

Socialist Challenge

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CHINA
KEEP
OUT
OF
VIETNAM

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EDITORIAL

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The next step in Iran

RARELY has there been such a crushing victory of the masses over a bourgeois army. To a far greater extent than February 1917 in Russia, the Iranian ruling class is disarmed. Its aim now must be to reconstruct its state apparatus.

Attempts to do this will centre on the figure of Khomeini, using him to buy time to reconstitute the capitalist state. To do this Khomeini will have to rely largely on the leftovers of the old regime. Already he is trying to leave the command structures of the army intact and simply weed out the most recalcitrant elements.

But this operation will take time, which is why Khomeini will be anxious to postpone elections to a constituent assembly and substitute a referendum to ratify the accomplished fact of the overthrow of the monarchy. Instead of this Iranian revolutionaries demand immediate proclamation of the republic and elections to a sovereign constituent assembly.

Already the mass movement is colliding with Khomeini's attempts to reconstruct the state. Khomeini was against the insurrection from the start — which most people are aware of — and is now moving to disarm those very forces who overthrew the Shah's army.

The masses are moving in the opposite direction. It is becoming increasingly apparent that only the organisation and arming of the masses can guarantee a sovereign constituent assembly.

The decisive question at the moment is the organisation of the masses at every level: into workers, soldiers and peasants committees; into political parties; into trade unions and peasant organisations; and into workers and peasants militias. Before such organisations are developed abstract slogans for a Soviet Republic mean little — what is soviet power without soviets? Likewise the degree of organisation — and of course the strength of revolutionaries within it — will determine how quickly the demands for a workers' and peasants' government will become relevant.

The immediate question is the convocation of a constituent assembly, for that cuts right across Khomeini's plans. But only the independent arming and organisation of the masses can guarantee that.

Yes in Wales

PERHAPS the saddest aspect of the referendum campaign in Wales has been the sight of the Labour Party at each other's throats. Indeed, so great is the Labour Party's concern for democracy that it has provided the main public speakers for both sides in the devolution debate.

On the one hand the party apparatus and the trade union bureaucracy who favour a Welsh Assembly; on the other the bulk of Labour councillors, led by the unlikely pact of the MPs Leo Abse and Neil Kinnock.

The latter group argues that the Assembly will be bureaucratic (an apparently plausible argument in the land of the Julian Hodge Mafia) and expensive. Debate rages over whether the Assembly will cost £6m, £12m or £20m. But the crocodile tears would be more convincing if shed in a fight for the £200m plus needed for the health service in Wales, or the £800m needed for the steel industry.

Against this they put forward the sovereignty of Westminster and the unity of Britain. But do socialists really favour the subordination of Wales, with its Labour majority, to a future Tory administration in London? Or do we seize the chance to weaken the instruments of capitalist rule?

National unity and working class unity should not be confused. The Welsh miners, whose record of solidarity with English and foreign workers is second to none, do not make this mistake. Their union supports the Assembly.

'Unity' of the type proposed by Kinnock and friends means subordination of Welsh workers to English capital. The west Wales economy, for example, is based on small farmers whose land is owned by the big food companies and whose language is still dying out, we are told, after centuries of persecution. The conclusion is that the language and the people who use it don't want to go.

The Assembly alone cannot solve these problems. But it will highlight the question: 'Does the Welsh nation have the right to decide?'

Nor do we think an assembly can solve the major problems of class oppression: poverty, unemployment and declining living standards are not soluble in Wales alone. That is why we say: For the Assembly, Against Separation.

Chinese invasion of Vietnam A crime against socialism

By Tariq Ali

THE Chinese invasion of Vietnam was not unexpected. The Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping had made no secret of the fact that China intended to 'punish' Vietnam for its part in the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.

Last Saturday Deng kept his word. Chinese troops crossed the northern border of Vietnam.

It is unlikely that the Chinese will stay long in Vietnam, but the invasion will have serious repercussions on inter-state relations in the non-capitalist world.

Why did China invade Vietnam? The immediate cause is supposed to be the 'indignation' of the Chinese 'at the atrocities perpetrated by the Vietnamese aggressors'.

The Chinese media is claiming that their invasion is a response to Vietnamese 'border provocations'. This is an outright lie.

The real reason had been given by Deng Xiaoping to American journalists. The Vietnamese had to learn 'some necessary lessons'. In other words, the Chinese troops were on a punitive expedition.

Such expeditions have normally been launched by imperialist powers when confronted with recalcitrant colonies. Britain and Afghanistan, the United States and Cuba, Japan and Korea are some obvious examples.

Why had the Vietnamese to be subjected to this invasion according to Chinese logic? Because Vietnam had become a 'Cuba in Asia'. Its intervention in Kampuchea was a major affront to the Chinese. Peking had 'lost face'.

The speed with which Pol Pot was overthrown must have rankled in the Chinese capital. And so, in the best fashion of their new-found friends in the United States, they invaded Vietnam.

The outrageous character of the exercise saw them totally isolated internationally. And in one of history's cruellest ironies, the chieftain of world imperialism, Carter, asked the Chinese to withdraw their troops from Vietnam!

In 1968 the Chinese unleashed a ferocious ideological offensive against the

Russians for the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Despite their wild rhetoric they were correct.

Today they stand hoisted on their own petard. There can be no hesitation at all in asking the Chinese to get out of Vietnam.

The Soviet Union has so far confined itself to verbal threats. But its defence of the Vietnamese is somewhat cynical.

The Chinese could easily argue that they are only putting into practice their version of Brezhnev's 'limited sovereignty' theses, which were utilised to justify the invasion of Prague.

There is no equation between what happened in Kampuchea and the Chinese invasion. The overthrow of Pol Pot was undoubtedly a step forward for the masses of that country.

The regime over which he presided had become a blot on the international workers movement. There was a serious danger of imperialism returning to Phnom Penh.

It would have been much better if the Kampuchean people themselves had been able to remove Pol Pot and his cohorts. In the event they could not do so without Vietnamese help.

The latter should now begin the task of withdrawing its troops from Kampuchea.

But the Chinese invasion was designed as a sharp rap on the knuckles from big brother. The excuse that Vietnam was bullying China (a nation of 900 million people) is a sick joke.

The fact of the matter is that China is in the middle of a sharp factional struggle in the top reaches of the party. Deng's aggressive turn outwards is designed to bolster his position internally.

But he might find, like French and American politicians before him, that tangling with the Vietnamese offers no easy solutions.

The Vietnamese defeated the French and the United States. They are quite capable of dealing with the Chinese incursion.

But they should do so by mobilising their own people and appealing to Chinese workers and peasants to oppose this bureaucratic escapade. An intervention by the Soviet Union would not benefit anyone.



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OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trade 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 understanding that:

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 the 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.

'We want a people's army - a real army'



From Brian Grogan in Tehran and Richard Carver in London

'WE WANT a people's army, a pure army!' 'No Islamic censorship!' 'The new government is a government of bazaar merchants and capitalists, which does not meet the aspirations of the workers!'

Led by the Fedayeen, several thousand chanting demonstrators last Friday marched to the 'Komiteh' (Committee), Ayatollah Khomeini's organising centre at a school in the suburbs of Tehran.

The 'Islamic marshals' on the door refused to admit a delegation. The Ayatollah had developed a strange indisposition. Finally they relented and allowed eight people through to deliver a message.

Earlier the demonstrators had held a meeting on the football pitch at the university. The university is one of the few open forums for discussion, beyond the constraints of 'Islamic censorship'.

It is also the only place where women mix with men on an equal footing and take part in meetings. There are no veils here, only blue jeans.

Assembled there were soldiers from all three services, deserters, students and Fedayeen. It quickly became clear that what concerned everyone was the future of the army. 'We must shoot the generals.' 'We must build a people's army.'

No sooner were these slogans shouted than the news came through that four of the Shah's generals had been tried by an Islamic tribunal and executed.

The meeting was unimpressed. Despite the obvious joy at seeing the head of SAVAK get his come-uppance, people were asking why he was not put on public trial, so that SAVAK's activities could be properly exposed.

And everyone realises that the executions are being carried out under pressure and are a substitute for destroying the army.

One soldier at the meeting said: 'We followed the call of Islam to desert. Now it tells us: get back to your barracks and don't worry what happens to the superior officers who have not changed their attitude.'

And what should be the position towards officers who did change their views: 'How are we expected to place any confidence in leaders who change their coats from one day to the other?' a sergeant asked.

Speakers called for committees to link together rank and file soldiers, low-ranking officers and 'popular vanguard

forces'. These committees would elect new officers and form the basis of a new people's army.

In the space of a few days Khomeini's strategy has become clear. He never favoured the insurrection and now plans to disarm the masses quickly, get rid of the most hated symbols of the Shah's control of the army, and transform the old military apparatus into an 'Islamic army'.

Even in Tehran, where the army is all but crushed, Khomeini plans to do the minimum of rebuilding, which is why he is so anxious that the command structure remain intact.

If necessary he is even prepared to treat with the guerillas. There is talk of the Moslem Mojahedeen taking over the functions of the old Imperial Guard. But on no account will the Khomeini-Bazargan regime allow the free armed organisation of the masses.

There is a problem, however. The militant mood expressed at the Tehran university meeting is widespread. Out of an estimated 100,000 guns distributed during the insurrection only 20,000 have been returned.

The new government is having difficulties just organising the collection of arms — it is using the mosque, which is the only functioning administrative network in the country.

But the problem runs deeper than that. Even the most devout Moslems are not convinced that the usefulness of their guns is finished.

The establishment of formal militias and the election of officers is the only way that the arming of the people can be maintained and the army held at bay. Already there have been clashes between leftists and 'Islamic soldiers', the most celebrated being around the occupation of the American embassy.

Similar reports are coming in from the rest of the country, though it is impossible to assess their accuracy. When the government talks about clashes with pro-Shah forces it is difficult to know what to believe — those who attacked the US embassy were described as pro-Shah!

Certainly fighting with reactionary forces is still going on. In Tabriz the army has put up its stiffest resistance. There too the left-wing forces are in the strongest position.

The Bazargan government has tight control over radio and television, though this is being challenged. The demonstration to the Komiteh on Friday demanded the abolition of censorship and the journalists, who played a leading role in the

struggle against the Shah, have come out firmly against state control of news.

The country is slowly returning to work, but with none of the enthusiasm the Bazargan government had intended. Workers work because they have no other way of supporting themselves, particularly after months of strikes, which have caused immense hardship.

Indefinite strike is not a realistic prospect, but it is pertinent to ask: **under what conditions should workers go back?**

This is how one General Motors worker put it to Socialist Challenge before the insurrection: 'Part of (the company) belongs to the Pahlavi Foundation which now should belong to the workers. Another part belongs to imperialists who have exploited us terribly. This part should also now belong to the workers. The other part belongs to the Iranian owner who has fled to the US and therefore should be taken over.'

This worker was echoing a widespread sentiment for nationalisations. One of the people at the Tehran university meeting, a teacher, also raised the question of who was to control the conditions and terms of work:

'Ayatollah Khomeini asked us to strike, denouncing the educational system and the dreadful books of the imperial regime. Now he is calling on the people to go back to work on Saturday and is asking us to go back to school. But the system hasn't changed and the books are the same.'

After months of factories and refineries being directed by elected strike committees, control is being handed back to the old managers.

It is unlikely that workers will accept this state of affairs for long. The demand that these elected committees should take over the factories would be likely to find a lot of support.

It remains to be seen how long confidence in Khomeini is maintained. Peasants occupied land before the insurrection and were waiting for its legalisation by a Khomeini government. Some appended their names to the summer villas of the rich, awaiting the go-ahead to occupy. Others put their markers on a chosen bit of land.

But even before the uprising Khomeini was damping down the struggle. His 'committee to coordinate strikes' was an attempt to get the movement under control.

In the oilfields representatives of this committee, headed by Bazargan, were trying to get domestic production restarted.

They had already got postal and dock workers back to work.

A leading strike committee member in the oilfields resigned in disgust. He issued an open letter protesting at the 'usurpation of the responsibility formerly held by the representatives of oil workers.'

He complained of 'the suppression of free expression of diverse opinions on the grounds that they are trying to prevent divisions,' and ended by warning 'we must remember the fate of Portugal, Argentina — and especially Chile.'

Another oil workers' delegate has resigned on the basis that: 'It was a coup d'etat. Bazargan didn't come to help us but to give us orders.'

Last Friday's march to the Komiteh is an indication of popular dissatisfaction with the appointed regime. People are asking who appointed Bazargan. The answer is the Komiteh, the mysterious committee in the suburbs which Khomeini uses to orchestrate events. But then who elected the Komiteh?

Outside Tehran it is the same story. In Ahwaz and Abadan, for example, the two southern oil towns, a provisional administration has taken power, comprising bazaar merchants and mullahs, with the odd student. In the heart of the oil industry there is not a single oil worker involved.

It is still unclear what plans Khomeini and Bazargan have for the future of the government. It is quite possible that at some stage they will want to call a constituent assembly to legitimise their rule.

For the mass movement something different is needed — a government immediately accountable to them. Immediate elections to a sovereign constituent assembly would be a way of guaranteeing that.

But such elections can themselves only be guaranteed if the independent organisation of the mass movement is maintained and developed and armed militias formalised.

A strange atmosphere now prevails in Tehran. There is a superficial air of normality — for example, shops are now open for the first time in ages — at the same time as armed groups of Islamic and left-wing militia patrol the streets.

Most people seem to be giving the new government a few more days to prove itself. And most of them are convinced of the accuracy of one of the favourite slogans doing the rounds here:

'The army of the people cannot emerge from the army of the Shah, like a rabbit out of a magician's hat.'

**EYEWITNESS
REPORT
FROM IRAN**

How Kurds rattled Pahlavi

ON this page and the next RICHARD CARVER looks at some of the most important political groups in Iran: the national movements, the Tudeh party, the National Front and the guerilla organisations.

THE SHAH, in common with many autocrats, liked to pretend that he ruled over a uniform nation.

The Pahlavi dynasty aggressively 'persianised' its subject territories in a vain effort to conceal the fact that the Persians are little more than the largest in a kingdom of minorities.

Persian-speakers constitute barely half the total population. The next largest nationality — the 21 per cent of Azerbaijani speakers — do not even belong to the Iranian linguistic group.

The national minorities are an important factor in spreading the impact of the Iranian revolution.

Baluchis and Afghans overlap with neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan in the east. Kurds, Turks, Assyrians and Armenians span the Iraqi and Turkish states in the west. In the north Azerbaijan straddles the border with the Soviet Union.

And the Arabs of Khuzestan — the southern oil-producing region which they know as Arabestan — provide a bridge to the rest of the Middle East.

Moreover the national movements deserve attention as the only political force ever to mobilise the rural population.

Despite severe poverty, active peasant resistance has been rare. More frequent is armed hostility to outsiders on

national and ethnic grounds, as with the largely nomadic and militant Baluchis.

The more populous and fertile north has seen the most advanced experiments. Immediately after the first world war and Russian Revolution, when the central Iranian power had crumbled to nothing, many of the northern provinces and Arab Khuzestan set up autonomous republics.

In the Republic of Gilan, Iran briefly had its only experience of soviet power.

Independent Kurdish control of the Lake Ourmia region continued until 1930, when the Kurdish leader was assassinated while conducting negotiations with Reza Shah, the father of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

The Kurdish movement well illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of the national oppositions.

After the second world war a Kurdish republic was proclaimed at Mahabad (there was also a similar republic in neighbouring Azerbaijan), becoming an immediate refuge for Kurdish fighters from neighbouring Iraq and Turkey.

It enacted measures for the promotion of Kurdish language and literature and opened economic relations with the Soviet Union, which controlled north-west Iran in the months just after the war.

But in December 1946, just a



year after its formation, the Mahabad republic fell without a fight to the Shah's troops.

The coolness of the Soviet Union was partly to blame for the republic's unspectacular end. Its best defence would have been an all-out political assault on the central power in Tehran, organising the masses in the other northern minorities.

The Soviet Union was well placed to do this, both directly and through its relations with the Tudeh (Communist) Party. But it didn't.

Stalin had agreed the

carve-up of the world with imperialism. The deal was that Iran would be outside his sphere of influence and, when it came to this sort of issue, Stalin was a man of his word.

But there was another weakness to the Mahabad regime, and one that runs chronically through the Kurdish movement: the republic failed to enact the radical social measures, agrarian reform above all, that would enable it to enthuse the Kurdish masses in its defence.

Another permanent problem

has been relations with the Kurdish movement in Iraq. The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran has always tried to maintain organisational independence from its Iraqi counterpart. But for a long time it was simply cheerleader to the struggle over the border.

From 1961 the KDPI sent arms and guerillas to help its comrades. This was fine until Barzani, the Iraqi Kurdish leader, concluded an agreement with the Shah and ordered a freeze on nationalist activities inside Iran.

The radical wing of the movement did not accept this. Its attempts to launch armed uprisings failed and militants were hunted down by both SAVAK and the Parastin, Barzani's secret police.

The KDPI only resumed the struggle when Tehran concluded an agreement with Iraq in 1975.

The Shah's signature on that treaty was an inadvertent signal for the revival of Kurdish nationalism. Mass protests have grown over three years, culminating in a demonstration of tens of thousands in Mahabad last year, organised by the KDPI in favour of independence.

In the weeks since the Shah's fall the movement has grown even further and the upsurge in Tehran and elsewhere has led to a crucial weakening of garrisons in Kurdistan.

Despite the Kurdish movement's large contribution to the revolution, few of the pan-Iranian political parties have a clear position for the right of national self-determination.

The guerilla organisations have abstained from any position, though many sections of the Fedayeen guerillas are sympathetic to self-determination.

The bourgeois National Front and the religious movement both stand for maintaining the unity of the Iranian 'nation'. The Tudeh party claims it supports self-determination at the same time as declaring itself for the 'territorial unity' of Iran.

Any future revolutionary government in Tehran will find support for national self-determination indispensable. The dictum about 'disunion for the purpose of union' was coined in reference to a country composed entirely of national minorities — the Russian Empire — and it applies equally to this modern multinational empire.

Any attempt to place 'national' unity above the recognition of this democratic right will in fact divide the revolution fatally.

Pro-Moscow party backs Khomeini

THE Fleet Street scaremongers, brandishing the threat of a Soviet take-over of Iran, have turned the spotlight on the role of the Tudeh Party.

THE Tudeh [masses] party is Iran's pro-Moscow Communist party — a small and weak group, but probably the largest on a small and weak Iranian left.

It has doubtless played a certain part in organising the recent opposition to the Shah. In a recent interview with Socialist Challenge one Iranian who was extremely hostile to the party nevertheless paid tribute to its role in industrial organisation. He particularly mentioned the wide circulation of its industrial paper, Navid.

Another Iranian, an oil worker, told us that the Tudeh party had played no part in the strike at all and he had never come across it.

The Tudeh party has suffered certain objective problems. Despite the arguments of the cold war scribblers, it has not benefitted from being a pro-Moscow party in a country bordering the Soviet Union. Iran's strategic sensitivity makes the Kremlin reluctant to intervene directly into its internal affairs.

But the real reason the party

has made such little headway is its political adherence to Moscow. In the late 1940s and early 1950s it was a mass party. During the Mossadeq interlude of 1953, when a bourgeois nationalist government was in office, sectarian abstention led it to miss the chance to lead a revolutionary seizure of power.

The conclusion party leaders drew from this failure was to swing over to an exactly parallel error — prostration before bourgeois parties such as Mossadeq's National Front. The errors of 1953 are remembered in Iran and the attempts to rectify them not greatly appreciated.

Typical of the party's current stance is an interview one of its leaders gave to the Morning Star last week. The party has recently undergone a change of leadership to cement its new-found and uncritical support for Khomeini.

The Ayatollah is 'in the present context democratic'. Does this include his attempt to disarm the workers?

In a further statement the Tudeh Central Committee



In fact it is the Tudeh Party which bows down to the mullahs.

explains: 'In these days, of primary importance is the unity and solidarity of all the political forces of Iran which have fought for the victory, and the organisation and discipline of all the armed units of the people.'

The apparent radicalism of the final phrase is undermined by the stress on unity with those who now control the state apparatus. Thus the 'armed units of the people' turn out to be nothing more than the reconstituted army.

The Tudeh interpretation of the insurrection is that it was 'brought about by the joint action of the armed people and a part of the armed forces.'

That is a 'characteristic remoulding of real events to fit

in with dogma. The implication is that the armed forces 'split' rather than that many of the rank and file deserted under the impact of the mass movement.

This has practical implications. If the capitalist army has really come over to the revolution then surely it is correct to support Khomeini's disarming of the masses. The Tudeh party faultlessly follows the argument through to its logical conclusion.

Remoulding the truth becomes pure fiction when it comes to the Soviet Union: 'The role of the Soviet Union has been most helpful,' the Tudeh party told the Morning Star.

Perhaps they had in mind Brezhnev's message to the Shah on his 59th birthday in October:

'Your majesty Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, light of the Aryans, king of kings of Iran: On the occasion of a day of national rejoicing for the Iranian nation — the birthday of your majesty — please accept the sincere greetings of the Executive Committee of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and my own as well. For you I wish good health and happiness...'
Most helpful!

INTERNATIONAL

CARI conference 31 March

A long-term plan for solidarity

By Steve Potter

THE mass insurrection in Tehran which has inspired and strengthened anti-imperialist fighters all over the world has, not surprisingly, provoked a flood of lies and distortions from the Western press.

The Committee Against Repression in Iran has called a solidarity conference on 31 March to give a true picture of Iran today and decide what solidarity action can be taken in this country.

The main efforts of Fleet Street have been to identify the mass movement totally with Khomeini, and Khomeini with the rulers of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Cartoons in the popular press show Khomeini dragging the Iranian people back into the Middle Ages.

Khomeini has fuelled this campaign by refusing to give unconditional guarantees of immediate free elections and other democratic rights.

But the government of Bazargan-Khomeini is not turning the clock back to feudal times in Iran. On the contrary, the main offensive of that government — the return to work under the same hated

owners and managers of the Shah's time — is devoted to preserving 'modern' capitalism in Iran.

For years before the downfall of the Shah the Committee Against Repression in Iran fought in the British labour movement to give voice to the resistance inside Iran. It campaigned for the release of political prisoners, organising support for strikes that took place and demanding that the British government broke all links with the Pahlavi regime.

CARI thinks that what is now needed is a longer term plan for solidarity, taking account both of the changed situation in Iran and the new configurations in the British solidarity movement.

Liberation, the Communist Party-backed anti-imperialist front, has just launched a solidarity committee on the simple basis of defence of Iran against imperialism. Unfortunately, although we unconditionally support Khomeini against imperialism, this is not the only dividing line.

The Khomeini-backed government is now the only serious prospect for stabilising the

capitalist state in Iran. For that reason CARI proposes that solidarity with the struggle of the workers of Iran has to be a plank of the solidarity movement.

This includes supporting the fight for complete freedom of organisation and expression for political parties; equal rights for women; the right of workers to organise trade unions to defend their own interests; self-determination for national minorities; full rights for religious minorities.

The other main solidarity group in Britain, the Iran Solidarity Campaign, has stated that it agrees with these objectives. CARI has written to this organisation appealing for a united solidarity organisation in Britain which includes all British and Iranian activists who agree with the objectives of the campaign.

At its conference CARI will argue the need to build direct links between British trade unionists and the growing trade union movement in Iran. This is one of the ways we can resist the threat to cancel contracts with Iran.

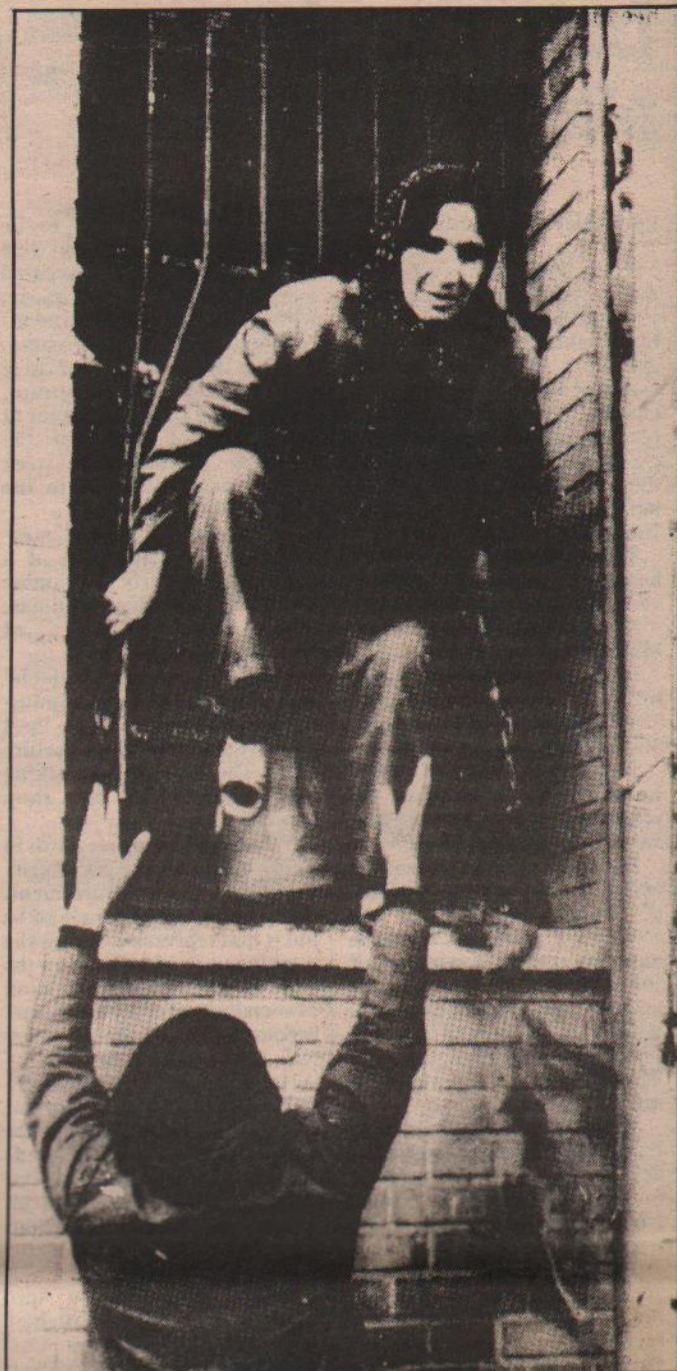
Similarly the women's

movement can play a part in helping the emergence of an autonomous movement fighting for women's liberation in Iran. And the long-standing links between the British and Iranian student movements should continue, as the struggle goes on to get rid of censorship and state control of ideology.

The CARI conference is on Saturday 31 March at 11am at University College, Gower Street, London WC1. Speakers invited include Fred Halliday, author of the recent Penguin book on Iran, a representative of the Liverpool Docks Shop Stewards Committee, a member of the Vickers Combine Committee and an Iranian woman speaking on women's oppression.

Because of the unavoidable clash with the international day of action on abortion on 31 March the International Campaign for Abortion Rights has been invited to provide a stall and speaker for the morning session before their demonstration.

Delegates' credentials are £2, observers' £1, from CARI, Box 4, 182 Upper Street, London N1.



Mass action opens Tehran jails

Fedayeen: no turning the clock back

NO single political organisation can claim credit for overthrowing the Bakhtiar government. But the several thousand Fedayeen guerillas, alongside the Mojahedeen, a Moslem guerilla organisation, were the main organisers of the insurrection.

From his refusal to launch a holy war to his threat to cut off the hands of those who kept their guns, it was clear that Khomeini was neither in control nor in favour of the uprising.

The revolt of technicians at Dashan Tadeh airbase was apparently unplanned, but from them on it was the guerillas — underestimated by all outside observers — who led the movement.

Only a few months ago most observers wrote off the guerilla organisations. Their strategy of guerilla war had failed utterly with dreadful casualties.

The Fedayeen theorists drew on the writings of Guevara, Debray, Mao and Giap to prove the necessity of rural guerilla warfare. They argued that the level of mass organisation was very low and that a combination of the guerillas' example and the regime's repression would attract support to an embryonic people's army.

But the attempt to build a nucleus among the Iranian peasants, who have no recent history of armed resistance, stood even less chance than Che Guevara's ill-fated Bolivian campaign.

The Fedayeen's low profile



in recent months is because of their concentration on purely military propaganda — how to fire a rifle, how to make a Molotov cocktail. Nevertheless there has been a large influx of members since their abandonment of rural warfare and the military preparation was not wasted when the moment came.

The Fedayeen's politics are ambiguous, if only because the organisation comprises a number of widely varying factions. Maoism, Castroism and a strong current of anti-Stalinism have all contributed to their political

background.

Present reports from Tehran are confused and contradictory, but it would be surprising if the Fedayeen lent any support to the Bazargan government's attempts to disarm the mass movement. And it is a matter of life and death for both guerilla organisations to hold onto their own guns.

We will have to wait for the Fedayeen's own statements before trying to predict how they see the future of the Iranian revolution. The orthodox Maoist idea that the

revolution can be halted at some 'popular democratic' stage, short of workers' power, is increasingly discredited — partly because of the momentum of the mass struggle and partly because of the Chinese bureaucracy's support for the Shah.

The logic of the Fedayeen's position on armed struggle is to proceed to smash the remains of the army and replace it with armed detachments of the masses. Once that happens it will be difficult to turn the clock back.

National Front is a capitalist front

TWO leaders of the National Front have been included in the new Bazargan government.

The party's social base is the bourgeoisie of the Tehran bazaar — a layer that is both intransigently opposed to the old regime and anxious to stabilise a new pro-capitalist government.

The Front itself is what its name suggests — a coalition of groups, of which there are three major ones.

Darius Faruher, the labour and social minister, leads the section of the National Front with the most affinity to its British namesake. His Iran Nationalist party is uncompromisingly pan-Iranist, though it refrains from the excesses of the Pan-Iranist party itself.

The latter models itself on the Nazis and stands for the annexation of Bahrain, Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan and the Soviet Union.

Faruher is a prominent bazaar merchant.

The centre section of the Front was led by former Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar — until his expulsion for accepting office under the Shah six weeks ago. That Bakhtiar

could have been in the Front so recently is an indication of how far to the right Faruher's group really is.

Karim Sanjabi, now Bazargan's Foreign Minister, is the National Front's general secretary and leads its liberal wing, the Society of Iranian Socialists. Since his recent visit to Khomeini in Neuphle-le-Chateau, Sanjabi's salon radicalism has been reduced to total identification with the religious leader.

EYEWITNESS accounts from Iran form the centrepiece to the new issue of Intercontinental Press/Inprecor. Other features include Claude Gabriel on Cuba in Africa and a perceptive article by the new editor, Mary-Alice Waters, on 'Where Does Indochina War Danger Come From?'

Single copies are 30p. Subscriptions are £9 for one year, £5 for six months or £2.50 for an introductory offer of 10 issues. Write now to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor.

Lucas workers plan faces defeat

By Geoffrey Sheridan

THE FIRST serious divisions within the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards committee — responsible for drawing up an extensive plan of socially-useful products — are likely to emerge over an agreement reached last week between the company, the government, and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

The daily press, from right to left, was unanimous in its verdict on the agreement.

'Radical plans gain respectability', announced the Financial Times. 'Lucas stewards score hit in "alternative work" drive', declared the Morning Star's headline.

Industry minister Gerald Kaufman, who chaired the tripartite meeting, was first among the cheer leaders.

But behind the agreement, which already has the support of several stewards in the combine, a number of combine members see the acceptance of job loss and the danger of an end to the independent role which their committee has played in challenging the dictates of the capitalist market.

At the centre of the present battle was Lucas Aerospace's decision last year to close plants in Liverpool and Bradford, which employ over 2,000 workers.

The new agreement gives the go-ahead to these closures, with the concession that a Lucas factory to be opened in Huyton, Merseyside, would employ 800 instead of the 500 originally proposed.

A new plant is also to be opened in Bradford. But this still leaves 650 of the Liverpool workers facing the dole queue, with 'no compulsory redundancies' over the next two years.

It was the acceptance of these concessions by John Mottram, Engineering Union convenor at the Liverpool plant, at the tripartite meeting last week which opened the way to the agreement.

Its supposedly radical measures are the setting up of a joint working party to examine suggestions for new products, with the assistance of management consultants.

If any 'commercially viable' products emerge, Lucas Industries will use its 'best endeavours' to manufacture them. The eight-strong working party will include two shop stewards.

When the 72 shop stewards in Lucas Aerospace meet shortly to consider the new agreement, one proposal that is likely to be put is that representation on the working party should be on the basis of: no job loss; discussion of socially-useful products; and accountability of the representatives to the shop floor.

★Phil Asquith, an executive member of the Lucas combine committee, will be one of the speakers at a national trade union conference on Workers' Plans and Workers' Control, organised by Socialist Challenge.

It will be held on 28 April (note new date) at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Cost £1. Creche available. Tickets from: SCTU Conference, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Police storm Community Relations office

POLICE in Brixton made no bones of their attitude to 'community relations' on 12 February. They raided the Brixton offices of Lambeth Council for Community Relations and arrested three of the staff.



The police burst into the offices at 9.15 on the Monday morning. Apparently they had been tipped off anonymously that someone connected with an incident outside a pub the previous Friday night could be found in the offices.

The incident — which included the stabbing of a plainclothes cop — had, it was suggested, involved someone wearing a sheep-skin coat.

So when the police raided the CRC's offices anyone found with such a coat or anyone admitted to owning one was hauled off to the cells at Brixton police station.

That's what happened to senior administrator Herman Ouseley, his assistant Sid Meghie and youth workers Lloyd Douglas.

Herman Ouseley says that when he was arrested he was not cautioned and when he was taken to the police station he was not even questioned. He was released after an hour. The other two picked up with him were held for a longer period but both were eventually released.

As a consequence of the raid and arrests the executive committee of the Council for Community Relations in Lambeth have decided to quit the recently set-up CCRL/Police Liaison Committee.

The CCRL is also asking Lambeth Council to hold a public inquiry into the whole question of police/community relations in the area. There are numerous complaints of police racism in Brixton, including a Special Patrol Group operation in May/June last year when hundreds of blacks were stopped, searched and arrested.

In a statement the chairperson of CCRL, Gerlin Bean said,

'There has been virtually no positive action from the police. It is absolutely clear that the police in Brixton and the out-of-touch Home Secretary do not care about people in Lambeth or their rights'.

Bean went on to warn of 'dire consequences' of 'the growing misuse of police powers'.

Home Secretary Merlyn Rees has in past ignored numerous calls for an inquiry into police racism in Brixton, including one request from MP John Tilley.

The group Black People Against State Harassment held a meeting on the raids and police racism on Wednesday night.

International action on abortion rights

By Judy Watson

WOMEN from every major European country met in Barcelona last weekend to discuss plans for 31 March, the international day of action on abortion rights.

The call for action is being answered throughout the world:

*In Australia, major demonstrations are planned in every main city.

*In Quebec, abortion campaigners will be marching for their rights.

*In Belgium, the pro-choice movement is organising local tribunals.

*In Holland, the embassies of Catholic countries will be the scene of street sales of contraceptives.

In London, activity is well underway and because of the international dimension to the campaign, many new activists have been involved in it — especially black women.

Regular forums organised by the International Campaign for Abortion Rights have discussed forced sterilisation, women in Eastern Europe, the drug companies, and, next Friday, women in Latin America.

The British focus for the demo will be daycare abortion facilities. Over the past ten years out of 86 deaths resulting from abortion, 72 were NHS

patients.

The health service is still only able to provide 50 per cent of abortions, which means half the women concerned need to pay.

NAC is demanding out-patient abortion clinics as they provide much safer, earlier (less than 12 weeks) and easier abortions. Today, there are only 15 clinics in Britain. NAC has already campaigned for the extension of six of these and — in 12 other areas — for the provision of facilities.

The campaign doesn't stop at the question of providing facilities. NAC demands the right of women to refer themselves for abortions, to avoid reactionary GPs; transport for women to the clinic; more say in how the clinics are run; no cuts in in-patient facilities; and more publicity.

After 31 March, NAC's main emphasis will be on a campaign to change the 1977 NHS Act. Today, only contraceptive facilities are mandatory on the NHS, and NAC wants abortion facilities to be the same.

★Next international women's forum is on Latin American Women — 'Is a woman's right to control her own fertility a relevant issue?', Friday 23 February, 7pm, Seymour Hall, Shouldham Street, London W1.

MORE than 100 people marched to Hackney police station last Saturday to protest at police harassment of black youths. The demonstration was organised by Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation and included the banners of Hackney Trades Council and Hackney NUT.

Our photo shows the father of three of those hauled in — Phillip, Osbund and Noel Morris — speaking outside the police station.

Two of those charged, Dennis and Lee Samuel, come up at Old Street Magistrates Court on Wednesday 28 February; and Phillip Morris comes up at the same court on Thursday 1 March. Pickets are being organised on both days at 10am.

There is also a picket of Highbury Magistrates Court on Tuesday 27 February at 10am for HBPDO supporter Winston James, arrested during a court appearance of those charged with the killing of Michael Ferreira.



IN BRIEF

Sexism in education

By Jan Pollock

THE NEXT time Shirley Williams argues that schools will need to 'compensate for the crisis of the family', she will find a ready response from a new campaign.

The Campaign Against Sexism and Sexual Oppression in Education (CASSOE) was set up from a London conference on 10 February, which over 200 attended. Enormous difficulties face

the campaigners. Workshops heard how a woman teacher was victimised after a checklist was published in Spare Rib on non-sexist approaches to teaching.

Two students recounted how their anti-sexist protests resulted in their suspension from school.

The campaign will call an open meeting to discuss its structure and direction. Its basic aims include the development of anti-sexist policy, and a campaign for its adoption by unions and educational establishments.

Join CASSOE today! 7 Pickwick Court, London SE9 4SA.

Squatters' victory

THE CASE against 11 defendants in the Huntley Street squatters' trial was rejected by a magistrate last week because the prosecution failed to present sufficient evidence that the 11 were resisting the sheriff.

However, the case against squatters' leader Piers Corbyn will continue on 1 May.

The prosecution argues that his alleged action of pouring water over the sheriff's head is prima facie evidence of resistance. Two others from the Huntley Street Campaign are also to go on trial.

The campaign, which continues, sees the dropping of the charges as an important victory, as the prosecution has failed to get an all-embracing definition of resistance under the Criminal Trespass Law. Further information: c/o Camden Law Centre, 146 Kentish Town Road, London NW5.

HOME NEWS

'Women's work': undervalued and low paid



Photo: MARK RUSHER (JFL)

THE NATIONAL Union of Public Employees, at the centre of the fight against low pay, boosted its membership from 300,000 in the late '60s to over 700,000 today.

Most of the new recruits were women, who make up 70 per cent of the present membership. PENNY DUGGAN follows the pitiful progress of women's pay.

Women make up the vast majority of low-paid workers in Britain. The Labour Government recognised this when it introduced the Equal Pay Act in 1970.

But since the end of 1975, when the Act was supposed to come into full force, the gap between average male and female earnings has actually widened.

Why? Not just because employers found all sorts of ways to get round the legislation, but because it was irrelevant to two-thirds of women workers.

For them there are no comparable men's jobs to provide a basis for pay equality in terms of the Act.

Most women's jobs are in effect an extension of what they are expected to do in the home — servicing and caring for other people. Large numbers of women work in catering, for example, and in the health service, as nurses, domestics, and technicians.

Because in the past these areas have been seen as 'women's work', they are undervalued and low paid.

Under the pay policies of the Labour Government, with their percentage limits, wages for these jobs have fallen even further behind.

In 1974-5 women manual workers in the NHS received 88.6 per cent of the average female wage. In 1978 this figure fell to 83.5 per cent, and the average woman's wage was only £56.40.

Many women with family responsibilities are obliged to take part-time jobs; double shift work — in and out of the home — which puts them in a double bind.

Pay is low, and with little flexibility about the hours they can work, their choice of jobs is limited, leaving them vulnerable to employers' requirements.

You may have thought that the Government's initial 5 per cent offer that gave 60p a week to the lowest-paid public sector manual workers was derisory.

But for most of the quarter million workers in that grade, the part-timers, the increase would have been 25p per week. And the Government's latest offer of a minimum earnings guarantee specifically excluded those who work less than a 40-hour week!

Faced with such appalling levels of pay and pathetic offers, it comes as no surprise that workers not previously thought of as militant — schools meals staff, cleaners, and hospital ancillary workers — should be prepared to take action to defend their living standards.

Women workers in these sectors face a problem, however. Although they have been joining unions at a rapid rate over the past few years, women have not been integrated into the unions, particularly at shop steward and other official union levels.

While tens of thousands of women did take action on 22 January, the workers who have supported all-out strikes since then have not included many women workers. It has been the refuse collectors, grave diggers, and sewage and water workers who in the main have been confident enough to take this sort of action.

Since women make up the vast majority of the most low-paid workers it is vital that the unions ensure that women are fully behind the £60-35 hours claim.

It needs to be explained that even for women who do not work 35 hours this claim will mean a real increase in their pay, since they will receive a pro-rata increase in their hourly rates.

Women should be fully involved in discussions on the action their union is taking, so that they do not feel they are being wheeled out to vote for strike action without any real involvement in the life of the union.

Only then will the public sector workers be able to wage a strong, united fight for their claim.

Manchester

By Eve Bryczkowski
NUPE steward (housing)

WORKERS' isolation and ignorance of what's going on in the strike is a recipe for acceptance of a sell-out.

A stewards meeting organised last Saturday by the £60/35 hours campaign (which includes all the far left in Manchester) discussed how we could start to break the hold of the union leaders and extend the action.

We agreed to put out a bulletin and leaflet presenting ways of stepping up action and involvement — such as an all-out strike, joint shop stewards meetings, a campaign against cash limits, and regular production of bulletins by the unions — as well as the political arguments against a sell-out.

We are also supporting a resolution to the various local trades councils this week calling for a pay action committee to co-ordinate the campaign against low pay.

★ Local NUPE leader Colin Barnett refers to himself as a 'sensible commander' and treats his membership like chess pieces. The initial aim in Manchester was to have 1,000 workers on strike each week, but so far it's only averaged 250. The argument that it would cost the union too much has been used to stop any move by area officers to sanction more strike action.

South Glamorgan

By Alex Webber
NUPE steward,
United Hospitals.

THE official line of selective and sectional strikes is dividing and confusing workers here. Our local Low Pay Action Bulletin is so far the only contact and source of information between different sections.

Through this bulletin we are proposing an area joint shop stewards committee to co-ordinate local action. This has already won support from ambulance drivers, refuse collectors, and hospital workers. Many workers would like to see action stepped up but have little confidence in the present level of organisation in the unions.

We are also trying to organise meetings at which women can discuss their particular problems, so that we can involve more women in the fight and get the unions to take up these problems.

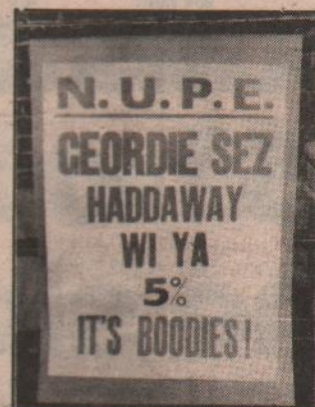
Newcastle

By Paul Davidson

ALMOST all schools in the North-East region are now out. In Blyth the council employed goon squads to break the school door down, and also broke into caretakers' houses to get at the boiler-heaters, etc. As the strike bulletin pointed out, this shows who the real vandals are.

There is quite a strong current for disaffiliation from the Labour Party. The strikers are trying to mobilise support around demands which cut across this argument — such as for the Labour council to pay the claim now!

The strike committee has sent a resolution with this demand to next week's AGM of



Newcastle North Labour Party. It also calls on the district Labour Party to mount a campaign against any attempt to restrict the monies available from central government.

Scotland

By Des Tierney

ACTION by NUPE in Scotland, which has lagged behind the rest of Britain, is to be escalated now that talks with the Secretary of State for Scotland have brought no concessions.

Mick Napier, chairperson of the Edinburgh South Hospitals branch of NUPE, is just one of those disappointed in the limited action proposed by the full-time officials. He says that demands for unofficial action can be expected unless his branch membership is involved in widespread action.



Avon

Mike Eade
TGWU hospitals steward

THE POLICY of hitting key sectors in the health service has reduced the Avon area to urgent admissions only. The problem is that the large majority of health workers are not effectively involved in the dispute.

Management's strategy has been to try to wear us down through media propaganda, rather than making any direct and potentially provocative response.

We are holding discussions with local National Union of Journalists members (whose recent strike we supported), and taking the fight out to the local labour movement.

Workers at Rolls Royce, for example, have sent donations and joined a demonstration by health workers in Bristol last week. With a sell-out now in the air, we need an all-out national strike with emergency cover under stewards' control.

Haringey

By Nigel Hamilton
TGWU-ACTS

THE MONTH-old strike by NUPE members in Haringey, North London, is lacking in neither resolve nor support.

When Alan Fisher told a support meeting attended by over 200 people last week that he wants a public inquiry, strikers used the example of Camden to argue that they would stay out for the full claim if the national settlement falls short of this.

The meeting decided to build a broad-based support committee, which was formed on Saturday by 40 delegates from local organisations, including the Labour Party, 'Parents for the caretakers', and the Socialist Challenge group.

The committee will be leafleting, raising funds, helping to build inter-union links, and holding a picket of the Hornsey Journal, which has done its best to break the strike.

Hackney

By Martin Meteyard

HACKNEY council in East London has 59 Labour members out of 60. It officially supports the public sector workers' claim but it won't agree to pay it now.

Labour councillor John Sweeney explained at a Socialist Challenge meeting last week that this is because the right wing dominate the Labour group: 'They see themselves as employers, local managers. Their role is to do the government's dirty work.'

And they will certainly make working people pay for any wage increase by raising both rates and council rents — in defiance of their manifesto pledge.

What about withholding interest charges to the financiers? Sweeney didn't think this was on, because 'the officers wouldn't allow it — and the majority of councillors would back them up'. Yet these interest charges account for more than £15m — about half the revenue the council raises locally.

The Treasury has also dictated that by next year all council borrowing must be for a minimum of seven years, so as not to disturb the capital market. For Hackney this will mean an extra £1½m in interest charges — enough to finance six new nurseries, for example.

This is clearly an issue which can't be left to the Labour group but must be taken out to the mass of working people whose interests are being sold out by their so-called 'representatives'.

London College of Furniture

By Penny Pike
President, LCF student Union

VICTIMISATION has now become an issue in NUPE's pay battle at the London College of Furniture. The head caretaker is paid to begin work at 8.30am, so he has not been opening the college until then.

The employers, the Inner London Education Authority, have retaliated by refusing to pay the other caretakers for the two and a half hours from 6am, when they begin work.

The result — a NUPE strike,

which has closed the college from 13 February. Last Thursday the principal, helped by police, broke a window to force their way in. Students are picketing against this action and in support of the caretakers.

★ At Thames Polytechnic, scene of a week-long strike by NUPE members, some lecturers have found a curious way of 'supporting' the shutdown. John Downing, head of sociology, re-located a staff meeting to the LSE last Monday.

Campaign for Action in NUPE
All Out
for
£60
and
35 Hrs

Tower Hamlets

By Stewart Madewell
NUPE member

THERE have been problems with strike action among home helps and meals on wheels staff in Tower Hamlets as well as Camden. So it was agreed to make special exemptions for the social services departments at the mass meeting where the decision to go on all-out strike was taken.

The shop stewards committee subsequently made two decisions: to exempt the meals on wheels but not to service the vehicles; and to set up a sub-committee to examine each of the homes and make decisions on what should be done in every case.

The sub-committee has the power to pull people out on the spot after investigating a home. The rule of thumb is that incontinents need help and are therefore treated as emergency cases, whilst other cases are not.

In all situations it is the trade union representatives rather than management who decide, and in no case are voluntary agencies allowed to do work normally done by council staff.

Scottish teachers

By Joanna Haynes
EIS Glasgow

AT A rally in Glasgow on 13 February, almost a thousand teachers heard proposals from the executive of EIS, the Scottish teachers' union, on action to support our salary claim.

The union leaders called for a one-day strike along with the National Union of Teachers, followed by strikes in selected schools. A joint EIS-NUT action committee was also proposed.

They argued that a 43 per cent rise was needed to restore teachers' pay to Houghton's standards. The executive's resolution, to which no amendments were allowed, was carried overwhelmingly.

However, nearly half the meeting stayed to hear a proposal from Rank and File calling for a minimum increase of £20 and consideration of an all-out strike.

This was defeated by 225 votes to 216.

Camden pulls the £60 and 35 hours pie from the skies

THE OFFER by Camden council's majority Labour group to meet the full £60-35 hour claim of its employees — with some possible provisos — has stepped up the pressure on other councils across the country.

While the public sector union leaders have sat down to talk about a 9 per cent national offer, the Camden strikers have shown — as NUPE branch secretary John Suddaby puts it:

'No one can now say that what we're demanding is pie in the sky.'

By Geoffrey Sheridan

Just how far Camden's offer has divided the Labour left on local authorities can be judged from the remarks of two prominent supporters of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone.

Knight is leader of Lambeth council in South London, which has experienced an all-out strike by its employees, and prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for Hornsey. He is furious that Camden is prepared to pay up.

'They're politically irresponsible,' he told Socialist Challenge. 'The fight is with the government and they've capitulated on that fight.'

Needless to say, Lambeth has refused to make any offer to its employees. Knight's recommendation to them is to urge a London-wide all-out strike 'to stop Fisher's sell out'.

Ken Livingstone's response to that is brief: 'Tea and sympathy,' he snorts. Livingstone is chairperson of Camden's housing committee, and prospective parliamentary candidate for Hampstead.

It was his resolution to the Labour group, passed by 15 votes to 9, which brought Camden into the national headlines on Wednesday of last week, seven days after the 2,500 members of NUPE's general branch in the North London borough had begun a virtually

all-out strike.

'What we need now is to get other councils to follow our example,' says Livingstone. 'That will put an end to the sodding pay policy as far as the public sector is concerned.'

He singles out Hackney and Lambeth councils in London, which both have much heftier Labour majorities than Camden, where Labour holds 33 of the 59 seats.

The offer has still to be put to a full council meeting, but there is little chance of the Labour group's decision being changed. What is at issue, however, is the interpretation to be given to the resolution that was passed.

It states: 'This group agrees to the NUPE claim for a basic wage of £60 for a 35-hour week and resolves to open local negotiations to implement this decision.'

'This new basic wage to include the consolidation of awards under earlier phases of the government's pay policy and also the existing guaranteed bonus scheme.'

'We accept that this policy will reduce differentials and resolve that the reduction in basic hours should lead to an increase in employment rather than overtime.'

Existing differentials are already narrow — basic pay for all the local government workers involved ranges from £40 to £44.91 a week, and the union negotiators accept that this could be further narrowed.

The main bargaining point is the determination of some councillors to interpret the offer as a minimum earnings guarantee rather than a basic £60 for all grades.

The former would mean in effect that those who presently depend on bonus payments, including refuse workers, road sweepers, and highway staff, would not benefit from the local agreement, but have to rely on the national settlement for their pay rise.

The response of NUPE members to this proposal was evident at a meeting for the public to meet Camden strikers and councillors last Saturday, which 250 people attended. When a right-wing Labour councillor advocated the consolidation of guaranteed bonuses, five minutes passed before he could make himself heard again.

'It's a ploy by the right wing,' says John Suddaby, the NUPE branch secretary and a member of the International Marxist Group. 'They didn't want local negotiations in the first place and now they're trying to limit the resolution'

'Our position is that the resolution says £60 basic and we're demanding that the council doesn't back down.'

Meanwhile the strike continues. The offer has given the strikers enormous encouragement. 'We don't hear many whispers against the action now,' John explains. 'No one can now say that what we're demanding is pie in the sky. But at the same time we've had to fight to stop a demobilisation, because members have assumed the deal is in the bag.'

The strike committee has received numerous enquiries from other NUPE branches about the offer, and is preparing to send out speakers to explain the Camden developments.

It is also anxious to argue that Camden is not a special case, although the borough receives three-quarters of its rates income from commercial properties, which will pay the majority of the 8 per cent rates increase that the pay rise is expected to lead to.

The branch maintains its call for a national all-out strike, and will lend its weight to the demand for other Labour councils to follow Camden's example. It is supporting the lobby of the London Labour Party's annual conference, to be held on 3 March at (coincidentally) Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, WC1. The lobby, called by the Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council support committee, begins at 9.30am.

Camden's offer has made a national sell-out that much more difficult. But if it is not to remain a unique exception then the battle has to be taken to the doorstep of every local authority and into the heart of the Labour Party, with the call for a recall conference.

As Battersea CLP member Hugh Richards argued in Socialist Challenge last week: 'There is a way that Labour local authorities can meet the full claim and increase services and reduce rates at a stroke. That is to refuse to pay interest charges.'

It means that Labour councillors will have to stand shoulder to shoulder with their employees, instead of praying for the government and the union leaders to get them off the hot seat. A national all-out strike remains the best means of forcing all the public employers, and not least the government, to put an end to low pay.

LOW ALL OUT THE SE

Public sector pro a concordat with

By Patrick Sikorski

SCEPTICISM abounds about the concordat announced last week by Jim Callaghan and TUC general secretary Len Murray. Margaret Thatcher called it a 'boneless wonder' and much press comment was of the same order.

Accordingly if Callaghan is to give the concordat any degree of authority it must be seen to work — and work at once. And this is where the public sector workers come in.

It was at the public sector rally on 22 January that NUPE general secretary Alan Fisher stood up and promised that he would only consider a comparability study if it was a one-off exercise and if public sector workers were offered — immediately — the 'going rate' of between 14 and 15 per cent.

Fisher has also maintained that any comparability exercise would not just involve comparisons with those in similar work, but comparisons with the average manual wage.

The proposals now on offer, both suggested in general terms in the concordat and specifically in the negotiations between the public sector unions and the employers, do not even approach the preconditions for settlement outlined by Fisher on 22 January.

Indeed the concordat hints at long-term agreements by which strikes in the public service will be 'voluntarily' abolished. Nor is there any mention in the concordat or the public sector pay offer of the 35-hour week, even as long-term commitment.

For the public sector workers, this means that through the concordat the 35-hour week claim is ditched; Fisher's talk of comparisons with manual workers as a whole has been dropped and the 'unacceptable' offer of 8.8 per cent made before the strike action began now turns into the acceptable offer of 9 per cent, plus comparability with those doing 'similar work'.

The dream world of comparability

THE MAGIC word 'comparability' is now being put forward as the solution to all the problems of the low paid.

It is suggested as a crucial plank to the Government-TUC concordat and comparability is the chief weapon the trade union leaders in the public sector are using to sell to their membership the idea of ending the present strike wave.

But comparability is not a new idea. It has been used before; for example to determine the pay of teachers and civil servants.

The 1974 report of the Houghton committee recognised that teachers' salaries had fallen behind those of comparable workers. The government accepted Houghton's comparisons and gave teachers a 22 per cent increase.

The then Secretary of State for Education, Reg Prentice, said: 'For teachers to fall behind, year after year, then have a catching-up exercise at long intervals would be to sell teachers short in the future as we did in the past.'

Fine words from the now Tory Prentice. But just where has the comparability exercise of 1974 got teachers?

Last year the National Union of Teachers in conjunction with the employers conducted a new 'comparability' study, using the comparison of which the Houghton award was recommended.

The conclusion is that since 1974 teachers have fallen behind other non-manual workers by between 18 and 22 per cent.

Fred Jarvis, general secretary of the NUT and one of the more right-wing union leaders, has commented: 'The years of income policy and the fact that teachers have no "fringe" or "productivity" extras have led to the present sorry state of teachers' pay.'

The NUT has now put in a claim for a 35 per cent rise, to bring up their pay to the levels of 1974. And that — five years on — is where 'comparability' has got the teachers.

Civil servants' pay is a similar story. In this instance there is a permanent pay comparability body which is run through a pay research unit governed by a pay research board.

This lays down how far and with what other groups of workers



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

PAY TO BEAT OUT

Proposals ~ on low pay

The only additional factors are vague promises on the productivity front. But the government, sensing correctly that the concordat now puts the public sector union leaders in an embarrassing position, is unlikely to give anything for nothing as far as productivity goes. The already chronically understaffed public services seem likely to face further job losses if a productivity deal is to have any substance.

The concordat has thus achieved its first aim — to allow the union leaders in the public sector to recommend calling off the struggle, long before the full claim has been remotely approached, except — so far — in one London borough.

The long-term implications of the concordat — both for public sector and other workers — are even more serious.

There is the suggestion that firm 'voluntary' limits should be placed on strike action; there is the institutionalising of 'comparability' exercises; and

on picketing there is the proposal that the union officials and not those actually involved in any strike action will have the right to decide where pickets should be placed.

Seen in this light the concordat is 'boneless' only in so far as it threatens to make the trade union movement 'boneless'.

Not one single vote on the TUC General Council was cast against the concordat, including those of Alan Fisher and Communist Party member Ken Gill. But that does not mean the concordat is now law, albeit a 'voluntary' law.

Just as the deal will gain a good deal of credibility if the public sector workers' offer is accepted, so the public sector workers can deal with the measly offer they have had, and the concordat, in one fell swoop. How?

By rejecting the offer and calling for an all-out strike — against low pay and against the concordat.

of

comparisons will be made. The right wing of the civil service unions argue in favour of PRU, claiming it is an independent unit, free from 'political' interference.

The degree of independence and impartiality of the board can be illustrated by a quick glance at its membership.

The chairperson is Lord Malcolm Shepherd, a deputy director of the Stirling Group of Companies. Shepherd's 'independence' from the government is hardly suggested by his previous employment — from 1967-70 he was a leading light at the Foreign Office, during Wilson's period of grovelling support for American policy in Vietnam.

Other members of the pay research board include Sir Derek Raynor, a director of Marks and Spencer, and an ex-Tory MP, Lady Pike.

All the board members are appointed by the government, and the government representatives on the board, together with 'independents', outnumber those from a union background.

Civil servants have not had a great deal of recent evidence to base a judgement of pay research on — because the government hasn't allowed it to operate as promised.

From 1976 to 1978 the government didn't allow the pay research unit even to convene. And because of the social contract civil servants had to accept the going rate.

There is no guarantee that the same won't happen to any 'comparability' exercise in the public sector.

Any comparability award given to school caretakers, ambulance workers or whatever, and due to come into effect in August or the following April, could well be suspended through the terms of the concordat, or through an incomes policy imposed by a Tory government.

Certainly the present government is unlikely to accept the teachers' comparability demand for 35 per cent this pay round. And in that there will be a lesson which all public sector workers would do well to learn.

Towards a workers' plan for the NHS

WORKERS are beginning to take their own decisions about how the health service should be run.

That is where recent action by health workers is pointing, according to CARL BRECKER and KATE TRUSCOTT, two members of the co-ordinating committee of **Fightback**, the national campaign against health service cuts.

They argue that the present wages fight and the struggle against the cuts raise the question of a new way of running the health service.

By Stephen Marks

'A lot of the best campaigns have been where support has been mobilised from outside the health service,' says Kate Truscott.

The **Fightback** bulletin, which sells 4-5,000 copies quarterly, reports examples such as the industrial action for a new hospital in Hemel Hempstead, and the widespread community and trade union support for the fight against health service cuts in Cynon Valley, South Wales.

In Cynon Valley, a protest sit-in lasting eight weeks was supported by rotas of pickets from steel works, factories and pits, each providing two or four workers per shift, with their wages made up by workplace collections.

'We didn't leave it there,' says Carl Brecker. 'We found there were three campaigns in Wales not in touch with each other. So we proposed they get together regionally, and with Cardiff Trades Council they now form a South Wales Co-ordinating Committee against NHS cuts.'

At Calderstones hospital in Lancashire, nurses 'worked to rule' against staff cuts by occupying two wards and running them at what they thought was an adequate staffing level. Local bus workers helped by taking patients out on trips.

But whether the issue is cuts or wages, the question of cash limits can't be ducked. The Government has a rigid cash total for the NHS bureaucracy to work within, leaving them to divide it up between wages, investment, and running costs.

'This means that any demand for wages or against hospital closures will affect the overall total,' Carl explains. 'You can't raise the question of more jobs, higher wages, or closures without demanding an end to cash limits and a massive injection of funds.'

It also means running the health service in a new way. Kate points out how the way the health service is presently run works against the level of health care in the community.

'Prestige in the medical profession does not come from community care, or specialising in looking after the health needs of children, the old, or women, or dealing with industrial disease.

'It comes from specialising in "prestige" acute diseases and medical disorders, or high-technology things like heart transplants.'

The current struggles point to a different way. 'Everywhere workers have justified their action by saying "if we do not take action, cuts will reduce provision so much that we cannot provide a service",' Carl points out. 'They know the NHS is already just an emergency service.'

But this makes it vital to link the demand for £60 for 35 hours to the question of staffing.

'If workers win more money without breaking the cash limits,' Kate argues, 'that could just mean fewer jobs, more cuts in equipment and more closures of hospitals; and especially more staff shortages, which cause the biggest hardship to staff and patients.'

Fighting the cash limits also means taking up the private profiteering from the health service, by drug companies and outside contractors.

More and more hospital services, such as laundry and catering, are being contracted out to 'private enterprise' low-wage profiteers. 'All this is an attack on workers' ability to control the health service,' says Carl. 'Private practice in the health service is not just a matter of pay-beds.'

But union leaders are not taking this up; instead they are talking about productivity deals, and 'comparability'. 'But the £60 claim is based on comparability; it is two-thirds of the average male wage,' says Kate.



'The problem now,' Carl maintains, 'is that wherever people are trying to get meetings going that cut across union limits and go beyond £60 for 35 hours, there is an unwillingness to respond because of the way the union leaders are directing the campaign, into sectoralism and inter-union rivalry.'

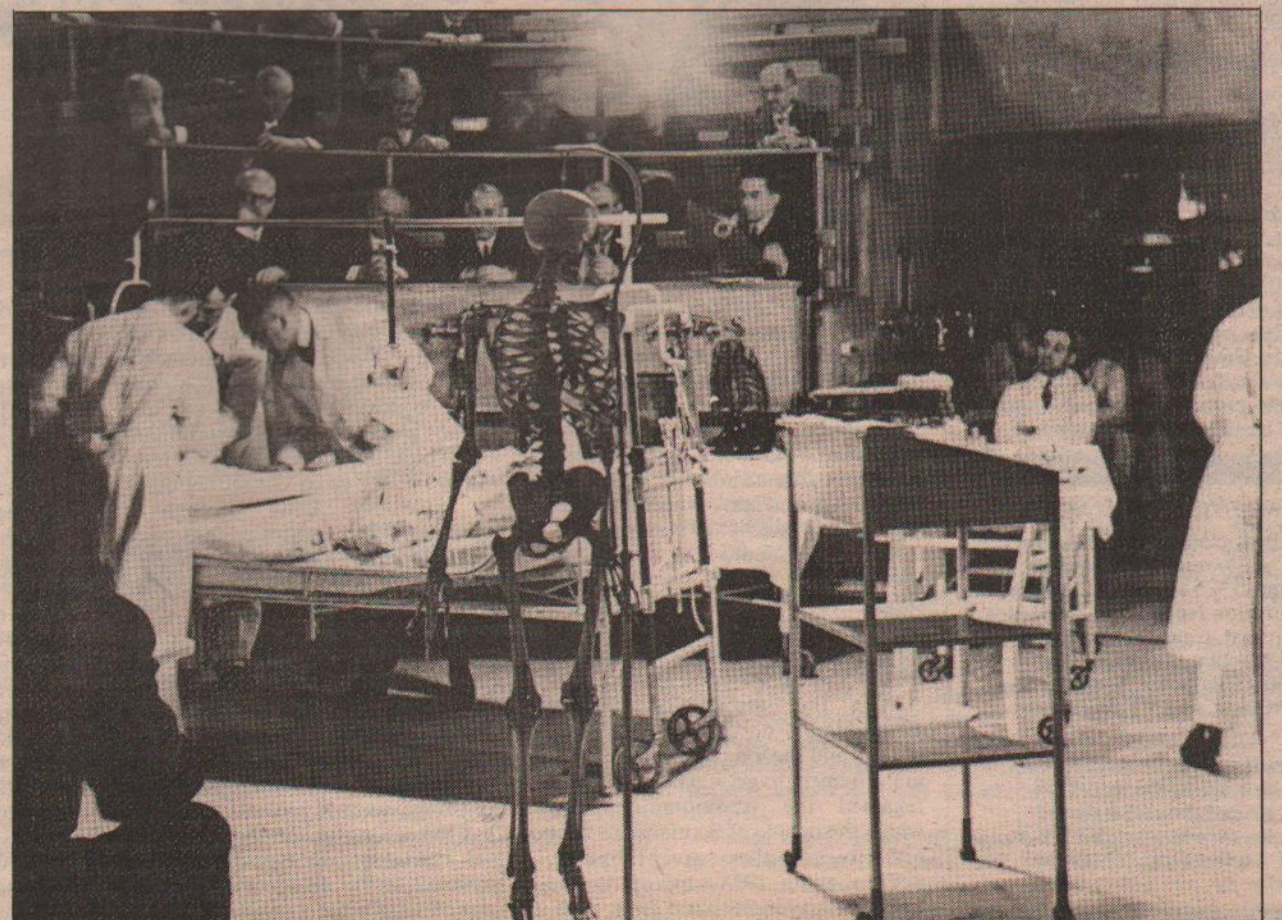
'The policing role of the trade union leaders has never been more damnable than now, when the feeling, the anger and the degree of trade union organisation are there as never before, and the political conditions are there to win against the Labour government.'

Kate points out that the 1973 ancillary workers' strike was much more spontaneous, with more stewards' control.

But the members today are better organised, more prepared to act, and less frightened. Both agree the best action has been where control has been wrested by stewards from divisional level, or where officials have been better than average.

These and other problems will be discussed by **Fightback's** affiliated union branches, cuts campaigns, trades councils, women's groups, shop stewards committees and others, at their forthcoming national conference early in June.

Make sure your organisation is represented. Further information from: Fightback, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1.



Devolution in Scotland

One small step towards working class control

ON 1 March the Scottish electorate will be asked whether it approves the government's legislation setting up an elected, legislative Assembly in Scotland.

DES TIERNEY and PAT KANE explain why Socialist Unity is campaigning for a Yes vote in the referendum.

BY THE LATE 1960s the traditional ruling parties in Britain had been exposed in the eyes of the Scottish working people. '13 Years of Tory Misrule' had been followed by the Labour government of 1964-70, and yet the social and economic problems which had bedevilled Scotland throughout the 1920s and '30s seemed to be still insoluble.

The deep-seated structural problems of the Scottish economy persisted. Long-term attrition of job opportunities — the closure of the mines, the shipyards, the railway lines, and the heavy engineering factories remained a major problem. New industries, where they were set up, tended to be part of a 'branch factory' economy, employing unskilled, low-paid workers: in many cases in areas far from the traditional areas of working class concentration.

Glasgow and its surrounding areas, in which almost half the population of Scotland lived, continued to provide some of the worst housing conditions, the worst unemployment figures, and the lowest health standards of any similar area throughout Europe.

Migration from Scotland in the 1960s accounted for almost 96 per cent of the natural growth in the population, a higher proportion than any other area of Europe.

A central factor in the rise among Scottish working people of aspirations to self-government was the changing role which state institutions came to play in economic life after the Second World War.

The 'welfare state' ideology promoted by the Labour Party and endorsed by the British working class in 1945 included a commitment to full employment — a concept which was retained, at least in principle, for the next 20 years, even when the Tories were returned to power.

But the deep structural problems in the Scottish economy meant that even the post-war boom and the subsequent period of relative prosperity throughout the capitalist world could not provide sufficient employment in Scotland.

This brought about a wholly new development — regional economic policy, which began with the Distribution of Industry Act in 1945. The aim of the policy was the direction of industry; the provision of an adequate environment for it to grow in, through industrial estates, and in some cases the provision of an

adequate workforce, through the setting up of new towns.

Regional policy — especially since it had the support of the trade unions and the Labour Party — became the main vehicle for change in Scotland. The vast majority of Scottish people believed that this policy, combined with distinct 'Scottish' institutions of the state, could reduce unemployment and provide adequate housing and health facilities.

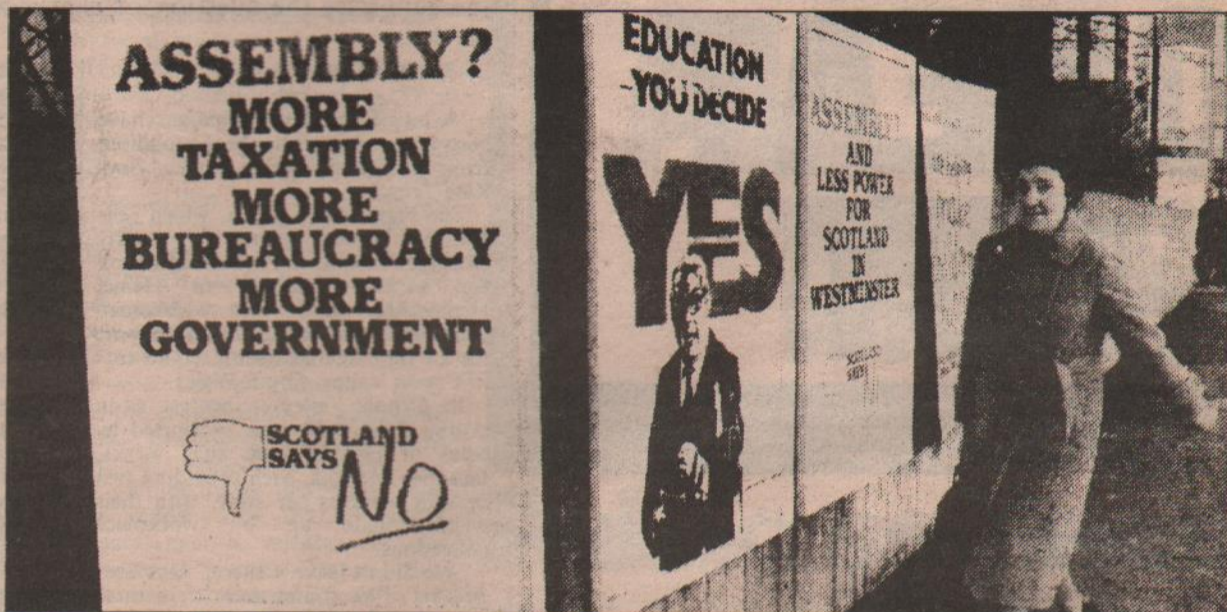
Disillusionment with the performance of both major political parties was widespread at the time of the fall of the Heath government, and was reinforced by the austerity policies rapidly introduced by the newly-elected Labour leaders.

All the preconditions existed for some form of 'radical' change. The growth of the Scottish National Party was the first major reflection of the Scottish people's desire for that change, and it was in the new towns that the ideas of nationalism first took hold.

The new 'middle classes' were totally disillusioned by the failure of Heath and saw the possibility of being squeezed by the unions.

The SNP took this regionalism one step further. Why not set up our own independent Scotland, free from outside interference and able to use the new benefits of North Sea oil? This was the view which attracted the Scottish middle class, together with sections of the working class.

The demand for an elected Assembly in Edinburgh became the focus for the discontent, and with the Labour Party initially hostile to any change from Westminster rule there



Regional economic policies haven't worked and nor will an Assembly on its own.

adopted and elected in the three by-elections which took place; in two of these the Labour Party achieved more votes than it did at the last General Election! Opinion polls showed greater support for Labour than in any period since 1966.

The reverse was the case with the SNP. Despite having excellent, 'populist' candidates in the three by-elections, the SNP's vote slumped. A crisis seems to be developing within the party over its reactions to these events and the leadership of the party is in turmoil.

What does this indicate? First, despite the attacks on working class living standards by the Labour government, and workers' continued resistance to these, the political concessions which the Labour government offered were supported by the Scottish working people.

Their demand had been for an

Assembly in Scotland — within the British state. It did not represent a winning of sections of the working class to 'nationalist' positions. Where should socialists stand on this demand?

The solutions to the problems which beset the Scottish working class will not be solved by the setting up of an Assembly. Only through a planned, democratically-controlled socialist society, in which capitalist property has been taken over, can people begin to overcome these problems.

Such a solution will only come about through the independent action of working class people. Does the setting up of the Assembly take us nearer this solution or further away?

A powerful argument against the Assembly, were it proved correct, is that the setting up of the Assembly will increase the possibility of 'nationalism' as an ideology gaining ground within the working class.

All the evidence at the present time

seems to point in the opposite direction. In the absence of an elected Scottish Assembly and the real advantages which it will confer on Scottish working people, the pull of 'nationalism' will be stronger.

Much more positive reasons can be seen for supporting the setting up of the Assembly.

There are at present unique and separate institutions through which the Scottish people are governed. The Secretary of State for Scotland, through the Scottish Office, employs 12,000 civil servants running the equivalent of nine English ministries. They supervise 204 ad hoc boards or commissions.

The form of British state which governs Scotland is, to say the least, less generous than the forms which govern England and Wales.

This allows a specific relationship to develop between the elected leader-

ship of the working class in Scotland — Labour MPs, STUC, and Scottish union executives — and their electorate.

Unable to test their 'programme' in action due to the failings of the British state institutions or the 'slowness' of the rest of the British working class expressed through the all-British union leaders, the leadership of the Scottish working class is characterised by their demagogic left-sounding phraseology.

This may be helpful to their subsequent careers in the union apparatus, but it hinders the advance in consciousness of working class people in Scotland.

The advent of an Assembly would bring with it the opportunity to demand legislation, the inability of Assembly members to dodge the issues so readily, and pressure on Scottish union executives to implement their policies.

This will allow a clarification on the Scottish political scene.

Although there are dangers in the Scottish people placing their trust in any form of Assembly, it has already given a great impetus to reforming legislation. In many areas of civil life — divorce, abortion, women's legal rights, homosexual rights, educational provision — a range of reforms are presently being formulated.

While many of these will fall foul of the new legislative process, their introduction will become a focus for the mass activity needed to achieve them.

Already working people look to the institutions of the state to intervene in their favour. This process will be greatly strengthened with an elected Assembly.

Whether or not the Assembly has the formal powers to solve unemployment, bad housing, and inadequate health provisions, this will not stop the Scottish people raising demands for the Assembly to act in their interests.

Socialists have to argue that only struggles outside the Assembly will have any impact on the massive problems of Scotland. But through the Assembly it will be possible to take to task the traditional leaders of the Scottish workers, and to contrast socialist solutions.

For these reasons it is vital that the socialist movement should support the demands of the Scottish people.

The Labour Party, the Scottish unions, and the Communist Party are lined up behind a Yes vote. The CBI, the banks, industrialists and the Tory Party, together with small sections of the Labour Party left, are for a No vote.

During the referendum debates, it is the policies of the SNP and the Labour Party which are dominant.

With the participation of the Socialist Workers Party, revolutionary socialists would be making a more powerful impact on the campaign. Unfortunately, the SWP is calling for a No vote. Socialist Unity is campaigning in Scotland for the biggest possible Yes vote (not least because those who do not vote will be recorded as a No vote).

We are explaining why we as socialists support the call for an Assembly, and are seeking to use the campaign to help build a socialist alternative to the policies of the SNP and the Labour Party.



was a massive transfer of votes to the SNP, mainly from the Tories but increasingly from Labour supporters.

Coupled with the growth of trivial forms of Scottish nationalism, this development was seen by many — particularly within the labour movement — as a step towards reactionary nationalism. It led many socialists to outright revulsion against any form of legislative Assembly.

What they could not understand was that the rise of working class support for the SNP was temporary, and in itself a reflection of the aspirations of the Scottish people for some form of self-government.

With the introduction of the government's devolution legislation in 1977 and the long drawn-out battle in Parliament to get it passed, Labour regained the traditional support which the people of Scotland, in their majority, have always given the party.

Throughout 1978 support for the Labour Party in Scotland grew. Confirmed government supporters were

ship of the working class in Scotland — Labour MPs, STUC, and Scottish union executives — and their electorate.

Unable to test their 'programme' in action due to the failings of the British state institutions or the 'slowness' of the rest of the British working class expressed through the all-British union leaders, the leadership of the Scottish working class is characterised by their demagogic left-sounding phraseology.

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MEETINGS IN WALES

'Why socialists should support an Assembly for Wales'

Monday, 26 February, 7.30pm, Corporation Hotel, Cow Bridge Rd. East, Canton, Cardiff

Meeting sponsored by: Socialist Challenge, Morning Star, Tribune, and Y Faner Goch

Tuesday, 27 February, 7.30pm, New York, Princess Way Roundabout, Swansea.

Speakers from: Socialist Challenge and Y Faner Goch [Morning Star invited]

INTERNATIONAL

Support March 3 Zimbabwe conference

Will Smith survive until the elections?

Saturday, 3 March
ZIMBABWE
ACTION CONFERENCE
11am-4pm London School of
Economics, Houghton Street,
London WC1.
Further information from
AAM, 89 Charlotte Street,
London WC1. Tel: 01-580
5311.

By Jim Atkinson

RHODESIAN troops have gone on the rampage against black villagers in northern Zimbabwe since nationalist guerrillas shot down an Air Rhodesia viscount airliner on 12 February.

'Initial retaliation for the Viscount crash', the *Guardian* reported on 18 February, 'is taking place inside the country in an area heavily populated and controlled by guerrillas.'

Helicopter-borne Rhodesian commandos of the notorious Special Air Services have been combing the Vuti area 'in what appears to be a deliberate and ruthless tactic to drive every African from the region'.

The SAS, the *Guardian* said, are in a 'merciless mood' and black civilian deaths 'can only be high'.

Another Air Rhodesia plane was hit by guerrilla fire on 15 February. These incidents highlight the growing success of the nationalist forces.

The guerrillas have sunk deep roots all over the countryside and have now moved into the cities in considerable numbers. On 13 February, freedom fighters attacked an industrial zone of Salisbury, near the

capital's main power station, only two miles from the city centre.

The regime's own officials admit that there are now over 12,000 guerrillas in the country — in addition to tens of thousands of recruits in bases in Mozambique and Zambia.

The imperialist powers are increasingly scared that the white settler regime will simply collapse if a transfer to some form of neo-colonial rule is not rapidly negotiated between the Smith government and the Patriotic Front, which commands the allegiance of most of the liberation fighters.

The British and US governments know that the 20 April 'internal settlement' elections will fail to head off the growing black revolt.

The white minority is to retain 28 per cent of the cabinet seats after the poll, the rest being shared out between the discredited black groups that have joined the Smith government since the 'internal settlement' was signed last March.

The white-run army, police and state bureaucracy will remain intact after the transition to Smith-style 'Majority rule' — and there are

constitutional provisions barring the take-over of farms, mines and factories from their white capitalist owners.

The elections themselves can only be a farce — if the Smith regime actually succeeds in holding them. 85 per cent of the country is now under martial law, with special military courts empowered to hand down death sentences against which there is no appeal.

In much of the country, especially most of the 'tribal trust lands', where the nationalists have effectively dislodged the settlers' army, very few blacks are likely to vote at all.

Elsewhere, intimidation by government troops and the private armies of the black collaborationist groups (primarily those led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa and the Rev Ndabaningi Sithole), may force some Africans to turn up at the polling stations.

The disintegration of white power would spur on the masses to fight for social, as well as national liberation, jeopardising the imperialists' plans for 'black' neo-colonial rule under which imperialist interests were preserved.

The black agricultural proletariat, which has not yet attempted to seize the 4,000 huge white capitalist farms that occupy half the country's arable land, would almost certainly start to do so. And the urban proletariat, one of the largest in Africa (besides that in South Africa itself) would be spurred forward to fight for its own class interests.

This is what the British and American governments are determined at all costs to avoid. 'Delay breeds danger', David Owen, the Foreign Secretary, said in London on 23 January referring to the stubborn refusal of the whites to come to terms with the Patriotic Front. 'Delay has allowed communist ideologies in many countries to flourish. It is chaos which emerges as the real threat'.

Minority rule cannot survive, Owen said. 'The question is

how long it survives and in what way it is ended.'

The biggest threat of all to the imperialists is the potential impact of the impending victories of the Zimbabwean masses on blacks in South Africa. This is where the imperialists' interests are really massive.

'Let us be open and frank', Owen said in his 23 January speech. 'We do remain vulnerable because of certain key minerals and a huge UK investment in South Africa, which, including portfolio investment, is of the order of £5,000 million, probably double that of the United States or of Germany.'

The British government is so alarmed at what may happen in South Africa if the black masses bring down the Rhodesian regime by force that it already has contingency plans to send out British troops, most likely under the cover of a United Nations 'peacekeeping force'.

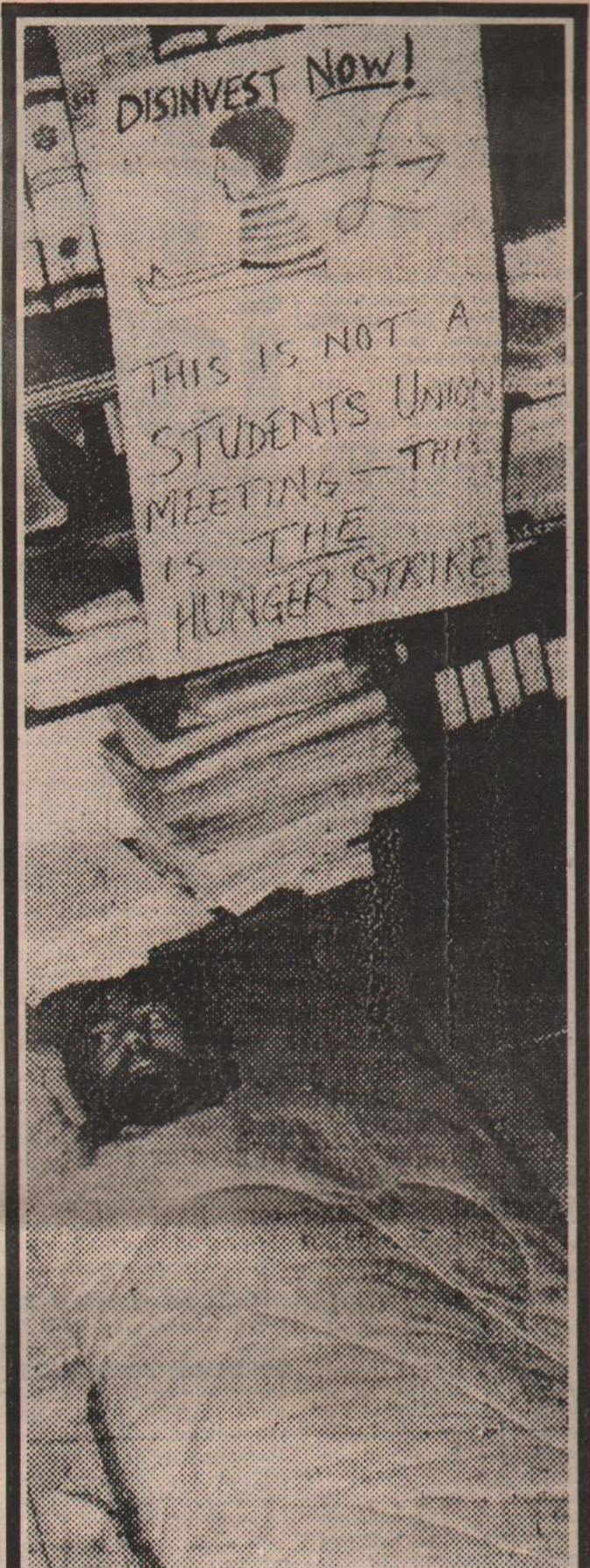
A British military force would not play any progressive role, whatever the official propaganda. Its sole purpose would be to oversee a transition to a neo-colonial government.

The serious danger that British imperialism will directly intervene in Zimbabwe in the not-so-distant future emphasises the urgency of building a powerful solidarity movement in Britain.

A key step to doing this will be the Zimbabwe Action Conference being held by the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London on 3 March. The conference is supported by the National Union of Students, the International Marxist Group, the Communist Party, local anti-apartheid groups, Third World First and both the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). It starts at 11am in the London School of Economics, will hear speakers from ZANU and ZAPU, and will end with a demonstration to Downing Street at 4pm.



VICTIMS of a Rhodesian raid into Mozambique



SIX students at the London School of Economics have gone without food for nearly two weeks in protest at the college's refusal to sell its South African investments. The college's director, Ralf Dahrendorf, is displaying immense fortitude in not giving in to this 'moral blackmail', but holding on to the £311,000 worth of investments.

Soweto 11 framed for sedition

By our Foreign Staff

THE Soweto uprising of 1976 still looms over South African politics. The regime is trying to assign the 'blame' for the rebellion — and distract attention from its other troubles — with the resumption of the Soweto 11 trial.

The trial of 11 student leaders, which has just restarted after a two month break, is aimed at proving that

they were responsible for seditiously stirring up the black population against the regime.

Although sedition is a common law offence the 11 also face charges of conspiracy or incitement to commit sedition under the Riotous Assemblies Act and participation in terrorist activities under the Terrorism Act.

These statutory offences provide a convenient smear.

The prosecution has made no attempt to prove, for example, that the accused instructed 'persons in the making of petrol bombs for destructive purposes' or that they introduced a 'terrorist or terrorists' to the students.

Equally the defence does not dispute that the 11 were involved in organising a number of the demonstrations and stay-aways cited by the

prosecution.

What this all adds up to is that the 11, who have been detained since July, are on trial for political views which they have never denied and as representatives of a political movement over which they have no more control than anyone else.

'Sedition' and 'terrorism' are convenient epithets for any opponents of the regime.

Union solidarity

by Pete Evans

RECENT events in southern Africa — for instance the coming 'majority rule' elections in Rhodesia and the trial of 11 Soweto school students — make solidarity with the liberation struggle particularly urgent.

We need to build in the trade unions and workplaces for solidarity actions such as boycotting all trade with South Africa.

In the North West such a campaign is already underway. A conference last November, called jointly by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the North West TUC, set up a liaison committee to organise a tour by speakers from the liberation movements. This will be especially aimed at trade union activists.

Public meetings are planned in Manchester, Tameside, Liverpool, Preston, Blackburn and Burnley, with meetings in a number of factories, including

GEC and ICL, both of which have extensive southern African links.

We hope the meetings will not only educate trade unionists on southern Africa, but also group together a number of trade union activists who can contribute to build the solidarity campaign in the labour movement.

Such a network could, for instance, follow the example of the Rover shop stewards at Solihull, who produced a broadsheet on the links between British Leyland and South Africa.

Along with other Leyland stewards they have taken action in solidarity with the struggle for union recognition by the black Metal and Allied Workers Union which has branches in Leyland plants in South Africa.

The North West Trade Union-Anti-Apartheid Liaison Committee can be contacted c/o 59 Tintern Avenue, West Didsbury, Manchester.

IN BRIEF

Astrid should stay

THE authorities in both Britain and Germany are getting rather nervous over the growing protests against their bid to extradite Astrid Proll.

In the Appeal Court last week, Lord Chief Justice Widgery adjourned the Proll hearing to await clarification on Astrid's nationality status.

Her claims to British nationality, by virtue of her marriage to Robin Puttick, are currently being heard at the Family Division of the High Court. Her lawyers argue that there can be no extradition of a British subject.

In an obvious attempt to get Astrid back to West Germany, the Minister of the Interior, Gerhard Baum, has hinted at clemency.

In an interview with the magazine Stern, he suggested that Astrid would be treated leniently if she gave herself up and renounced her alleged associations with the Red Army Fraction.

The Friends of Astrid Proll held a rally on 20 February at which Jo Richardson MP spoke out against the extradition bid.

Violence against women

A NUMBER of groups and organisations within the women's liberation movement, including the National Women's Aid Federation and several rape crisis centres, are planning a week of action on violence against women from 3 to 10 March.

Activity will be concentrated at a local level and directed towards women. The organisers of the protest point out that 25 per cent of violent crime is wife assault, and that 50 per cent of rape cases reported to the London rape crisis centre involve men known to the women.

More information on the week of action can be obtained by phoning the following numbers: Scotland — Sue Robertson, 031-225 8011; Leeds — Jo Kirk, 689882; Birmingham — Heather Powell, 021-452 8742; Cardiff — Carol Jenkins, 499084; Sheffield — Maureen Storey — 0742 51816; London — 01-837 9317, or 01-340 6913.

Expulsions

A LEADING member of Oxford City Labour Party has been expelled. He is Ted Heslin, chairperson of the party's anti-racism sub-committee.

Heslin was expelled last month on the charge that he supported and distributed the literature of an organisation whose principles and constitution are contrary to those of the Labour Party.

The right wing in the branch complained that he had sold Socialist Press, the newspaper of the Workers Socialist League.

The branch has also refused two applications from membership on similar grounds, and past expulsion bids have been made against both Socialist Press and Socialist Challenge supporters.

Heslin's trade union branch — he is chairperson of TGWU 5/833 — protested against the expulsion at a meeting on 7 February and elected a steering committee to fight for the lifting of the ban.

IRELAND

H Block - the real issues

'THE PROPAGANDA prison' was the sub-title of last week's Panorama programme, advertised as a report on H Block, Long Kesh. And propaganda the programme turned out to be.

By Geoff Bell

Panorama hardly mentioned the actual circumstances surrounding H Block. Nor was there any description of the legal procedures which lead to convictions for 'terrorist' offences.

Instead Panorama concentrated on explaining how American newspaper columnist Jack Anderson had been misled into criticising British policy in Ireland.

The programme ended with an interview with Northern Ireland Minister Roy Mason, who 'welcomed' the opportunity to 'put the record straight'!

Panorama hardly mentioned the actual circumstances surrounding the propaganda offensive now being waged by the British government on H Block. Already it has produced 250,000 copies of a special newspaper on the issue.

But at least H Block is now talked about, and hopefully argued about. Here is how the argument should proceed.

What's actually going on in H Block?

Over 350 Republican prisoners — and a few Loyalist prisoners are wearing nothing but a blanket. They are refused exercise and normal prison facilities and are kept locked up for 24 hours a day.

As a rule the only time the prisoners leave their cell is to go to mass or, more ominously, hospital.

The prisoners are also refusing to 'slop out', wash or empty their toilet pots. Consequently most of the cells are filthy.

The prisoners also say that they are regularly assaulted and beaten up by the prison warders.

But the government says that these conditions are 'self-inflicted'.

The confinement of the prisoners to the cells and the denial of normal prison facilities are not 'self-inflicted'. They are punishments imposed by the prison authorities for protests the prisoners are making.

Nor have the prisoners chosen to have no chairs, beds or tables in their cells. These were taken away by the authorities as punishment.

But nobody is stopping these people from washing, slopping out or cleaning their cells. They have done that from choice.

It depends what you mean by 'choice'. The prisoners say they had no choice, it was the only way to draw attention to what was going on.

What happened was that early last year the authorities

suddenly stopped allowing the prisoners to go to the toilet unless they wore a prison uniform.

So unless the prisoners gave in to this demand, they were unable to dump their piss and shit.

Then, once these new rules were introduced, Loyalist orderlies were given the work of emptying the toilet vessels and they began to deliberately topple the pots over the cells.

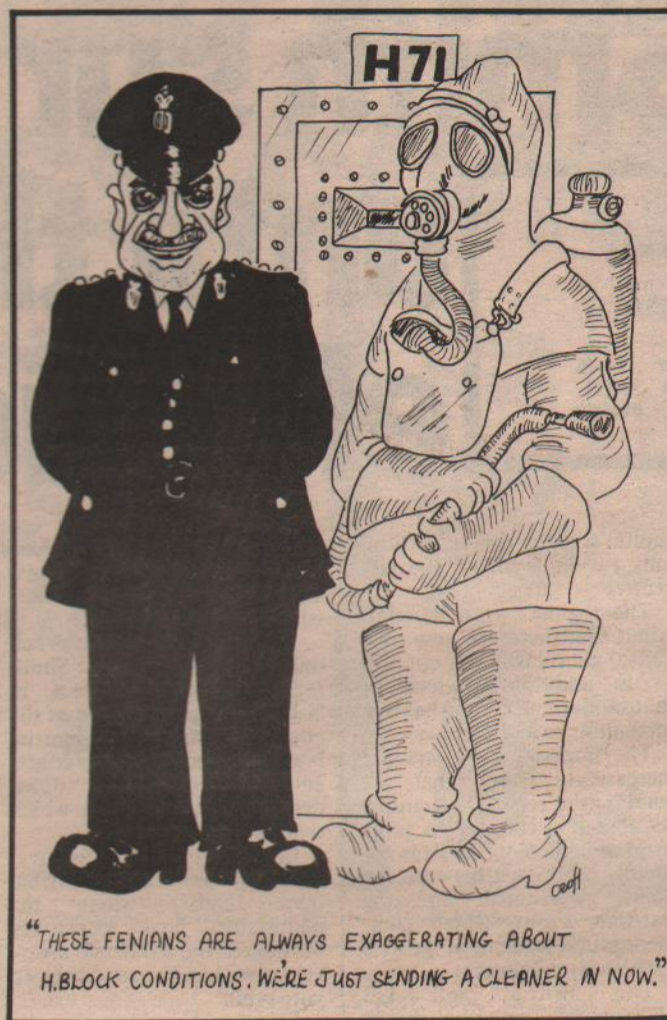
It was the combination of all this which led to the 'dirty strike' of the prisoners.

It all seems to go back to this question of prison uniforms. What's behind the refusal to wear them?

It is a bit more complicated than just the question of uniforms. Essentially what happened was as follows.

In 1972 the Conservative government recognised the peculiar nature of those in prison for crimes connected with the political situation in the North of Ireland and granted those prisoners 'special category status'.

In all but name this was political status. It meant that the prisoners were allowed to wear their own clothes, mix freely, and take orders only from their 'officers' rather than the prison staff.



Their status was similar to that given to prisoners of war.

There were not a great many prisoners who fell into this category at that time, because internment without trial was still operating.

Most Republicans were simply interned, and the camps operated on a similar basis to the 'special category' rules.

The phasing out of internment was accompanied

by the establishment of new legal procedures as contained in the Emergency Provisions Act (1973).

Eventually this was joined by the abolition of 'special category' status by the Labour government in May 1976. No prisoner convicted of a crime after that date was to be granted 'special category' status.

Those convicted refused to accept this change, and refused to wear the prison uniform required under the new laws. The British reacted to this by denying the prisoners the usual facilities.

So essentially it was a change of rules by the British government which produced the whole H Block issue. The H Blocks are the compounds in Long Kesh where the prisoners are housed.

But why should the government treat these prisoners differently from any others?

First of all, the government itself recognises those convicted of so-called 'terrorist' offences are not normal criminals.

They are convicted by special 'Diplock' courts, in which the normal laws regulating criminal trials do not apply.

For instance, there are no juries in these courts. The accused are tried by judges alone, and those making the accusations are not required to appear in court and therefore need not be cross-examined.

The Amnesty International investigation into police brutality testified that the way the accused are tried, held and convicted has 'eroded the rights of suspects held in connection with terrorist offences'.

From the minute they are picked up to the minute they are convicted, those now 'on the blanket' are treated entirely differently from ordinary criminals. The argument is that this process should continue

after conviction.

They may be treated differently, but this does not make them 'political' prisoners.

Even the British government does in one way admit that these prisoners are political.

The legislation under which most of them are convicted is the Emergency Provisions Act. This Act talks of 'terrorist offences'.

What is meant by terrorist offences? Another piece of legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, offers a definition.

It is the PTA under which the suspects are first picked up, and some are convicted under the Act. It defines terrorism as 'violence for political ends'.

Thus even on its own terms the British government admits that the offences are 'political'.

But this is not the central reason why the prisoners are demanding political status. Instead it involves the nature of the crimes committed — or rather alleged, for often the evidence under which they are convicted is extremely flimsy.

Amnesty International, for instance, reported that 90 per cent of convictions are based on confessions and Amnesty went on to severely question how these 'confessions' were obtained.

The main point is that 'crimes' are committed in the course of a national liberation struggle for the right of all the Irish people to rule themselves. It is a political struggle for political ends.

The vast majority of those committed have no 'criminal' record, they are volunteers who are fighting not for personal gain but for a political ideal. Their actions take place in the context of a war against an occupying army and government.

Since 1918 the Irish people as a whole have never been given the right to vote on the presence of this army or on the government of Ireland.

The volunteers in Long Kesh are arguing they should be given that right, and that only the Irish people have the right to determine their own future.

So why doesn't the government give in to the demands of those 'on the blanket'?

Precisely because that would be to admit the political nature of the conflict taking place in the North of Ireland. It would raise the whole issue of the nature of the struggle taking place.

As long as the government can say that the IRA are just 'criminals' or 'gangsters', it can portray the war as merely a 'policing action' to root out 'terrorists' who have no support in the community.

How these 'isolated gangsters' can exist, as they have done for the past nine years, in the face of between 15,000 and 20,000 British troops, the government does not care to explain.

What the British want to avoid is a discussion of the real causes of the conflict and of the justice of the Republican demands in that conflict.

Denying 'political status' to the prisoners is one means of doing this, for it pretends that the conflict is not political at all.

OPEN FORUM

Internationalism: a very practical question

Developments in Iran have put to the test the political strategies offered by socialist organisations of every variety. Furthermore, the Iranian struggle has brought home to many revolutionaries the very practical questions of building a party in Iran.

Internationalism is a fundamental, practical issue, which can no longer be dismissed as 'abstract'. Very few socialists would deny that the results of every 'national' struggle can be far-reaching — or even decisive — in changing the relationship of forces on a world scale. We need only remember the differing impact of dramatic events like the Russian Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, Vietnam, Chile or Portugal.

That's why it is not enough to organise support for these upsurges when they occur. Much more is called for, including a critical opinion of their development, the steps which should be taken, and the political tasks involved. Without this approach effective solidarity is precluded, and a sound national perspective cannot even be developed.

The question of internationalism, specifically the Fourth International, is the centre of much discussion today. The IMG, at a national and local level, is involved in debate with, amongst others, comrades of the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers' Socialist League, and the International Socialist Alliance.

Below, we print a contribution to the debate which is taken from a new pamphlet called 'On Trotskyism and the Fourth International'. It is written by Phil Hearse, a member of the IMG.



Ernest Mandel speaking at the IMG's rally on the 40th anniversary of the Fourth International last year.

IMG in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign or the central role of the JCR in building the Comité Vietnam in France?

Was it 'a fiction' when the French and Swiss sections set about jointly linking up the struggle of French and Swiss workers during the strike at the Lip watch factory — a decision which led to some concrete, not just verbal, linking up of workers' struggles internationally in the form of joint demonstrations attended by workers in watch factories in both France and Switzerland.

Or again, was it simply a fiction when the whole weight of the Fourth International was used to win over a substantial section of the Basque nationalist movement to Trotskyism. Without the intervention of the International, and especially the influence of the French section or the ETA-VI comrades, Trotskyism would be in an incomparably weaker state than it is today in Spain.

Is it pure fiction that Trotskyist organisations have been built in several East European countries, under repression and in the most difficult circumstances, an accomplishment which would have been literally impossible without the permanent work of militants from many countries in Western Europe? We could add endlessly to this list of examples. They all testify, against the international passivity of Hallas, to the possibility of meaningful international work by revolutionaries.

Such things are not possible, however, if contact between the Marxist vanguard is limited to 'meetings and discussions between grouplets in various countries'. Permanent joint action requires an agreed programme and a joint organisational framework; if everything has to be discussed from scratch in 'meetings and discussions', then nothing practical gets done.

The many conferences held by the French organisation Lutte Ouvrière, several times attended by the British IS (SWP), demonstrate that conferences without programmatic agreement or organisational framework modify nothing. For comrade Hallas, as for all of us, existence determines consciousness. His polemic represents the rationalisation of a nationally-based group, albeit a large one, which finds itself at sea on the international terrain.

The near-destruction of the revolutionary Marxist tradition by Stalinism has led to a situation where the re-building of revolutionary organisations and the re-appropriation of revolutionary Marxist politics — especially after 1969 — by broad new forces has taken place in a complex and contradictory fashion.

This is classically demonstrated by the case of Il Manifesto in Italy. Its core was expelled from the Italian Communist Party (PCI) at the end of the 1960s for 'leftism'. But its leading group, around Rossanda and Magri, never fully broke from Stalinist positions.

Failing to develop a homogeneous politics or cadre, the organisation has been through numerous internal crises, and has ended up going back on one of its central concerns — the key role of workers' control in the seizure of power. Now it sees its central role as left pressure on the PCI, in Rossanda's words 'making the 3½ million legs of the PCI march to the tune of Il Manifesto'.

Crucial in this whole development has been the absence of a firmly-rooted revolutionary Marxist organisation capable of intervening to win these centrist forces to fully revolutionary Marxist positions. Il Manifesto's experience has been repeated in slightly different ways by the other two major organisations of the Italian far left.

This represents a major tragedy for the European revolutionary movement as a whole. These huge organisations, numbering nearly 50,000 militants at one time, each with daily papers, are being frittered away because of their inability to answer central questions of orientation which are ABC to Marxists.

No modification can occur in the state of the existing revolutionary left internationally without a co-ordinated struggle by revolutionary Marxists. Any national revolutionary organisation which takes its own ideas seriously must attempt an international intervention; and this immediately poses the question of international organisation. Any other approach simply leads to constructing alliances with the most diverse trends, a practice totally incapable of contributing anything to changing the face of the revolutionary left.

★ The extracts above are from the pamphlet 'On Trotskyism and the Fourth International'. The pamphlet contains two essays: 'On the Fourth International' and 'Big Flame on Trotskyism'.

The last article will be of particular concern to many Socialist Challenge readers who were critical of our failure to review Big Flame's pamphlet. We would urge them to order a copy of the pamphlet from: The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XQ. 30p plus 10p p&p.

1. Duncan Hallas, 'Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party' in 'Party and Class', Pluto Press, 1969.

In face of the developments in international capitalism, including the internationalisation of its counter-revolutionary and repressive functions, the international co-ordination of workers' struggles and the intervention of the vanguard is an urgent task. Such co-ordination cannot be improved on a piecemeal basis.

The crying need is for a mass revolutionary International, with sections deeply implanted in the working class. Starting with the existing revolutionary forces, how can we begin this task? For some comrades the answer is 'link up workers' struggles, discuss, but above all...wait'.

This is how Duncan Hallas of the SWP puts it:

'To develop a real current on internationalism — and without such a current all talk of an International is self-deception — it is necessary to start by linking the struggles of workers in one country with those of others. This means starting where workers actually exist, namely in the various countries.

'It means putting aside grandiose ideas like "International leadership", "World Congresses" and the like in

favour of humdrum tasks of propaganda and agitation in one's own country together with developing meaningful international links, which however limited at first are meaningful to workers outside the sectarian milieu...meetings and discussions between socialist grouplets in various countries are essential...'(1)

Let us note straight away that this approach abandons all attempts to build an international political tendency in favour of 'humdrum tasks' and 'meetings and discussions'. In this respect, such an argument abandons the revolutionary left in each particular country to its own spontaneous development, a ridiculous approach which we discuss below. Further, in 1978, the notion that there does not exist 'a real current of internationalism' in the workers movement in many countries is decidedly antiquated.

But the real objection to Hallas' approach is its abandonment of the possibility of the Marxist vanguard in each country co-ordinating its activity and developing a common analysis of the world situation and political tasks.

These possibilities exist even when revolutionary groups are very small; but they cannot be realised without a common framework for discussion, a permanent organisational structure and at least a limited division of labour, and a commonly accepted way of making decisions and agreeing on political analysis.

If some comrades find the names actually given to these essential mechanisms (International leadership, world congress, international executive committee, etc) 'grandiose' then that is a very secondary objection which can easily be dealt with. The real problem is whether an internationally agreed analysis is possible, agreement on internationally co-ordinated intervention is possible, or whether these things are merely 'fictions' and 'self-deception'.

For example, was it 'self-deception' when the Fourth International oriented its sections at the 1965 world congress to building mass campaigns on Vietnam? Or did it find some concrete result in the central role of the SWP in the US anti-war movement, the central role of the

★ IT IS around such issues as internationalism that the International Socialist Alliance and the International Marxist Group are planning a series of day-schools. The first will be on 'Revolutionary Strategy and the Revolutionary Party', in London on Saturday 10 March.

We are inviting all the signatories to the appeal for joint work which appeared in the 4 January issue of Socialist Challenge to attend, as well as comrades who feel they agree with the appeal. Big Flame has also been invited.

Venue — Hampstead Room, YWCA, Great Russell Street, WC1. [Organised under the auspices of the London World Affairs Group.]

Registration £1, from SC School, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

WHAT'S LEFT

5p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication. Payment in advance.

STRATEGY for Socialism in Mozambique: Discussion meeting, Friday, 2 March, 7.30pm at Mozambique Information Centre, 34 Percy Street, London W1. Admission 40p inc. light refreshments. Essential reading: Frelimo's Third Congress Report, (£1.50 from above address).

WOMEN'S Theatre Group open 'Soap Opera' — a musical play about six women's lives. At Chats Palace, 42 Brooksby's Walk, London E9. On Thursday, 15 March, Saturday 17 March, Sunday 18 March at 8pm.

COMRADE from the Other Bookshop urgently needs accommodation. Please ring 226-0571 for details.

MANCHESTER. 'The Crisis of British Imperialism'. A series of public forums organised by the Revolutionary Communist Group. Forum No. 3 'Ireland: Imperialism in Crisis 1968-78', Wednesday, 24 February, 7.30pm, Longsight Town Hall, Stockport Road, Longsight.

IRELAND — A selected mail order list of over 150 publications in stock. Available on request. News From Nowhere, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool.

PICKET GARNERS: Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £6. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-240 1056.

COULD YOU work with Pensioners? Kensington and Chelsea Task Force are looking for three dynamic new people to complete a collective of six. These three positions are one full-time permanent, one full-time temporary and one half-time permanent worker. Driving licence an advantage. Salary: £3,732 p.a. For job description phone 01-969 9105/6 or write TASK FORCE, 11 Acklam Road, London W10. Applications close: 2 March.

WOMEN and Health — what are we fighting for? A workshop organised to bring together all women concerned with the fight against hospital cuts and closures and the fight to control our own bodies. Sessions include — an information exchange for campaigns, the politics of community care, racism and health, prevention — a public or personal responsibility? Sat 17 Feb, 10.30am-5.30pm, University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. Adm: 50p at door.

MAY DAY GREETINGS: trades council or shop stewards committees, would your trade union branch put its May Day Greetings in Socialist Challenge? If so, just send us the name and address of the branch secretary and on 28 February the branch will be mailed allowing the item to be raised at the branches' March or April meeting. Copies of the circular, including rates, from D. Weppler, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

UNDER REVIEW

Full of envy for the uterus

About Men, by Phyllis Chesler
The Women's Press, £2.95

THE WOMEN'S movement has had a profound impact on men's roles as well as women's, and it has resulted in a certain crisis of the male ego. A number of men on the left have attempted to come to terms with this by setting up men's groups and magazines in order to examine the roles which society forces them to play.

But this approach smacks a bit of boys' clubs with their male exclusivity which has always been oppressive to women.

Men are not oppressed in the same way as women, and it is difficult if not impossible for them to come to terms with their alienation under capitalism unless they seek to do this in conjunction with the people they oppress.

Phyllis Chesler's *About Men* is valuable reading for those trying to deal with the more subtle aspects of that role. The book contains a potted history of Christian culture and the ways in which it has been male dominated.

Chesler traces a psychological continuum based on three common themes which various artists and writers unconsciously display: uterus envy; the violent treatment of sons by their fathers, from Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac to numerous con-



temporary (but rarely publicised) accounts; and lastly the enmity between brothers within the family, which is identified as the root of competition between men, preventing them from having loving relationships.

Creation of new life is woman's fundamental achievement, and it is men's envy of this which prevents them from relating to other men in a

meaningful way, since, for example, their own sons are a constant reminder of that achievement.

This is also the root of women's oppression, Chesler argues, because women must be rendered powerless. Her analysis leads to many useful insights into male psychology, such as the competitiveness, and the fear of intimacy which many men display in relation to women.

Chesler's analysis combines a radical feminist perspective with a peculiar compassion for men in their plight as the powerless section of society; a situation they have sought to make up for by numerous horrific deeds throughout history — including Nazism and the Vietnam war.

Yet it is the division of labour within the family which to a large extent determines the psychological make-up of men and women, not some primal urge. And men have material reasons — not just psychological — for oppressing women, such as privileges in the family and higher wages.

While the male psyche undoubtedly plays a role in the unfolding of history, we have to look at objective historical circumstances to explain what happened and why.

Chesler's analysis leaves us with the vain hope that men will reform and that the dictatorship of the father will be challenged and 'new heroes' will emerge. This hope will remain an illusion so long as the material conditions for men's dominance over women still exist.

It is through the 'fighting experience' of women's self-organisation that the male role will be challenged, not by changes inside male heads.

JUDITH ARKWRIGHT

Poetry with a political bite

100 Poems Without a Country, by Erich Fried
Translated by Stuart Hood
John Calder, £4.95

SOMETIMES it almost seems that it needs repression or one of its results — exile — to produce good imaginative writing.

The failures and problems of the class struggle should concentrate the minds of writers as well as politicians. The international class struggle has yet to achieve its goal — socialism.

This is the 'human predicament' rather than the endless existential scab-picking that usually passes muster as 'profundity' in much contemporary poetry.

It says a lot about the literary culture of this country that probably the best poet presently writing in Britain writes in German. Erich Fried has lived in this country for forty years; his writing and translating largely unrecognised.

His poetry is not fertile soil for the symbol and myth mongers, nor is it one of passive wet-eyed humanism. Fried's latest collection, '100 Poems Without a Country', have political nerve and muscle even when they appear to be at their most personal:

WHAT IS LIFE?

Life that is the warmth of the water in my bath

Life that is my mouth on the open lips of your sex

Life that is anger at the wrongs in our countries

The warmth of the water is not enough I must also splash in it

My mouth on your sex is not enough I must also kiss it

Anger at wrongs is not enough we must also probe them

and do something about them only that is life

No British poet could write like this.

This collection spans a wide range — from the morning rituals of the bathroom to the repressive West German state; from the problems of writing poetry to some sharp-edged glances at the left.

Thought-provoking, ironic and very funny, these poems will freshen tired minds.

COLIN SMITH

The manure collectors are here!

Chinese Shadows by Simon Leys
Penguin, 80p pbk.

A western organiser of a trade exhibition in Peking was asked: 'How many visitors would you like to have? Twenty thousand? Forty thousand? Sixty thousand?' Exactly 60,000 visitors turned up at the exhibit. Perhaps this example typifies Simon Leys' impression of Mao's China.

The post-Mao period is now opening up, with the outcome likely to have a major bearing on dynamics of the world revolution. *Chinese Shadows*, a well informed but humorous account of China under Mao, provides a background to

events unfolding today.

The main preoccupation of the book is the conflict between the real China and the China the west 'thinks it knows'.

Leys ridicules the Sinologists who accept the wise words of the bureaucracy; those who spend their time at banquets, writing books and articles for the western press extolling the virtues of beloved Chairman Mao.

Leys manages to piece together the other China.

One absurdity is the case of an escaper to Hong Kong. Asked where she would like to live, she replied: 'Well in Yugoslavia, for example. Because, in pseudosocialist countries run by revisionist hyenas in the pay of American capitalism, oil and cotton cloth are not rationed.'

The material basis for these absurd developments comes from the disastrous all-embracing Cultural Revolution. Secondary education closed for four years. A cultural past is torn down to make way for barren tarmac surfaces.

The policy of giving material incentives to the peasants is denounced as rightist, then suddenly its opponents are 'leftist but in fact rightist'.

So, for example, 'permanent revolution' is denounced as Trotskyist while 'continuous revolution' is Mao's gift to Marxism. Indeed the term 'revolution' is used and absorbed by the masses to mean 'this is what the administration approves of — beware!'

What is approved? Six or so modern operas which are repeatedly shown as the only works at cinemas and blared continuously over loudspeakers as workers guided by Mao Tse-tung thought make their way to work.

At banquets the western audience gets encore after encore of 'the production brigade' celebrates the arrival in the hills of the manure collectors'.

Above all *Chinese Shadows* is a reminder of how similar the Cultural Revolution was to the Moscow Trials.

The Peking Stalinists were prepared to unite with anyone, even the most reactionary politicians in the west, to preserve their own positions of power.

However, if the analogy with the Moscow trials has any bearing, so any analogy with the liberalisation under Khrushchev should come as a warning.

We do not know whether a 'Kruschev' or a 'Brezhnev' will triumph at this stage.

What is certain is that unless the masses break from the bureaucracy — an essential feature of Stalinism — and organise their own lives, any gains made at present will be short-lived.

Their ability to force the bureaucracy away from its disastrous foreign policy even in the short term remains important in the struggle against imperialism.

Chinese Shadows isn't clear as to the reasons behind the reactionary turns made by Mao. The author admits that his main object was to be descriptive rather than analytical.

To dispel the Maoist mythology that has passed as Modern Marxism the book is vital reading, especially as it is priced at an attractive 80p.

RAY SIROTKIN

SUS on stage

THE NEWLY-formed Forum Alternative Youth Theatre, featured in Socialist Challenge earlier this month, has found two London locations for its play *This Green and Pleasant London*.

The play, written by Damian Duggan-Ryan, is about young blacks, the police, and the sus laws.

Performances at 1.15pm, 26 February to 3 March, Soho Poly Theatre Club, 16 Riding House St, London W1. And 1.15pm, 6 to 19 March, Kings Head Theatre Club, 115 Upper St, London N1.

The death of Robert Watson, 37, of Aberdeen

By Duncan Bush

A LORRYDRIVER on picket duty was killed on 18 January when he was hit by a lorry as it left the Shell oil depot at Aberdeen harbour. The man was hit as he moved towards the vehicle to speak to the driver as the lorry passed through the dock entrance. Another picket said that the driver did not stop and the man fell under the rear wheels.

And they talk about 'crushing the pickets' — well, they crushed one in Scotland on Thursday under a juggernaut Foden or Leyland or Daf, driver killing driver (neither of them being drunk) because the one tried to speak to the other at a gate.

The wheels that turned over the one man's body were not the same as the wheel turned by the second man's hands: he was unsighted, there was no purpose to kill.

It was just that someone was driving the man who was driving the lorry (it may have revealed itself in what he had thought was momentary anger or contempt, or through the newspaper he carried in the cab) without his even really knowing he was being driven.

You might even say that the victim who survived knew less about who was driving him than the dead victim will know about the third man (a stranger, but a man in the same job) who must now drive him slowly to the cemetery.

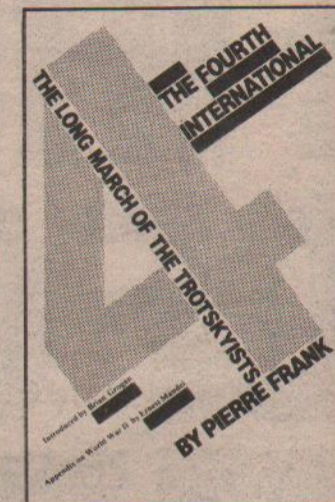
The Other Bookshop

The Fourth International: The Long March of the Trotskyists, by Pierre Frank

PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER

You can get this history of the FI for only £2.50 (normally £2.95) if you order it by 30 April (p&p add 30p).

Ink Links



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Joseph Hansen's account of the early years of the Cuban revolution and its analysis by the Trotskyist movement. Only £2.00 (normally £2.80) (p&p add 30p). Pathfinder

SPECIAL OFFER FEBRUARY Land or Death

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SABER NICKBIN

IRAN THE UNFOLDING REVOLUTION

FOREWORD BY TARIQ ALI



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Analysis of the revolution by leading Iranian Trotskyist. Explains the causes of the upheaval and charts the course towards workers' power. Only 40p (p&p add 10p).

IMP

OUT MID-FEBRUARY

The Transitional Programme, by Leon Trotsky

Founding document of the Trotskyist movement, with an introduction by veteran British Trotskyist Harry Wicks. 30p (p&p add 10p).

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Socialist Challenge

FIRST VICTIMS OF CONCORDAT: THE LOW PAID?

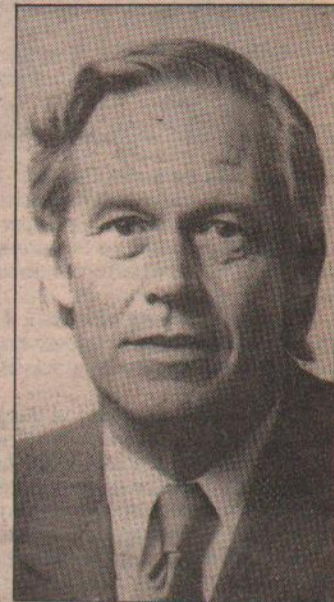


Photo: BOB MURPHY (Socialist Challenge)

NUPE leader ALAN FISHER — said he hoped that the concordat would help to solve the current problems in the public sector; he was pleased at the references to achieving fair play to members like his own without having to hurt the public by going on strike.

THE LEADERS of the public sector unions appear to be on the verge of settling with the government. They are set to recommend a 9 per cent increase. Despite the comparability clauses, this is a far cry from the £60-35 hours demanded by the unions.

In accepting the government offer, the union leaders have ridden roughshod over their members and the decisions of the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

By Brian Hearse

In the very week that the TUC-Labour government concordat was announced, the *Guardian* carried an interview with Denis Healey. The Chancellor was remarkably frank.

In reply to the question 'You clearly think some form of permanent incomes policy is inevitable?' the Labour leader replied: 'I think it is. You have to have one in the public sector anyway, and that's a third of the labour force.'

In other words, the Labour government will maintain a permanent force of low-paid workers, force an incomes policy down their throats and hope for the best. The first test for those union leaders who are recommending the 9 per cent offer will come this week.

The ambulance staff have already shown that they are not

prepared to be intimidated by either the government or the ideological offensive of the Tory press. Their example could well be followed by other public sector workers.

But what the present situation reveals is this: an all-out strike by public sector workers would be the most effective way of winning the claim.

The course recommended by Fisher was, at best, designed to put pressure on the government to make a few concessions. Fisher might be satisfied with the crumbs he has gained, but most low-paid workers will be extremely unhappy.

The militancy of the low-paid threw the Callaghan government off balance. Because of the proximity of the General Election (it cannot legally be postponed beyond October 1979) he was forced to



LABOUR's 'Iron Chancellor' says that a 'permanent incomes policy is inevitable'. It is these right-wing policies that will ensure the return of the Tories.

accept that the 5 per cent norm was no longer operative.

But the concordat was designed to demonstrate that the government had not been converted to free collective bargaining. It was also aimed at aiding the trade union leaders to contain the militancy of sections of their rank-and-file.

The weakness of the concordat from the government's point of view is that it has no status in law. But this is

something which the Tories could well remedy when they are elected to office.

The concordat is a desperate attempt by Callaghan and the TUC to convince the ruling class that they can still deliver the goods and that the last few months are an aberration.

NUPE militant Ray Varnes spoke for many others when he said this week: 'We are not going to be made the sacrificial lambs to weak attempts at bolstering Labour's election

chances.

'We will not accept the concordat. It's against TUC and Labour Party policy. If Fisher tells me to accept the 9 per cent I'll reply that we should recall the TUC.'

The acceptance by the TUC leaders of the concordat without any opposition reveals yet again the total lack of a serious alternative strategy. In the absence of such a strategy we should not be too surprised if many low-paid workers refuse to vote Labour in the coming elections.

This trend could be countered by Labour councils following the lead of Camden and meeting the full claim. The argument that this breaks the solidarity of the strike is an opportunist one.

There is no national strike. There are only selective strikes. Where these result in victories they show what is possible elsewhere and demonstrate how effective a national strike can be at the present time.

Fisher rejected that alternative. The consequences of accepting the 9 per cent offer could be severe. The public sector workers might be the first victims of the concordat, but the ultimate casualty will be the Labour government.

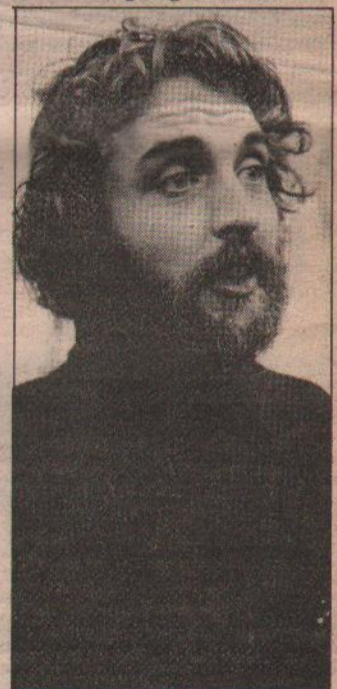


Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

NUPE district committee secretary for ILEA, RAY VARNES: 'We will not accept the concordat. It's against TUC and Labour Party policy. If Fisher tells me to accept the 9 per cent I'll reply that we should recall the TUC.'

OUR FUND DRIVE

A VERY welcome £25 arrived from Hackney Socialist Challenge supporters this week.

But despite this the week's total has fallen below £100 for the first time in ages. And we

need £200 per week to reach the £2,500 target each quarter.

Hackney Socialist Challenge Group's £25 came from a benefit night organised last week. Tuesday is not a good night for a social occasion (it was the only one available at such notice) and there were also problems with the sound equipment and the size of the venue.

Still, well over a hundred people came, lots of them had a good time, and those involved in setting it all up (including one of the bands) are now discussing out the problems that arose in the hope of organising further benefits for the paper.

Meanwhile thanks to the bands who played — Oxy and

the Morons (249 3867), Charge (800 4530), and the Slightly Abnormals (806 6279) — and to the Criminal Records disco.

Our thanks this week to:
HackneySCG £25.00
Ann Chesterton 10.00
Anon 10.00
S. Zutschi 10.00
Ian Harrison 16.00
James Blanco White 25.00
Week's Total £96.40
Grand Total £1,427.08

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LOTTERY

SOCIALIST Challenge Spring Lottery. Tickets 10p or £1 per book. Prize is choice of 12 volumes of Trotsky's Writings or a £25 book/record token.

Draw is on 2 May in Socialist Challenge offices. Help yourself while helping the paper! Why not order a few books of tickets on a sale or return basis to sell locally?

Write to: Lottery, SC Offices, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Organised by

D Wepler.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

THE paper relies heavily on subscriptions. In January alone, £900 came from this source — the majority of it through new 6-month subscribers.

We want every area to help us increase this figure by getting a new subscription a month. We have new subscription forms printed which you can use to help sell them. These are available on request, free of charge.

A weakness in our domestic subscribers is among multi-reader institutions: libraries, research offices and so on. We'd like you to ask your local library this week to subscribe to Socialist Challenge. Tell us the results!

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