdrawal of the British Army.

A similar conservatism is reflected in the Provisionals' 'Eira Nua' (New Ireland) programme, which is marked by its inability to champion the struggles and demands of the most oppressed layers of Irish society. Sinn Fein's claims as a party of the working class should not be taken too literally: the criteria for judging the class character of any movement is its programme.

Concretely the overall programme of the Provisionals does not even allude to the leading role of the working class in the Irish struggle. It prefers instead to talk of 'people's power' based on provincial governments embracing 'Catholic and Protestant, Orange and Green, Left and Right'.

OPPOSITION TO ABORTION

similar confusion is evident in the Provisionals' economic programme which envisages a mixed economy of nationalised industries, co-operatives and small capitalists.

But perhaps the most worrying aspect of Sinn Fein's programme is its position on women. For the considerable hold the Catholic Church has on women in Ireland is directly related to Ireland's national underdevelopment by imperialism. Yet Sinn Fein's position on women is no different from that of the Catholic hierarchy, or for that matter very little different from that of the whole imperialist order. Ruairi O'Bradaigh's opposition to abortion is not accidental, it flows logically from the Eira Nua programme whose 'Draft Charter of Rights' sanctifies the family. It remains to be seen how the Provisionals will respond to a mass feminist movement in Ireland. Presently, however, their programme is not only a disservice to women but to the entire struggle for freedom in Ireland.

The 1977 Ard Fheis confirmed such basic inconsistencies. The need in Ireland is for a mass revolutionary socialist party. While it can confidently be stated that the most dedicated and consistent Republican will be part of this party, its nucleus today is the small but conscious forces gathered around the Irish Trotskyist movement.

The 'no platform' debate

THOSE WHO advocate the banning of Jewish societies on the campuses should reflect carefully on the danger that these moves — primarily directed against Zionism — could end up by opening the road to anti-semitism, and may even find support among National Front sympathisers in the universities and colleges.

Zionists arrogantly claim to represent all Jews — despite the fact that many people of Jewish origin, from the ultra-orthodox religious groups to those who have thrown in their lot with the working class and socialism, are opposed to Zionism and the creation of a theocratic racist state on the soil of Palestine.

This Zionist state of Israel is a racist state which gives the 'right of return' (sic) to any Jew — wherever he or she is born — but denies this right to tens of thousands of Arabs born within the frontiers of present-day Israel and their children and grandchildren. It also practices legislative discrimination against Arabs.

But not all Zionists outside Israel support this repressive

feature of the regime and may actively oppose it. A blanket denial of a platform to Zionists will also silence those oppositionists within the Zionist movement — people who can be won over to socialism in a reasoned debate.

If we accept that all Zionists are ipso facto racists, is it correct to equate them with the National Front and apply the same tactics of censorship to them? If all racists are to be banned, then what about the pro-Moscow 'communists'? And what about the supporters of Forbes Burnham in Guyana?

The ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union pursues virulent racist policies against the minority nationalities of the USSR, even to the extent of deporting entire peoples (for example the Crimean Tatars) from their traditional habitat. Great Russian chauvinism is just as much a manifestation of racism as Zionism. So is the discrimination against the Indians in Guyana.

We deny a platform to fascists not simply because they are racists, but because the racism peculiar to them has a definite

objective — to divide the working class into racially antagonistic groups as a preliminary to the destruction of the labour movement itself. This is manifestly not true of Zionist or pro-Moscow racists.

By using the present left-wing majority in the student movement (possibly assisted by under-cover anti-semitic fascists) to impose a ban on Jewish societies, we are laying ourselves open to the danger that a right-wing backlash may one day impose a similar ban on socialist societies.

Socialists must be in the forefront of the fight to preserve and extend the rights of free speech. Only in the exceptional case of avowed fascists, whose victory would destroy our movement, must we take the drastic step of curtailing this right. But we must realise the exceptional nature of this action and never try to turn it into a universal principle. That is the road to monolithism and totalitarianism.

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN (N. London)

Fascist bans

YOUR 6 October issue carried an article called 'IMG position on the bans'.

Obviously, there are different premises for what practical position to take in regards to fascism in Europe and in the United States. It's usually only the smaller sectarian organisations which advance the line of 'no platform for fascists' in America.

The American working class never really had to face the tangible prospects of a fascist occupation of the entire country as did their brothers and sisters (if not uncles and aunts) in Europe during the Second World War.

During the anti-war movement of the 1980s, however, we constantly had to debate the essence of this question when the Reserve Officer Training Corps and CIA recruiters were sent to our campuses. Nowadays, the American left has a better foothold in the political spectrum than it did before the anti-war movement.

But the agents of capitalist ideology are still most likely to feign as if to 'awing their axes both ways': equating left with

right in the minds of the workers.

Hence, in the States, we often begin with a premise of 'free speech to all'. That because we assume that the State will 'swing its axe at both left and right'. So long as the far right is smaller than we are, we'll probably be able to continue to get a better hearing, sound much clearer and reasonable to the workers, while organising defence of our own meetings in those fairly rare cases where a direct confrontation seems likely.

I think the IMG did well in explaining the unique feature of the Tameside bans. There, as they said, 'a non-specific clause has been used to ban everyone'. But whereas the rest of the article no doubt clearly imparts the significance of that to British readers, it's regrettable that you still may have to imagine an American comrade's skull as if it were lined with lead just to understand that.

Hearing of this, American readers might be tempted to reply: therefore the IMG made another mistake, because it should have known that this is always going to happen. The

Tameside bans were one of several ways that the British state could have 'quieted the situation'. It was put to use a bit quickly, and generated about one month of confusion. But other ways still remain for the State as alternatives — around which we can make demands in coming situations of this sort.

The very fact that the whole question could be resolved through the simple addition of a clause in the Public Order or Race Relations Acts is an alternative which can be won through channels, already gained as concessions for the British working class.

In the allegedly 'more free' America, our 'democratic' politicians haven't been so innovative to dream up such channels for us. Or rather: we have not yet won such things, just as we have not yet won even a labour party.

Socialist Challenge is obviously directed for British workers. It seems to have already become a powerful tool for the class-struggle that's unfolding in England.

THOMAS BOUSHIER, [Oklahoma, USA]

The same paper?

SHORTLY AFTER being sent a copy of the new Basque paper Egin, I read the enthusiastic account of its launching by Fred Fairbairn in Socialist Challenge.

Egin is a bourgeois paper. This can be deduced not just from the articles, but also from the many adverts by banks and industrial firms. Certainly Egin is a great improvement on the old official press, just as the Daily Mirror is better than the

Telegraph. Does that mean we should mobilise in its support in the way that Comrade Fairbairn wants to do for Egin?

In his last paragraph, Comrade Fairbairn accurately states that the future of Egin is tied up with radical nationalism 'whose populism and fear of definition it shares'. May I add that radical nationalists around Egin have a more hostile attitude to the main workers parties than the conservative Basque Nationalist

Party (PNV).

They have physically attacked members of the Socialist Party. Nationalists, both radical and conservative, have a profoundly ambivalent attitude to the immigrant workers from other parts of Spain, who voted massively for the Socialist Party in the elections.

In the Basque country, more than in any other part of Spain, there are many owners of small and medium-sized businesses who traditionally have been opposed to Francoism. Left nationalism recognises them as part of the Basque people. Socialism becomes the expropriation of 'unpatriotic' businesses and the support of those owned by genuine ethnic Basques.

P. GALLURRALDE (Bristol)

Bolton report

THE FOLLOWING is a report on how the Bolton Socialist Challenge Supporters Group feels about the paper, as decided at a meeting last month. We hope to send you such reports fairly regularly.

The group was generally agreed that Socialist Challenge does not contain enough articles that take up basic issues of socialism in a popular propaganda manner. We feel that more popular education could be undertaken by the paper.

It was felt that while some of the longer articles have been good, others have been extremely abstruse and difficult to read, demanding a level of education which the vast majority of the readership would not possess; we felt this particularly

about the series of articles on the Italian far left which most of us found incomprehensible.

We welcome the increased arts coverage but would like to see more popular coverage along the lines of the review of Coronation Street: this could include analyses of women's magazines, kids' comics, etc.

We regret that there have been so few 'Battle of Ideas' supplements. Everyone in the group feels that these are a great boost to the paper. And rather than see less of them due to financial considerations, we think it is worth making them monthly, as originally intended, and cutting down on the content of the paper elsewhere in order to compensate. In our experience, people who know the paper are far more

keen to buy it when they know it contains a 'Battle of Ideas' supplement.

It was felt the lay-out could be improved. While we recognise that financial considerations probably play a considerable role here, we tend to think that the lay-out is rather monotonous and unimaginative.

The groups feels, naturally, that there is a great deal on the positive side to be said for Socialist Challenge, not least its continued struggle for unity in the far left and its attempt to break down the long-standing sectarian traditions which have been so much a part of Trotskyist politics in recent years.

NEIL DUFFIELD (Bolton Socialist Challenge Supporters Group)

Socialist Challenge

EVENTS

I'm a Socialist Challenge supporter

- LONDON**
- SOUTHALL: Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details phone 01-573 5696.
- BRENT Socialist Challenge group. For details of meetings write c/o London IMG, PO Box 50, London N12XP.
- HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. For details write c/o London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.
- HARINGEY Socialist Challenge readers group meets fortnightly. First meeting: Monday, 28 November, West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road (off West Green Road), nearest tube Turnpike Lane. The Need for Socialist unity, with speaker Ted Coxhead.
- EAST ANGLIA**
- NORWICH: For details of Socialist Challenge support group contact: C. Scott, 7 Clarendon Road, Norwich.
- COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Tuesdays. Next meeting 29 November, 7.30pm, room 303, Students Union, Francis Barker will introduce 'Culture, Media and the Struggle for Socialism'.
- YORKSHIRE**
- SHEFFIELD Socialist Challenge supporters meet weekly on Thursdays, 7.30pm, the Lion Hotel, 3 Nursery Street, (off the Wicker), Sheffield.
- MIDLANDS**
- For details of activities of local supporters contact Socialist Challenge Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham. (Tel: 021-643 9209).
- LEICESTER Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly at Highfields Community Centre. On Wednesdays, 8pm.
- NORTH WEST**
- For details of activities in the NW write or ring the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, Third Floor, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. 061-236 2362.
- Open Tuesday 6-8pm, Thursday 6-8pm, Saturday 10-1pm. Room available for meetings. Duplicating services.
- LIVERPOOL Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at Stanley House, Upper Parli-
- BURY Socialist Challenge group meets at the Royal Hotel, Silver St., every Wednesday at 8pm.
- WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2352.

The national question

I AM forced to ask if Bob Purdie [Socialist Challenge, 27 October] has ever paused to wonder why nations oppress one another, or why an advanced nation oppresses its more backward neighbour. Can it be that one nation is inherently more nasty than the other?

No, it is because the bourgeoisie of the oppressor nation sees advantage in taking over the economy of the oppressed nation, and suppressing its national identity. In order to do this, the economy of the about-to-be-oppressed nation must be at a considerably lower stage of development than the about-to-oppress nation. In general this will mean that the oppressed nation is prevented from building its own national capitalist economy, and this is precisely what has happened in the case of Scotland.

Comrade Purdie suggests that the necessary prerequisites for oppression which he lists are not present in the Scottish tradition. Ethnic and linguistic discrimination? Who wiped out Gaelic? Feudal annexation? The Union wasn't voluntary, and look what happened when a dynastic dispute turned into an attempt at secession. If Scotland is not oppressed, comrade Purdie, then what is it? Imperialist? Scotland has at least the credentials and potential of the likes of Euskadi, Quebec, Catalonia.

Ultra-leftism on the national question? Yes, that's when one says, as do the SWP, 'the real struggle is elsewhere, overthrowing capitalism'. Instead one should recognise that there is no solution to the national question this side of capitalism, and should therefore raise democratic demands which bring the mass of people into greater and greater conflict with their existing leadership.

A self-criticism

THE LETTERS last week from comrades protesting against the editorial of Socialist Challenge [3 November] which opposed the witch-hunt against Jeremy Thorpe and Maureen Colquhoun make many correct points. The comrades were right in criticising the 'amusing' way the editorial introduced the alleged murder plot against Norman Scott, and the concluding reference to the sexual preferences of some National Front leaders.

The editorial's statement in defence of the private life of Jeremy Thorpe was also criticised by readers. While we condemn the interference in people's sexual lives by the State, the bourgeois press, and indeed the Labour Party, we recognise that a great part of gay liberation deals with the process of coming out — that is, making the 'private' life of gays public.

Finally, while we agree that the oppression of gay people is not a hangover of Victorian ideology — gay people probably suffered less overt repression in the Victorian era — the editorial did not seek to analyse the roots of gay oppression. Had it done so, it would not have rooted this oppression solely in the relations of the 'nuclear family' of modern day society. We need more analysis on this, but surely its roots are located in the monogamous family that has existed throughout class society.

In summary, the editorial

board stresses its commitment to the fight for gay liberation. To that end, the far left has to develop its analysis of all aspects of sexual politics. We will be publishing a series of articles tackling the fundamental issues involved as well as tactical questions concerning

how to build and strengthen the gay movement itself, and the need to win the broadest possible support throughout the working class for its aims. We welcome contributions on these issues from our readers.

Editorial Board

The Other Bookshop
328, Upper Street, LONDON N1

Four Books on Literacy from the Writers and Readers Cooperative

The Politics of Literacy edited by Martin Hoyle.....£1.50

Education: The Practice of Freedom by Paulo Freire.....£1.00

The Literacy Process by Carol & Lars Berggren.....45p

Literacy in 30 Hours by Cynthia Brown.....45p

SPECIAL OFFER FOR READERS OF SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

All four books for £2.75 post free (Offer finishes 7th December)



Demands like 'For a Scottish Workers Republic'.

This is the approach Lenin argued for in Left Wing Communism and Trotsky in the Transitional Programme. The national question is too important to be left in the hands of the Mats. That is what Bob Purdie is doing, by calling for more devolution.

ED ROBERTSON (Edinburgh)

Clive Goodwin: 1934-1977

A personal tribute

The fact that Clive Goodwin is dead has still not yet completely sunk in, writes TARIQ ALI. It still seems incredible. My first reaction on being told the news was to disbelieve it, to hope that somehow a ghastly mistake had been made. But it was not to be so.

Clive died on 16 November during a visit to Los Angeles to see one of his clients, Trevor Griffiths. He suffered a brain haemorrhage in the lobby of the most exclusive hotel in LA. Instead of calling for medical assistance, the hotel staff treated Clive as a drunk. In pain and semi-conscious, he was carted off in a police car and deposited in the drunks' cell.



CLIVE GOODWIN

It was there that he died without receiving any medical attention. One felt a combination of rage, helplessness, and acute depression. For Clive was not just a friend but a comrade. A unique character in the world of television and theatre.

In the days which followed his death many memories have flooded back. Conversations and arguments we have had. His sense of humour. His sensitivity, often disguised by a cynical remark. His other friends — and there are many — will no doubt write about Clive's multi-faceted personality. I will concentrate on the part of his life with which I was associated.

natural death. The early 70s were the period in which I hardly saw Clive. The wounds of the split were still too recent. We would see each other at the odd party or street demo and smile politely and exchange a few words. There was something both said and unreal about this period and we, who had been in almost daily contact for many years, felt it.

I don't quite remember when this phase ended, but it did. We began to meet again. He used to stress time and again how awful it was that the left was so divided and split. 'Why can't you and Socialist Worker get together? It would be such a powerful combination', he used to say. 'They aren't interested', I would reply. 'I'm sure they say exactly the same about you,' he would counter. End of conversation on left unity.

UNCOMMON

It was just over ten years ago that I first met Clive. He had read a critical review I had written of *US*, Peter Brook's play on Vietnam, and he had rung up to say he agreed with me and could we meet. He was a theatre and television agent and a socialist: an uncommon combination.

We met and he asked what I thought of the idea of launching a new left-wing newspaper. I was naturally for the idea. Afterwards I was convinced that no more would be heard of it — a fate that often befalls nice ideas. This feeling was enhanced because Ralph Schoenmann, of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, had thought of a similar plan several months earlier and nought had come of it.

Clive rang up again a few weeks later and said a number of other people were also interested and we should meet and discuss the matter further. The first meeting was held at his house, 79 Cromwell Road, London SW7. A number of people were present, among them the poets Adrian Mitchell and Christopher Logue, the scriptwriter Roger Smith, the playwright David Mercer.

Clive's enthusiasm and Christopher's inventive skills (it was he who suggested the name) finally saw the launching of *The Black Dwarf*. Its first office was Cromwell Road and its publisher and main inspirer was Clive Goodwin. The paper couldn't have been launched at a better or more propitious time.

BLACK DWARF

The first pre-publication issue hit the streets on May Day 1968, ten days before the Night of the Barricades in Paris. The year of the Vietnam demonstrations in Britain and Germany, and the year in which Soviet tanks invaded Czechoslovakia.

The *Black Dwarf* was a success. As the wave of 1968 receded divisions appeared on the editorial board, followed by the inevitable split. Clive and I were on different sides in the split. There had been mistakes on both sides, and, in retrospect, one can see clearly that the whole question should have been handled in a different way.

Those of us backing the International Marxist Group set up the *Red Mole*, while the *Dwarf* — after a few issues (good ones, incidentally) — died a

INVOLVED AGAIN

He was very pleased with the launching and growth of *Socialist Challenge*. He was happy that we published his article on censorship in TV drama. He wanted to get involved again, and came to a meeting to discuss future articles for our Under Review page. He undertook to research and write a feature on why it is that an immense amount of music is recorded, but so little broadcast.

He rang after the Dobson scoop: 'It's great. I was delighted. Almost thought of sending you a cable saying: "Welcome Back, Love Media Stars Inc." Just before he left for Los Angeles he rang to discuss the 32-page Xmas issue we are planning. He had promised to write something on the States for us, in addition to getting an article from Trevor Griffiths on John Reed.'

For one of Clive's enormous talents lay precisely in occasionally uniting socialists working in different fields and functioning in different milieus. His death on this front alone leaves behind a terrible gulf.

I still can't quite believe that the phone won't suddenly ring and Clive's voice will be at the other end. Nor can I visualise 79 Cromwell Road without him. And yet one can almost hear him say: 'Don't mourn too much but have a good wake.'

Clive's wife, the artist Pauline Boty, died a tragic death almost 13 years ago. She had left behind an infant daughter. To Boty Goodwin, the comrades of *Socialist Challenge* join Clive's other friends in offering our sympathy, love, and condolences.

Bad news reels on the '30s

by JANE CLARKE and JOHN THACKARA

THE CONTROVERSY which has greeted *Before Hindsight*, a documentary about contemporary newsreel coverage of Hitler's rise to power in the Thirties, says as much about the short-sightedness of today's current affairs journalists as it does about the Thirties. After all, the material in this documentary is forty years old or more, yet it has managed to set the BBC and ITV humming.

As a systematic critique of media coverage of an era, *Before Hindsight* is certainly powerful. After 1933, for instance, no mention appeared of the persecution of the Jews until 1938, when the collapse of appeasement witnessed an abrupt change to almost hysterical anti-German propaganda.

EXOTICA

Critical films were made during this period, but they were cut, delayed or censored out of existence. All that remained were anodyne accounts of Hitler and Mussolini as exotica, with passing references to the danger to world peace, but complete silence on the internal regimes in the fascist states.

The newsreel editors themselves account for the trivialisation and non-engagement of

their efforts by reference to their prime role as entertainers; it was showbusiness, and the education of the public about fascism was never considered.

The makers of *Before Hindsight* — director Jonathan Lewis, executive producer Elizabeth Taylor-Mead, and presenter James Cameron — are reticent about explaining or judging the Thirties newsreels, until Jonathan Dimbleby is interviewed at the end on the parallels between then and now. 'My fear, my belief,' says Dimbleby, 'is that when our successors in 30 or 40 years time look back on the coverage of events in southern Africa, of events in southern Ireland, they will look back with the same kind of dismay that we now look back on the way the cinema covered events in the Thirties in Germany. And that is a very, very sad fact.'

Although he doesn't go into it in great detail in the film, the crux of Dimbleby's critique is the complete dishonesty inherent in the notion of 'impartiality'... which is in fact a value-judgement of its own. Even had it been attempted, who would have welcomed a 'balanced and impartial' coverage of fascism — apart from the fascists themselves?

WEANED

These are difficult issues for media workers, weaned and trained according to prevailing standards of 'balance' and 'news values'. *Before Hindsight* may be a bit late arriving, but if it leads even to minor improvements in the coverage of Ireland or race, and to a new critical awareness



by journalists and broadcasters then it will have been very worthwhile. *The Other Cinema*, which is showing *Before Hindsight* nightly until mid-December, is holding discussions on the issues raised by the film on 27 November (Film as Evidence) and 4 December (The Politics of Television News Reporting). The film is showing with Free Theatres, made in 1935 by Ivor Montagu as part of the campaign to free the German Communist Party leader who was imprisoned by the Nazis without trial or charges. The film was banned by the British censor on the grounds that it dealt with a 'convicted criminal'. For details of performances ring Don Macpherson on 01-734 8508

The richness of women's lives: in festival

From: Women's Festival '77

FINALLY WE have it: an enormous festival by and about women — three weeks of performance, discussion, display workshops. At long last women can share in a huge way what we've all been doing, thinking, feeling and creating over the past few decades; compare notes on our political, emotional, and artistic developments; above all, show off the richness of our lives.

Women's Festival '77 will be on in Central London from 29 November to 18 December: featuring plays, concerts, films, and dance performances; exhibiting photographs and visual artwork; discussing campaigns and projects, holding workshops, selling literature and jamming 'til midnight. For six days a week, the festival — to be held at the Action Space Drill Hall — will present such artists as Terry Quaye's Moon Spirit, Jam Today, Oya, Pirate Jenny Team Two, The Women's Theatre Group, Anna Wise, Maggie Nichols and Meg Christian and Teresa Trull.

WORKSHOP

Many organisations will be holding discussions and workshops, including the Rape Crisis Centre, Third World Women's Workshop, Child Poverty Action Group, Women in Ireland, Women's Aid, GEMMA, and the NCCL. Every Tuesday evening a workshop will focus on women working in the mass media. Friday and Saturday nights are set aside for late music; Sundays for children's workshops, classical music and cream teas.

Voices, a new play by Susan Griffin, an American playwright and poet, will have its British premiere in the downstairs theatre.

It was the desire to produce *Voices* — now playing to critical acclaim in Los Angeles — which

workshops open to women only. Each Saturday there will be women-only performances and discussions on writing, music and visual arts. In addition the workshops on female sexuality and Lesbian sexuality are limited to women.

A crèche will be provided from midday six days a week, staying open until the festival closes each night. The cafe at Action Space will be open and upstairs, literature, posters and records will be on display and for sale. Exhibitions of photography and visual art will be continuously displayed throughout the building. For women requiring special provisions, the festival will be organising accommodation for out-of-towners, and transportation for the handicapped and

elderly on request.

GRANTS

In the past week, the festival has received grants from the Arts Council, Camden Council, and the Greater London Arts Association. But this money is not enough to cover even the expenses of the three hundred women taking part. We are therefore charging a minimal admission price for performances and concerts.

For a programme of Women's Festival '77, write to: Action Space Drill Hall, 16 Chenies Street, London WC1. Tel: 01-637 7664.

Socialist Challenge

Socialist Challenge Benefit

Saturday 26 November, 6.15pm. The Other Cinema, 25 Tottenham Street, London W1.

Fistful of Dynamite

starring James Coburn and Rod Taylor. (Sergio Leone, Italy, 138 mins., Italy 1971).

Set in Mexico in 1914 following the collapse of the Diaz dictatorship with Coburn playing the part of an exiled Irish Republican who joins up with a group of Mexican revolutionaries.

Followed by a discussion on "Irish Republicanism" led by Geoff Bell (author of *The Protestants of Ulster* and a member of Socialist Challenge Editorial Board).

Cheap drinks and food available. All for only £1.20. Tickets at the door.

Socialist Challenge

The logical conclusion of Arab policy:

SADAT IN ISRAEL

Egyptian President Sadat will certainly go down in history as a man who dared to do what others only dreamed of. But it remains to be seen what the remainder of history's verdict will be: a perspicacious statesman? Or an over-impetuous adventurer? **CHRIS BALFOUR** and **RICHARD CARVER** report.

We probably won't know whether Sadat appreciated the irony of his visit to the El Aksa mosque in Jerusalem. It was at that very spot that King Abdullah of Transjordan was killed 25 years ago as he, too, tried to conclude a separate agreement with the Zionist state.

The difference was that this time the Arab leader was in an occupied zone, under the protection of the Israeli armed forces and secret police.

It has been clear for some time — at least since the days of King Abdullah — that the Arab ruling classes have no interest in defending the national rights of the dispossessed Palestinian people. Only the deep-going popularity of their cause throughout the Arab world and the Palestinians' capacity for resistance has forced the Arab regimes to keep up a pretence of support.

The suffering Palestinian people is only a troublesome distraction alongside the apparent super-profits to be made from the recent inflow of oil cash into the area.

The dream of every Arab ruling class has been a quiet pact between themselves and the Israelis, underwritten by imperialism and the opportunist workers states, which would establish a 'holy alliance' against the Palestinian masses. Sadat, as representative of a ruling class that is at the same time among the most developed and most vulnerable in the Arab world, simply decided to take the bull by the horns.

While his action outraged Arab opinion worldwide — expressed in a deluge of occupations, pickets, and armed attacks on Egyptian embassies — his official critics were so cautious as to give the suggestion of a nod and a wink.

President Assad of Syria de-

livered a lengthy statement stressing the identity of Egyptian and Syrian aims, and stating only that Sadat's visit was an 'erroneous tactic'. Hardly surprising, for it was Assad's armies which poured into Lebanon last year to do the Israelis' job for them — the most vicious attack on the Palestinian resistance since another Arab regime — Jordan — tried the same thing in 1970.

From Saudi Arabia came a pregnant pause of 24 hours, before a mild statement of condemnation was forthcoming. The Moscow news services, not normally known for their reticence, limited themselves to publishing the criticisms from the Arab states, especially Syria (whose Lebanese venture they had backed), adding little comment of their own.

Mystery surrounds the Soviet role.

RUMANIA'S ROLE

Little attention has been drawn to the fact that it was Rumanian President Ceausescu who acted as intermediary in setting up the meeting.

Probably Moscow knew nothing, but nothing that has come out of the Kremlin in the past week will give much reassurance to the Palestinians.

The US role in setting up the visit is equally shady, though Israeli Premier Begin sent Jimmy Carter a fulsome letter thanking him for 'your efforts which have contributed so magnificently to this historic meeting in Jerusalem'.

Carter helped the talks in the best way he knew: by praying!

But he may have provided some other incentive as well. The Egyptian policy of 'economic opening', designed to at-



tract investment from the West, has not been a dazzling success, and the mass uprising against food price rises in January set the seal on its failure. What exactly did US Secretary of State Vance say to Sadat in Cairo this summer?

So far the Jerusalem talks have only served to show the distance between what Sadat feels free to say and the demands of the Israelis. But what Sadat has done is to set in motion a process that can lead in only one of two directions: a further shift to the right by the Arab regimes and a more open sell-out of the Palestinians; or an upheaval in the Arab world that could overthrow Sadat (already two of his Ministers have resigned) and lead to a renewal of the Palestinian resistance.

Behind the smiling faces and conciliatory words of Begin and Sadat stands the armed might of the Israeli state. Who stands behind the Palestinian people?

Palestinians in Britain speak out

This is what a group of Palestinians in Britain had to say about Sadat's visit:

'The General Union of Palestine Students states unequivocally its total and absolute condemnation of this initiative of the Egyptian President, which is in line with the policies of Arab reaction in subduing the struggle of the Arab masses for social liberation and progress. It is the latest move in the conspiracy that is being waged by imperialism and its local agents in the area against the rising tide of the Arab revolutionary movement...

'The Palestinian masses will continue their struggle for the creation of a secular, democratic state in Palestine. From this standpoint, the visit is totally condemned and rejected by the Arab people, since it represents a humiliating submission to im-

perialism and its creature, in that it legitimises the forcible eviction of the Palestinian people, the occupation of Arab territory and all the crimes committed by Zionism.

It is ironic that while Sadat was addressing the Egyptian parliament about his visit to the Zionist entity to establish his so-called just solution to the problem, Israeli warplanes were giving a startling example of the vicious nature of this entity by razing Lebanese and Palestinian civil concentrations...

It clearly shows that the Arab ruling classes are working in

collusion with Zionism, and that their interests are the same in stabilising the area through a liquidationist settlement...

'By taking this initiative Sadat not only further exposes himself to the Arab people but hastens the momentum of his own downfall and that of rulers of the Arab states who further throw themselves to the dictates of imperialism.'

These remarks were taken from a press statement issued by the General Union of Palestine Students during its occupation of the Arab League offices in London last weekend.

Keep it rolling!

THE MONEY is still rolling in. Two more donations of £50 in recognition of our sterling work in cleansing the management at Leyland. One donor commented:

'Here's ten pounds for an excellent paper. Another fifteen for doing a job on Dobson. And twenty-five to help you get the rest of the racist scum off the streets.'

Our grateful thanks to this supporter and to the following:

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MB	1.50
D. Herman	10.00
IC	0.50
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P. MacRae	1.75
R. Paterson	0.40
Anon	50.00
TOTAL	171.15

This takes the cumulative total for the first eight weeks to £937.09. This still leaves us £170 short.

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