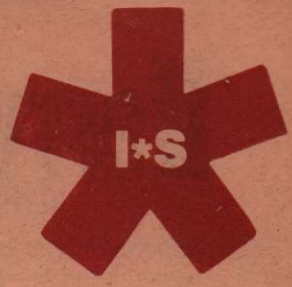


Socialist Worker



FOR WORKERS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

exclusive Moves to break Factories Act safeguards

ROUND-THE-CLOCK SHIFT WORK THREAT TO WOMEN

Socialist Worker Industrial Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO REWRITE THE FACTORIES ACT so that women can be employed on the double-shift and night work systems that are a vital part of British capitalism's drive to modernise and screw more profits from the workers.

The plans are linked to proposals to change broadcasting hours under which popular soap operas like Coronation Street will be shown at breakfast time. This would allow women on night shifts to follow the serials when they come home from work.

Behind the moves are Ministry of Labour proposals to introduce new safety, health and welfare legislation.

As part of the review of the Factories Act, a working party of the National Joint Advisory Council, with representatives from the Confederation of British Industries, the TUC, the nationalised industries and the Ministry of Labour, has prepared a report (marked 'In Confidence—Not for Publication') on the employment of women and young persons under 18 years.

Since 1819, when the employment in cotton mills of children under nine years old was forbidden, it has become established acceptance that the hours of work of women and young persons should be limited by law.

The majority of the working party thinks protective legislation has gone too far. The employers and the representatives of nationalised industries even see in it a cunning device to deny women their rights.

MESSAGE

Their rallying cry appears to be: 'Not equal pay, but equal exploitation for all!' The message is clearly spelt out in the following quotation from the report:

'The need to ask this question about legislation arises partly because the working environment and the social conditions have radically changed since the era in which the legislation was fashioned and partly because of the need to ensure that productive efficiency is not impeded by provision which may no longer be necessary ... As regards conditions of employment women should receive the same treatment as men.'

'They see no reason why women should not be allowed to decide for themselves what is good for them and, like men, have the freedom to determine by agreement with their employers, against the background of the collective bargaining system, what their hours of work should be.'

The TUC representatives could not stomach the arguments of the employers. They argued that as many women had homes to run as well as doing outside jobs, there was a great risk of women increasingly becoming the victims of industrial accidents due to excessive tiredness.

In the eyes of the employ-

Bosses and TUC in secret talks

ers at least the Ministry of Labour representatives took a more positive view. They said:

'In modern conditions the case for continuing to maintain legal restrictions on the hours of employment of women is not strong. So far as health is concerned they are advised that there are no medical reasons which would support restrictions being placed on women, as compared with men that limit their hours of work or days of employment.'

BALLOT

It is true that anomalies exist in the field of women's employment. Nurses, for example, are conditioned to shift working, including night shifts, while women employed in a factory with a tradition of day work may not be put on double-day shifts unless the majority of them agree to do so by secret ballot.

The Factories Act excludes

To back page



2500 members of the London Fire Brigade marched to County Hall on Tuesday to demand a £2 a week pay increase. They rejected a £1 offer from the GLC, who want to increase the men's week from 56 hours to 72. The brigade is 500 men understrength.

Firemen's Xmas party ban

From KATHY SIMS

HAINAULT (Essex): The local branch of the London Fire Brigade has been refused permission by the Greater London Council to hold its annual Christmas party for orphaned and deprived children.

The GLC decision was prompted by the firemen's fight for a £2 a week pay increase.

The firemen are standing firm. Their campaign has won wide support from the local

working-class movement.

Hainault fire station is on a main bus route. Bus drivers are stopping outside the station so that firemen can collect signatures from passengers who support their claim.

Tenants support

Hainault tenants—many of whom are also fighting the GLC and its savage rent increases—are passing round a petition to support the men.

Everyone in the area is disgusted that men who work

in tough and dangerous jobs for long hours every week should have to go to such lengths to get a decent wage.

Strike call

MILITANT London firemen are demanding strike action against the GLC if their demand for £2 a week extra is not accepted.

Fords do well

Ford's exports are up this year by at least £36 million compared to last year and will top £200 million.

Government plans anti-union laws

EDITORIAL

THE working-class movement must prepare to fight sinister new threats to trade unionists and, in particular, shop-floor militants who threaten the government's reactionary incomes policy.

The millionaire press is full of rumours about plans by Mrs. Barbara Castle to bring in new legal penalties against strikers.

It was suggested at first that the government might introduce an American-style 90 day 'cooling-off' period for both unofficial and official strikes, in which all disputes would have to be referred to a state commission with provisions for compulsory ballots before national strikes.

But this measure will certainly not be tough enough for the 'jail 'em and fine 'em' brigade of the Confederation of British Industry.

Now it looks as though 'Left-wing' Mrs. Castle has given in completely to the wildcat demands of the CBI. The Observer's Labour Correspondent reported last Sun-

day that she now believed only the 'most severe legal penalties would be enough to cure the problem of unofficial strikes.'

The government is under great pressure from the CBI, the City and the international bankers to get tough with the unions, to smash their fighting ability in order to further boost profits, prices and dividends.

The capitalist class, panicked last week into discussing the advantages of a dictatorial coalition government, has been further rattled by figures that show a considerable jump in the number of days lost this year through strikes.

They are also angry that disputes like the one at Girling can bring the car industry to a halt.

It seems clear that the government intends to largely ignore the recommendations of the Donovan Report on the unions, which argued against

legislation against strikes.

The only suggestion acceptable to the government is the creation of a 'trouble-shooting' Commission for Industrial Relations, chaired by some reliable anti-union trade unionist like Ray Gunter.

Mrs. Castle is prepared to reverse the government's own 1965 Trades Disputes Act, brought in to please the unions when a draughtsman named Rookes, who lost his job when he refused to join DATA, successfully sued a union official named Barnard for damages.

Pound of flesh

If the Act is reversed, union officials will be liable for 'third party damages'. But Mrs. Castle wants another pound of flesh—the right for the employers to sue unions for damages.

This would mean reversing the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, brought in after the infamous Taff Vale judgement when railway owners won £35,000 damages from the union after a strike.

At first sight it seems preposterous that a Labour government would take such extreme steps as these and risk even a break with the Weary Willies of the TUC.

But the government's record shows that it is prepared to ruthlessly crush any sign of reformism in order to please the bankers—and now it has a rattled ruling class breathing down its neck.

Whether or not such legislation would work is a side-issue at the moment. The fact that such ideas can be discussed in Labour circles shows the drift of the government towards more openly authoritarian measures.

The rank and file of the labour and trade union movement must prepare, with demonstrations, strikes and leaflets to fight these measures every inch of the way.

If we delay now it will give the government the green light to prepare even more ruthless legislation as the ship of state faces the rough seas of 1969.

WAR —WHORES

Pause. Bombing pause:
The military whores
Sit back and lick the
wounds
And down a pint for Jesus.
Suffer little children
Balls!
Suffering little children
Burnt by Christian soldiers
Marching as to whore.
And another thing.
Don't come to me
With all your wise lies
Brother.
Tomorrow
Let me remind you
The working class
Of two nations
Will kill each other.

Alex Glasgow

The naked half-truth

By ROGER PROTZ

TUESDAY'S documentary The New Radicals on BBC-1 turned out to be a garbled and incoherent mess.

Director James Mossman was determined to be 'with it' and he abandoned clarity for a series of jagged shots, switching from subject to subject, interview to interview in a bewildering manner.

And of course it wasn't very 'with it' at all—the style had been around for a decade and was made worse by such mind-boggling clichés as shots of young bourgeois trotting in Rotten Row as socialists harangued the Hyde Park crowds.

NUDE GIRL

No viewer who stayed till the end can be any clearer on the revolutionary movement. Apart from Tom Hillier, who was excellent, the programme was able to develop no ideas for what they actually were.

A large chunk of the programme was given over to an opera on female emancipation, involving a nude girl (my— isn't the BBC daring) and a robot. Interesting in its own right, no doubt, but it totally disrupted an already unbalanced programme.

Mossman returned to discuss the programme later on 24 Hours. Moving from a second showing of those naked mammaries, the interviewer asked: 'What has that got to do with revolution?'

'Two very strong reasons, really,' said Mossman. Indeed.

A merry Christmas
and a red
New Year
to our readers

Socialist Worker
will take a break next
week. We'll be back with
our issue dated January 4.

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Derry: the grim facts

about Ulster's divide and rule city...

by PAUL FOOT

THE DEMONSTRATIONS which have erupted in Northern Ireland and which, in spite of the sacking of Home Secretary Craig, will almost certainly continue, started in Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second city.

Derry's predicament sums up the 'divide and rule' policy of the Unionist government.

Here are some of the facts about the city which cannot be found in government handouts.

SUB-STANDARD

Housing. There are approximately 12,000 houses in the city, 40 per cent of which are sub-standard.

According to the 1961 census, 45 per cent of the households in the city do not have sole use of hot water; 54 per cent do not have a bath; 16 per cent do not have a kitchen sink.

About 1,250 households are in 'multiple occupation', sharing household amenities.

The Derry Housing Association has seven volumes, incorporating some 1,410 documents of cases of 'intolerable' housing conditions. And these are all Catholics.

To these have to be added at least another 300 households in the Protestant areas of The Fountain and Waterside, where conditions are no better than in the Catholic slums.

OVERCROWDING

In 1966, the city's Medical Officer of Health, who is President of the Apprentice Boys, a high-powered Masonic-type organisation named after the boys who closed the Derry gates against the invading armies in 1688, reported: 'Overcrowding plays a large part in the causation of tuberculosis in the area.'

House-building: The Derry Corporation, which is Unionist-controlled, built no houses in 1967. The following table speaks for itself:

Town	Pop.	Incl. houses built in last 5 years.
Coleraine	13,578	336
Newry	12,214	659
Portadown	20,710	535
Larne	17,278	212
Limavady	4,811	266
Londonderry	55,681	197

6. Followed by Merlin.
8. The rate of house-building

in Derry (70 houses per 1,000 people) since the war is the slowest of any housing authority in the United Kingdom.

And that's including the effort of the government-sponsored Northern Ireland Housing Trust, which has done most of the house-building in Derry since 1958.

The vote is only available in local elections to ratepayers, that is, householders in separate dwellings. More than a quarter of the adults in Derry (8,400 people) cannot vote.

There are three wards: South, North and Waterside. Half the Derry people live in South ward. Nearly all of

them are Catholics, who vote eight Nationalists on to the Corporation.

In North and Waterside there are small Protestant majorities, who return 12 Unionists. Protestants make up about 25 per cent of the Derry population, but their party controls the Corporation.

TURNED DOWN

This delicate balance controls the Corporation's housing policy.

A proposal by Derry Housing Association to build 450 houses in Pennyburn was

Derry's Guildhall - seat of Gerrymandered power



turned down—for fear of rehousing Catholics in a Protestant area.

Similarly, the Protestant slum-dwellers must stay where they are. To move them out to council houses would mean losing valuable votes.

Everything is neatly carved up and Unionists and Nationalists don't bother to fight elections.

Elections don't happen, unless, like last year, for the first time, the Northern Ireland Labour Party intervenes, getting about 30 per cent of the vote in Catholic and Protestant wards.

Unemployment is 12.5 per

cent in Derry. 17.4 per cent of males are out of work.

Unemployment in Northern Ireland depends very much on the religious nature of the area.

HIGH AND LOW

Derry is Catholic—so unemployment is high. Belfast is Protestant, so unemployment is relatively low:

Catholic Towns	Unemployment Rate %
Londonderry	12.5
Newry	15.1

Strabane	16.7
Enniskillen	17.9
Kilkeel	20.4

Protestant Towns

Belfast	5.5
Coleraine	8.8
Balymena	3.1
Portadown	3.8
Newton	3.7
Lurgan	3.5
Antrim	2.5

A YOUNG SERVICEMAN on the harsh reality of life in uniform

Remember — that man in khaki could be on your side

1968 HAS BEEN a year of action on the Left, a year of demonstrations, strikes and sit-ins, a year when apathy seemed at last to be shaken and people became aware.

But a section of the working class was isolated from these events. That section was the armed forces.

Was this because they are a group of people living a happy and contented life? The answer is a resounding NO.

Soldiers, sailors and airmen join their respective services for numerous reasons: to get a trade, travel, adventure or because there was a shortage of jobs in their home towns.

They are convicted to a

life of petty military discipline for a minimum of nine years. Many servicemen join at the wise old age of 15 for a term of engagement lasting 12 years.

Complete authority

The power structure in the services is such that although the non-commissioned men make up the overwhelming majority, the officer class have complete and utter authority.

The only people who can represent the men are the officers. No two men can join together to make a complaint.

It is argued that this is the only way to run a disciplined service, but it leaves the men open to intimidation and victimisation.

The men have no real forum for discussion of service or welfare matters and there is a great gap between the social lives of the men and the officers.

This gap exists before service life starts. The men are recruited from the working class and the officers from the middle class.

Because servicemen have no real representation and are not allowed to form trade unions, they are left in a helpless state.

Of course, there are many people who like the service life. Some come from orphanages or troubled homes; some like travelling and making friends.

But for those who dislike

the life there is nothing to look forward to but years of misery. Apart from desertion, there is no way of getting out except in extreme compassionate cases.

Those who have political convictions with the Left and who express their views face possible victimisation or dishonourable discharge.

With the present financial crisis in the capitalist world and the consequent rise in prices and freezing of wages, the establishment will expect more militant action from working-class organisations.

And when the cards are down, capitalists will play their ace—the armed forces.

Tanks rolled

In Mexico this year the army was used to suppress students and workers. In America, troops were used to 'put down' the Black people and in France in May tanks at one point were rolling towards Paris.

In this country, the govern-

ment threatened to use tanks and troops against the workers during the general strike, and the post-war Labour government twice used the army to break strikes.

Remember that the people who make up the mass of the armed forces are the people you used to go to school with. On the whole, they are good people.

But the armed forces in Britain at present are the weapons of a capitalist state.

If we are striving for a socialist Britain then the Left must lead the struggle for reform in the services.

Stop children

A debate must be opened with this in mind. Petitions should be organised to stop children of 15 joining the forces.

The period of engagement should be reduced and servicemen should be allowed to leave without having to 'buy themselves out'. Above all, they must have the right to form their own rank and file organisations to defend their rights.

The Left must attempt to break down the state-imposed barrier between workers and the forces. United, they represent a terrible threat to the system that oppresses and exploits us all.

Socialist Worker

EDITORIAL 657a High Road Tottenham London N17 telephone 01-808 2879
BUSINESS Paxton Works Paxton Road London N17 telephone 01-808 4847

Editor Roger Protz
Editorial Committee Paul Foot Richard Kuper Constance Lever Laurie Flynn
Business Manager Jim Nichol

WHERE WE STAND

mand of no victimisation of trade unionists. Redundancy should be opposed with the demand: five days work or five days pay. Shop stewards organisations should strengthen and extend their in-

fluence by linking up on an industrial and ultimately a national basis.

We are opposed to racial discrimination, a weapon used by the ruling class to divide the labour movement. Immigration control must be ended, ensuring the free movement of peoples regardless of race and colour. Black and white workers must unite and form their own defence organisations to fight fascism and racialism. The labour movement must demand the immediate recall of British troops from abroad as the first step towards ending colonial exploitation.

The task of revolutionary socialists is to join workers in their struggles with socialist ideas that will link up the various sections of the labour movement and help create a force that will lead on to workers' power and international socialism.

Have you read...

Education, capitalism and the student revolt 4s6d

France: the struggle goes on by Tony Cliff and Ian Birchall 3s6d

all prices include postage

IS BOOK SERVICE 90 Mountview Road London N4

IN MARTIN BAR on Merseyside (November 16) number of falls which should because if Soc wants to do a j sis should be b not on assumptio

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Does Martin that if the st better or long Liverpool doc would have g ghost completel have handed dockers complet last dock strike'

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HAVING PERM self a gratuitous reference to me (November 30), also consider comments.

First: '...tre playwright'. Tre is a trendy w passing on from ose one cou political contex fashionable post ling in curr moods and m for narcissistic mere ego-satis having a genui ive political pos

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There was a coherent party b I could accept Marxism-Leninism. In the muddled development of protest in this so many others usiasm and em now there.

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THE EDITOR RE

Criticisms Mercer has writte interesting desc political develop role as a pla readers may fee discussion and co In view of the his reply, it is that our diary itself a small Socialist Labour have sprinkled Mercer.

We were not a his attitude to v we were criticia critical attitude what might be figures'. In Mr. Mercer's he supports the daily Newsletter, blow-ups of hi featured promin licity for the form Mr. Mercer, it political disagree SLL, particularly question.

It is true to s is normally toug ising to marxist accept their an Certainly the used to be the their attitude to

Shell Star deal convenor explains...

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the men refused to work a productivity deal, because 'a third of the labour force would be made redundant.'
This is not true. No one on that site would have been made redundant, but the stewards and the men understood that if the interchangeability agreement was accepted at Shell Star, it would have been a pattern for all future sites, and this would have caused their labour force requirements to be cut by at least a third.

FUTURE

There is a political difference here. The men were not fighting for their immediate jobs, but for the future jobs in the industry.
Then he says that little was solved because 'Shortly after they had won a complete return to work on the old

agreement, the Shellstar stewards accepted a similar productivity agreement.'

This statement shows a complete lack of understanding of the practical and political facts of the situation. Perhaps I should explain that, last May, site stewards negotiated a £4 per week increase for all the men employed.

Barbara Castle then stepped in to stop any more payments of this increase. Arising from this, her department got together with the union executives and the firm.

They then presented the men with a productivity, interchangeability and procedure agreement. Up to this point the increase was still being paid.

The men refused to work to this agreement and were subsequently sacked. After a magnificent struggle for five



Flashback: police v. pickets at Shell Star

weeks, the men returned to work on the old agreement, but less the £4 per week increase.

USELESS

If things had been left in this setting, the Prices and Incomes Board would have in fact succeeded in what they set out to do—keep wages down.

At a future meeting already arranged to take place after the return to work, the stew-

ards were able to delete, take out or change words to make the agreement useless where the firm or the PIB are concerned. This was precisely because of the struggle that had taken place, and the fear by the firm of more action by the men if they did not get what they were entitled to.

So much so that Barbara Castle, in accepting the revised agreement, sent a letter to the union executives saying that on no account must this new agreement be introduced on any other site.

On the question of the agreement being accepted 'in the teeth of bitter opposition from many of the men', at least two days before the mass meeting, every man had a copy of both the original and the revised agreements. Yet there was very little discussion on the agreement from the floor at the meeting.

The main bitterness came from some people opposed to the site decision not to allow anyone back on the site who had found work elsewhere during the stoppage until all unemployed in each trade group were working.

Finally I think it is wrong for any socialist paper to denigrate the efforts of workers and stewards who are actually engaged in struggle, without at least trying to ascertain the true facts from source.

While it is correct to examine the positive and the negative aspects of any situation, it is wrong to give a completely defeatist attitude, as you do, when you say that in spite of all the militancy, very little was won in terms of money and conditions.

How can you say this as far as Shell Star is concerned, when an increase of 2s 6d per hour or 25 per cent was achieved along with better conditions? So much for the government's Incomes Policy.

When you put this type of slant on a fight you are discouraging workers in other parts of the country from taking part in a struggle.

UNITY

Workers take part in struggle basically to improve their lot. If you keep telling them that the workers are not winning anything, it makes it much harder for the people on the job to get them to move.

In your paper you quite rightly say that the Incomes Policy should be fought. But surely you must know that any section of workers who have a crack at it will not defeat it completely by themselves.

Only when more and more take up the fight in unity with other workers will this be done.

This is a lesson that Merseyside and other workers have to learn. They will not learn it if you keep telling them that every fight carried out has won them very little or nothing.—W.SUMMERS, Site convenor, L'pool 2.

Mrs Short in black and white

YOUR REPORT on Renee Short's latest declaration on immigrants (December 7) suggests that she has only just been converted to the keep-the-blacks-out bandwagon.

In fact, her record is quite consistent. For example, on February 15, when Enoch Powell was just limbering up with his horror stories, Mrs. Short said, 'I believe we should lay it down that an immigrant should be here a certain number of years—three to five—before being allowed to bring in his family. They may then think twice about coming.'

Later she signed an amendment to a motion by Duncan Sandys that called for 'immediate legislation to curtail the influx of immigrants to Britain'. The amendment waffled about 'the grave problems which arise when the rate of immigration exceeds the ability to assimilate newcomers'.

Renee Short also voted (with Enoch Powell) for barring Kenyan Asians from this country.

This just goes to show that the term 'Left-winger' doesn't count for much—and is absolutely meaningless when applied to a Labour MP.—ALISTAIR GRAHAM Halifax, Yorkshire.

Letters for publication should arrive first post Monday.

of a marxist playwright

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Naturally one gravitates to those points where contradictions appear to be taking the form of actual confrontations—and thus the confusions arising from that particularly pernicious English tradition of 'liberal-democratic socialism' from which it is so hard to disengage.

I say hard, because given a sort of Keir Hardie working-class background, and virtually no education—given this, with a strong dose of the post-war Koestler/Orwell 'disillusion' at a critical age, then the path to understanding theory and apprehending revolution, is long and difficult.

So much for my trendy 16 years between then and now.

Secondly: you blandly quote from an interview with me in The Guardian. You do so comfortably out of context and without, it seems, even bothering to wonder what I could have meant.

Let's have it again: '...I think it's (politics) becoming less important for me as a writer. Political commitment is not something that I'm concerned with in the foreground of my preoccupation as a writer...'

For me writing is essentially and primarily a process of the imagination. It is out

of the question to cook a play in a pot of theory, or indeed any sort of conscious intellectual structure.

I know, because in the beginning I tried it and the results were a dubious hybrid—mostly neither good politics nor good drama. The idea was to consciously dramatise social and political realities through the relationship between characters, and their relationship with their environment.

POUNCE

It took me some time to learn that the total play is the total man—that you submit to what is intuitive, and the degree (or absence) of talent determines the stature (or failure) of the work at all levels: psychological, social, political, whatever.

My statement in The Guardian, upon which you so sneeringly and unthinkingly pounce, was an attempt to compress what I have said above. No doubt I should have spelled it out more clearly for the benefit of those who would rather make hurried assumptions than scrupulously apply their minds.

As for the SLL and the 'well-heeled intellectuals'

(are no-heeled intellectuals necessarily more authentic?) one can only conclude here that you are pursuing that vindictive and paranoid sectarianism which is doing so much to destroy what little hope there is in this country of evolving towards a revolutionary party.

I support the SLL's imminent daily newspaper because I believe the time and conditions are right for the emergence of a daily newspaper based on revolutionary theoretical principles and practice, based on the need for a dialectical analysis of current events, based on the urgent imperative for a press which might counter the lies, distortions and evasions of the bourgeois press.

Whether this is what we shall get remains to be seen. It seems to me that there is a good chance, and in the meantime I doubt whether anything I say can cause alarm in Clapham High Street.

Whether or not the SLL 'deals with' its members (I can hardly know since I am not one) I suspect the relationship between their committee and individuals is rather different than your fantasies would have us believe.—DAVID MERCER, London NW8.

are the 'paranoid sectarians'?

PLIES:-

ions and individual marxists.
But perhaps this attitude does not apply if you are a 'trendy rebellious figure' prepared to help push the daily paper. The use of the word 'trendy' was deliberate: it is a phrase used by establishment-orientated hacks to turn serious political people into acceptable stereotypes.

Tariq Ali is another 'trendy rebel'—a serious, committed revolutionary whom the millionaire and racist-tainted press have attempted to defuse into a 'colourful', eloquent alien.

ABUSED

It is interesting to note the double-valued approach to Mercer and Ali in The Newsletter. The first has political differences with the SLL but supports their daily paper campaign; he is an OK figure.

The latter has political disagreement and does not support the daily paper. He is repeatedly abused in The Newsletter in a completely unmarxist manner as a 'political playboy' which represents an unthinking acceptance of the methods of the bourgeois press and its desire to avoid political argument by turning opponents into figures of fun.

Mr. Mercer's description of the kind of daily paper he would like to see is excellent. We, too, would like to see such a paper, though whether the time is ripe for its publication and whether a small group can carry such a burden are debatable.

Such a paper would clearly have to abandon the 'vindictive and paranoid sectarianism' of which The Newsletter and not Socialist Worker (which campaigns for a united revolutionary movement) is guilty. This reply marks only the third reference to the SLL in our paper this year, while The Newsletter—as Mr. Mercer must be aware—devotes space week after week to cheap and vulgar distortions of our policies and ideas.

If The Newsletter feels that our theory and practice need to be combated, then surely the discussion should be based on a clear, principled analysis, not on innuendo and hearsay. We are frequently accused of being anti-marxist and opposed to the building of a revolutionary party, but an honest assessment of our writings would show that such accusations are nonsense.

Opposition to accepting the SLL as the revolutionary party should not be construed as opposition to building a revolutionary party.

The dishonesty goes deep. One

member of the International Socialists is alleged to have said in public that Russia is a 'fascist state'. If this was said, then the comrade was certainly not speaking for IS; nevertheless, The Newsletter now crudely and frequently labels IS as the organisation that 'says' Russia is fascist.

In its analysis of the October 27 demonstration, the paper printed a picture of a Maoist tendency, the Revolutionary Students Front, which held a placard opposing Russian and American 'fascists'. The caption said the placard was carried by the 'state capitalist' RSSF. This is political dishonesty of the worst kind.

But sectarianism reached an all-time low in the issue of December 7. It contained a spiteful and dishonest caricature of the politics of Eamonn McCann, the Northern Ireland revolutionary socialist.

The Newsletter chose to attack McCann on the very day that he was appearing in court in Derry on charges arising out of the brutal police suppression of the civil rights march on October 5. There was no mention of this case, no basic solidarity with a socialist under attack by the capitalist state.

Is this, Mr. Mercer, the kind of daily paper you are championing?

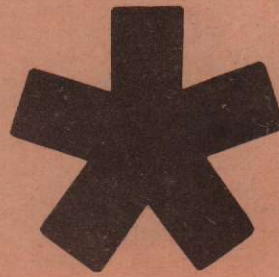
Join the International Socialists

ABERDEEN Janet Kennedy 32 East Main Ave Mastrick	GLASGOW Ian Mooney 4 Dalcross Passage W1	NORTHAMPTON Alan Druker 21 Ardington Road
ACTON John Deason 148 Rusthall Avenue W4	HAVERING Dave Rugg 8a Elm Parade Hornchurch Essex	NORWICH Gerald Crompton 220 College Rd Norwich NOR 54F
BECKENHAM Mervyn Smith 9 Alton Gardens Copers Cope Rd 01 658 6552	HORNSEY Valerie Clark 18 Dickinson Rd N8	NOTTINGHAM Robert Abrahamson 15 Wellington Square Derby Rd
BIRMINGHAM Godfrey Webster 128 Yardley Wood Rd B'ham 13	HULL Paul Gerhardt 52 Freehold Street	OXFORD Steve Bolchover 181 Iffley Road
BRADFORD Bob Kornreich Flat 1 7, Oak Avenue Bradford 8	ILFORD Lionel Sims 99 Belgrave Road 01 SEV 6991	POTTERIES John Whitfield 5 Grosvenor Rd Newcastle U Lyme
BRIGHTON Micky Adams Flat 4 85 St. Aubyns Hove	IPSWICH Malcolm Bezant 45 Melbourne Road	RICHMOND Peter Glatter 3 Burlington Ave Kew
BOLTON F Canavan 11 Sutton Rd Sutton Estate Deane Bolton	ISLINGTON/ANGEL D Phillips 2 Chapel Mkt Grant St N1 01 BRU 1026	RIPLEY & ILKESTON C Burnett 75 Heage Road Ripley Derbys
CAMBRIDGE Peter Smith 65 Glisson Road	DALSTON/SHOREDITCH B Hugill 154 Downham Rd N1	SELBY John Charlton 12 Thatch Close Selby Yorks
CAMDEN Chris Barker 36 Gildden Road NW5	HIGHBURY Keith Ellis 8 Archibald Road N7	SHEFFIELD J Wilkin 15 Raven Road Sheffield S7 ISB
CHERTSEY Nick Humphrey 83 New Haw Rd Addlestone Surrey	KENTON Kevin Simms 56 Salisbury Road Harrow	SOUTHAMPTON John Fisher 144 Thornhill Park Road
COLCHESTER Ian Noble 12 Coach Rd Arlesford Wivenhoe 272	KILBURN Sean Dunne 18 Lithos Road NW3	STEVENAGE Michael Downing 57 Trumper Road Trots Hill
COVENTRY Richard Hyman 49 Stychole Ave Earlsdon	KINGSTON Roger Crossley Flat 2 6 The Avenue Surbiton	STOCKPORT Barry Biddulph 10 Foliage Crescent Brinnington
CRAWLEY Deborah Ward 2 Weddell Rd Tilgate	LAMBETH Andy Smith Flat 6 126 Streatham Hill SW2	STOKE NEWINGTON Mike McGrath 28 Manor Road N16
CROYDON Jenny Woodhams 26 Braemar Avenue South Croydon	LEICESTER Shirley Abrams Flat 3 26 St Albans Road	SWANSEA Pete Branston 33a Uplands Crescent
DURHAM A Beard 35 Hallgarth Durham	LEEDS Vince Hall Flat 3 25 Bayge Road Leeds 2	TOTTENHAM Laurie Flynn 374 High Road N17
EAST LONDON John Metcalfe 61 Wolsey Avenue E17	LOWESTOFT Ron Mallet 30 Cotmore Road	TOWER HAMLETS M Renn 58 Merchant St Bow E3
EDINBURGH Jim Smith 25 Pitt St (Leith) Edinburgh 6	MANCHESTER Jack Sutton 11a Rowan Avenue Walley Range M16	WATFORD Paul Russell 61 Carpenders Avenue Carpenders Park
ENFIELD Gill Pressman 34 The Chine London N21	MERSEYSIDE Ross Hill 5 Lothair Rd Anfield Liverpool 4	WIGAN Ray Challinor 34 Whiteside Avenue Hindley
FULHAM Jackie Taylor 41 Perham Road W14	MERTON Malcolm Roe 22 Elmhurst Avenue Mitcham Surrey	WOOD GREEN Helen Wigley 332 High Road N22
FOLKESTONE Dave Cowell c/o 18 Station Rd	MIDDLESBOROUGH Chris Chard 32 Bedford Terr Billingham	WOLVERHAMPTON Dave Spilsbury 274 Penn Road
	NEWCASTLE Tony Corcoran 26 Lesbury Road	YORK Bob Looker 22 Hobgate

Please send further details of the meetings and activities of the international socialists to

Name

Address



Building unions surrender

By TED RICHARDS (ASPD)

A KICK UP THE ARSE FOR CHRISTMAS—that's Labour's bonus for building workers who will lose 1d an hour from their increase of 3d per hour for labourers and 3½d for craftsmen next week.

The building union leaderships have agreed to the wage cut. Their opposition to the government lasted no more than a few days and consisted only of a few 'militant' phrases.

Doleful Xmas in North-east

Socialist Worker Reporter

DON'T TELL the North East's unemployed about the most prosperous Christmas ever.

In Bedlington, Blyth and Sunderland it's got a very hollow ring. It's a good year for 'Provident' checks, dole clerks and debt collectors.

Unemployment in the Northern Region stands at 4.8 per cent (64,000—November figures, Department of Employment and Productivity Gazette). The figure is exactly double the national average.

But this is a very misleading figure. Male unemployment is much higher and unemployment in some towns is approaching 1930s levels.

TYNESIDE has 16,330 men on the dole—7.1 per cent.

SUNDERLAND is so bad that it was actually mentioned in parliament last week. The general rate is 6.5 per cent but male unemployment is 10 per cent.

DURHAM, STANLEY and HARTLEPOOLS are approximately the same as this, while in areas of recent pit closures, South-West Durham and mid-Northumberland, it's even worse.

BLYTH has 10 per cent unemployed.

EDGEFIELD and FERRYHILL, where Mainsforth colliery (950) closed last month, stands at 12 per cent, possibly higher.

BEDLINGTON (Northumberland) claims along with Millom (Cumberland) the highest unemployment rate in England—14 per cent.

Happy Christmas Harold!

MEETINGS

IS NATIONAL STUDENTS meeting. Sat Jan 4. 10-6. At LSE.

IS LONDON REGION MEETING. Rosa Luxemburg commemoration meeting. Spkr Tony Cliff. Sat Jan 18. Africa Centre, King Street, WC2 (tube Leicester Square) 8.30-6. Followed by social at New Merlin's Cave, Margery St WC1, 8.00 pm.

Small Ads

ROSA LUXEMBURG 1919-1969 poster. Black on Red 5s. Black on White 4s. Prices inc. post. Socialist Worker, Paxton Works, Paxton Road N17.

IS BADGES with Socialist Worker symbol. All proceeds to the paper. 1s each. 10s per doz. Fior, 6 Alwyne Villas, London N1.

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Jingle bells in the High Street

'THE PUBLIC HAVE gone buying mad,' a spokesman for British Homes Stores commented last week.

For despite the government's attacks on spending power, the annual ritual of the Christmas shopping spree is again filling the tills.

In a country where many hundreds of millions are spent on advertising, Christmas is undoubtedly the best of all sales promotions.

The absence of Christmas spending would undoubtedly leave a large dent in the profits of all stores and many manufacturers.

The government's retail sales index shows how powerful Christmas is as a magnet to draw in the cash. Last year, for example, sales leapt 50 per cent in December.

Jewellers more than doubled sales and a similar increase was recorded by sports and toy shops.

Boots, the giant chemists' chain, recorded sales of £1 million a day just before Christmas last year. This is almost twice the rate for the rest of the year.

The interim report of W.H. Smith, the booksellers, said that 'if the Christmas trade approaches expectations, profits will top the previous £3 million record.'

All the year long, competing capitalist interests fight it out for what is known as 'consumer expenditure'. Landlords and employers use brute force to cut back on what workers have available to spend.

In the high street, stores



will use any means, however irrational, to grab what is left. And Christmas provides a heaven-sent opportunity to empty pockets and boost profits.

Of course, the buoyant sales that Christmas will inevitably produce, will be used by the government to show how well off we really are.

But when Selfridges claim that £300 colour television sets are the 'big thing' this Christmas, we can be sure workers are not among the customers.

Share prices have soared ahead this year. So the rich will have no trouble in affording their best Christmas so far.

But workers, who have been hit by rising prices, wage freezes and taxation, will find all the propaganda about 'rec-

ord spending sprees' a little ironic.

Prices have risen by around 6d in the pound over the last year alone.

And for the six million people living below the government's poverty line, the whole thing is little more than a sick joke.

The contradiction between the dazzling show of wealth and the harsh poverty which most of the world's people suffer, whatever the season, is not lost on our rulers.

Charities for the starving are eagerly encouraged. But, these few crumbs hardly touch the real problems.

But it is very convenient that, for example, the action of oil interests and the British government in Nigeria can be temporarily forgotten amid the chink of collecting boxes for the war victims going round the Stock Exchange.

Round-the-clock shift work threat to women

From page one

night work for women except in special circumstances and after a carefully worked-out process of consultation and agreement.

Probably for their own convenience many women would willingly do shift work. But they should realise that the employers are not concerned with women's convenience, but with their own profit.

JARGON

The following quote, couched in the official jargon of the profit takers, illustrates this point.

'First in regard to shift work, the changing pattern of industrial (and indeed non-industrial) employment and of social life has to be recognised. With the constant introduction of expensive new equipment, shift working will no doubt continue to increase so as to maximise the economic return from the capital investment involved and indeed before committing capital to the purchase of such machinery employers want to be assured that shift working will be possible, so as to ensure an adequate return.'

What the employers want is flexibility. And all in the sacred name of profit.

At present Section 68 of the Act requires that all women and young persons in a factory have their breaks at the same time. This helps the enforcement of work of the Factory Inspector.

The Working Party feel that this requirement 'denies to employers the flexibility in arranging the hours of their women and young persons... so essential in present day

conditions.'

So the Working Party want to abolish the provision. They propose to substitute for the present some form of notice to be posted in a factory showing starting and finishing times and intervals for meals and rest.

At present the maximum continuous work spell without a break for women and young persons is 4½ hours to be followed by a half-hour break, except that if a 10-minute break is given the work spell may be increased to one of five hours.

The Working Party appears to be willing to agree to increase the work spell to one of six hours provided the 10-minute break is given.

The employers insist on the right to work double-day shifts without limit of starting or finishing times. This means that shifts could start as early as 5 am and finish as late as 12 mid'night.

Workers who know the nature of employers will not

be surprised at their proposals. What might surprise some is the failure of the TUC representatives to put up more resistance, but as they accept all the reactionary talk about wage freezing and productivity their support is not so surprising.

The proposal for a work spell of six hours could be the most dangerous of all. This means that employers, especially in the so-called development areas, could operate factories for 12 hours with two six-hour shifts of women, paying them no premium rates either for shift working or for overtime.

In the name of progress and equality, the government and the bosses want to turn the clock back to Victorian times. Their plans would destroy the social life of many thousands of working-class families.

And with women notoriously difficult to organise into unions, they would lay themselves open to the worst exploitation at the lowest rates

Cinema pickets arrested

A HULL MAGISTRATE told a police superintendant last week that he had no right to allow students to picket a cinema where The Green Berets, an American propaganda film about Vietnam, was being shown.

Fourteen students were in the dock accused of obstruction. One was discharged and the others were fined £4 each.

Although passers-by were allowed free movement by the

pickets, the demonstrators were fined because for one brief moment they had linked arms when four of their number were dragged away by the police.

By allowing them to win the case on a minor technical point, the magistrate has given a free hand to the local police force to run in any demonstrator for obstruction.

An assault charge has been lodged against the police

LABOUR COUNCIL SACKS 25 TEACHERS

From GORDON BLAIR

SOUTH SHIELDS:- The town council decided last week to sack 25 part-time teachers at Christmas as part of an economy drive.

After a stormy meeting of the Labour-controlled Durham council, most of the Labour and all of the Progressive (Tory) councillors voted to back the management board proposal.

A meeting of the local Labour Party and Trades Council on December 3 condemned the cuts and asked the Labour councillors not to support them. But only four Labour and two Independent councillors voted against the sackings in the council.

One of the Independents said: 'I thought at least one side would think of the children.'

The sackings and the reshuffle of the town's teaching staff in the middle of the school year will cause serious disruption.

Denounced

Most of the part-timers are specialists who cannot adequately be replaced. Mr. E. J. Rowson, branch secretary of the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions, denounced the move as 'cut-price education'.

The Times Educational Supplement has forecast that remedial work in the town will be severely hit if the sackings go through.

The cuts were only partly a result of Jenkins the Squeeze and his Whitehall men.

The government had cut £3000 from the estimate for teachers' salaries with little opposition from the local council, but most of the blame must fall on bureaucratic bungling at local level.

Most frightening has been the lack of fight shown by local teachers, parents and political organisations on an issue which commands wide public sympathy. Apart from one well-attended but rather haphazard public protest, the local teachers' organisations have made the usual 'sherry party protests.'

Intervene

In desperation, the town's Labour Party Young Socialists have called on Edward Short, Secretary of State for Education and Science, to intervene to stop the sackings.

The episode has been an ill-omen for the success of the fight against the real government clamp-down that is coming.

One thing that has been clearly shown is that we cannot expect our elected representatives to look after the children.

Councillor J. Donegan, chairman of the Labour Party and Trades Council and one of those who did vote against the sackings, said: 'The pattern has been set that the lowest possible standard is good enough.'

He added: 'In the near future the Progressive group will be the controlling body in South Shields. I think the people can be assured that they will not notice the difference.'

'As a life-long member of the Labour Party, this is the saddest day of my political life.'

Nearly Tory-controlled Sunderland council has 'denied' rumours that it is considering similar sackings.

Election victory

The general election in Guyana was won by the CIA.

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