

Socialist Challenge

'We've put legislation on the statute book as advanced as any in the world'

JIM CALLAGHAN



FBU: new leaders needed

WHATEVER the decision which the members of the Fire Brigades Union finally arrive at on 12 January, it is likely to be a close one. Many firemen will be sorely tempted to accept the offer being made by the employers, and call off the strike. Several weeks on strike is no joke, particularly over Xmas, and after the refusal of the TUC to support the FBU it would be easy to think that the strike cannot be won. But that would be a big mistake.

Never has the support amongst other workers and trade unionists been greater for a strike. Millions of people not only see the FBU claim as justified, but believe that a victory for the FBU can aid them in their fight to defend living standards. Last year's union conferences saw vote after vote against another round of incomes policy, and it was that massive feeling amongst rank and file trade unionists which forced 17 members of the General Council to vote to support the FBU.

But simply calling on the TUC for support is not enough. The FBU must appeal over the heads of the TUC to the rank and file in the unions for solidarity action which can win this strike. So far the executive has failed to do this.

Each time there has been a mobilisation by the FBU no effort has been made to involve other trade unionists in that action. The first London demonstration before Xmas, the lobby of the TUC and the call for a demonstration on the 16th, were built amongst FBU members alone. It is time the FBU put the 17 members of the General Council on the spot — a date should be named for a day of industrial action in support of the FBU strike, and the 17 called upon to throw their weight behind mobilising for it.

The deal offered by the employers makes promises of further rises in November and later. But there are no guarantees. Callaghan is already talking of a 5 per cent Phase 4 limit starting in the autumn. The General Council have paved the way for this, by putting the 12 month rule and the 10 per cent before the interests and desires of both the firemen and their own union members. With the employers demanding a return to work which leaves the union weak, (with action against scabs ruled out and duties set out in individual contracts), far from throwing in the towel the strike should be going on the offensive. The executive was right to call for a recall Trade Union Congress. The leaders who betrayed their members interests must be removed and a campaign launched against any incomes policy. The job of the FBU is to begin that campaign now — that's how the strike can be won.

Editorial

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WHILE TOURING Bangladesh, Callaghan told journalists who asked him questions about racism in Britain to mind their own business. In India he was a bit more polite and claimed that Britain was constructing a multi-racial society and had the most advanced anti-racist laws in the world. This was in place of a comment on the McKinnon affair.

If the South Asian journalists had done their homework properly they could have asked Callaghan of the role Labour Governments have played over the past decade in aiding racism. Callaghan was well-known as a racist Home Secretary, an opinion not confined exclusively to black people but admitted by Crossman in his recently published diaries.

For it is a fact that Labour is now paying the price for its failure to do anything to help curb the rise of racism. Joe Ashton's effective anti-Nazi broadcast, as we have already stressed, was a step forward. But it was essentially motivated by a desire to prevent the fascists from taking too many Labour votes in the local and national elections. Labour's immigration policies and its package of social and economic measures have encouraged the growth of racism. Unless Labour Party members recognise this fact they will not get anywhere in combatting the cancer.

McKinnon's racist remarks should not come as a surprise. He probably utters remarks like that in the 'privacy' of his club or at dinner parties fairly regularly, as do a host of magistrates and judges. It was his public display of racism which the liberal press finds reprehensible. Unless the Government is utterly supine, McKinnon will probably be sacked or asked to resign, à la Dobson. There is, however, a more important point. It is the way in which judges are appointed in this country. In 1975, for instance, 88 per cent of the judges appointed to the High Court went to public schools, and 74 per cent to Oxford and Cambridge. The class basis and bias of the judiciary is well known. A recent book by Professor J.A. Griffith (*The Politics of the Judiciary*, Collins, £1.25) demonstrates this in an extremely effective fashion.

It is a revealing comment on British Labour that they have refused to institute any reforms whatsoever in the judicial system, despite the fact that this is the sixth occasion on which they have been in office since the Second World War. The belief that judges are 'neutral' is patently ludicrous. The implication is, in Griffith's words, that a judge 'must act like a political, economic and social eunuch and have no interest in the world outside his court when he comes to judgement'.

Labour MPs should not remain content with calling for McKinnon's dismissal. A Labour and Trade Union Inquiry into the workings of the judiciary, comparing it to the system of justice in other bourgeois-democratic societies, should be set up to prepare a report which could form the basis for a discussion within the labour movement.

For black people in Britain, McKinnon's outburst demonstrates what they have known for some time. British justice is not colour blind. It is racist to the core — a reflection of Britain's imperialist past and its crisis-ridden present. A black person in a magistrates court will frequently be given a prison sentence for offences which if committed by a white would result in a fine. The proportion of blacks in prison is extremely high when compared to their proportion of the overall population.

Thus the best method of protection is not through the courts (who will protect black people against the courts?) but by organisation at the level of the community, which should include self-defence. If black lawyers want to help the bulk of black people who live in this country they should not restrict their activities to the courts. They should actively aid in setting up defence centres in the heart of the black communities. This remains a vital need. Even if McKinnon is brought down, there are several hundreds more to go.

SOCIALIST UNITY STEERING COMMITTEE
 Sunday, 15 January, at noon

Venue: please note change — 328/9 Upper Street London N1.
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NUS under assault Student leaders sap union strength

In the name of a 'united student movement' the leaders of the National Union of Students have taken a big stride down the road to the destruction of the student movement as an independent and campaigning force.

The NUS conference in December represented a decisive shift to the right in NUS policy, and a consolidation of the alliance between the leaders of the Broad Left [a coalition of Communists and Labour students] and the Federation of Conservative Students, argues COLIN TALBOT, a member of the NUS executive and organiser of the Socialist Students Alliance.

Student union organisation came under direct attack in

1971 when Margaret Thatcher proposed to institute 'public control' of student union finances. That external threat was soundly defeated by the biggest mass mobilisations of students in the NUS's history.

WITCH-HUNT

Today that attack is restarting, aided and abetted by Tory students within the unions. As before an atmosphere of witch-hunt is being created by the press and education authorities in preparation for an all-out offensive.

Isolated colleges have already come under attack, like the union officials at Birmingham Polytechnic who face possible imprisonment for making a union donation to striking firefighters.

The response of the NUS leaders to this attack is based around the philosophy that if you run away fast enough, the enemy might not be able to catch you. Before the attack has even started in earnest, the executive accepted 'public accountability' of union funds, and denounced those who want to fight as 'wreckers'. By a

minute majority this position was endorsed by NUS conference.

Parallel to the NUS retreat on union independence has come the drift away from any student mass action and more submissions to the Government and lobbies of Parliament. The only exception to this has come on the issues of grants and overseas students.

The position of students who (supposedly) get discretionary grants and the fate of overseas students, now facing vicious racist quotas, has become so bad that the NUS has been forced to call some action so these students can 'let off steam' if nothing else. That's why the NUS has called demos on quotas on 22 February and on grants on 3 March. Having called these actions the NUS executive will do only the bare minimum to build them, being more interested in the delegate lobby of Parliament on grants on 2 March.

AUTONOMY

The Socialist Students Alliance is planning an all-out offensive to defend student

union autonomy and develop mass actions around the demands of further education and overseas students. A national conference on student union autonomy has been called for 18 February. It has already gained endorsements from a very large number of student union officials.

SPRINGBOARD

At the same time the SSA is calling for the transformation of the 2 March into a day of action in the localities, including mass pickets of local authorities and occupations of colleges. This is a direct challenge to the NUS-called lobby of Parliament. It will be used as a springboard to build massive support for the demonstration the following day. Material is also being produced to build the quotas demo on 22 February.

Details of posters and leaflets on autonomy, grants and quotas can be obtained by contacting Colin Talbot of the SSA on 01-359 8371.

Lesbians fight back

by ANN BOND

LAST Friday a group of women — from Action for Lesbian Parents, Gay Sweatshop, Spare Rib, anarchist and socialist feminist groups — marched into the offices of the *London Evening News* in Fleet Street. This action was a result of the publication of an article in the previous evening's *News* about investigations into a doctor helping lesbian women to have children by the artificial insemination method.

The forty very militant and very determined women sat down in the editorial offices of the *News* and demanded to see the editor and the journalists involved. Harassed management proceeded to call in the police and threatened us with eviction. But we replied that if they chose to do that, then we would return as many times as necessary and that we would bring more and more women with us. Suitably impressed by this statement, the managing editor continued to negotiate.

For about an hour *News* staff were adamant that they would only speak to four 'spokesmen'. This was naturally



Angry women occupy *Evening News* office.

refused by the women involved, who insisted that they all had something to say about the scurrilous story. When the managing editor conceded to our demands to be present *en masse*, we agreed to have only four speakers to put our demands to the *News* Editor.

Amidst flashing cameras and more abuse from people outside the offices we confronted Lou Kirby, editor of the *Evening News*, and Stuart Kuttner, one of the 'investigative' journalists. The

first demand presented to them was for the right of reply to the articles — a demand which was granted with surprising rapidity by a very harassed-looking Kirby. Alongside this was the demand that any further investigations being carried out by the *News* should cease immediately and that apologies should be given for the invasion of privacy entailed in the investigations.

It was put to Kuttner and Kirby that the story was a

flagrant breach of the NUI code of conduct, which prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sexual preference. Mr. Kirby's reply was emphatic. No, they had not broken the code, nor had they oversensationalised the story — he believed that it was published 'in the public interest' because it highlighted 'abnormal procreation'. 'I am not concerned with sexism', he said, refusing to give an apology.

Needless to say, this provoked a good deal of anger, and a member of Gay Sweatshop produced a sensational article written by the same journalists decrying their plays for children as 'sex plays'. Another woman produced an article — again by the same journalists — sensationally relating the Thorpe 'homosexuality' story. 'Isn't it true that this is queer-bashing?', Kirby was asked.

And of course it is. The story in the *Evening News* was plainly and simply a very vicious facet of a more generalised attack on gay people. Increasingly the right of people to determine their own sexuality and lifestyle is coming under attack from all the reactionary sides of society, and wherever these attacks occur, socialists should follow the example and demands of the women who zapped the *News*.

OUR POLICIES

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

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

- * To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.
- * To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the 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 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 be the long run decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

To 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.

Old Bailey decision Nazi-style justice from Mugger McKinnon

Two headlines on the weekend neatly summarised the contrasting verdicts on the most outrageous racial 'justice' so far dispensed by a British court, reports GEOFFREY SHERIDAN.

'Long live free speech!' proclaimed the *Daily Express*, a sentiment which in the context of the events at the Old Bailey on Friday roughly translates as: 'Let the haters and murderers of "Niggers, wogs, and coons" flourish'.

The *Daily Mirror*, which has lately turned over some of its front pages to the anti-fascist campaign, took a different approach to the acquittal of Nazi leader Kingsley Read, announcing: 'Fury over "wogs case" judge'.

Even the *Daily Mail* — in the same pro-Tory camp as the *Express* — felt obliged to register in a sub-headline that Labour MP Martin Flannery was demanding 'Give him the sack' — a demand endorsed by the *Observer* the following day.

It requires only a cursory reading of Judge Neil McKinnon's remarks to comprehend the horror with which they have been undoubtedly received by any social democrat who retains the faintest liberal conscience. For it is easy to mistake McKinnon's summing up of the case — before the jury reached its verdict — as a speech by Read, former chairperson of the NF, himself.

FAMILIAR EQUATIONS

'Of course we cannot accommodate here unlimited numbers of immigrants coming into this country, but it is not something to be ashamed of', McKinnon declared. He went on to make the equations familiar to all who have heard the Nazis' propaganda.

'Goodness knows, we have one and a half million unemployed already and all immigrants are going to do is to occupy jobs that are needed by the local population. Homes are scarce...'

And when the all-white jury took the hint — determining that Read did not intend to incite race hatred with his 'One down a million to go' speech after the murder of Gurdeep Singh Chaggar in Southall, or the delightful epithets he employs to describe black people — the Mugger told Read: 'I wish you well'.

RACIAL INCITEMENT

Under the 1976 Race Relations Act, it will supposedly not be necessary to prove 'intent' in order to convict for racial incitement. But as the *Sunday Times* pointed out in its comments on the effectiveness of the new legislation: 'We doubt whether it would be proof against the infantile vapouring, personal reminiscences and overtly political assertions which passed for Judge McKinnon's direction to the jury.'

The ruling class will not

be happy to allow the Mugger's judgement to remain as an unqualified precedent. In the 18 months since Read made his 'One down' speech, many more blacks and anti-racists have 'gone down' in the upsurge of killings, stabbings, fire-bombings, and other more 'subtle' manifestations of intolerance.

ZEBRA CROSSING

Kingsley Read made his speech in London's East End, where just a few days ago a car that had slowed down to allow a black to cross the road at a zebra crossing immediately accelerated at him when he had stepped off the pavement. It narrowly missed.

That, as every black and anti-racist militant knows, is the kind of murderous activity which is now an everyday experience, and which is spurred on and made respectable by the likes of McKinnon and his cohorts on the bench, in the right-wing press, and the rest of what passes for the establishment.

But it is the response of the black community and the anti-fascist movement which will make the ruling class think twice. Black barristers have already announced that they will refuse to appear in McKinnon's court. The West Indian Standing Committee has called on all blacks to do the same.

SIGNIFICANT DENT

This response makes a significant dent in the charade



"There is no actual law to prevent you arranging wogged forces for the removal of your unwanted neighbours. I wish you well."



Neil McKinnon: The ruling class will not be happy to allow the Mugger's judgement to set a precedent

of 'impartiality' which the courts are meant to represent.

The 18 months that have passed since the Southall killing have seen a dramatic rise in anti-racist and anti-fascist activity. There were demonstrations of many thousands during that bloody summer of '76; there have been numerous demonstrations against the fascists since, some of them violent.

HUNDRED MILITANTS

All this deeply concerns the upholders of 'law and order'. Who would have thought a short while ago that it would be possible to mobilise over a hundred militants to counter an NF paper sale in an area such as Croydon, as happened the day after McKinnon's judgement?

The leaders of the race relations industry — fearful that Mugger McKinnon has jeopardised their frail juggling act — are now pleading with Sam Silkin, the Attorney General, to rectify the damage done at the Old Bailey.

The same Uncle Sam who decided to take no action against Sir Richard Dobson's 'wogs' speech and countless similar pronouncements. It just

so happens that two people have been successfully prosecuted for incitement under the Race Relations legislation which brought Read to court. They were Michael X and Obi Egbuna, who both just happened to be black.

Whether or not Silkin moves against the Mugger, the latter has forcefully revealed the character and power that resides in the whole judicial system. We repeat, therefore, the demands that *Socialist Challenge* put forward at the time of Magistrate Oakley's blunder:

* Abolition of the magistrate system and for all cases to be tried by a full jury.

* Abolition of 'majority verdicts'. Only a unanimous jury verdict should be permitted.

* Election of all judges by the local community.

The Labour Government, the judiciary, and black self-defence — see Editorial.

Meanwhile in Leamington..

IN LEAMINGTON SPA on Monday, the magistrates court decided to postpone hearing a case against British Movement fascists Mick Cole and George Jones until 6 February. They are being charged under the incitement to racial hatred sections of the 1976 Race Relations Act.

Over a hundred anti-fascists picketed the court, demanding action against the racist thugs whose activities in town are well known. Will Mugger McKinnon's choice remarks put the Leamington magistrates in a quandary as to what to do? A lot will depend on whether Attorney General Sam Silkin decides to sack him or not.



Emperors of the World Unite

A RECENT copy of the *Pyongyang Times*, the English-language information weekly distributed by North Korea, recently published a message from the Great and Beloved Leader Kim Il Sung to Emperor Bokassa I. The Korean fantasist wrote his new friend:

'On the occasion of the first anniversary of the proclamation of the Central African Empire, I wish to address, in the name of the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea and the Korean people, as well as in my own name [surely this modesty is unnecessary — NFN] my warm congratulations to Your Majesty, and the Governments and people of your country.

'The Korean people are following the great progress being made by the Central African Empire under the leadership of Your Majesty in its struggle to consolidate national independence and build a new society...'

'I take this occasion to sincerely wish Your Majesty greater success in his work for the prosperity and development of the country.'

The exact date of the impending coronation in Pyongyang has yet to be announced.

Tribune — Stranger than Science Fiction

TRIBUNE is the weekly organ of left-social democracy. Its editor is Dick Clements, the scourge of the far-left and a doughty defender of press freedom. It is commonly accepted that the two liveliest sections of the paper are the letters pages and the two centre pages which deal with the arts. It should be acknowledged that Tribune's review pages are more consistent and more effective than those of the far-left press. They have been edited until now by a libertarian named Doug Hill.

Some months ago Hill ran into trouble. He wanted to print an article critical of the recruiting tactics of SLADE, the designers union, together with a cartoon. Captain Dick refused to give permission. Surely it would have been better to publish and give SLADE the right of reply than not to publish at all. In any case Hill was offended by the censorship and might leave within the next few months.

The fact that he has written a science fiction novel, accepted for publication by Pan Books, might be a further inducement. Rumours that the book is a sub-conscious account of how Tribune is run have been vigorously denied. Not even Hill has the requisite imagination to do that. The new Literary Editor is likely to be Catherine Itzin.

Racal Welches on Sanctions

OUR disclosures in this column regarding Racal Electronics have resulted in some more information coming our way. It appears that the firm has recently got a massive order from Chile. A correspondent who worked for the outfit writes:

'From August 1978 to November 1977 I was employed by Racal Tacticom in their department at the Racal Marine factory at Broadstairs, Kent. The ultra-reactionary character of the Racal group of companies was the main reason I left.

About once a year, the relevant trades union would come around and leaflet the production line. I never got to see the leaflets, and only heard about this afterwards. A few people joined the union. But the management went around these people and "persuaded" them to revoke their membership.

This was freely admitted to me by the director-in-charge Reg Boreham, in a union-bashing pep talk he gave us afterwards. It was pointed out that if the factory were unionised, then management and workforce would be permanently at loggerheads, and we would have to fight for concessions, instead of being given them by a kind and generous company.

What struck me particularly was the extreme paranoia about unions shown by the management. This was borne out last August when I visited the S.G. Brown factory, owned by the Racal group. This is in Watford. It has recently [2 or 3 years ago, I believe] been unionised.

I met the production manager, who told me he had been one of the main movers of unionisation. The S.G. Brown factory sub-contracts work out to the production line in the Broadstairs factory. It would be normal practice within the Racal group for him to visit the Broadstairs factory for quality control, progress control, and similar checks. This he was not permitted to do. He claimed that this was because of his pro-union work. Obviously the group management does not want other companies within the group to be 'contaminated'.

In December 1976, the Racal group granted all its employees a 12½ per cent pay rise [outside the Government's pay limits], payable when wage restraint ended. In June 1977, Racal was informed by the Department of Employment that it would receive no further Government contracts until this rise was withdrawn. All of this was quite public, though not, I imagine, well-known. Racal sent a leaflet to every employee explaining the situation, withdrawing the 12½ per cent and awarding instead a 'productivity bonus', to be paid when the restraint ended. We were told 'off the record' that this bonus would not be less than 12½ per cent of gross wage backdated to December 76.

About one month later it was announced that Racal had been awarded a Home Office contract worth £4 million. I also heard it rumoured in Labour Party circles that apart from withdrawing contracts, the government had also threatened to expose Racal's sanction breaking in supplying military communications equipment to the 'Rhodesian' state and to South Africa.

It is true that there is a South African subsidiary, Racal South Africa, which sometimes works jointly with Racal companies in England, though whether trade sanctions are or have been broken is probably a rather technical question depending on the nature of the work/equipment/firm involved.

In the period 1976/7 the Racal Group made about £33 million profit on a turnover of £100 million."

The mushroom cloud of depression

Tyneside: Capitalism's road to nowhere

The first in an occasional series in which Socialist Challenge will profile towns and cities throughout Britain.

GEOFF BELL reports on the North-east, where depression has hung like a mushroom cloud for almost as long as anyone can remember.

Jim Murray, chairperson of the Vickers shop stewards committee put it this way: 'Unemployment is not an issue here. Unemployment is a tradition'.

It is easy to see what he means. At the start of the 1930s — when unemployment and the North-east of England went together as conveniently as corruption and Newcastle Labour Party do today — the number out of work in the North-east was 30 per cent above the national average.

Last year the figure was 38 per cent above that average. They didn't weep so many crocodile tears about unemployment in the 1930s as they do today. In 1936, the president of the Board of Trade told a deputation from Jarrow asking the Government to help establish new industry in the town: 'Jarrow must work out its own salvation'.

Today, the official rhetoric has changed. Labour's Minister of State at the Department of Industry, Alan Williams, says: 'The whole region offers business the benefits of a Special Development Area or Development Area, and my regional office in Newcastle-upon-Tyne is always ready to give location and financial advice'.

Working people in the North east have good reason to view such labels as 'Special Development Area' with suspicion. In the 1930s the area became a 'Special Area

Government indicated its willingness to add to these figures, by taking away the orders for building Polish ships from the Swan Hunter yard in Newcastle. A hate campaign was launched in the national press against the shipyard's outfitters, whose ban on overtime allegedly led to the withdrawal of orders.

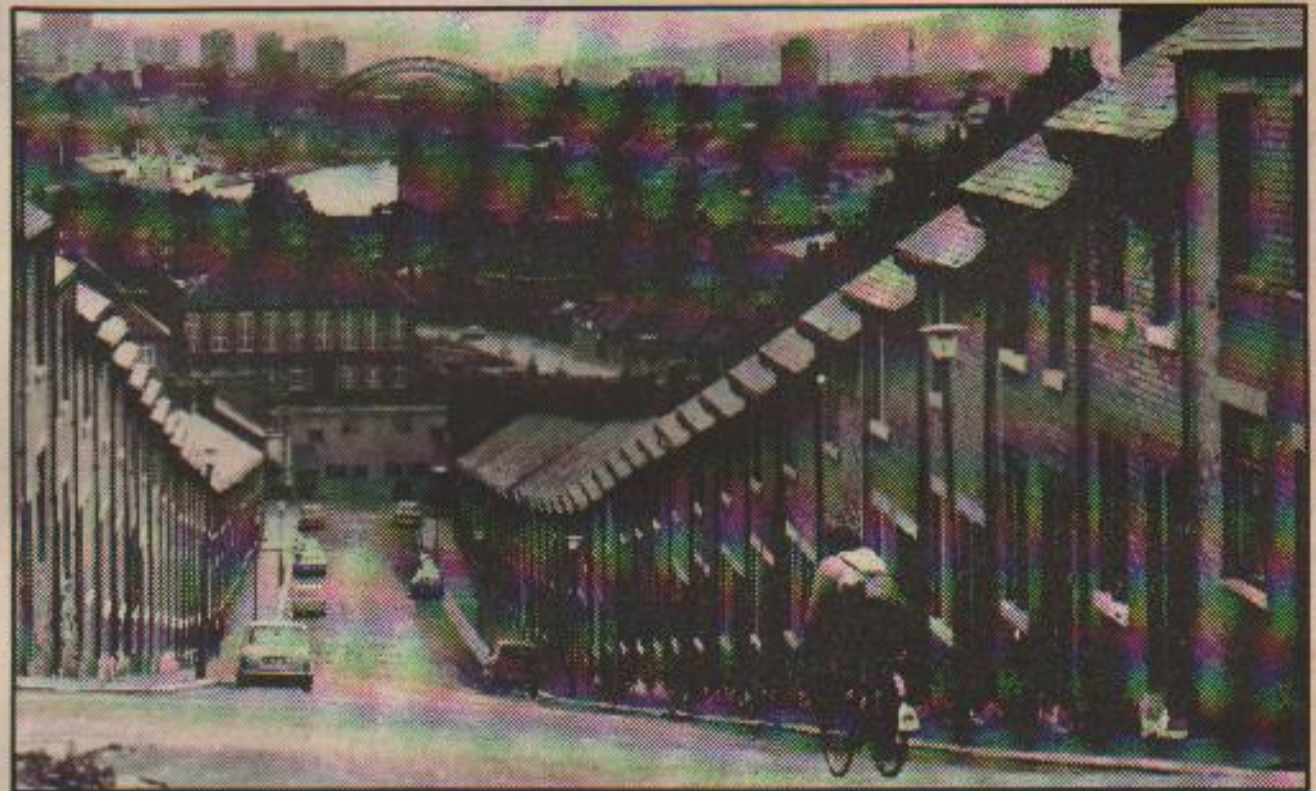
ROLL CALL

The outfitters were not asking for much — parity with boiler-makers. But that was too much for Labour's nationalised industry, even though there is such parity in other yards owned by British Shipbuilding. Consequently the Labour Government is now adding its name to those who have swelled the dole queues of Tyneside in the last few years.

The list is impressive. *Plessey*, which closed down last year with the loss of 3,000 jobs; *Spillers*, which closed the Tyne Brand factory in North Shields in 1976 with 300 redundancies; *Burtons*, 1,000 jobs lost, *RCA 100* redundancies.

The list is like a roll call of all that's meant to be best in British and multi-national industry: *GEC*, *GKN*, *Rolls Royce*, *Lucas*, *Ronson* — all have sacked in Tyne and Wear within the last two or three years.

Many of these firms were meant to supply jobs that have been lost by the decline of the



employs 3,000 in the district.

The latest bright idea to tackle unemployment in the North-east is the building of 'nursery factories' for small businesses. Forty such factories have been let in the Tyne and Wear, but with little effect on unemployment — less than 500 jobs have been offered. What these schemes do attract is sharp-eyed hustlers out to make a quick profit. The small factories usually employ those in the low wages sector and all sorts of grants are available to make profits easier to come by.

Heavy unemployment suits private industry in other ways. The traditional message is that it secures a docile labour force. Such an image is one the local trade union bureaucracy is only too willing to put over. In a recent interview with a Department of Industry magazine, George Arnold, chairperson of the TUC Regional Council, assured his audience:

'We are a very hard working crowd... As a member of the Regional Economic Planning Council I am sure that in the council as a whole, the trade union members play a very important role in advising on the industrial relations aspects, and certainly from our point of view being that little closer to management enables us to jointly tackle the problems that we know exist in industry'.

SPECTACULAR

One such happy partnership was concerned with the power plant manufacturing firm of C.A. Parsons and its campaign last summer to win the order for the Drax B turbine.

Parsons was in competition for the order with GEC and a very effective public relations exercise won the order for the Newcastle company. The most spectacular event was a mass demonstration when Jimmy Carter visited the town.

But the Parsons' workers on that demonstration were given the day off with full pay by management to go on it; indeed the whole campaign was run with the closest co-operation between unions and management. Such co-operation did not prevent management attempting to declare 250 redundancies on the staff side once the order was won.

In the end most of the jobs were saved, but the decline in the number of jobs available at

the company continues. Bob Murdoch, a member of the TASS shop stewards committee, commented: 'We're having to reappraise the situation. We

Drax controversy.

The truth is that, whether in the form of nationalised British Shipbuilders or free enterprise C.A. Parsons,

Special Development Areas, nursery factories, diversification, fake nationalisation — the lot.

AIR OF DEPRESSION

But the air of depression still hangs over the area. The advice given by the president of the Board of Trade to the Jarrow representatives in 1936 can be re-written to read: 'Workers must work out their own salvation'.

The director of the North of England Development Council, John Hobbs, recently wrote: 'The people of the North of England are indeed fortunate in the quality of life they can enjoy.'

Some enjoy better than others. There is the example of former deputy leader of the Labour Party, Ted Short, who now carries the title of Lord Glenamara. Short continues to do well out of Newcastle, where he was an MP. He is now chairperson of the North of England Development Council.

Meanwhile Short's old friend, the ricketeer T. Dan Smith, is now out of jail and said to be building a movement for ex-prisoners. He has boasted: 'I want to build this organisation to get cons jobs. I've got lots of contacts.'

Raw material for fascists

THE DEPRESSED state of the North-east, added to the right wing nature of the declining Labour Party in Newcastle, has had a number of unpleasant consequences. Most disturbing is the growth of fascist activity in the area.

Within the past few months, black people have been beaten up in the Wallsend district of the city, and recently the local headquarters of the Socialist

Workers Party was fire-bombed.

In the Heaton area, two Asian-owned shops have been subjected to repeated window breakings, while the favourite target is Newcastle's Socialist Centre, which has been physically attacked at least six times.

Newcastle Trades Council has mounted a campaign against fascism and racism in response to these attacks.

were only concerned with getting Drax. Now we've got Drax and the company's attempting to have a go at us'.

UNDERSTANDABLE

The willingness of Parsons' workers to do all they could to save jobs — including co-operating with management — is understandable. So too is one aspect of the Swan Hunter controversy which did little credit to the trade union movement: the stubbornness shown by the boiler-makers to maintain their differentials over their fellow craft workers.

But the consequences of such actions need stating: there is no long term security at Parsons; the Labour Government was able to use the competition between boiler-makers and outfitters to try and defeat an overtime ban, the objectives of which were simply to win what other outfitters have won elsewhere.

ACROSS COMPANY

The need in Tyneside today is rather in the direction of the across-company shop stewards campaign against unemployment, which briefly surfaced during the Parsons controversy. There is also the example of the Power Engineering Industry Trade Union Committee, which seeks to break down the type of Parsons workers versus GEC workers mentality that undoubtedly existed during the

capitalism ceased long ago to have anything to offer working people on Tyneside. As Bob Davis, a former member of the Community Development Project, says: 'Within the limits of reformism you can't do a lot'.

The long dole queues in Newcastle and Sunderland emphasise the point. Every gimmick has been tried:

The price of the Polish order

AN ASPECT of the Polish ships order which wasn't splashed on the front pages of the national press concerns the document shop stewards at other yards had to sign before the order was placed in their yards.

The first clause pledged the union to 'give our fullest co-operation to ensure that the delivery dates and productivity man/hour targets laid down in the contract was met or improved on'.

This represented a thinly disguised commitment to step up productivity, with no money in return.

The aim of the second clause wasn't disguised at all. It pledged the workers to 'accept and adhere to the Government's current guidelines on pay policy, including in particular the 12-month rule'.

Tony Carty, secretary of the boiler-makers branch in a

Sunderland yard, observes: 'We were never asked to sign such an agreement when shipbuilding was in private hands'.

Carty's personal view of the outfitters stand at the nearby Swan and Hunter yard was one of support. Indeed workers at his yard refused to handle the Polish order. Carty explains: 'We took exception to the way the outfitters were vilified. We knew they were being paid less than outfitters in Sunderland'.

The solidarity shown in Sunderland was not displayed elsewhere. In particular, Glasgow shipyard workers voted to work on the contract taken away from Swan and Hunter. Dave Hanson, leader of the Newcastle outfitters is particularly angry about Glasgow's attitude: 'When the Upper Clyde were out we all reached into our pockets, I feel let down'.

Centring on socialism

A FOCAL point for socialist activity and discussion in Newcastle is the Tyneside Socialist Centre at 233/5 Jesmond Road, Newcastle 2.

Established in December 1975, the centre has attracted wide support from shop steward committees and left groups. One of its most recent activities was organising literature and posters for the FBUI solidarity march last month. Regular meetings held at

the centre have attracted a wide range of speakers, including Ralph Miliband, Bernadette McAliskey, Edmund Baluka, Jan Kavan, Philip Agee, and Kamlesh Gandhi of the Grunwick strike committee.

The Tyneside Socialist Centre is governed by general meetings of its supporters, which are held monthly and take decisions on the organisation's general political direction.

(Development and Improvement); during the 1940s it was meant to have benefitted from Industrial Development Certificates; in 1960 it was designated a 'Development District'; in 1966 a 'Development Area'; 1967 'Special Development Area', and in 1972 'Intermediate Area'.

Which would all be very impressive if it were not for the fact that unemployment today in the Tyne stands at 9.6 per cent; in the Wear district at 13.6; on Teeside at 8.8, and in South-west Durham at 9.0 per cent.

Last month, the Labour

traditional industries in the North-east — shipbuilding, mining, and heavy engineering.

BRIGHT IDEA

To take just one example of this decline. At the end of the First World War the old Armstrong company employed some 20,000 workers in its giant engineering works at Elswick and Scotswood in west Newcastle. The figure dropped to 18,000 in 1939, but today the same conglomerate, now under the name of Vickers

FBU and TUC

'Fight on with new leaders'

Socialist Challenge went to press before the results of the FBU delegate conference were known. The indications were that the vote to continue the strike would be very close, and the areas in the forefront of the struggle — such as London and Glasgow — would decisively reject the executive's recommendation of surrender. Whatever the outcome of the vote the FBU strike, argues RICH PALSER has many lessons for the trade union movement as a whole.

The FBU strike is the first official national strike in the union's history. In demanding the average industrial wage, plus 10 per cent for danger money, rank and file members of the FBU who voted to go on strike knew from the start they were taking on the Government. There was less certainty about the role of the TUC. After all the Congress in September had voted for 'an immediate return to free collective bargaining' and had rejected pleas by the Government to accept a 10 per cent limit.

unions, and was finally confirmed by his recommendation to return.

The attitude of both the majority in the TUC general council and that in the FBU executive has been the main stumbling block to a quick successful strike. When Hampshire members of the FBU voted to support a return to work its chairperson, Tom Garland was quoted as saying, 'The men are very dissatisfied with the offer... but they can see no alternative but to accept it'. A fighting campaign led by the FBU executive and supported by the general council would have provided such an alternative.

But an alternative is still there. One aspect of it is summed up in a placard waved as the Scottish executive were meeting to vote against acceptance — 'We fight on with new leaders'.

DECISIONS

Eventually these decisions meant nothing to the majority of the TUC's general council who on 21 December voted by 20 to 17 against the strike. Their collaboration with the Government's incomes policy illustrated by the acceptance of the 12 month rule, proved the crucial factor. Last Monday, just to ram the point home TUC general secretary Len Murray publicly called for the strikers to go back. For him the terms of surrender endorsed by the FBU executive 'are very substantial advances'.

It is an indication of the standing of Len Murray among rank and file members of the FBU that his intervention probably hardened the opposition to surrender. 'Substantial advances' for Murray can be translated into the scrapping of cow dung for rank and file trade unionists.

ADVICE

Neither is it likely that the advice of Terry Parry to accept the offer will be treated very seriously. Parry's opposition to the strike was there at the start, was shown throughout by his inaction to campaign for support among other trade

TESTED

Those who occasionally pose as a potential leadership should be tested. The 17 members of the general council who voted to support the strike should take up the campaign for an immediate recall of the TUC. More decisively they should also commit their own unions to backing any group of workers that takes up the call of the September Congress and strike for 'an immediate return to free collective bargaining'. This means both financial assistance, and ultimately solidarity strike action.

As for the FBU, it is beyond doubt that its executive no longer reflects the wishes of its membership. Even if the delegate conference accepts the offer, it will do so by nothing like the 13-3 majority by which the executive vote to accept.

Whatever the outcome of the delegate conference — and it should be noted that the vote of the 7,000 part time firemen who have scabbed on the strike could be decisive — a major issue

will remain. That issue centres on the leadership of the TUC and FBU, who have ignored the democratically arrived at decisions of the trade union movement, with the same enthusiasm as they have scabbed on the strike. A major campaign for the

removal of these is now the immediate need. That way Callaghan's talk of a new round of incomes policy with a five per cent limit can be reduced to a pipe dream. A defeat now for the 10 per cent limit can even stop pipe dreams.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Liverpool conference

The Liverpool FBU solidarity conference — including a day of action on 16 January and an emergency TUC — mapped out steps in the right direction. But the resolution finally adopted would have had more teeth if Communist Party delegates had not been successful in arguing against the call for strike action on the day.

CP delegates went for a lobby of parliament instead of strike action because of a 'change in the situation'. This 'change' was nothing more than Thursday's FBU Conference. But in the days leading up to such a conference, the need is to step up activity, rather than retreat. Policies for winning the strike cannot be made by starting from the possible outcome of a future conference.

The CP-led LCDTU has opted for a similar course of retreat and inactivity. Called first to discuss unemployment in February — despite the central concerns of the workers' movement around the

Government's pay policy — the LCDTU has now been postponed until March, in the midst of a strike of national political importance.

Conference also heard arguments from the Workers' Revolutionary Party delegates in support of a resolution to bring down the Labour Government — and rejected them for the madness they represent. But delegates accepted an amendment put by Buckinghamshire's FBU for other sections of workers — chiefly power workers and the TGWU tanker drivers to take action now on their own pay demands.

Alan Thornett of the Workers Socialist League supported this call, but his insistence that such action was counter-posed to the day of action was correctly rejected by conference. Steps proposed by Socialist Challenge supporters who were delegates, for a campaign of boycotts against emergency fire services by workers, was carried.

Media bias protest

IN EDINBURGH 100 FBU strikers besieged the BBC studios, to protest against the BBC's 'biased and misleading' coverage of the dispute. The strikers carried placards reading: 'Nationwide support the Armywide', and 'The BBC and press must support the true facts'.

They said the worst offender was Nationwide with its 'Firewatch' feature that concentrated on the heroics of military and ignored the FBU. Firefighters also complained that the BBC had given extensive coverage to 200 union members in Leicester who favoured calling off the strike, but ignored a rally of 6,000 in

Glasgow which was solidly behind the strike.

The Edinburgh strikers did not let ITV or the press off the hook, however. Bruce Holland, for the strike committee said, 'To begin with, we were glad that they didn't blame the firemen for deaths in fires, but now they are covering up the fact that people are dying because we haven't been paid'.

This kind of action in Edinburgh was taken by FBU members independent of their leaders. 'It was an initiative from the membership,' said Bruce Holland, 'we'll tell the executive later'.

What's Left

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

NATIONAL Socialist Feminist conference 28/9 Jan. Manchester. For details of venue, papers, transport, etc London women please contact Karen Margolis, 85 Regent's Park Rd, NW1 (722-9621).

'FIRST OF MAY', Edinburgh is a left meeting place and bookshop at 45 Niddry St 031-557 1348. Open 12 noon to 7pm Mon-Sat (5pm Sat). We have an excellent range of books and periodicals. We welcome all visitors.

MALE or female to share large flat with non-sectarian IMG comrades. Rent £24pm. Phone Dan, Dave or Rex on 801 0173 (Totterham).



NEW anti-fascist badge, produced by the Socialist Students' Alliance. Black on white. 15p each, or £1 for 10, plus 10p p.p. Order to SSA, c/o The Other Bookshop, 32B Upper Street, London N1 2XQ.

GAYS for Socialism — Yes! the badge you've all been waiting for. 3 colours, with two lavender moles! 20p + 7p p.p., or 15p for 10 or more post free. From Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1. Cheques/postal orders to 'The Week'.

Revolutionary Communist Tendency new pamphlet **Under a National Flag — Racism, Fascism and the Labour Movement**. Send orders to: BM RCT (SC), London WC1V 6XX. Cheques and postal orders to RCT Association. 30p (+12p post).

SINN Feb Bloody Sunday march. Assemble 2pm, Sunday, 29 January, Speakers' Corner. March to Whitehall. All banners welcome.

LEON ROSSELSON, socialist musician and song writer, performs at the opening night of the Brixton Socialist Centre, 8pm, Friday, 13 January. At The Canterbury, Canterbury Crescent, behind Brixton police station. Entrance 50p.

REGIONAL meeting of Socialist Teachers, Sat 21 Jan, 11-5, Sheffield University Students Union (Graves Cinema). Registration 10.30am (50p). Sessions on Role of School in Society and How to Change Schools. Organized by Sheffield Teachers Action Group. More information from Len Solinger, 142 Hunter House Road, Sheffield 11.

SOLIDARITY with Latin American women. Cuban film *Lucía* plus discussion. Fri 13 Jan, 7.30pm. Old Theatre, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2.

INTERNATIONAL Socialists and Revolutionary Unity Conference sponsored by ex-IS/SWP activists. Sessions on IS tradition, political situation, revolutionary unity. Africa Centre, King Street, London WC2. Details and registration (£1 includes documents in advance) from Martin Shaw, 67 Salisbury Street, Hull.

SOCIALIST FEMINIST Educationals: a series of theoretical discussions for women. First meeting *Women and the Economic Crisis*, 14 Jan, 10.30-4.30, at St Anne's Hall, Venn Street, Clapham, SW4 (one minute Clapham Common Tube). Creche. For further information ring 720 7316.

CRADLEWELL Books, bookshop of the Tyneside Socialist Centre, requires two full time workers. Commitment to socialist politics essential. Bookshop experience useful but not essential. £50 a week for 40 hours. Apply for application form to The Secretary, Tyneside Socialist Centre, 233 Jesmond Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne. Closing date for applications, Sat 28 Jan.

NORTH LONDON Gay Socialists. Public meeting for the National Gay News Defence Committee, 23 Jan, 7.30pm at Holloway Library, Holloway Road. (Holloway Road or Highbury and Islington tube). Quash the Gay News convictions! Stop the backlash!

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Tendency public meeting: Fascism, Racism and the Labour Movement. Speaker: Frank Richards. Fri 20 Jan, 7.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. (Holborn tube). Admission 20p.

POGO for your rights at the National Abortion Campaign benefit with X-Ray Spex, Sadista Sisters, Black Sluts, Dead Fingers. Talk and disco. The Houndhouse (Chalk Farm tube), Sun 15 Jan from 5.30pm. £1.50 from box office (01-267 2564).

MANCHESTER LABOUR Party meeting on 'Socialism and Liberty'. Speakers: Peter Hain and Geoff Hodgson. Fri 20 Jan, Withington Town Hall, Lapwing Lane. Everyone welcome.

PICKET DANISH Embassy, 19 Jan, 12-2pm at 29 Port Street, London SW1. To demonstrate against Danish Government's plan to evict 1,000 squatters from the island of Christians. Organised by London squatters union, 560 0855.

FIGHTBACK Conference in Defence of the NHS. Sat 18 Feb 10-5, Central Hall, Westminster SW1. For details, credentials, etc contact Fightback Conference, c/o Occupation Committee, Hounslow Hospital, Staines Road, Hounslow, Middx. (01-570 4448).

WALES WOMENS Liberation Conference 14-15 Jan. Splott Youth Centre, Sanguhar, Cardiff. Workshops, social, food, etc. Registration £1, 50p for claimants. Inquiries Cardiff 499 769.

BOOKMARX CLUB

Book club for socialists. Selections for first quarter 1978.

Lot A *Conquered City*
Victor Serge
No Mean Fighter
Harry McShane
Ford Antireport
CLS
The Locked Room
Spiegel & Walter
Muller
John Prebble

Lot B *Unemployed Struggles*
w/1 Hamming

Lot C *Selected writings*
Alexandra Kollontai

Send £4.50 to receive Lot A plus one other lot. 12.50 preference! £2.25 each for additional lots.

Details: Bookmarx Club
Bookmarks
265 Seven Sisters Road
London N4

Leyland to sack 30,000

Speke strike 'not a one-off affair'

Over last weekend the news leaked out that British Leyland's new boss Michael Edwardes is planning to sack up to 30,000 workers in the next 18 months. This represents one quarter of all Leyland's workforce and is the biggest threat so far to the future of carworkers in this country.

Edwardes has already threatened the Standard Triumph Speke plant in Liverpool with closure. But the threat is seen as a bluff by the shop stewards committee at the number two plant — an attempt to smash the current strike at Speke over manning levels. TOMMY HEALEY, former deputy convenor at Standard Triumph Speke, outlines what is at stake in the present strike.

Since last March, Leyland management in Speke have been trying to push the line speed up from 14½ cars per hour to 17½ cars. During the two month strike, it is estimated that 400 workers have left Speke to take other jobs. Many stewards say that because these workers have left there is no way the line speeds could now run at 17½ cars per hour, which certainly proves that British Leyland mean to crush the strike — and mutuality agreements as well.

COMPONENT LACK

Speke plant workers, now in the second month of their strike, came back to work in November after a six-week layoff, caused by a lack of components due to the Lucas toolroom workers' strike. Within one hour of returning, 750 production workers walked out when management tried to up the score to 17 cars per hour.

A section of the shop stewards' committee wanted to occupy the factory but senior stewards swayed the vote

against this. What took place instead was a picket at the gates. The picket was made up only of shop stewards, and did not involve the rank and file.

When a mass meeting was called, it voted to continue the strike. But full-time trade union officials in the transport workers' and engineering workers' unions had been bending over backwards to sell it out by making deals with management, to agree to the new manning levels.

The shop stewards' committee turned down the sell-out and was supported by the automotive section of the TGWU. Talks with ACAS are now in session (remember Grunwicks?) and Labour MPs on Merseyside have made fine speeches. But words won't thwart Leyland's first real attack on manning.

WHIZ KID

The British Leyland attack on manning has started. The plan to cut manning levels throughout the British Leyland Combine has long been promised by the Leyland

executive. Now, with whiz kid Michael Edwardes at the head, it has chosen Speke, which produces the TR7 sports model, as a first nut to crack.

ONE-CAR PLANT

Speke was chosen for a number of reasons: it is a one-car plant producing the TR7 (but the number one plant does produce the body for the Dolomite which is finished at Canley in Coventry). The TR7 is not the big seller which Leyland hoped for, so Speke's TR7 is not a large volume car like the Mini or Allegro. Another reason is that the workers at Speke have been weakened by lay-offs, with many having had only one week's work since August.

The workers at Speke are also one of the few plants who voted overwhelmingly against the Leyland plan for corporate bargaining. This was made known when Leyland were given all plant-by-plant ballot results by the Electoral Reform Society. But the breakdown of the ballot results was never given to the Combine committee or the trade union officials.

So this is no one-off strike: it is a ruthless campaign by Leyland to rip up existing agreements throughout the combine on manning. If Speke is defeated, Coventry, Oxford or Longbridge will be next.

Every trick is being used by the Leyland management to smash the strike, including threatening closure. The dirty tricks department has been putting out leaflets with 100 alleged signatures. The 100 scabs who want to break the strike could have an effect

unless the shop stewards committee call more mass meetings which involve the rank and file, instead of playing the wait and see tactic.

If the workers at Speke win the strike it would put back the plan to smash manning levels and close down other plants. To win this strike, they must get the support of other Leyland factories. The workers at these factories must have full information on what is happening at Speke. It must not be left to the likes of Eddy McGarry (TGWU convenor at Coventry) who waits like a vulture to see if Speke will close.

The strike at Speke can be won if the action is spread throughout the combine, and Speke workers have to spread the action. Now that Leyland executive say they will close the plant, it is vital for the shop stewards committee to spread the action.

Michael Edwardes and Company sit in Berkeley Square in London. They have the full backing of the Labour Government for the plans for manning cuts, redundancies, and closures. But 6,000 workers make a mighty flying picket — to Coventry, Oxford, Longbridge — or London.



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (JFL)

Abortion campaign on the offensive

by JUDY WATSON

THE National Abortion Campaign mapped out plans at its national meeting in Sheffield last weekend to go on the offensive in light of the failure of the anti-abortionists to come up with a restrictive bill this parliamentary session. Top of the list is support for a nationally co-ordinated campaign for day care abortion facilities in every locality, as well as plans to draw together

ideas on positive legislation.

Outpatient abortion facilities could provide safe and quick abortions on the NHS. In most areas facilities for abortion are totally inadequate. Plans for future clinics have been shelved, thanks to cuts in NHS spending. And where clinics

exist, doctors' anti-abortion attitudes make certain that their full potential is never reached. The campaign hopes to work closely with local cuts committees, trade unionists, women's groups and student organisations.

A special student sub-committee has been established and the Trade Union Liaison Committee proposes to organise with other pro-choice groups an all-trade union conference in the autumn. In the spring, a national conference on positive legislation will discuss the implications of NAC's demand for a woman's right to choose — what it entails in theory and practice, and why it is a necessary demand in the fight of women to determine their own sexuality.

ABORTION CHARTER

To lay the basis for further activities — and possible legislation — NAC hopes to draw up an Abortion Charter. The campaign is also considering the possibility of using government and council elections to raise and extend the discussion on its aims.

Grunwick strikes on

AT A STRIKE Committee meeting last Friday, the Grunwick strikers decided to use the provisions of the Employment Protection Act to seek union recognition. They accepted a proposal from APEX General Secretary, Roy Grantham, who attended the meeting, to ask ACAS to hold another ballot — this time with greater efforts to seek the opinion of

strike-breakers still working, following the ruling of the Court of Appeal.

A mass meeting of all the strikers which followed was solidly in favour of continuing the strike. The decision of the strikers is a victory for the APEX leaders, who have all along campaigned for resolving the dispute through the courts. Grantham and Co. have fought against the mass action on the picket line and the building up of action to cut off services to George Ward which were capable of

winning the strike. As long ago as last August, Grantham said 'There can never be a victory — a draw is the best result'.

The APEX bureaucrats pursued this line with vigour to regain control after the summer. They have sent a full-time official to attend every meeting of the Strike Committee. They got control over the Strike Committee's funds by making it compulsory for an official to countersign the strike fund's cheques. And they were ably assisted by Tom Jackson and the postal workers' union executive who inflicted heavy fines on members of its London District Council for supporting the blacking of Grunwick mail over the summer. John Taylor, the London District organiser was fined £500 — a total of £1,400 were meted out in fines.

The APEX leaders favour continuing the strike because they want to reverse the legal losses suffered by ACAS. George Ward has not only exposed their inability to win recognition and reinstatement at Grunwick but has thrown into question the whole strategy embodied in the Employment Protection Act for all similar industrial disputes. The decision to continue the strike is a correct one. But the APEX leaders' reliance on the courts will lead only to demoralisation and defeat. The Strike Committee must think again.

by JONATHAN SILBERMAN

No 'free press'

WORKERS at the Leicester Mercury offices were leafleted by demonstrators from a 100-strong march last Saturday, to protest the paper's refusal to advertise Gayline — a telephone service run by gay people for gay people in the city.

The Mercury didn't stop with its refusal to advertise. The editor explained his reactionary views in an editorial. Making the obligatory attack on paedophiles, the editorial labelled gays as 'perverted' and claimed that Gayline's activities are not 'a proper subject to set before readers in the family home'.

Mercury readers are advised to wistfully recall a time 'when people who practiced unnatural vices did so in secret, or at least with some discretion'. The message for those 'with a deviant problem' is to go to a doctor or psychiatrist. But gay

by JAMIE GOUGH

people don't need the 'help' of the medical profession, we need the solidarity of other gay people!

Gayline supporters are taking this case to the Press Council and have already won the backing of the Leicestershire National Union of Journalists, as well as the NUJ chapel at the Mercury. The Mercury editorial management should be forced to implement the union's policy of no discrimination on the grounds of sexuality, and give space to Gayline for a reply. To date, the paper's editor has not only refused the right of reply, but has cut off all correspondence on the subject.

Leicester Gayline operates from 7.30-10pm, Leicester 826200.

Ford worker victimised

by STEVE HARPER

ON 4 January the management of Ford Dagenham stamping and body plant issued a company bulletin. It stated: 'This afternoon an employee was advised that he was to be dismissed for misconduct, that he sabotaged a Fiesta underbody and urinated in an air duct.'

ANGRY REACTION

The worker in question is Tom Birmingham, a General and Municipal Workers Union shop steward, and a member of the Socialist Workers Party. The attempts by management to smear and sack Birmingham have raised an angry reaction among shop stewards in Dagenham.

OWNED UP

One department's shop committee's bulletin has accused the company of moving 'towards the same situation as 1962 when in the paint, trim and assembly plant 17 shop stewards were sacked'.

The workers' anger at the attempted sacking is well



Maureen Colquhoun, Labour MP for Northampton North, last week won her appeal against the decision of her constituency party to drop her as their MP. The special Labour Party national executive enquiry ruled that the sacking of Colquhoun was invalid on 'procedural grounds'.

It argued that when the original motion demanding Colquhoun's sacking was moved in the Park Ward the MP had not been given prior notice of it, and this was against 'natural justice'.

The technical nature of this judgement conveniently avoided both the disgusting anti-lesbian campaign conducted against Colquhoun and her own remarks in support of racist statements from Enoch Powell.

Socialist Challenge

AS PART of the debate that has been launched on *Socialist Challenge*, we are publishing this questionnaire which will enable you to comment on *Socialist Challenge*; on what you think is good or bad, and how the paper can be improved.

The questionnaire can be completed by individuals or *Socialist Challenge* groups. We would urge all our readers to be involved in a group, which are now located in the towns listed here.

If you would like to be put in touch with your local group, or to initiate one if there is none in your area, write to: Socialist Challenge Group Information, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Or phone 01-359 8371.

Please complete the questions below. Replies can be included on separate sheets. Return to: Socialist Challenge Questionnaire, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

- Which town are you living in?
- Are you a member of a trade union or student union. Which?
- Are you active in any campaigning organisation or movement, such as the National Abortion Campaign, Anti-Apartheid Movement? If so, specify:
- Are you presently a member of a political party or group. If so, which:
- Have you previously been a member of a political group or party? If so, which?
- How long have you been reading *Socialist Challenge*?
- How did you come across *Socialist Challenge*?
- Did you previously read *Red Weekly*, the forerunner of *Socialist Challenge* or any other left wing paper?

- Which daily paper or other journals do you regularly read?
- Are you involved in your local Socialist Challenge Group?
- If there is no Socialist Challenge Group in your town, would you be prepared to help set one up?
- What in your opinion are the good aspects of the paper?
- What do you consider are the weakest aspects of the paper?
- How could the paper's design and presentation be improved?
- Do you read all the articles in *Socialist Challenge* or do you only read certain sections?
- Where do you buy your copy of *Socialist Challenge*?
- Would you be prepared to help sell *Socialist Challenge*?
- Other comments
- Name and address Please state 'not for publication' if this is required.

There are Socialist Challenge Groups or supporters of the paper in the following towns and cities. Scotland: Aberdeen, Dundee, Falkirk, Hamilton, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, Thurso. North East: Durham, Darlington, Middlesbrough, Newcastle. Yorkshire: Bradford, Hebden Bridge, Huddersfield, Hull, Sheffield, Leeds, York. South West: Bristol, Bath, Swindon, Exeter, Plymouth. Wales: Cardiff, Newport, Swansea. West Midlands: Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Leamington Spa, Worcester, Stafford, Stoke. East Midlands: Nottingham, Leicester, Northampton,

Derby. North West: Manchester, Bolton, Leigh, Bury, Warrington, Wigan, Liverpool, Birkenhead, Preston, Lancaster, Burnley, Nelson. South East: Brighton, Crawley, Canterbury, Portsmouth, Southampton, Guildford, Woking. London: Greenwich/Lewisham, Camden, Southall, Brent, Wandsworth, Haringey, Harrow, Hammersmith, Home Counties: Oxford, Reading, Basingstoke, Hemel Hempstead, Watford, Bedford. East Anglia: Norwich, Colchester, Cambridge.

Sponsor a journalist

Since *Socialist Challenge* was launched last June, it has been produced by an editorial team of just five journalists. That has inevitably meant long days and nights. But more importantly, we have not had the human resources to carry through the full editorial coverage and projects that we would like.

Except on a few occasions, we have not been able to send out a reporter from London to do, for example, the kind of regional profile that appears this week on Newcastle. It has also been extremely difficult to devote the time necessary for full-scale investigation articles, such as our expose of Magistrate Oakley and Willesden court.

On the production side, we consider that more needs to be done to improve the presentation and readability of the paper, which includes more

effective sub-editing of articles.

These are among the reasons we are now anxious to employ an additional journalist. Interviews have already taken place, and we would like the selected woman comrade to join the staff as soon as possible. But, as our readers will appreciate, we have major financial problems. That is why we are launching the Sponsor a Journalist campaign.

To aid us in expanding the team, the target is £1500 a year, which can be realised through bankers orders of £125 a month. If you are able to make a regular monthly donation — anything from £1 up individually or through a group — then please complete the form below. You will be helping in a direct way to strengthen *Socialist Challenge*.

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COMMENT

Who are our readers?

I WOULD agree with many of Big Flame's points about the content of *Socialist Challenge*. As a committed revolutionary, on reading issue 24, I can find no motivation to read either 'Under Review' or 'Surplus Value'. On other occasions, the latter has featured some interesting articles — like the recent one on Irish Republicanism. The cutting of 'Under Review' would allow an extra half page for letters, which were actually better in the old *Red Weekly*.

The limited space in 'Comment' appears to give the editorial board the excuse not to reply to direct criticisms and questions. In fact the failure of the paper to make any response to criticism is one of its most irritating features.

What about the excellent suggestions some weeks ago that the paper should run regular articles exploding

bourgeois economic and political myths. The author of this suggestion might just as well have torn his letter up and thrown it in the bin for all the response it elicited. The other half of the 'Under Review' page could fulfill this role.

Similarly, on the production side, acres of small print, which are frequently actually difficult to read, mean that large tracts of paper are actually wasted. It would be better to be more concise and more readable. Likewise, some of the photomontages actually look more like 'accidents'. The comment that at the price of 15p, *Socialist Challenge* was as good value as *The Guardian* (or words to that effect) tells us almost as much about the editors' conception of the paper as it does about their attitude to pricing. How many working class militants buy *The Guardian*? There is

certainly plenty of room for improvements in content and production.

Does this mean that Big Flame's analysis of the reasons for these problems is accurate? When the project of *Socialist Challenge* was launched, it was done according to a specific analysis of the present conjuncture, and with specific tasks in mind — the fight for revolutionary regroupment and the fight to create a class struggle left wing. As part of this, the IMG realistically appraised its strengths and weaknesses, the stage of development of itself and other revolutionary groups, and assessed the likely areas of readership a new paper could hope to reach. We had no illusions that it could become a mass paper overnight.

If the great majority of the

most advanced and conscious sections of the working class do not yet support and relate to the revolutionary left, can we expect to bypass them and reach straight out to the broad masses? The response of the IMG would in general be that we could not. So the political content of the paper is based on a realistic assessment of the state we are in at.

As for the counterposition of unity in action vs. debates on programme, Big Flame's letter contains the answer itself on this question. The development of a network of local *Socialist Challenge* groups, the convening of a national conference along the lines suggested, the drawing up of a common revolutionary programme as the political basis for common activity, all offer a way forward for growth and regroupment. In the longer run, such progress must lead to the development of a properly democratic centralist organisation.

Having said this, we should be prepared to reconsider the immediate aims of *Socialist Challenge* and perhaps re-appraise the sort of readership we are aiming at. I feel that the changes suggested above would not only improve the paper in an abstract way, but actually go some way to popularising it in the manner indicated by Big Flame. As for developing *Socialist Challenge* as a form of organisation that provides the unity in action necessary to lead to regroupment, whilst the support of groups like Big Flame is virtually a precondition for success, success cannot be a precondition for support.

LEWIS EMERY, Bristol

A Trotskyist 'Arts Monthly'

THE Christmas issue of *Socialist Challenge* reflected the strength, but also the serious weaknesses of the paper. Although any attempt to cover issues not normally regarded as 'political' is undoubtedly worthwhile, the Xmas issue failed to do this in an adequately popular form.

Any socialist paper must strike a clear balance between those articles which are of interest and value to experienced militants, and those which are of use to those who have only recently been drawn into socialist politics.

In fact, the interviews with David Hockney and John Fowles were unintelligible, even to those who have been active for a number of years. On top of this, it was difficult to distinguish between articles of a serious nature and those with a satirical content.

These shortcomings emphasise and highlight the serious problems the paper faces, most obviously in cultural coverage. Numerous letters have been published critical of the 'Under Review' page, but have not led to any significant change. The editor-

ial board has to make a clear decision. Should the 'Under Review' page be accessible to the vast majority of the paper's current and potential readership, or only to a small, well-educated minority?

Articles such as the review of 'Coronation Street', other TV reviews and certain film reviews, are examples that need to be followed up. Articles such as the review of the last 25 years of British painting are irrelevant in the way they are at present written. Are the comrades trying to produce a Trotskyist 'Arts Monthly' or a popular political newspaper?

MIKE TUCKER, EDDIE ASH-BEE of Southampton Socialist Challenge Group.

Balance not quite right

TONY HEAL [5 January] seems to have missed the most important criticism that should be made of *Socialist Worker*. This is not that 'some of its content is sectarian and directed solely towards party building', true as that may be, but that its political level is abysmally low.

This is not accidental, but a result of Tony Cliff's idea, imposed on the paper when its first editor Roger Protz was sacked, that the SWP's audience is primarily young workers without political or even trade union experience. SW has therefore to be brash, simple and sensational as possible.

The lack of serious political analysis or discussion in the paper means that it presents little challenge to serious militants of any description, including SWP members, leaving a gap which is hardly filled by the rather irregular *Journal International Socialist*.

Unless the revolutionary movement is able to sustain more than one well-produced weekly paper (and it is obvious that no single organisation or section of the left is in that fortunate position), then any serious paper must actually try to appeal to a number of different audiences. There is a modest 'popular' audience for socialist ideas among workers, women as well as men and black as well as white, who are not involved in organised trade union, let alone political, activity. A paper must be relevant to them.

There is also a sizeable audience of trade union and political activists of some knowledge and experience. A

paper must be relevant to them. And finally there are the members of revolutionary organisations, especially of the one(s) producing the paper. A paper has an important role to play in informing and educating them, too, and providing a means for some sort of discussions.

Maybe it is utopian to think that a single paper can fill the requirements of these very different layers (and others). Certainly *Socialist Challenge* is too uniformly 'heavy' for the first audience, as I am told comrades in one of the Socialist Unity election campaigns found — to that extent Big Flame and Tony Heal are right. But for the second and third audiences *Socialist Challenge* is filling a vital role.

It is true that, even within this framework, there is rather too much of a bias towards 'intellectuals' in the narrow sense. But we should be careful about saying this or that sort of article should not appear, a position which often implies that trade union activists should not be interested in painting, or serious films, or whatever — which is indeed patronising and philistine.

The key question all the time is that of the balance within the paper. This isn't quite right at the moment, but let us not lose our balance altogether in our emulation of *Socialist Worker*. Rather, as Tony Heal and other correspondents have argued, Big Flame and others should now join the paper — with the aim of building on its real achievements.

MARTIN SHAW, (Hull).

The events of recent months in the FBU strike, at Grunwicks, and in the NUM symbolise the turns which have taken place in the class struggle in Britain over the last few years. In 1968-74 a series of mass working class struggles rocked British politics. In the summer of 1975 however the Labour government introduced an incomes policy which was followed by a huge drop in mass trade union struggles. The working class suffered important setbacks on the economic, social and political fields. Wilson was replaced by Callaghan, who proved to be an even tougher and more ruthless ruling class politician. The new upturn of struggle in 1977 suffered some important defeats.

These changes in the political situation saw attempts to explain what was happening. A strategic debate opened up on the left wing of the workers movement in Britain. Socialist Challenge believes that an understanding of what has taken place is a vital task confronting the left today. In the first of two articles on the analyses of the left, JOHN ROSS disputes the explanations given by Eurocommunists and lefts within the Labour Party for the defeats of the last period, and the perspectives which they offer.

IN ORDER to understand the impact of the events of 1975-77 on all classes and layers of society in Britain it is necessary to go back four years in time. When, in the winter of 1973-74 the miners brought down the Heath government they provided the British working class with its most important victory since the Second World War. It came in the wake of six years of mass working class struggles, of a kind not seen in this country since the early Twenties.

As a result, not merely the left, but virtually every major force in society expected this victory to be followed, perhaps after an initial lull, by an escalation of the class struggle which would lead to further working class victories.

They noticed not just that Heath had been defeated by an important trade union struggle, but also that the Tory Party in February 1974 lost a major proportion of its working class votes — votes which are vital for any governmental party in a society as heavily proletarianised as Britain. The Tory proportion of the vote was the lowest this century. Furthermore the implications of the rise of Scottish nationalism for the unity of the British state, especially given the fact that the Scottish National Party had replaced the Tories as the most dynamic party of the bourgeoisie in Scotland, were well understood by the ruling class.

An important section of the ruling class felt that major political and constitutional changes were necessary to control the situation. The Tory Party manifesto for the October 1974 election raised the question of a peacetime coalition government for the first time since 1931. There was talk of proportional representation. Devolution became an issue of some importance and ruling class journalists prepared their class for major changes in British politics.

All this from one angle might have seemed a somewhat exaggerated, if not hysterical response, to the overall situation. After all the return of a Labour government was hardly a new experience for the captains of industry. They knew that in the Labour leaders they had loyal and tested defenders of the system. The real reason for their consternation was not the Labour government. It was their fear that the relationship between the Labour government and the mass working class movement had shifted decisively in favour of the latter and that

Labour would not be able to effectively police the situation.

In 1968-70 a Labour administration had been forced to withdraw *In Place of Strife* which embodied its anti-trade union proposals. It had been unable to prevent the beginning of the biggest strike wave for 45 years. In 1970-74 the trade union bureaucracy was unable to prevent the major struggles which led to the defeat of the Industrial Relations Act and ultimately brought down the Heath government. The political positions of the most important sections of the bourgeoisie following winter 1973-74 were based on the evaluation that the Labour bureaucracy would not be able to prevent the masses launching further major class struggles of the type of 1968-74.

In that situation some different, more powerful political formula would have to be found. A National Government would concentrate all political forces against the working class. Proportional representation would hopefully prevent Labour ever gaining a majority again. It meant, at the very least, that the Tories had to be supported against Labour not merely in February 1974, when it appeared possible they could win, but also in October 1974 when it was obvious that they would lose.

THE LEFT

This appreciation of the relations between the masses and the Labour government was shared not merely by the ruling class, but by most of the left wing of the workers movement. It was almost universally anticipated that the working class would again move into struggle and gain victories. The only major difference was on what form this new advance would take.

The Labour left and Communist Party saw moves forward being inaugurated by the reformist left. The revolutionaries expected a collision with the Labour government that would sap the illusions in the Labour bureaucracy held by sections of the working class.

In the event neither the perspectives of the ruling class nor of any section of the left were realised. After allowing some limited economic concessions in its first months in office the Labour government moved, in the summer of 1975, to introduce incomes policy and austerity

measures. This in itself didn't surprise anyone as the ruling class had urged it and the left predicted it.

What was dramatic and unexpected however was that the huge attack on the working class launched by the labour bureaucracy met not mass resistance, even after an initial lull, but on the contrary led to a major downturn in mass struggles. The 12½ per cent cut in real wages in two years — the most rapid decline in living standards for a century; the doubling of unemployment; the savage cuts in the welfare state; a series of attacks on trade union and democratic rights were met, not with a mass fightback, but by a fall in the number of days lost in strikes in 1976 to the lowest level for ten years.

Furthermore there were other disturbing symptoms. The growth of electoral support for fascists and racists, the fall in mobilisations on major international questions such as southern Africa and Ireland to levels far lower than even two or three years previously, not to mention 1968; the stagnation of the revolutionary left and the decline of left reformism.

BALDWIN WITH NORTH SEA OIL

For the ruling class of course it was relatively easy to respond to this new situation. If, contrary to expectations, the Labour bureaucracy could control the masses then support should be shifted to the Wilson and Callaghan governments. Whereas in 1974 there was talk of how to change the electoral system to prevent Labour ever getting a majority again, by 1977 Peter Walker anticipated the fullsome new year tributes to Callaghan which filled the bourgeois media by characterising him as 'Baldwin with North Sea Oil'.

By the end of 1977 some important working class struggles had taken place — the toolmakers' strike, Grunwicks, the FBU. But, after initial flutters, the bourgeoisie retained its confidence that the bureaucracy had the situation under control and made it clear that they thought Callaghan and the Labour government were the best people to handle the situation.

This unexpected boost for the ruling class was, however, a matter of grave concern for the left. How had the ruling class been able to achieve this unexpected victory? Why hadn't the expectations of the left following the victory over Heath been realised? What could be done in the present situation? These were the issues facing even nominal socialists. They found a pale reflection even on the front page of *Tribune* of 6 January.

THE CENTRISTS

The reformist and centrist left has not been slow in coming forward with its explanations of the situation. Setbacks in the class struggle always produce a host of intellectual apologists, who rush forward to provide sophisticated rationalisations for accommodating to capitalism. The specific form this has assumed in the last period is an attempt by a whole series of reformist and centrist forces — in particular the offshoots of Eurocommunism in Britain (Purdy, Prior, Roberts et al, as well as the official CP leadership), and various forces in the Labour Party left such as Ken Coates, Geoff Hodgson, Peter Jenkins, etc. — to ascribe the setbacks in the class struggle not to the role of the reformists but to allegedly overwhelmingly unfavourable factors of capitalist society.

On the theoretical level the common thrust of this current has been the attempt to demonstrate the supposedly invincible might of bourgeois institutions in general, and bourgeois democracy in particular. Whether it is because soviet power is less democratic than parliaments (Hodgson), because democracy is classless (the CP and various Labour lefts), or simply because the ruling class is overwhelmingly powerful and won't tolerate anything else (Poulantzas), the essential goal of the Eurocommunists and centrists is to establish that it is impossible to successfully challenge the most basic ruling class political institutions.

The left has therefore to give up any idea of the sovereignty of workers' institutions, dual power, or any strategy leading to this goal. The best that can be done is to work to transform ruling class institutions through their own contradictions — although of course a few workers' councils and the like may be able to play a useful role in pushing this process along a bit.

The transition from this overall analysis to explanations of the present situation lies in defining what has been the most essential element in the defeats of the last period. According to the Eurocommunists and centrists what has occurred is not, as the 'insurrectionist, economist Trotskyists' suppose, some sort of 'betrayal' by the labour bureaucracy. On the contrary it is an affirmation of the tremendous power of ruling class institutions.

The working class was unable to go forward, and suffered defeats, because of this bourgeois power — although whether the allegedly decisive role was played by democracy, culture, or general ideology differs from version to version.

The answer in the present situation is to

recognise this power and move sharply to right to link up with other forces who may be partial contradiction with it. Thus for Purdy Prior — and the most consistent Eurocommunists — the important thing to do is give up the ridiculous 'economist struggle against incomes policy, and instead make a deal with progressive sections of capitalism when the working class accepts wage cuts in return for reforms.

For Ken Coates and the Institute of World Control, what should be done is to avoid wages struggle, which 'splits' the workers movement, and instead form a bloc with people such as TUC chairperson David Basnett and other supporters of incomes policy to try to persuade them to make a campaign against unemployment. This will 'unite' rather than 'divide' the working class. For the CP leaders in the student field especially, what is needed is to avoid any alliance with the revolutionary left and instead form a bloc with 'progressive Tories'.

In each case, however, the analysis and answer is the same. The present situation is a still manifestation of the power of ruling class institutions. What needs to be done, therefore, is to scale down activity and get closer to work sections of the bureaucracy — or even to part of the bourgeoisie itself. This entire 'explanation' of the present period is, in reality, both theoretically incoherent and at variance with the elementary facts of the situation.

We will not deal here with the underlying falsity of the theoretical argument concerning nature and power of ruling class institutions. This has been done elsewhere recently in *Socialist Challenge* (see for example, 'A "Third" Road Socialism?' by Dave Bailey in 8 December issue). What we will demonstrate is that this argument neither fits nor explains the recent developments in British politics.

Let us first look at the thesis which stems from the allegedly invincible strength of ruling class institutions, capable of derailing any revolutionary struggle by working class based on forming alternative organs of power. The centrists are wrong to believe that these institutions can never be historically challenged.

At present however they are indeed quite sufficient to derail any move to violent revolution or insurrection. Doubtless if the fighters, presumably propelled by



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES

Grunwick: Bourgeois leaders disagreed on whether to back Ward.



Peter Hain speaks at Labour Party conference Tribune meeting.

Photo: G. M. COOKSON | Socialist Challenge

maintains that the ability of the institutions of the bourgeoisie to hegemonise 'day to day life' has been the real dominant element in this period, even though they do not operate in a 'direct' fashion.

But the exact opposite is nearer the truth. Far from an almighty display of ideological and repressive power of the ruling class, even a struggle initially involving a small group of workers, such as Grunwicks, produced significant problems within the bourgeoisie. Far from a powerful response, bourgeois leaders started openly disagreeing over whether or not to back Ward — the row over the Scarman report revealed this most clearly.

Furthermore, as with the Pentonville Five and the NIRC fine on the AUEW, it wasn't institutions such as the bourgeois courts which

bourgeois press and Tory Party. *It wasn't any tremendous power or action of 'institutions of the ruling class,' but Callaghan stepping in to say 'not an inch' when elements of the bourgeoisie itself wavered. It was Parry and the FBU leadership spinning out their endless negotiations with the employers rather than mobilising passive sympathy into active support, and the TUC stepping in to isolate the FBU that broke up the initial impact of the strike and ensured that a struggle with a chance of victory instead plunged into stagnation.*

The other major struggle of the last period, that within the National Union of Mineworkers, is hardly even necessary to detail. The most elementary facts show up the bankruptcy of centrist 'explanations'. Not even the ruling class believes that its own institutions can step in and

communists and centrists: the role of the labour bureaucracy.

These are not 'academic' questions. Any analysis which explains that the crucial factor in recent defeats was the 'strength of bourgeois institutions' and not the central role played by the TUC and Labour Party leaders, leads inexorably not to looking for ways to attack and weaken the position of the leadership but to moves to the right and giving up any activity frightening to the 'left allies' within the bureaucracy. For the reformists the enemy which has to be encountered and defeated within the working class is not the Labour bureaucracy, but rather the so-called 'ultra-left'.

There is a certain logic in this position because the central leaders of the bureaucracy in recent years have been Scanlon, Jones and Daly, old friends of reformism and centrism, and traditional defenders of left social-democratic perspectives. A break with them is clearly too frightening a perspective.

Thus the claim that the central factor was the 'strength of bourgeois institutions' provided the rationale for the complete absence of any activity in the present period from the CP-controlled

Unions (ICDTU), the virtual disappearance for a prolonged period of the Institute for Workers Control conference, and the abandonment of the call for a campaigning NUS by the CP. The different practical policies advocated by centrists and reformists on the one hand, and by revolutionaries on the other, are thus closely interconnected with how both sides explain the present situation.

But the obvious flaws in the reformist argument should not lead to complacency on the part of the revolutionary left. For merely exposing incorrect arguments is not sufficient. The fact is that the revolutionary left, too, confronts a crisis, which only those who live in the fantasy world of sectarianism can ignore. For unless the revolutionary left can provide answers to the present situation and evolve a strategy capable of linking it to the masses, its own crisis will continue apace.

Next week Socialist Challenge will be printing the second part of this article which takes up the crisis facing the revolutionary left and the tasks posed for revolutionaries today.

were determining the situation, but on the contrary, the judiciary carefully followed every twist of the struggle before determining its policy. Indeed what the Scarman report and bourgeois policy in the summer confirmed was that following the mass demonstration of 11 July, Ward and his supporters could have been defeated by further workers' mobilisations. *What allowed the defeats of the late summer at Grunwicks wasn't the huge power of ruling class institutions but the fact that Grantham and Jackson stepped in smartly to put an end both to the mass pickets and post-office blacking which were winning the struggle.*

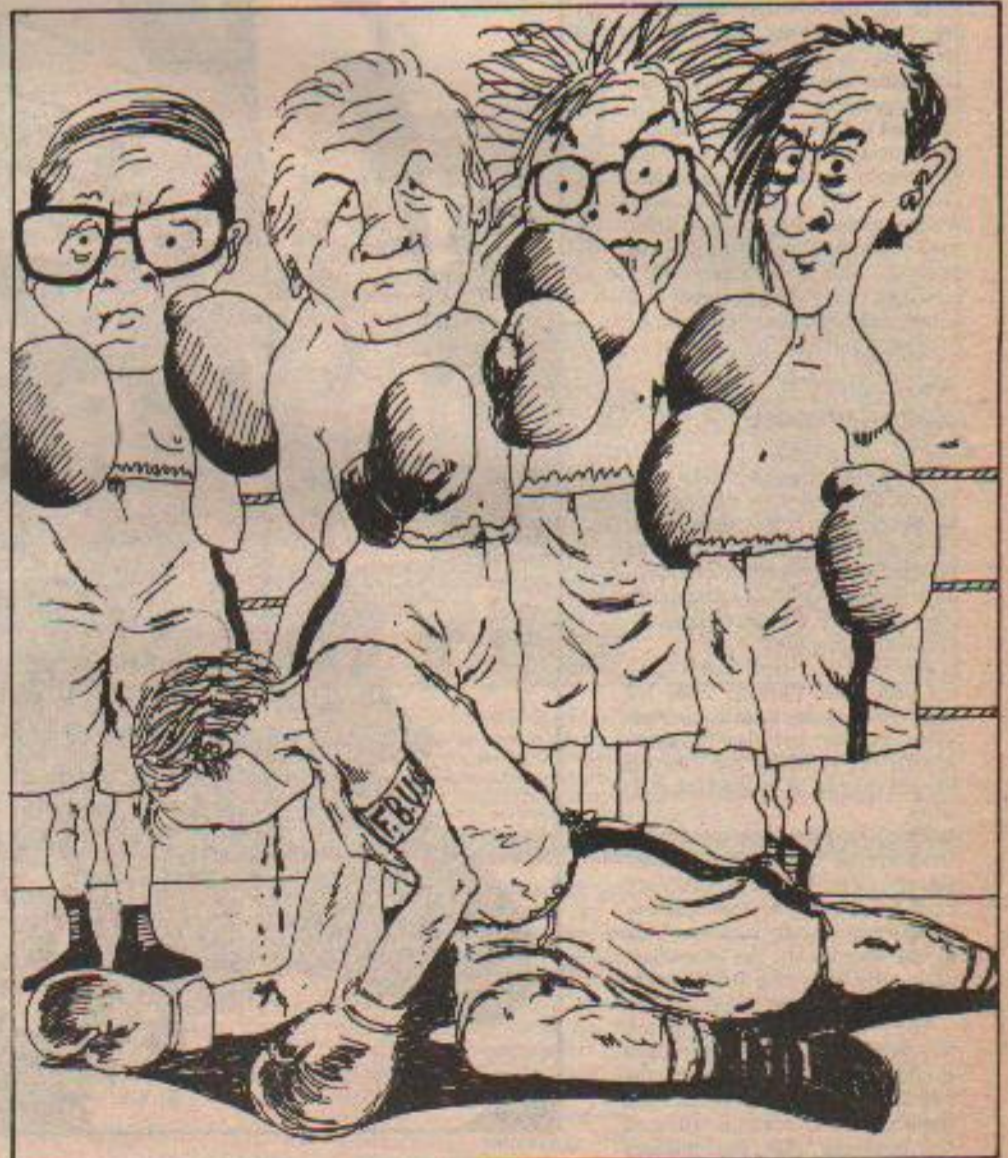
The same situation has existed in other important struggles of the last period. Despite the press and bourgeois campaign of 'burning children to come', rarely has any strike in recent years enjoyed such overwhelming mass support at its inception as the FBU strike. Even the 1972 miners' strike had much less sympathy at its commencement. It won mass support later only because of the resolute and determined execution of the dispute.

The first impact of the FBU strike took sections of the bourgeoisie by surprise. There were various proposals for capitulation from the

just defeat the miners. Indeed every single capitalist policy since 1974 has been quite explicitly framed on the assumption that the NUM cannot be defeated in struggle and therefore its leadership must be bought off.

'Ruling class institutions' weren't able to do one single thing to overturn the productivity ballot result. The 'credit' for bringing about that turn around, and inflicting the most serious defeat on the miners for nearly a decade, belongs wholly and exclusively to Messrs Gornley, Daly et al and the weakness in this struggle of their left wing opponents.

Far from having demonstrated the extreme strength and power of ruling class institutions for dealing with this period of the class struggle, what we have seen is the very considerable weakness of these institutions in confronting any major struggle of the working class. Of course in the final analysis the power of all reactionary forces is drawn from the fundamental structures of capitalist society. But in the present situation, the actual decisive instrument for the bourgeoisie has not been the institutions of the ruling class itself, but the element which is almost completely absent from the 'explanations' of the Euro-



In Socialist Challenge No. 24, Bill Richards wrote a critique of the Provisional Republican Movement. The article attracted a good deal of controversy. We are pleased to print this alternative view submitted by Provisional Sinn Fein.

Irish Republicanism today -

A reply

the civil rights movement of 1968, and the writer suggests that it would be better to return to a single issue campaign around repression.

While the civil rights demands were a threat to the power of Stormont, in no conceivable way were they a conscious attempt to build a socialist movement or even lay the basis of one (i.e. the reunification of Ireland). Stormont was brought down when it became clear that the Northern Ireland statelet could not contain a democratic advance for the catholic population.

MASS PARTICIPATION

Under the Provisionals' almost hegemonic leadership, a number of single issue campaigns have emerged and attracted mass participation during the subsequent years. The rent and rate strike; the campaign for political status; and the anti-internment campaign were the most successful. But there can be no return to the illusion that the Northern Ireland statelet can be reformed by campaigns around single issues.

Bill Richards shows contempt for what the Northern Ireland catholic people have learned since 1969 if he thinks that in 1978 a mass movement can be built around such limited conceptions.

Yes, we do believe we are at a more advanced stage since the days of the civil rights marches. The question now is not whether to turn back the clock, but how best to solve the problems that now face the people in the ghettos.

Repression is not an 'issue' in Northern Ireland. Repression is institutionalised. The very existence of the six county state guarantees the repression of the nationalist minority, whether by the guns of the B-Specials, torture by the RUC, or the British Army's

day-to-day harassment of the community.

Repression is being fought day-by-day both by the resistance of the people on the streets and the organised resistance of the IRA. Just to be born in a catholic ghetto forces you to take a stand in your daily life.

Does the writer suggest it is the job of the Republican Movement to bring thousands of people out onto the streets in civil rights style marches, to be met with tear gas, rubber bullets or worse? That it is capable of doing this is apparent from the massive turnout against the visit of Elizabeth II. But Bloody Sunday was the watershed that made the civil rights question into an anti-imperialist war.

COMMON BOND

The real political task of the Republicans now is to organise in the community to unite individual struggles into a common bond of political resistance to British imperialism. As the Belfast Relatives' Action Committee proclaims: 'Prisoners are not a civil rights issue, a war of national liberation is being waged'.

Bill Richards suggests a united front with the Social Democrats and Labour Party. The concept of a united front is to expose the leadership and politics of a reformist party and to draw away its popular support. To apply this to the SDLP implies that the SDLP has mass support in the



Protest in Fleet Street after the suppression of Republican News.

Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

THE BASIC principles of Irish Republicanism today are the same as they were when formulated nearly 200 years ago by Wolfe Tone. They are democracy, national sovereignty, and the union of all the Irish people in order to achieve the first two.

A further principle which was not applicable in Tone's day, when true national independence was coincident with the bourgeois nation state, is the necessity to dispossess the capitalist class and create a socialist republic. This principle was learned the hard way from the predictable failure of the 'Free State' to liberate Ireland from British imperialism after 1921, and in the words of James Connolly:

ENGLISH

'If you remove the English army tomorrow, and hoist the green flag over Dublin castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individual institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.'

Bill Richards sees the nationalist ideals of the Republican Movement as 'conservative ideology'. But the nationalist and socialist struggles in Ireland, as in any colonised country in the world, are interdependent. Partition in 1921 retarded the growth of any significant socialist movement as there had been in the days of Larkin and Connolly. The artificial division of Ireland created the southern Irish state shackled economically to Britain, the working class confused by the civil war and subsequent nationalist rhetoric of the ruling parties.

ARMED STRUGGLE

The six county, one party state set up on the other side of the border had its only reason for being in the maintenance of the political and economic ascendancy of one section of the community over the other, on sectarian religious, not class lines.

The relative benefits this gave the protestant working class led them to look to Britain as their allies, whereas the discrimination against the catholics led them to look to the rest of Ireland for their allies.

These relationships cannot be transformed while the border remains. The border is sustained by a British military occupation. That is why priority is given to the armed struggle for the immediate nationalist aims of a British withdrawal and national reunification.

The Provisionals' direct military war of liberation' is counterposed in Bill Richard's article to the building of a mass movement. The Republican Movement is criticised for believing that the military struggle is on 'a higher plane' than



working class catholic ghettos. Bill Richards must have been misled into believing this by the massive catholic vote for the SDLP at election time, which is in fact an anti-unionist vote, not a vote for the specific policies and performance of that party. The SDLP is already well exposed as traitors in the eyes of the catholic working class people who vote for them. It let the people down over the rent and rate strike, internment and RUC patrol in catholic areas, and it has failed in word and deed to defend the people from the armed brutality of the British troops on their streets. The writer's proposal has distorted the real situation to fit into his doctrinaire concepts, and this has led him to make suggestions which would be politically disastrous if taken seriously by the Republican Movement.

We can only cover two of the several points Richards makes in his criticism of Eire Nua. First, the question of federalism. Eire Nua is intended to provide guidelines for the unification of the country, and has to face the divisions created by partition. Federalism is an attempt at a realistic plan which would enable the protestant people of the North to make the transition in a constructive way towards finding their future interests in the Irish nation.

The writer condemns the four-province federation as a backward step, as against what he calls the radical idea of 'a united Ireland completely free of the old religious communities,' 'ending the caste system once and for all'. This is not a political plan but an abstract wish. How does he propose we get there? Ban religion? Deport the protestants?

CULTURAL IDENTITY

He has no grasp of real political struggle. He merely displays his own terror of the difficulties of fruitful political action in a society with a divided working class and with problems of nationality to solve. The Provisionals recognise the right to a cultural identity of the existing protestant working class, while removing the basis of sectarian

dominance: the 9 county Ulster in a United Ireland will not have a protestant majority, and the link with Britain, the mainstay of the ascendancy, will be severed.

Secondly, Bill Richards states that the criteria for judging the class character of any movement is its political programme. Eire Nua, he says, is 'marked by its inability to champion the struggles and demands of the most oppressed layers of Irish society'. This is a most despicable statement. The most oppressed section of the whole Irish working class is in the catholic ghettos of Northern Ireland. The fighters, organisers, and all the local leadership of the Republican Movement are of that class. So are the emerging socialist theories of the Republican Movement, whose only universities are the concentration camps of Long Kesh, Magilligan, and Armagh.

FRONT LINE

These are the people who are in the front line the battle against the British state in these islands. Their ability to champion the oppressed in Northern Ireland is not being fulfilled merely by words, not by proclaiming a programme, but more important, by the implementation of a programme. The graveyards and goals of Ireland and Britain are testimony to the courage and determination of the Republican Movement to defend and to champion the most oppressed people of Ireland.

Our 'failure' up to the present time is not a reflection of our politics, as Bill Richards arrogantly claims, but because we are up against the most experienced and one of the most vicious imperialist powers in the world. If there has been a political failure it is on the part of revolutionaries in Britain who have failed to be whole hearted in their opposition to the British occupation in Ireland, and have failed to give their full support to the anti-imperialist forces in Ireland.

London Comhairle Ceantair [Branch],
Provisional Sinn Fein [Britain]

Klymchuk - a massive frame up?

ANDY KLYMCHUK, the British student arrested by the KGB in the Soviet town of Lviv last August, was released and returned to Britain last Thursday. MARK JACKSON reports.

In this country the National Union of Students, on the initiative of the far left, has taken up a campaign for his release, and the student demonstrations around various Soviet cultural events have played a big part in persuading the authorities to release him — a decision that was probably taken at the highest party levels.

CONFESSED

According to 'exclusive revelations' in the *Daily Express*, Klymchuk publicly confessed to the crimes of which he had been charged — taking money and coded messages into the Ukraine on behalf of bourgeois nationalist organisations in this country.

He did carry the material, but says that he was set up by a mysterious Irishman called Dickson, who had persuaded him to take the material without him knowing exactly what it was. One thing comes across clearly: that the KGB knew exactly what Klymchuk was doing even before he set foot inside the Soviet Union.

The activities of the KGB are not directed towards protecting the USSR from 'bourgeois nationalist' conspiracies. The bourgeois nationalist organisations in the West have little if any impact inside the Ukraine today. The target is the domestic movement for human rights and for the national rights of the Ukrainian people.

It has always been standard Stalinist practice to smear oppositionists with having contacts with sinister outside forces. A link with the Ukrainian nationalist organisations in the West is particularly useful given their initial collaboration with the



KLYMCHUK — back to face family condemnation for publicity-seeking. Ukrainian human rights movement are less sophisticated but considerably more brutal. If the campaign to free Klymchuk has focussed the attention of the British left on the Ukraine, and if that attention can be used to hamper the KGB's current drive to smash the opposition, then it will have served its purpose.

The Soviet police treated Klymchuk to visits to the opera and to see his aunt. The methods used against the

South London Quick action stops racist rugby

Swift action by the South London Anti-Apartheid group in mobilising a massive public outcry forced the cancellation of the planned rugby match between Dulwich College and an all-white public boys school from South Africa scheduled for 17 December. KEVIN THOMAS reports.

Within ten days the Anti-Apartheid (AA) organisers had succeeded in bringing the match, which the College authorities wanted to be hush-hush, twice to the front page headlines of the widely-read *South London Press*. Coverage of the counter-demonstration also hit the major daily newspapers, the local press and even the ITN programme *Thames at 6* on the day of the cancellation.

OPPOSITION

Owing to the widespread opposition in this country to collaboration with apartheid, and the quick action of the organisers, support for the action was mounting up to the moment when it was called off. A large demonstration was expected.

The most important factor was the ability of the local AA to win the support early on of several members of the team, including the captain. By the time of the cancellation, they and several others on the team had decided not to play the match and to join the picket. Their backing was only made possible by the broad support enlisted by the organisers, who had projected a mass picket at the match.

In addition to the press coverage, protest against the

match and support for the picket came from local Labour and socialist organisations (including the South London International Marxist Group, three Bishops (Southwark, Woolwich and Kingston); representatives of trades councils, Labour Parties and student unions in south London; and a member of the National Sports Council (who was also a Director of Tulse Hill School).

It was in the face of this opposition, and the promise of a massive demonstration on the day itself, that the College authorities were forced to cancel the event.

This victory will have important repercussions for the anti-apartheid movement in south London and throughout Britain. It will also give encouragement to those fighting for their freedom in southern Africa.

THE IMG is holding a school on 'South Africa — the rise of workers struggles' on Saturday 28 January, at Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19 [nearest tube Archway]. Socialist Challenge supporters are welcome.

Australia after the elections

Queensland - a model strong state

What is happening in Queensland at the moment?

Well, since 22 September there has been a series of rallies, marches and pickets which have resulted in over 840 arrests. This campaign was sparked off when the Premier, John Bjelke-Peterson imposed a ban on all political marches.

Why did Peterson impose this ban?

For several reasons. Peterson has been in power for 10 years. His party has ruled in coalition for 20 years. He is an extreme reactionary, heavily involved in mining companies. He owes



BJELKE-PETERSON

his position to an outrageous gerrymander which gives him 40 per cent of the seats with 26 per cent of the vote.

His rule has been marked by ever-increasing attacks on civil liberties, oppression of aborigines, and lately overt attempts to crush the trade union movement and smash the growing opposition to the mining and export of uranium. Peterson imposed his ban because he wanted to show the ruling class in Australia generally how to cope with

unrest among the working class and oppressed. Peterson is the vanguard of the capitalist class. If he succeeds in Queensland then his solutions will be applied throughout Australia. That is the national significance of the Queensland struggles.

What is the connection between the civil liberties movement and the anti-uranium campaign?

The civil liberties movement is built around two key demands: the right to organise and the right to march. The first demand is aimed at beating off attacks on the most basic of trade union rights: the right to form a trade union. That right is being threatened in Queensland at present through anti-union legislation and harassment of union organisers. The right to march is more directly linked with the anti-uranium movement. Peterson is trying to make sure that the struggle is fought out on his terms. No marches — just rallies. This would obviously demoralise the whole campaign.

What is the role of the trade unions in this?

On uranium the unions are calling for a referendum. This puts them clearly to the right of the Australian Labour Party which is committed to halting the mining and export of uranium. This policy is a blatant attempt to sell out the campaign. If the anti-uranium struggle deepens the Government might take up the idea of a referendum. Because of the monopoly it has over the mass media it would probably win.

What about the federal elections and the big conservative victory?

There are several points to remember here. First, the governing conservative coalition received just under 50 per cent of the vote, but because of the electoral system they have a huge parliamentary majority,

Socialist Challenge talks to a member of the Communist League from Brisbane, Queensland.

Their problem is to turn this parliamentary victory into a decisive victory in terms of the real class struggle. They are obviously in a better position to do this but they still haven't significantly reduced the fighting capacity of the working class.

And here of course the Queensland struggles are important. In Queensland the working class is very weak, demoralised and apathetic. But they are coming out of this to fight back in a way the bosses could not have thought possible. The campuses which have been dormant for so long are coming alive again. This augurs well for the coming struggles throughout Australia.

What has been the response of the left in Queensland?

To begin with there was a very heated struggle about whether there should even be a campaign against the ban on marches. The Communist Party (CPA) argued that there shouldn't and that instead we should throw all our activities into the anti-uranium struggle. The far left insisted that there should be a direct militant response to the ban on marches. They have been proved correct because the campaign has gained widespread support and sympathy and has now started to attract organised workers.

The CPA has changed its line and is now trying to get the leadership of the mass movement away from the far left. But the whole campaign has opened up real opportunities for the far left. It is now possible to see a way to end the

unemployment. This can be done through rank and file trade union and local committees.



A picket of the Portuguese embassy in London last Saturday against the 13 year sentence on left-wing militant Afonso Sousa. Sousa was tried by a military court in Oporto for his alleged part in a bank robbery. He was convicted on the basis of identification evidence from two bank employees who had seen the robber's face for 1/10 seconds. The evidence of seven defence witnesses who were with Sousa in Lisbon at the time was ignored. A number of MPs, the Haldane defence solicitor, Justice Against the Identification Laws (JAIL), and Peter Hein have sent telegrams of protest to the Portuguese authorities.

What do you predict for the future?

The most important point here is that Australia is gripped by an acute economic crisis. Australian manufacturing exists behind high tariff barriers and is notoriously weak and inefficient. Inflation and unemployment are high

of growing repression and struggles. Fraser will try to break the trade unions and export uranium. The task of the left is of course to lead the fight back, but above all the need for regroupment on the left has never been greater. The revolutionary party must be built.

mining, are not labour intensive. All in all the future will be one

left in Australia looks to the European left for leadership and inspiration. The Euro-

peans, unfortunately, are abysmally ignorant about Australia. Queensland House in the Strand should be the target of protest mail, telephone calls, pickets, demonstrations, and boycotts. Within Queensland the struggle against the attacks on democratic rights will continue. streets in thousands. Present indications suggest that this is not an impossible dream.

Hammami, Holden, Syrians

The labyrinth

The crisis of the Palestine Liberation Organisation has exploded in the most dramatic way since the Sadat-Begin diplomatic initiative. At least that is the most likely explanation for the killing of PLO representative Said Hammami in London last week, argues CHRIS O'BRIEN.

Although the PLO's public statements on the killing have been understandably guarded, it is clear that the leadership is beginning to revise its initial routine denunciation of the assassination as the work of 'Zionism and Imperialism'. It has joined the bulk of the British press in pinning responsibility on Abu Nidal, the Iraqi-backed PLO rebel. His motive is unclear.

The *Guardian* suggests that the killing was meant to obstruct a Syrian-Iraqi rapprochement, but if it has any effect it is likely to be the opposite one of hardening PLO and Syrian opinion against Egypt. Also the Nidal theory is based upon the supposition that the left wing of the General Union of Palestinian Students in Britain is overwhelmingly pro-Iraq,

which is not the case. The left GUPS is meant to have been Nidal's recruiting ground.

If it were capable of a little further soul-searching — which it isn't — the PLO leadership might come up with the conclusion that it had to take a share of the responsibility, for it seems increasingly likely that the killing was carried out by Palestinians who rejected the PLO's attempts to accommodate to the Sadat initiative... or by people who used that as a cover. This does not rule out Nidal.

HOSTILE

After his initially hostile response to Sadat's Jerusalem trip, PLO leader Yasser Arafat has instructed PLO representa-

tives in Egypt to maintain links with the Government. The Egyptian President has returned the compliment and backtracked slightly by defending the PLO from attacks by both Begin and Carter. This does not mean PLO support for the Egyptian plan — far from it — but that Arafat and his Syrian protectors are keeping their options open, since the possibility of a 'rejectionist' front with the Iraqis looks unlikely, if only because of traditional hostility between the Baathist regimes in Iraq and Syria.



SAID HAMMAMI

In other words the whole affair is a maze, and scepticism the only way to deal with anyone who claims to know the solution. Things are complicated still further by the deaths of *Sunday Times* journalist David Holden in Cairo and two Syrian embassy officials in London on New Year's Eve.

It has been suspected for years that Holden was working for British intelligence — which hardly gets us any nearer a solution. Anyway, it is only supposition that links this to the Hammami killing, and nothing more concrete connects the Syrian killings to the others.

One variant of the Abu Nidal theory (this time *Observer*-style) works on the assumption that the two Syrians were killed in the course of Iraqi-Syrian rivalry. However, forensic evidence suggests that they were not murdered but killed by their own bomb. The bomb did not explode when the car door was opened or when it started, but when the vehicle was in motion. The bomb was on the seat between the two men where they could not have missed it, and the discovery of

fingers some 100 yards from the explosion suggests that they were handling the bomb when it went off. The police theory is that they were trying to fix the detonator.

None of this is conclusive, of course, but it does raise some interesting questions. The official version that the Syrians were off to bomb an Egyptian office on behalf of their own government is unconvincing, particularly since the police also choose to accept the theory that the Hammami killing was a response to the soft line of the PLO and Syria towards Egypt. You can't have it both ways.

QUESTION

So the question remains: who were these two embassy employees really working for? Were the real culprits out to sow the maximum confusion among the Arabs? Or are the three killings unconnected? It is unlikely that there will ever be a clear answer, since police and press will be happy to settle for a politically suitable conclusion, just to close their casebook.

The one theory they are not

interested in is that it could be the Mossad, the Israeli secret police, trying to create confusion. Or another regime in the area operating for reasons we could not hope to fathom? Even if they find the finger that pulled the trigger on Hammami they will not have found the murderer, since all the relevant organisations are so infiltrated and duplicit.

INFILTRATION

Fleet Street will continue to remain puzzled at the 'petty' squabbles of these strange Arabs. But there is nothing obscure about these disputes. For if the PLO had maintained a strict independence from the bourgeois Arab regimes it would not have been wrong-footed by Sadat's decision to take Arab ruling class policy to its logical conclusion, and it would not have laid itself open to the infiltration and confusion which makes this case so impenetrable.

If the PLO leadership had offered an alternative strategy based on no compromise with the Zionist state and alliances with the Arab masses the events of the past week might never have happened.

British arms for El Salvador

Stop this shipment!

£850,000 worth of military equipment, sold by the Ministry of Defence to the Central American Republic of El Salvador to help bolster the repressive military regime of General Romero, is likely to leave Britain on 2 February.

The shipment consists of 15 second hand armoured vehicles, Salsdins and Ferrets fresh from repression in Ireland, and some communications equipment. The equipment is to be loaded at the north Kent port of Sheerness.

El Salvador has been ruled by the military since 1931, and its history since has been dominated by repression, violence, and corruption in the maintenance of its tin, ruling oligarchy. Not that General Romero is opposed to elections. On the contrary he loves them so much that he makes sure all his friends get to vote a number of times, along

with numerous people who don't actually exist. Uncharitable observers might claim that this is why he won the presidential election last February.

Surprisingly, the subscribers to this uncharitable view of Salvadorean politics include US President Carter. Electoral fraud and the massacre of peasants and students made even Carter (who recently concluded an arms deal with the Shah of Iran) too embarrassed to supply the El Salvador armed forces. Not so the British Labour Government. After sending troops to Belize and Bermuda, Foreign Secretary David Owen is improving his standing with progressive peoples everywhere by giving Romero a hand in dealing with the troublesome population.

The Foreign Office excuse is that it has received assurances

from El Salvador that these arms would not be used in the event of a conflict with Belize. The Salvadorean Government has now claimed that such assurances were not given but the deal goes ahead anyway. The people of Belize would do well to bear this in mind the next time Owen sends in the Harriers to 'protect' them.

The Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Central America, in conjunction with Campaign Against the Arms Trade, is organising a picket at Sheerness docks on 2 February, to support an appeal to the dockers to boycott the cargo. Your support is needed. Further details of buses etc. from CAAT, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. (01-278 1976).

*Next week: Chile after the plebiscite.



Dockers unite to stop scabs

by NOEL HIBBERT

WHO SAID internationalism was a pious cliché reserved for Labour Party conferences only? Certainly not Hull and Goteborg dockers, who have just agreed on joint action against a Swedish company called Gullfiber.

The company's ship *Christopher Needer* sails between Hull and Goteborg carrying scab dockers who then unload cargo in Sweden. Gullfiber thus hopes to smash the Swedish dockers' union.

Through intermediaries in the Fourth International in Sweden (KAF) and Hull (IMG), a joint meeting of dockers took place. The Hull Port Shop Stewards' Committee decided to boycott this company's goods in solidarity

and also to raise the issue nationally. Since 18 December the ship has been stuck in Goteborg harbour with its cargo boycotted.

It is in such disputes that socialist organisations built on an international basis can play a role in centralising contacts and experience for workers in struggle. In the dock industry what is needed is to build a network of rank and file contacts in the European ports to fight the shipowners.

As Walt Cunningham, chairperson of the Hull Port Shop Stewards' Committee, said: 'It's up to the rank and file militants to organise international solidarity independent of their official union leadership.'

Already dock militants in Antwerp plan to call an international meeting of dockers.

Kenyan writer arrested

by a Nairobi correspondent



NGUGI WA THIONG'O

NEWS HAS just come that Ngugi wa Thiong'o, well known writer and author of *Peals of Blood*, has been arrested by the Kenyatta regime.

Head of the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi, Ngugi has made a name for himself in Kenya and internationally, both in the field of literature and as a socialist critic of neo-colonial Kenya.

Recently, a Kikuyu play which he co-authored — *Ngahika Ndenda* ('I'll marry you when you want') was performed for the first time in Limuru, near Nairobi. While I am not familiar with the play, it is obvious that, as in his other works, Ngugi has not refrained from making known his critique of the regime (this time not in English, but in his own tongue). After its first performance in Kiambu, the play was banned.

On New Year's Eve, police surrounded his house and arrested him, seizing over 100 books. He has been under

arrest for several days now, and has been refused the right to see anyone, including his wife Nyambura.

This is the latest in a series of arrests of left wing oppositionists of the Kenyatta regime. Only three weeks ago Oginga Odinga (well known left nationalist leader and founder of the banned Kenya People's Union) was arrested after a speech on the question of land distribution (or the lack of it!)

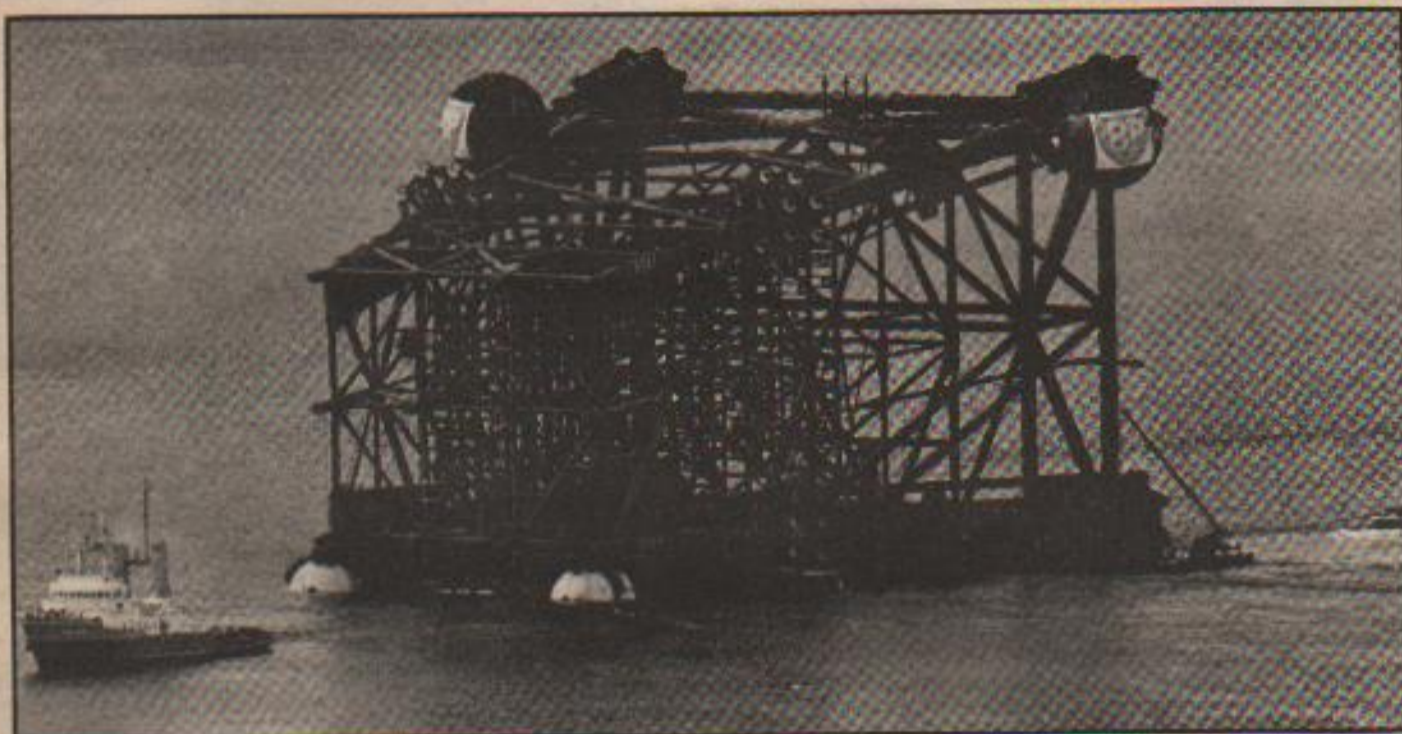
These arrests are not only an attack on the already restricted democratic rights in Kenya. They also reflect a growing awareness by the neocolonial ruling class of the crumbling of its credibility among the masses. Its response is likely to be ever more brutal repression against all forms of opposition to its and imperialism's rule in Kenya.

It is urgent that *Socialist Challenge* readers in Britain and elsewhere organise immediately a campaign to release Ngugi, Odinga, and all political prisoners in Kenya.

We in Kenya rely on this international support: the restrictions on democratic rights in Kenya make a local campaign not just difficult, but dangerous.

The Left and Scottish Nationalism

by NEIL WILLIAMSON



YOU PROBABLY haven't noticed but we are supposed to be on the verge of one of Britain's most important political reforms. The Devolution Bill, now labouring its way through Westminster, must be among the most discussed and debated pieces of legislation to have appeared in recent years. But the excitement in the media is in distinct contrast to the broad indifference it meets amongst the mass of the population — no demonstrations, no rallies, or public agitation of any type.

This undeniable fact has led many on the left to conclude that the entire 'national question' was a media creation from the start. Many in the Labour Party are now saying that the Scottish National Party's support is only a temporary protest vote. On the far left it is now argued that the 'national' and 'socialist' aspects of the political crisis are like two sides of a see-saw. As the class struggle against the Government heats up, the national question dims in significance.

All these conclusions are mistaken, no matter how attractive they may appear. Other features must be found which explain the current relations of political crisis in Scotland.

BEWILDERING ARRAY

An interesting start is merely to list the current line-up for and against the Devolution Bill. In support of it stand *The Economist*, *Socialist Challenge*, *The Sunday Times* and the *Morning Star*. Against the Bill can be found the CBI, the bulk of the Tribune group, and the Tory Party. Such a bewildering and unprecedented array of forces on either side illustrates very well that *no-one* from any part of the political and class spectrum thinks that the Bill is anything but a very temporary compromise.

The left only support it insofar as it provides a very limited opportunity for self activity on the national question through election campaigns and other forms of political activity. Right-wing supporters are reluctant converts, openly sceptical over the future of an Assembly, but seeing no alternative course of action that is viable.

For this reason, the boredom and cynicism among the masses is quite predictable. Who is going to get enthusiastic over the pathetic local government body envisaged by the Government? But rather than 'solving' the problem of Scotland, it only makes the entire situation much more explosive. When the Assembly finally meets, the only certainty is that almost every active political force in Scotland, from the CBI through the SNP to the revolutionary left, will be profoundly unhappy with it. Hardly the best start for the 'devolution experiment'.

There is a second reason behind the disinterest about devolution, directly related to the nature of the SNP. It has been argued that the SNP is somehow a harbinger of radical change, and that despite its bourgeois

nationalist leadership, the party's growth would have a dynamic effect on Scottish society. Alternatively, the SNP has been portrayed as an 'extremist' element, full of tartan thugs straining at the leash.

The last few months have demonstrated just how ridiculous both views are, despite the political distance between their proponents. Today the SNP is clearly the central element in Scottish life, ensuring *total political peace* around the national question. There are many examples of this. For instance, the proposal for demonstrations after the defeat of the first Devolution Bill was vigorously opposed by the SNP leadership, as were subsequent attempts to initiate any form of public organisation. There was also the amazing spectacle of the SNP pledging loyalty to the Crown at its Dundee conference, despite a real and noticeable coolness towards the whole Jubilee circus felt throughout Scotland.

In a period when support for the Labour Government has never been lower, the SNP has acted as the loyal opposition, with cuts, unemployment and falling living standards passively accepted with a shrug. With the electoral support of 30 per cent of the population, such a consistently conservative and constitutionalist attitude inevitably has its effects. Much of the disillusionment with Labour which produced the massive growth of the SNP has been strictly imprisoned inside atomised ballot box protest. How long this can continue without this disillusionment spilling out into social protest remains to be seen. The answer will be decisive for Scottish and British politics.

Despite this 'lull' in the national question, there is another side to the political equation which has to be examined: that of the British political system as a whole. A few hours spent reading the Parliamentary reports on the Devolution Bill are well rewarded. These

reveal that opposition to devolution has little to do with a general principle of 'defending the interests of the ruling class'. West Germany is an eloquent reminder of how a 'strong state' can be quite compatible with a highly decentralised and federal system of political rule.

Opposition to the Bill flows from another source — essentially that of defending the specific institution of Parliament. It is belief in Parliament, above all as the basis of MPs' authority and as a source of tangible benefits to their electors, which unites Enoch Powell with a Welsh miners' MP and Eric Heffer with a squire from Buckinghamshire. (It is also, incidentally, a deep scepticism towards this view of Parliamentary sovereignty which forced the last three Tory Prime Ministers into support for devolution.)

The problem is that the zealous band of Parliamentarians seem bent on suicide. A system so inflexible as to ban even radio recordings of its proceedings can only be described as arthritic. Normally its archaic structure is irrelevant, as it merely rubber stamps Cabinet and Civil Service decisions. Occasionally the lumbering bulk of Parliament is able to act as a road block to legislation, against the better judgement of the Government (and the Government's masters). Devolution is one such issue. Some MPs like Eric Heffer, a new convert to federalism, think that the Parliamentary structure can be reformed; TV cameras, federal assemblies, proportional representation, the lot. The difficulty they're faced with on such a timid measure as the Devolution Bill gives little optimism on that score.

Despite the boredom of Scotland towards the entire legislative process and the constitutional cretinism of the SNP, it is this inability of Westminster to act, and react, to the changing needs of bourgeois democracy in

Scotland which guarantees that devolution will be a running sore in British politics. Just how long that sore continues to fester is partly dependent on the SNP itself.

The Scottish National Party is very much a product of the social changes of the 1960s and early 1970s. Previously Scotland's social structure was a starkly contrasting one, with a working class dominated by heavy industry, the mines, and engineering, and a middle class weighted towards agriculture and the professions. Regional police and the consumer boom made great changes to this pattern, with a new generation in the new towns and east-central Scotland growing up socially and politically distant from the two main political parties and their cultures.

This formed the first solid base for the SNP. The party grew and developed by expressing all the political confidence, the 'democratic illusions', the petty bourgeois ambiguity of what can be loosely called the 'new middle layers' in Scotland.

ONLY A MEMORY

Today that picture of self-confidence towards a rapidly changing social scene is only a memory. Instead of a dynamic and optimistic social base, the SNP has to confront a very different type of audience, of angry and disillusioned sections of the population. This is even more true as the party attempts to broaden its base into the Labour strongholds of the urban west, a process which started with its victories in Clydebank and the housing schemes of Easterhouse last May.

In other regions of Europe, resistance to metropolitan repression, together with cultural and linguistic solidarity, are sufficient to hold the party nationalist movements together despite their diversity of class representation. In Scotland, these features do not exist. The result is an impasse inside the SNP ('crisis' is too strong a word yet). The vague rhetoric of Scandinavian reformism was sufficient in the past, but today precise social solutions are called for, both from their voters in the housing schemes and the Edinburgh bankers who may well govern beside it in the near future.

However, the SNP has to spell out a perspective in the knowledge that only a minority actually supports the central aim of the party — independence. The party is increasingly pressured at both ends to provide a clear political project, yet avoid alienating its non-independence supporters. This is producing strains inside the party.

The main 'debate' (in which only the leadership has any say) is of course the question of continued support for the Labour Government; but other features are present. There are rumours of a new weekly paper (produced by the radical right wing) to replace the *Scots Independent* (a staid internal news sheet), and the letter pages of the Scottish press continue to have constant references to the lethargy and inactivity of the party leadership. It can only be a matter of speculation (in the absence of any hard facts) where exactly Jim Sillars — his Scottish Labour Party now in ruins — fits into any internal SNP splits; but his collaboration with the Margo McDonald wing of the party is a long and close one.

Many on the left look at the present situation as a thankful return to the uncluttered days of Tory against Labour, bows against workers, politics of the period before the rise of the SNP. Everything points to the opposite conclusions. For better or worse the national question is an integral part of the British political crisis. The sooner we get used to it the better.



Scargill's pin-ups

IN REPLY to Diane Grimditch's letter [15-31 December, 1977] I wish to defend the paper's publication of Arthur Scargill's letter; although I agree totally with her indignation and outrage at his views. Above all, we can't bury our heads in the sand because these views exist in the labour movement.

I had the experience of working in the labour movement for a few years, and then the dubious honour of being then the only woman on a one year trade union studies course with 19 men, who were nearly all left-wing industrial militants. They were professed 'ardent' supporters of women's rights, which to them meant equal pay. But of course they considered one of the main stumbling blocks on the women question was the back-

wardness of women themselves, that we don't turn up to branch meetings, etc, ad nauseam.

While on the course, the men had a democratic meeting [I just happened not to be there — they said] to vote on putting up a female pin up. This was duly done after a narrow majority voted in favour. This was indicative of a number of things I had to contend with. The situation built up to such a point that I was practically a nervous wreck because of the constant trivialisation of women's sexuality.

When I tried to discuss their attitude and explain how oppressive and intimidating it was, the response was that 'I had no sense of humour', 'took everything too seriously'. In the end, because of my isolation I could only cope by

limiting the issues I took up.

Of course, the women's movement has helped a lot and one draws a lot of support from it. But its resonance has still not eradicated these situations, and women are quite often confronted with sexist attitudes in the isolation of their work place or home, and are too intimidated to take them up.

That is why I think it is extremely important that we do take these issues up in the women's movement and in the pages of the left press. Particularly when it is someone like Arthur Scargill, who considers himself — and is widely regarded — as a socialist.

Scargill sees no contradiction between his socialist policies and a defence of one of the most appalling aspects

of bourgeois ideology — objectifying women and using this image to sell its products.

We have to tell Scargill: pin-ups represent nothing more than a degenerate titillation to entice men to buy various brands of beer, cars, newspapers, etc — and now the Yorkshire Miner. The fact that he could accuse women of over-reacting to this acute aspect of our oppression is really an indication that he should re-evaluate his conception of what it is to be a socialist.

Grimditch makes a big point of the fact that Socialist Challenge published Scargill's reply without comment. I thought that it was obvious from the paper's general coverage and the way his letter was featured that it was a condemnation of Scargill, but it that was not clear then I agree a qualification should have been added.

PAT MASTERS (London)

Which way forward for the anti-fascist movement



MANY OF US involved in anti-fascist work at national and local level have been only too well aware for some time, as your article states, that street demonstrations, confined to the streets and its derivatives are not sufficient. Broader sections of the population have to be brought into the movement. This is, and always has been, our perspective. It is however also the contention of the National Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee (NAFCC) that any genuine 'broad front' organisation must be built democratically from the grass roots upwards and not imposed or manipulated onto us from on high. We are also committed collectively to a 'No Platform' position. We believe that the movement must be as politically broad as possible consistent with remaining effective.

In no way underestimate the value of presenting socialist alternative candidates at elections. Socialist Unity and so on. Collectively the AFC's must have been responsible for distributing several million leaflets at elections times. This I think must illustrate that we are alive to this requirement for general AF propaganda and electoral involvement (although it must be said not all anti-fascists share this electoral perspective).

We all understand that the fascists will be standing some 800-900 candidates at the next election. How many Socialist Unity candidates will the left be able to stand. How much financial support must be given by the left to running 'Socialist Alternative' candidates and how much hard slog and cash will be channelled into putting out general AF material in the vast majority of constituencies where the left will not be able to stand a candidate? I would suggest that there is an urgent need here for the leadership of the International Marxist Group, Socialist Workers Party, those working in Socialist Unity and so on to meet and actually discuss these issues with those involved in the co-ordination work of the NAFCC. In fact such an exchange of fund would be necessary.

The ANL has the potential of being able to draw in certain socialist elements. I can, I believe, make a very positive contribution to the AF struggle, although as your article acknowledges, the CP, the rest of the left and we might add the NAFCC have been studiously ignored in this initiative. As indeed have the rank and file of the SWP. Our efforts so far to establish a fraternal dialogue with those in the running of the ANL have as yet included with any success. We remain optimistic that this might change.

The JCAP are again seeking affiliations on a highly selective basis, perhaps this is inevitable given the political position of those involved in it. But this narrow sectarianism and failure to even attempt to establish a dialogue with other

forces involved in the same work can in the long term only be counterproductive.

The North West Committee Against Racism is not formally involved with the NW TUC but is largely being run by Colin Barnett in a personal capacity. Again they are seeking affiliations and involvement in this body on a very selective (a non-left basis. This again is to be regretted but there is very little the NAFCC can do to alter this situation. Never theless we have no doubt that this body will play a useful role at election time.

Ideally it would be fine if we did just have one campaigning organisation which could carry out the national co-ordinating work. Given the reality of the situation, it seems unlikely that this will be achieved in the near future. The NAFCC has, as you correctly state, scheduled an important conference next May. But given the fact that the fascists are scheduled to mount a major electoral offensive in the early spring and so the fact that we might face a General Election in the near future, it would appear that some co-ordinating work are necessary before this date.

Your article states that the national anti-fascist leadership would exercise a largely co-ordinating role. You also state that political organisations affiliated to such a body would retain the right to independent activity. Now if any point requires a fraternal exchange of views between the NAFCC and the leaders of affiliated political organisations this is.

How far more would the NAFCC be able to call for and co-ordinate a national demo or counter demo calling for all involved to march in AFC contingents if the leaders of political organisations also instruct without consultation with the NAFCC their members to march with comrades of their own political party or group? This is a situation we have actually faced on numerous occasions in the past. When we distribute AFC material at election time do we put out AFC material or suddenly go on and put out our own party material? All this needs to be discussed.

Deeply all the above problems I am optimistic that a good step forward will be possible at the conference next May. We shall certainly call in our power to build for this event.

Firstly could we point out to Socialist Challenge that the 65 contributors affiliated to the NAFCC are now being co-ordinated by an internal co-ordinating bulletin which contains news items of anti-fascist and fascist activity nationally and internationally. If readers of Socialist Challenge could send all appropriate information to us c/o Box AFC 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool. It would assist in the production of this bulletin.

David Wise, (Merseyside Anti-Fascist Committee)

PR: a democratic right

The Tribune group of Labour MPs has finished 1977 on a foolish and reactionary note by voting en masse against the 'regional list' proportional representation system for the elections to the European Parliament. This move was doubly reactionary.

On the one hand the 'first past the post' system will ensure that virtually all the British representatives — and

certainly all the English — are Tories. Whatever the limitations of the decision making powers of the proposed European parliament, it is hard to see how an effective boycott by the British labour movement will enhance the cause of socialism in Europe.

The European parliament could be used on a European scale as a forum for socialist propaganda; the abstention by

British Labour MPs will greatly increase the strength of the Christian Democrat-Gaullist forces against the Communist and Socialist deputies who will undoubtedly be elected from France and Italy in particular.

But the other — much more serious — reactionary side of the vote of the Tribunes was its implication for the prospects for proportional representation for all British

parliamentary elections. Everyone realised that to vote for PR for European elections was the 'thin end of the wedge', creating an important precedent. This was why the Liberals set so much store by it. Thus the great mass of Tories who voted against PR showed a sound class instinct.

For the British electoral system, by being absurdly undemocratic, is one of the firmest props of the existing political order. By excluding the extremes of the political spectrum from parliamentary representation and over representing the centre, the main bourgeois parties can represent themselves as the only serious political forces. But this nicely arranged mechanism has the paradoxical effect of actually obliterating the real centre party, the Liberals. There can hardly be an undemocratic absurdity anywhere in any bourgeois democracy greater than that which allows a party with five or six million voters a mere 13 MPs.

Joe Ashton recently argued on TV that PR would allow the National Front into Parliament, thus giving them credibility. That may be true; but PR would almost certainly allow in the CP, the SWP, or other far left forces. Moreover, Joe Ashton should be reminded that the argument that a more democratic system could strengthen one's political opponents is not exactly the most political argument imaginable.

The importance of all this for Socialist Unity can't be overstressed. Even half a dozen far left MPs would strengthen the revolutionary left as a credible political force; the possibility of such a development excluded by the 'first past the post' system, would multiply the far left vote several times.

Proportional representation — representation according to how the electorate actually votes — should be a basic democratic right. On this Steele, Pardoe and Cyril Smith are immensely more progressive than the Tom Littericks and Dennis Skinners. So let the far left join the campaign for PR, together with a fight for the right to vote at 16.

While the Liberal leadership want to rely on useless and completely ineffective parliamentary manoeuvres, many Liberals and especially the Young Liberals want a serious and mass campaign. Many other democratic and progressive forces, such as the Communist Party, could be drawn into such a campaign. The success of such a campaign could completely recompose the fabric of British politics.

PHIL HEARSE (Birmingham)



Socialist Unity election campaign in Ladywood.

Socialist Challenge EVENTS

NORTH WEST

For details of activities in the NW write or ring the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, Third Floor, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. 061-238 2352. Open Tuesday 8-8pm, Thursday 8-8pm, Saturday 10-1pm. Room available for meetings. Duplicating facilities available.

BURY Socialist Challenge group meets every Wednesday, 8pm, at the Wheatsheaf pub, in Bury New Road, Whitefield (near Whitefield bus and train station).

LIVERPOOL Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at the Dolphin, Canning Place. Next meeting with Martin Yarnit (Big Flame National Secretariat) on 'Big Flame and Socialist Challenge', 7.30pm, 18 January.

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-238 2352.

NORTH EAST

DARLINGTON Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Northern Rock on High Row, 11-1pm.

MIDDLESBOROUGH Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Boots in Cleveland Centre, 11-1pm.

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge on sale on Saturdays outside Fenwicks shop in Northumberland Street, 12-3pm.

SCOTLAND

For information on Socialist Challenge contact Scottish Socialist Socialist Challenge bookshop, 84 Queen Street, Glasgow (Tel: 041-221 7481). Open weekdays 10-4. Late closing Thursday 6.00pm. Wide range of FI publications.

DUNDEE Information about Socialist Challenge activities from 84 Queen Street, Glasgow. Join in SC sales outside Boots (corner of Reform Street) each Saturday, 11am-2pm.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Keravan, 12 Merchiston Grove, Edinburgh. Tel: 031-348 0466.

SOUTH WEST

PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge readers group every Monday, 7.30pm at Wiltshire

pub (upstairs), Hampshire Terrace.

LONDON

BRENT Socialist Challenge group. For details of meetings write c/o London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

CAMDEN Socialist Challenge group meets every first and third Wednesdays of each month in Kenilsh Town. For details ring Neil 359-8288 or write PO Box 50, London N1.

GREENWICH/LEWISHAM Socialist Challenge group meets every two weeks. For details ring Ray on 01-659 1187.

SOUTHALL Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details phone 01-573 5095.

SOUTHWEST LONDON Socialist Challenge supporters meet every two weeks in Battersea. Further information from 26 Latchmere Road, London SW11.

HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly — details from: London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

HARINGEY Socialist challenge readers group meets fortnightly. West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road, off West Green Rd. Nearest Tube: Turnpike Lane.

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meets regularly. Anyone interested please contact PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Feminist revolutionary

MOTIVE

Alexandra Kollontai



Selected Writings

Raising Kollontai's voice

by CATHY PORTER

'Since Kollontai's writings deal with the problems of women, their exploitation and oppression under capitalism, and the freedom they must struggle for and realise with the establishment of socialism, they were too embarrassing to have any place under Stalin.'

'They highlighted the gap between Soviet reality and socialism, and the extent to which ideas on family and equality had been discarded or distorted by the government; in so doing they raised questions about the nature of Soviet society and the direction of its transformation.'

In these selections from Alexandra Kollontai's copious writings, Alix Holt has imaginatively conveyed the depth, the limitations and the honesty of Kollontai's work. The integrity of the translations and of their accompanying explanatory texts enables us to pay serious attention to a feminist revolutionary of great importance.

For the influence her ideas had on millions of women in Russia both before and after

the revolution suggests that the Marxism which shaped European social democracy, Leninism and the October revolution did make genuine advances.

Alix Holt suggests that Kollontai's voice, though smothered by Stalinism, may well be re-emerging in the Soviet Union, and she quotes articles in recent Soviet periodicals which discuss questions of morality and sexuality, and link Kollontai's name to many of their conclusions. But the primary power of Kollontai's arguments — her vision of a society in which domestic economy would disappear along with wage slavery — has been ignored.

The Soviet Union represses the history of its women's movement in ways that are familiar to us in the West.

The recent interest of the women's movement with Kollontai was first awakened in 1972, with the translation of *Love and the New Morality* and *Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle*. Writing in 1919, she demanded: 'Why has the fact been ignored that throughout history one of the constant

which were used to explain it. Alongside this painful tale is the slow evolution of gay consciousness and resistance by gays themselves to the 'sickness' model which was imposed upon them. There is a chapter devoted to Edward Carpenter, whose ideas on 'homogenic love' pioneered the road towards a socialist perspective of homosexuality.

SOCIETY

Weeks is a revolutionary socialist. He always relates developments in the gay movement to changes in the wider society and, when necessary, brings in international developments. Sometimes I felt he had taken on too much and as a result things were dealt with in a rather simplistic way.

For instance, there is a brief account of the Bolshevik attitude to homosexuality in which he conveys the idea that the Bolsheviks were universally in favour of sexual liberation and that it was only under Stalin that ideas for a repressive code re-emerged. In fact, this was the subject of bitter wrangling between Inessa Armand, Kollontai, and Lenin.

There were always two strands of thought present: Lenin's view that 'promiscuity in sexual matters is bourgeois', and the more enlightened views of Armand and Kollontai.

The author carefully traces

features of social struggle has been the attempt to change relations between the sexes, and the types of moral codes that determine these relations? And that the way personal relationships are organised in a certain social group has had a vital influence on the outcome of the struggle between hostile social classes?'

Kollontai entered the Russian revolutionary movement in the 1890s, abandoning her liberal aristocratic family to do so and joining with thousands of young intellectuals eager to go beyond the naive socialism of the early populists. Two decades of industrial growth had persuaded revolutionaries like Lenin that the seasonal factory worker really did represent the beginnings of a proletariat susceptible to Marxist analysis and capable of revolution.

The first ten years of Kollontai's life in the revolutionary movement were devoted to the struggle against revisionism: the bourgeois appropriation of Marxist vocabulary to discredit revolutionary strategy. Her first articles are polemics against 'legal Marxism'. As for so many women of her time, who came to Marx through the works of August Bebel, his *Women Under Socialism* was an inspiration to her.

It was Engels' *Origin of the Family*, however, that prompted her to take a more critical look at these analyses of women in society. In *Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle*, in *Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It*, as in all her writing, female sexuality is considered not as a mere

abstract biological force, which socialism alone can liberate from the crippling effects of the double standard: late marriage and prostitution.

She goes beyond a negative analysis of bourgeois values to talk positively of socialist freedom. And in urging women to join the socialist struggle she spoke of that freedom not as a utopia conjured up to justify the present, but as the real reward open to women who fought with the organised proletariat for social revolution.

As an active member of the Second and Third Internationals, a fighter in the social-democratic parties of Russia, Germany and Finland, and a member of numerous women's commissions, Kollontai was in a position to see the actual practice of socialism in her time. As an independent woman in the European social-democratic movement, however, she was often too isolated to pursue her ideas to their logical conclusions.

A later generation of feminists can state with certainty that the oppression women experience is not simply analogous to class relations in capitalism, and from that certainty grows our analysis of patriarchy. Kollontai had to be more hesitant about her insights into the roots of 'male prejudice', but the conclusions women are drawing from the last ten years of their struggle will find new affirmations in her writings.

Alexandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings*. Translated with an introduction by Alix Holt. Published by Alison and Busby at £2.95.

Mapping the place of gays in history

The publication of *Coming Out, Homosexual Politics in Britain from the 19th Century to the Present*, marks an important landmark for the gay movement and all those socialists who are interested in problems of sexual liberation, writes SUE BRULEY. Until now, gay people have been represented in history in a rather unfortunate way.

'Mainstream' historians have denied them any existence at all, and those who have focused on homosexuality have either written dreary historical narratives with no analytical framework, such as Montgomery Hyde's *The Other Love*, or turgid lists of 'the great and famous' homosexuals of the past, such as the book by A.L. Rowse, *Homosexuals in History*.

Although homosexual behaviour is known to have existed in all periods of history, it was not until comparatively recently that this behaviour was associated with a specific type of person. For centuries certain sexual acts, such as buggery or sodomy, were condemned by the State and the Church (and usually punished by death). But these particular acts were seen as potential in all human beings.

During the late 19th century a spectacular series of court cases involving homosexual men — Oscar Wilde being the most famous — dragged homosexuality into the public arena and moulded the stereotype which is still part of the ruling class ideology: the gay man as weak, effeminate, lustful and upper class.

Jeffrey Weeks skilfully traces the emergence of this homosexual stereotype and the various medical approaches



Protest over the sacking of a trainee manager at British Home Stores, who revealed that he was gay, February, 1976.



'Marital Scene', a view of human relations by the satirist George Grosz, from *Ecco Homo*, a collection of his work originally published in 1923. Savagely depicting German society in the post First World War period, the book was suppressed. Dover/Constable, price £2.85.

the connections between both male and female homosexuality and the gay and women's movements. The section on 'Invisible Women' should be particularly welcomed, for in it Weeks has made considerable efforts to trace the separate character of lesbian history and the emergence of the lesbian identity. At last we can see Radcliffe Hall and her legal battles over the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* in some sort of historical perspective.

The latter part of the book is an account of the reform movement of the 1950s and 60s and the impact of gay liberation in the early 1970s.

There is a brilliant analysis of the 'first wave' of gay liberation and the perspectives for the future. The period of gay activism as merely a euphoric celebration of gayness, both individual and collective, has passed. The possibilities for the future lie in more specialist areas of work, particularly in building a base in the labour movement by the development of cells in individual unions (several major unions already have gay groups, including NALGO, NATFE, NUT and NUPE).

Beyond the small, specialist

groups, Weeks sees the need for a new national organisation in place of the hopelessly reformist and middle class Campaign for Homosexual Equality which provides a social network (for men) and very little else.

He is rather vague though as to what its functions would be, and says nothing at all about how it is to be established. But these are questions for us all to consider. We shouldn't blame Jeffrey Weeks because he doesn't deliver all the answers. I'm sure that *Coming Out* will point us in the right direction and become a valuable asset to gay socialists everywhere.

Coming Out, Homosexual politics in Britain from the 19th century to the Present is published by Quartet at £3.95.

NEXT WEEK

Especially for Socialist Challenge, JOHN BERGER reviews Padre Padrone, a film which he describes as a 'masterpiece' and 'perhaps the first authentic film about peasants'.

Socialist Challenge



In conjunction with Peter Kennard, Socialist Challenge has produced a set of postcards featuring six of Kennard's photomontages.

In black and white, the six cards relate to South Africa, Ireland, Chile, Seveso, the 1974 miners' strike, and repression in the USSR. Each card is 7 by 5 1/2 inches, and printed with all normal postcard requirements — in French, English and German.

The cards are a unique collection of modern political photomontage. They lend themselves to mounting and display. Order your set now! The cards are 15p each [very

cheap], plus 7p postage and packing. The complete set of six is yours for £1, incl. p&p, to: Photomontage Offer, Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

Other offers

* Russian Revolution special. Text by Isaac Deutscher, design by David King. 50p.

* 1978 Calendar. 13 posters from Paris 1968. 4 colours. £1.

* Subscribe for one year (£10) to Socialist Challenge and we will send you a calendar free.

All these prices are inclusive of postage and packing.

Build the Tatlin tower!

FOR THE last six months Socialist Challenge has only survived because of the donations our readers have sent in. The next three will be no exception. Over the next three months we again have to raise £1,800.

Our readers did not let us down in the first days of 1978. Anticipating our thoughts they sent in £159.10. That has set us off on the right footing. So let's keep it going.

For the next three months we have a new fund drive logo. In the forthcoming weeks we want to turn the Tatlin tower red. The Tatlin tower, named after its designer, was to have been a monument to the Third International.

In 1919 under instructions from the Department of Fine Arts, Tatlin began work on this monument due to be erected in Moscow. The tower, whose function was to house the Third International, was planned to have been twice the height of the Empire State building!

The tower never got further than the drawing board. Now

you have the chance to resurrect this monument and keep Socialist Challenge alive.

This week our thanks to:

R. Eason	25.00
A. Herring	2.50
J. Morrison	1.00
S. McIntosh	1.00
Anon	40.00
P. Sellman	10.00
D. Cowan	1.00
S. Kramer	3.00
I. Miles	2.50
E. Barker	20.00
P. Altin	10.00
D. Hall	1.00
C. Lomax	2.50
Anon	20.00
N. Stone	2.00
P. Hubert	12.50
A. Yuseaf	1.80
M. Smeridge	1.50
Portsmouth supporters	0.80
R.H.	0.50
K. Janzen	0.50
TOTAL	159.10

Liverpool conference on FBU strike says

RECALL THE TUC

An FBU solidarity conference called by Liverpool Trades Council attracted over 200 delegates on 8 January. Among those who attended were FBU members from Scotland, London, and the Northeast.

After expressing total solidarity with the strike the delegates mapped out a plan of action towards winning the dispute. Included in this resolution were calls for:

*Day of action on 16 January

*Organised demonstrations in every city, town and locality

*The immediate reconvening of the TUC

*The organisation of regular financial support for the strikers

*Other workers — especially TGWU lorry drivers and EEPTU power workers — to take immediate action in support of their 10 per cent busting claims.

March on 29 January

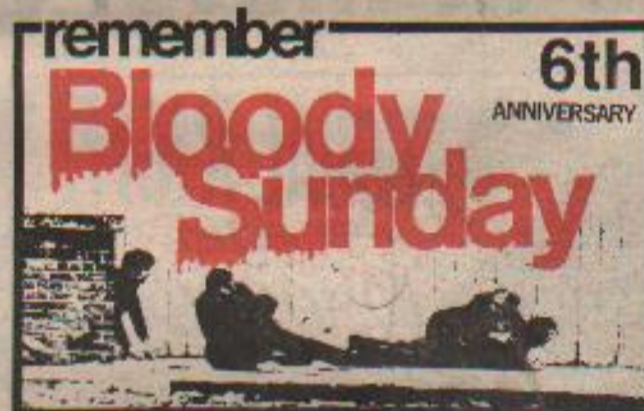
Yes, Britain out: but NOW!

By any, but British nationalist standards, last weekend's remarks of Irish Premier Jack Lynch were fairly mild. He did no more than urge Britain 'to indicate in a general way that they would like to see the Irish people coming together'.

The hysterical reaction to these remarks in British ruling class and Unionist circles is an indication of the right wing nature of these occupiers of Ireland, rather than any supposed republicanism of Jack Lynch. That the Government's North of Ireland office got too hot under the collar at the vague comments of Lynch shows just how fanatical Britain is about its rule of the North of Ireland.

OPPORTUNITY

Nevertheless the controversy surrounding the remarks of Lynch provide a useful



opportunity for the opponents of the British occupation of Ireland in this country to have their say — that Britain should get out, not some time in the distant future, but now. That is exactly the purpose of the demonstration in London at the end of this month.

Saturday 29 January is the date set for the sixth commemoration of the day in 1972 when the gunmen of the First Battalion of the Parachute Regiment of the British Army murdered 14 unarmed civil rights marchers on the streets of Derry in the North of Ireland.

This year the London march takes on a special significance. For the first time since 1972 the Parachute Regiment which was responsible for the 1972 slayings are once more patrolling the streets of Ireland — just one of the many examples of the increased repression which the minority in the North of Ireland have suffered in the last year.

The Irish solidarity movement in Britain has also changed in the last 12 months. There has been an increase in activity on Ireland, among students, women and trade unionists alike. The United

Troops Out Movement has also grown, both in numbers and geographically, and the major solidarity movement in Britain it is more united than that movement has been for some time.

The Bloody Sunday Commemoration Demonstration Committee, which is calling the main demonstration, is composed of almost all those who have been active in these various fields. It is supported by all the major left groups, the UTOM and the Student Movement Campaign on Ireland. It was also originally supported by Sinn Fein, but five weeks after the BSCDC was established Sinn Fein withdrew, and is now planning its own demonstration on the same day.

UNITY

A number of attempts have been made to persuade Sinn Fein to join the main demonstration. The BSCDC have stated that Irish groups will lead the march and Sinn Fein have been offered a speaker at the rally after the demonstration. Other speakers include Bernadette McAliskey, Eamonn McCann, Tariq Ali and Tony Cliff. With the BSCDC representing greater unity than has been achieved in this country on Ireland for some time, it is indeed unfortunate that Sinn Fein have opted out of this unity.

The mass troops out movement which still needs to be built in this country and which is the best way British socialists can aid the Irish struggle, will never be built if one organisation — British or Irish — insist that it is their 'right' to lead and control demonstrations.

Socialist Challenge urges its readers and supporters to turn out and show their opposition to the presence of British troops in Ireland. The march will assemble on Shepherds Bush Green at 1.30pm.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.

Name _____

Address _____

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.

Complete and return to:

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.