

# RED WEEKLY

Read June 9th  
**Socialist Challenge**

SPECIAL 4-PAGE PULL-OUT INSIDE!

## ANOTHER 'VICTORY' FOR THE CONTRICK SACKED FOR FIGHTING CUTS

Workers who went on strike against cuts on 11 May have been sacked by British Steel management and have now occupied the Reinforced Steel Services plant in Greenwich, London.

Since taking control last Thursday the workers have gained massive evidence of British Steel Corporation management's involvement with the right wing Economic League and the Special Branch in compiling dossiers containing false accusations and statements on persons working at the plant.

The occupation is demanding the full re-instatement of six workers sacked after the workforce had decided to give full support to the 11 May demonstration against cuts called by NUPE in London. Management threats were issued to all members of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation in the plant to prevent the action taking place.

In the face of these threats a unanimous decision was taken to close the works and attend the march. The management then sacked the six including works representatives Paul Lutener and suspended seven others including ISTC branch chairman Peter Suret.

### CLOSURE

The plant — which makes steel reinforcing for the construction industry is under threat of closure. This would worsen the 43 per cent job losses in the area in the past period. The closure proposal came on 21 January this year — the same day that the workforce returned from a successful strike over safety.

Jack Oughan, safety steward at the plant, explained their concern about the closure of hospitals in the London area: 'Dust in the factory is terrible. Three workers have got "deep lung" problems. The dust around one of the machines is a hundred times that laid down in factory standards.'

The occupation which is run along full democratic lines has asked all other workers in the area who supported the 11 May strike,

to support this basic right of trade unions to strike. These include local hospitals, school bus drivers, and factories including Chloride Metals, BICC, Burke and Harveys and Stones Manganese. But there has been no support from ISTC officials, instead only a telegramme instructing branch representatives to order all workers to return to work.

### SOLIDARITY

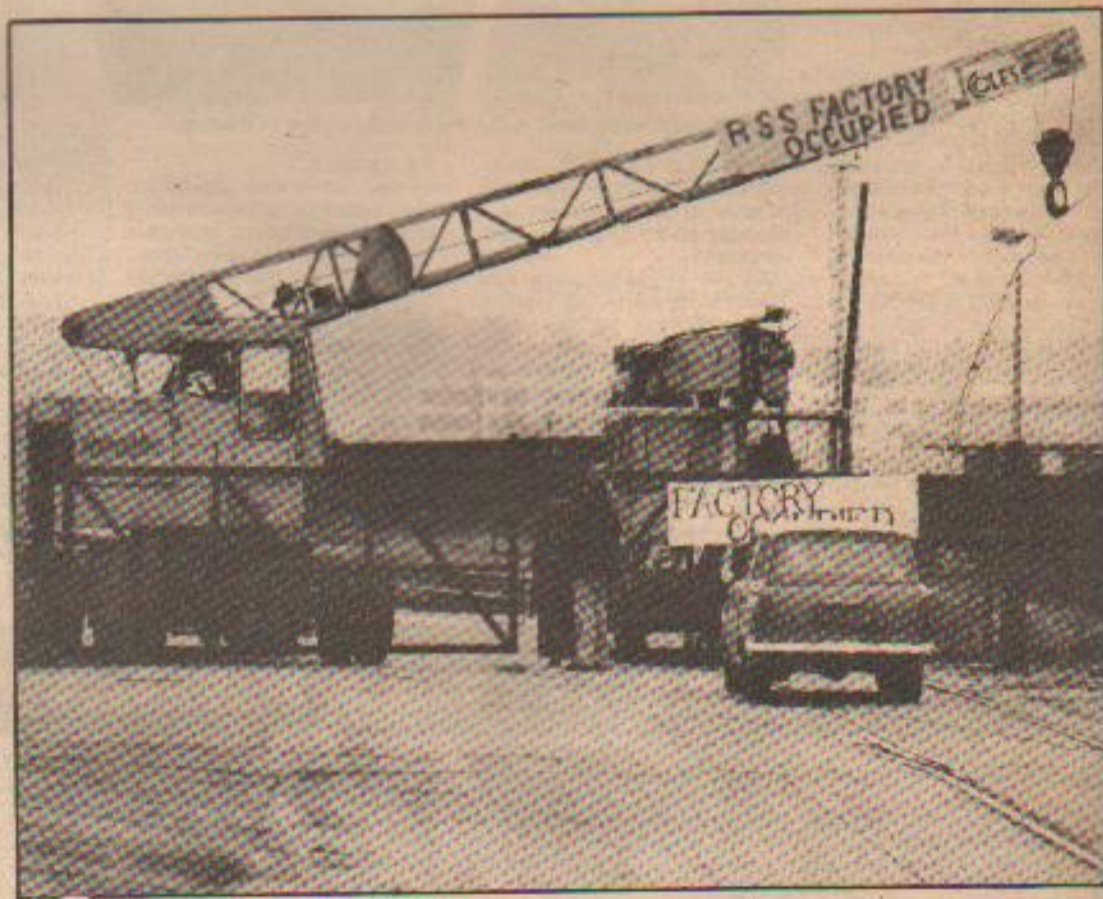
The occupation committee is asking its sister plants — Ickles and Meadow Hall in Sheffield, and Whiteheads in Newport, and all other sections of BSC — to block all RSS works. The workers at RSS are fighting for trade unionism. They are fighting for the right to work. They are fighting against the cuts. They are fighting for the whole working class. Now they need backing. Resolutions, money and speakers: Occupation Committee, c/o Ron Mitchell, 24 Kentmere Road, London, SE18.

Port Talbot strikers' convenor Wyn Bevan told Red Weekly he is 'absolutely astounded' by the sackings. 'For BSC to sack people protesting against government policy is criminal. If they try anything like that with us they're in for a rude shock. We won't stand for it'.

STEVE POTTER REPORTS



11 MAY — six steelworkers who marched against cuts have now been sacked.



## Week's total tops £1,000

LAST WEEK our Fund Drive grew richer by £1,038.73. Money is beginning to roll in as the final weeks of the Fund Drive draw near. But we still need to raise £5,804.27 if we are to reach our target of £15,000 by 5 June.

That target is not an arbitrary figure. It is the absolute minimum we need if we are to fulfill the tasks we have set ourselves. These have been spelt out week after week. We want to launch a 16-page paper — Socialist Challenge. We need to equip our new premises. This means

an expansion of our staff. And in addition to the ongoing work of the International Marxist Group — in the unions, in the student and the women's movement, in the anti-fascist and anti-racist committees — we have to begin to make preparations for a general election.

If you agree with the need to overcome the fragmentation of the left and see the necessity to organise a socialist opposition without delay, help turn this commitment into a reality by

sending in your financial contribution now. Workers League members in Sheffield have done just that. They have sent us a £5.00 donation towards the project of Socialist Challenge. Follow their example! Cheques payable to 'The Week', 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

Our thanks this week to:  
 Oxford IMG £25.33  
 Southampton IMG £8.50  
 Yorkshire IMG £5.90  
 Bristol IMG £50.00  
 MM £20.00

BT £200.00  
 KR £70.00  
 Dave Burns (NALGO) £20.00  
 Anon £4.00  
 Jullius Karanja £20.00  
 Pete Grist £5.00  
 YC & TC £100.00  
 Leonora Lloyd £5.00  
 Jo O'Brien £20.00  
 Jane Leggett, Hackney TC delegate £20.00  
 Liz Smith £20.00  
 NHS worker £100.00  
 OT £30.00  
 RD £120.00  
 Anon £50.00

Richard M. £80.00  
 Workers League members £5.00  
**TOTAL £1,038.73**

The next lap of the Socialist Challenge tour begins on Friday. Red Weekly readers should note the following dates in their calendar. Make it as successful as the meetings held in the tour's first week!

- \* Sun 22 May Nottingham
- \* Mon 23 May Oxford
- \* Tues 24 May Cardiff
- \* Wed 25 May Swansea
- \* Thur 26 May Bury
- \* Fri 27 May Bristol
- \* Sun 29 May Birkenhead
- \* Mon 30 May Reading
- \* Tues 31 May Manchester
- \* Wed 1 June Liverpool
- \* Fri 3 June So'ton
- Warrington
- Bolton
- Preston
- Brighton
- Canterbury
- London

# Free jailed student leader!

ANDY STROUTHOUS, President of North East London Polytechnic Students Union and a member of the NUS Executive, was sentenced to indefinite imprisonment in Pentonville last Wednesday.

His crime was following his union's instructions to carry out his duties as President of the union. The polytechnic's director, Dr. Brosan, having previously expelled Strouthous recently sought an injunction preventing Andy from entering the Polytechnic premises. Andy's refusal to give an undertaking to abide by the conditions of the injunction led to him being jailed for contempt of court.

The reason why the college authorities are so concerned to get rid of him is that they want to strangle the union's campaigning strength.

Strouthous' role in leading actions, notably in the teacher unemployment and fees campaigns is the reason for his victimisation.

The response of the Broad

Left leaders of NUS to this unprecedented attack has been abysmal. Not only did they refuse to support the demonstration called in his defence last Friday, but Deputy President Pete Ashby took the opportunity to call on students to end the few occupations against fee increases that are still continuing.

Steps have to be taken now to mobilise the widest support for the regular nightly pickets outside Pentonville. Trade unions and student unions should all be approached demand Strouthous' release and to organise action in his defence. Telegrams should be sent to NUS calling on them to organise national action in defence of Strouthous.

An appeal against Andy Strouthous' imprisonment will be heard this Wednesday. If he is not released a demonstration will be called for Friday at 6pm. Details can be obtained from NELP Students Union. Tel 01-534 5208.



Students demonstrate outside Pentonville Prison the night Strouthous was jailed.

## Scottish Women's Rights Rally

More than 120 people attended a Scottish rally for Women's Rights held in Glasgow on 7 May. The rally was initiated by the Edinburgh Working Women's Charter Group and backed by various trade union bodies, women's groups and political organisations. It was intended to take stock of the situation of women one year after the Labour government's Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.

A Scottish Socialist leaflet distributed at the rally announced that the government's legislation was on trial. Women's rights lawyer Sheila Gilmour and TASS full-timer Helen Gallagher gave countless examples of how loopholes in the acts and often farcical tribunal decisions prevented women getting a favourable outcome.

As reported in last week's Red Weekly, the rally was addressed by Eilan Nicklin, shop stewards' convenor at Laird Porch in East Kilbride.

She explained how the employers had stalled for time for more than a year after the introduction of the Equal Pay Act under the pretence of formulating a national agreement to implement equal pay. The women at Laird Porch, who were being paid less for semi-skilled work than unskilled male workers, had no faith in the Act or tribunals. The only way to ensure they won their demands was industrial action.

The importance of the reformist solution is exposed, but we are spared any easy sloganising. The climax of the debate between the Labour candidate and the Asians and their ally — ironically set in an Indian restaurant — presents clear political conclusions, but we do have to draw them for ourselves. In one short scene Edgar manages to present the personal dilemma of the left Labourite without engaging our sympathy for him in the slightest.

It is that sort of presentation — quite a departure from agitprop — which is the play's strength. But it stands out above all as a political statement. Those critics such as Colin Chambers of the *Morning Star*, who saw no solution offered must have closed their eyes and ears a few minutes from the end.

*Destiny* ends with a familiar but timely warning from... Adolf Hitler: 'Only one thing could have stopped our movement — if our adversaries had understood its principle and from the first day has smashed with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement.'

RICHARD CARVER

A LONDON West End theatre is not the usual place you would expect to look for a Marxist analysis of the rise of post-war British fascism. But there is one there at the moment — *Destiny* by David Edgar at the Aldwych Theatre.

# DESTINY

Although the play marks a change from Edgar's earlier agit-prop style, Birmingham Repertory Theatre still found the political content too hot to handle. The Royal Shakespeare Company staged it last year as their small Stratford theatre, the Other Place. It is above all a testimony to the play as *theatre* that the RSC was prepared to move it to its London theatre.

The play's central characters are drawn together by their common experience in India on Independence Day, 1947.

## UNION JACK

When he is demobbed Sergeant Taylor sets up as an antique dealer. He is bought out by the Metropolitan Investment Trust and sets up a band of tatty union jack wavers which becomes absorbed by a party called Nation Forward — no prizes for guessing who they are — whose by-election candidate he becomes in a Midlands constituency.

Major Rolfe becomes increasingly convinced of the need for an 'iron dawn' to set the country back on its feet. When Turner wins 23 per cent of the by-election poll Rolfe offers Turner and the Nation Forward leaders his financial support — only for Turner to discover that Rolfe is the boss of the Metropolitan Investment Trust.

The only condition, the fascists tell Rolfe, is that you must be prepared to drop the 'free' from 'free enterprise'.

And there is Gurjeet Singh Khara, the servant who takes



Fascist scabs try to break Asian workers' picket line in *Destiny*.

advantage of his British citizenship to come to Britain. He leads a strike of Asian workers at a foundry in the by-election constituency.

All this is more than a neat dramatic device — although it works perfectly on that level. Edgar accurately locates the specific features of the new rise of British fascism in the loss of the Empire.

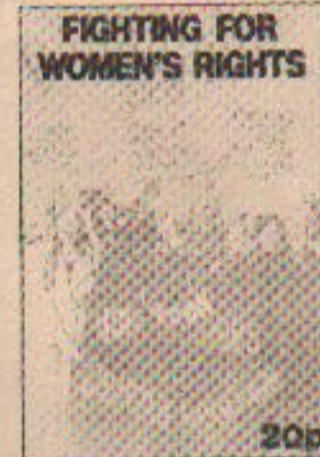
The play is strongest when it examines the internal workings of British fascism. There are two dangers, one character explains: on the one hand those who wish to take the 'national' out of National Socialism and on the other those who want to take out

the 'socialism'. Edgar shows how the leadership, initially a back-room group of Hitler worshippers, seize upon the opportunities given them, above all by Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech, to use racism as their central popular plank. But the NF's central tenets remain those of fascism: the master race, the world conspiracy of capitalism and communism, the defence of national values.

This look *inside* fascism gives a clue to the social base on which it grows. It is made clear how fascism attracts more backward workers — mainly on the basis of racism and the scapegoat it offers

— but never loses sight of the importance of the middle layers of society to its strategy. Turner himself is just such a representative of a social stratum for whom neither of the major classes of capitalist society seems to offer any political answers.

*Destiny's* discussion of how to fight fascism is mostly an inverted one — that is, it explains the sort of social and economic conditions on which fascism feeds. We are shown the contrasting strategies offered by the Tory candidate ('a truce on the question of racism'), the left Labour candidate and the Asian workers and a white militant in the Labour Party.



OUT THIS WEEK: a new Socialist Women pamphlet which shows how the Labour Government's policies are reinforcing women's oppression and explains the role of the Working Women's Charter in organising a fightback. 20p plus 10p p&P from: Redcoast, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1. Five or more copies post free.

Speakers from the floor proposed that people in various unions attending the rally should meet together afterwards to attempt to improve coordination of the fight for women's rights inside their unions. Summing up on the afternoon's discussion, Linda Smith of Aberdeen women's group spoke of the need for local groups to monitor tribunal cases and organise support for women using them.

She recalled the practical solidarity that trade unionists and students in Glasgow had given to the wave of equal pay struggles in the late 1960s which pressurised the Labour government into formulating the Equal Pay Act. The same sort of support — both financial and on the picket line — was necessary at Laird Porch and wherever else the struggle spread to.

— Scottish Socialist Supporters.

## ANTI-FASCIST CAMPAIGN ANTI-I

### Manchester

A NUMBER of leading voluntary, community and trade union figures in the Manchester area have circulated a letter drawing attention to the efforts of a former member of Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to form a Manchester Amateur Athletics Association. The gentlemen in question is one Walter Hesketh who, says the letter, is 'well known for his involvement in fascist movements and for his extreme right wing views'.

As well as being one-time Manchester organiser for Mosley, Hesketh stood as a Blackshirt candidate in Moss Side, Manchester in 1962 when he said that if his organisation came to power it would spend £11 million to send home all coloured immigrants who had come to Britain since 1945.

The letter goes on to say that Hesketh's name was later 'coupled with CARN [Campaign for Action for the Relief of Need] which under the guise of being a militant black power organisation attempted to put up 95 local candidates in the 1970 elections. Apparently with the intention of creating a backlash against the

signatories state that they 'think it is absolutely essential that a body which could quickly become the major athletics organisation in this multi-racial county, must above all be free from any suspicion of racism'.

The signatories include the General Secretary of Manchester Trades Council, the Director of the Manchester Youth Organisation and the General Secretaries of Manchester Youth Association, Bury Council for Voluntary Service and Manchester Council for Voluntary Service.

### Birmingham

LAST THURSDAY'S meeting of the Birmingham Trades Council came out in support of the action taken by a local teacher's union branch. The NUT presented a resolution calling for a ban on letting school rooms out to the fascists.

The discussion arose from a decision taken by a caretaker on 23 February. He refused school premises to the NF. His action was backed by teachers in the school.

It was reported at the Trades Council meeting that Tory Councillor Grimshaw — Chairman of the Executive Committee — had

teachers' proposed ban. But, he explained, his hands were tied. It seems the police have told him that the ban could not be enforced, because the NF would then turn to open-air meetings. With the increased anti-fascist activity in Birmingham, open air meetings are something the police would prefer not to get involved in.

### Manchester Univ

AN ANTI-MARXIST League has been set up at Manchester University. This is the first attempt by members of the fascist National Front and National Party to come out in public amongst students. Since its formation the university walls have been plastered with racist and fascist literature.

A united front anti-fascist committee has been established to organise against this threat. They have already planned a series of meetings and actions.

### B'ham Conference

EIGHTY-THREE delegates — predominantly from white collar workers, local Labour Party and

Indian Workers Association and the West Indian Confederation — met at the Birmingham Trades Council Anti-Racist Conference last Saturday.

A programme of action was agreed to which included an extensive leafletting of anti-racist and anti-fascist material in conjunction with shop stewards committees, and a demonstration in Birmingham against racism.

An attempt by the Communist Party to broaden the committee on the basis of 'one race, the human race' was proposed by a delegate from the building workers' union UCATT. The concern of the delegate was the involvement of such organisations as the Church. This attempt failed by a vote of 39-31.

An amendment which came from militants in the Mosley Labour Party also called for the committee's broadening — to include delegates from shop stewards committees, trade union branches, and ethnic minorities, was accepted. So was their motion to demand an end to all immigration controls, rather than merely those introduced between 1968 and 1971 as the

I would like information about the

# INTERNATIONAL ING MARXIST GROUP

Fill in the form below and send it to: National Secretary, International Marxist Group, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

Name .....

Address .....

# ABORTION . . .

## 10,000 march in London

OVER TEN THOUSAND MARCHERS — with a particularly strong show of force from the women's movement — demanded an end to the anti-abortion Benyon Bill and the right of women to choose when and if to have an abortion. On Saturday's

demonstration, banners were also there from a wide range of trade unions — from the building workers' and the printworkers' unions, to those of white collar workers including ASTMS, NATFHE, AUEW, NUT and NALGO.

But the numbers marching behind the labour movement banners were disappointing and didn't match the contingents organised by the women's and student movement. Sixty-five coachloads of marchers came from all over the country. And the international contingent had women from Spain, France, Germany, Chile and Belgium.

One of the strongest speeches at the rally in Hyde Park came from Rose Knight who represented the National Abortion Campaign — the major force behind the march. She vigorously put the case for a mass campaign directed against the Government to continue the offensive NAC has mounted over the past two years.

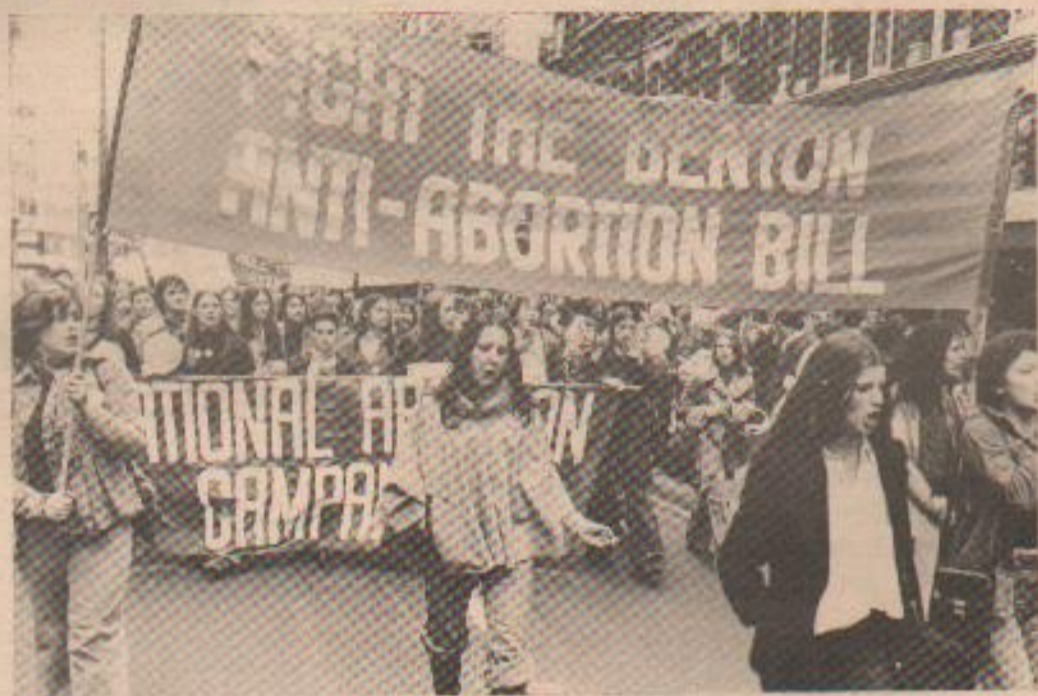
'We are clear about what we want', she told a responsive crowd. 'We want more out-patient abortion clinics, full NHS provisions for abortion, fully available contraception — and research into contraceptive methods so they are safe. We are fighting for an end to enforced sterilisation suffered by black and poor women. And we stand for a strong defence of the charitable sector which should be incorporated into the NHS.'

Knight argued for positive legislation after a full discussion in the pro-choice movement, but strongly opposed any legal or medical restrictions on women's control over their fertility. She appealed for an even stronger show of force for other NAC actions over the coming months. The next national march will be held in Birmingham on 29 October.

An equally hard-hitting speech came from Toni Gorton of the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign. She came down hard on the Labour leaders who had to take their share of the responsibility for the continuing attacks on women's abortion rights. Most Labour MPs had ignored the decisions of the Labour Party Conference and a full 150 MPs hadn't even bothered to turn up for the vote. The crowd yelled back in unison to her questions — rejecting the Benyon Bill, the interference in women's lives by the state, and that of the 'pontificating, pious priests'.

The first national LARC conference to be held the next day would decide on a proposal for a mass lobby at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton. 'If accepted we want everyone here, and everyone from your union, from your women's group, from your college and from your town that you haven't brought today, to join us on the lobby in the autumn.'

Other speakers on the platform included MP Jo Richardson (chairperson); Oonagh MacDonal MP; Dr. Alice Routon from Doctors for a Woman's Choice; Von McClary from the Working Women's Charter Campaign; Germaine Greer; Tess Woodcraft from the Abortion Law Reform Association and Judith Hunt



Lead banner on the 14 May abortion demonstration.

from AUEW/TASS.

Rosa Franquet from the Barcelona women's movement got the most sustained applause. Her speech was a sharp contrast with those of the Labour MPs who spoke. While they relied on well-worn appeals for more indi-

vidual letter-writing, Franquet stressed the need for a broad movement on an international scale.

The continuing repression in Spain has taken its toll on women. Franquet described the mass campaign she was involved in, which

demanding amnesty for prisoners, including women imprisoned for female 'crimes' like abortion and adultery.

Without doubt the demonstration was a success. It showed the breadth of the pro-choice movement — despite recent Government efforts to placate supporters with guarantees that no extra parliamentary time would be allotted for the Benyon Bill.

But this success occurred despite the work of most of the political organisations on the left. The Communist Party failed miserably to pull out its members and supporters, particularly in the trade union movement.

Unlike the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party had made an important effort to build the march. But despite the hard work of many SWP members, the refusal of the SWP leadership to participate in and build NAC once again reveals their incapacity to understand the necessity of building the campaign rather than seeing the question of abortion rights merely as a vehicle to build the SWP.

If the actions organised by NAC are to be successful, the tasks in the coming months are clear. High on the agenda will be the need to get the labour movement to take its responsibility in organising the fight.

The campaign around positive legislation with a special conference to discuss concrete proposals will be an important step in ensuring the involvement of the labour movement in the fight.

DODIE WEPPLER

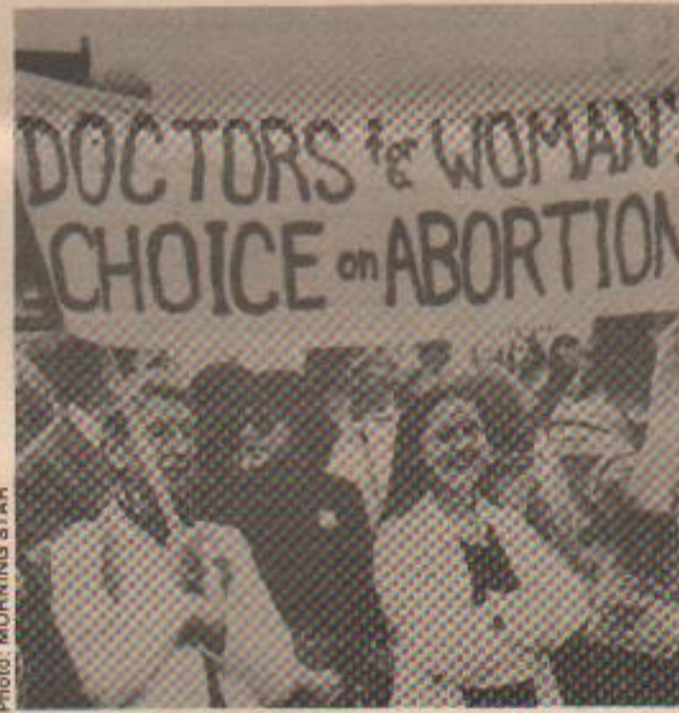


Photo: MORNING STAR

## Scottish action

★ IN SCOTLAND 250 pro-choice militants travelled to Glasgow to march against Benyon's restrictive Bill. It was a good turn-out with only a week's notice

for the march. The demonstration was called by Women's Voice without any consultation or contact with NAC. The first the campaign

heard of the march was a phone call from London last week. Plans for Scottish activity were well underway when Women's Voice announced their intentions. After some discussion, NAC agreed to support the proposal.

Despite this sectarian approach, members of the SWP showed a good sense of joint action on the day itself. They agreed to put the NAC contingent at the front and gave NAC the first speaker. This contrasts with the way in which they built the demonstration, which appeared to many to be simply a party-building exercise. Many Scottish campaigners were critical because the SWP has not been active in NAC.

Eve Oldham, a member of the Scottish Socialist League and speaking on behalf of NAC, opened the rally. She stressed that the attack on women's abortion rights was part and parcel of the attack being levelled against the working class as a whole. 'This is an ongoing struggle. If Labour falls, the Tories will return and will be equally restrictive on this

ence in NALGO, she warned against the influence of right wing groups such as Catholic Action. This group had launched a campaign to disaffiliate her union branch from NAC. In addition to influencing the labour movement, Catholic Action dominated the entire medical profession, according to Oldham.

Other speakers on the platform — Ian Gidley, a NUPE steward at Stobhill Hospital and Angela McHugh from the AUEW — pointed to the obstacles that prevent women from exercising choice about child-bearing.

With a thousand women a year forced to travel south for abortions, the west of Scotland needs a strong, united abortion campaign. It is to be hoped that the SWP's belated approach to the NAC can be turned into a permanent commitment. The call of McHugh — a Women's Voice supporter — to build the NAC meeting on 12 June in Glasgow is a step in the right direction.

★ Glasgow National Abortion Campaign Public Meeting: Sun-

# IN FOCUS

RED WEEKLY

## After the Loyalist Strike

THE FAILURE of the Ulster Action Council strike to mobilise majority support among the Protestant population has important implications for the Irish situation. But we should be clear what the nature of the Unionist opposition to the strike was. There have been countless statements from Unionist politicians, from the Unionist establishment press and notably from Irish trade union leaders which identify with one of the two aims of the strike; tougher 'security' measures.

There is the example of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' chairperson, Harold Binks who described the demands for 'better security' in 'the fight against terrorism' as 'quite legitimate'. These sort of statements are readily translatable as increased repression of the Catholic population.

This consensus for more repression among the Unionists did not extend to Paisley's other demand for the resurrection of Stormont. The whole dynamic of 'Official' Unionism [that is Unionism as it reflects the interests of the Northern upper and middle classes] over the last ten years leads to the view that a Northern Irish parliament is not essential for maintaining their interests. Indeed a Stormont of 1968 style can be a positive hindrance in that it produces gross political instability.

The priority of the Unionist bourgeoisie is the link with Britain and their economic advantages which flow from it. Thus the Official Unionists have been quite willing to engage in attempts at 'reform', 'power-sharing' and direct rule. It may not be the ideal situation but the alternatives are too problematic. They have been unable to get away with this 'reform' of the northern statelet because of the hostility of large sections of the Catholic population to the statelet as such, and because of the opposition of the Protestant working class and petty-bourgeoisie to reforming the statelet.

These latter forces see such 'reforms' as a challenge to their ascendancy over their Catholic counterparts. The imperialist relationship with Britain does not directly determine the 'labour aristocracy' of these sections of Protestants. The privilege and patronage they have enjoyed are more a consequence of Unionist control over the local and provincial political structures.

It is not simply a case of material interests. The 'white settler' and 'poor white' ideology rampant in the Unionist culture conditions working class Protestants against any equalisation with the Catholics. So there was not Unionist consensus on the resurrection of Stormont, but there was on the need to defeat the minority's 'rebellion'. For this rebellion threatens the interests of Protestant workers in the immediate term and the Protestant bourgeoisie in the immediate and long term.

### UTOPIAN AIMS

There was also a recognition on the Unionist side that the aims of the strike were utopian. In the 1974 strike the aim was clearly realisable. This time there was no chance Britain would give in to the demands for a return to Stormont, because Britain realises, as did the Protestant bourgeoisie that a return to the 'old days' would create many more problems than it would solve. For example it would stiffen the Republican resistance and increase its support among the Catholic community. This 'utopian' nature of the strike's demands is probably the main reason why the strike call failed to attract majority support, although the support was substantially greater than the British media admitted to.

The Protestant bourgeoisie also saw the strike as a means of politically discrediting the 'hard men' in the Loyalist side — something they have been unable to achieve in eight years. The Official Unionist leadership is now in a position to qualitatively change the balance of forces within the Unionist camp in their favour; although the volatile nature of the Irish situation means this change is by no means definitive.

But one consequence is that Britain may now find it easier to erect a 'power-sharing' scaffold, yet even then it is likely that the actual power which is shared will be strictly limited. But the success in achieving this, and with it the political stability so sought by Britain, is not merely dependent on defeating 'Paisleyism'. Whatever happens the IRA campaign will continue and there is the distinct possibility of a new Loyalist terror campaign.

The dangers in this situation are increased because the Loyalists have gained something from the strike. In an attempt to buy off the power workers Mason has promised an increased Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defence Regiment and UDR and an increase in Special Air Services operations. Mason is only too happy to deliver on these promises. He is as determined to defeat the Republican resistance as anyone is.

So a period of increased repression of the northern minority is on the horizon. British troops will be in the fore in this as they have been in the past—in sharp contrast to their virtual absence from the Loyalist picket lines. There are also indications that new attempts will be made to bring in the UDR and RUC into the front line.

This repression would have been much greater had Paisley won, but nevertheless the northern minority is in for a hard time. This means militants in this country must be prepared to do as much as they can in mobilising support against this repression. And as the new 'security drive' will be led by the British Army it means attempting to rebuild the movement calling for withdrawal of those troops. That has been our task, it is all the more urgent

## Paris Socialist Feminist Conference

SOCIALISTS in the women's movement met last Saturday to finalise plans for Britain's contribution to the international socialist feminist conference to be held in Paris on 28-30 May.

The meeting was attended by Rosa Franquet — the Spanish feminist who was the international speaker at the 14 May abortion demonstration.

She explained that women from her group in Barcelona would be travelling to Paris to

for the march. The demonstration was called by Women's Voice without any consultation or contact with NAC. The first the campaign

heard of the march was a phone call from London last week. Plans for Scottish activity were well underway when Women's Voice announced their intentions. After some discussion, NAC agreed to support the proposal.

Despite this sectarian approach, members of the SWP showed a good sense of joint action on the day itself. They agreed to put the NAC contingent at the front and gave NAC the first speaker. This contrasts with the way in which they built the demonstration, which appeared to many to be simply a party-building exercise. Many Scottish campaigners were critical because the SWP has not been active in NAC.

# PORT TALBOT- 'More unity now than there has been since the strike began'



Speakers at the support meeting organised in Port Talbot at the end of last month. Wyn Bevan is seated at centre of the platform. Bernard Regan — invited from the Socialist Teachers Alliance — is seated second from right.

The strike by 560 electricians at the Port Talbot steel works is now in its eighth week. The claim for recognition of new skills had its first hearing since the strike started when the national officials of the electricians union met them in Kent last week. Despite the lack of support from the national executive, the mass meeting which took the report back from the stewards was described as 'the best meeting we've ever had'.

*Red Weekly* spoke to Wyn Bevan, Convenor of the Shop Stewards Committee, and to Tom Lyons, one of the stewards, and asked them how the strike was going.



WYN BEVAN

these people are remembering. The problem with the Social Contract is that if you put in a wage claim you will breach it, and if you win your wage claim you will be within it. Wyn Bevan is well aware of this:

'It is possible that we could agree a claim within the Social Contract because of the way that claims have been conceded elsewhere in the BSC and especially in Port Talbot with the Technicians. (The Technicians were categorised as Grade 3 Foremen and given staff status for their increased skills).

'But if it means we've got to break the Social Contract then we know that the Social Contract has been broken right across the country. So it is just a matter of tactics in negotiations how we go about it.'

Tommy Lyons was a bit less guarded:

'We have had the Social

Contract rammed down our throats by Bernard Clarke (the local full time union official) before the strike was a week old. We've had it rammed down our throats by Chapple.

'Although loop-holes have been found in the Social Contract and have accommodated people in the same situation as we find ourselves in, if they can't accommodate us, then the Social Contract has to go. And if our strike is a means to that then it is just unfortunate — we did not pick the fight, it was thrust on us and we will respond to it.'

The media has joined in the BSC's attempts to sit out the strike by giving it minimal coverage in the press. A great responsibility has fallen on the left to assist in combatting the isolation of the strike. The money that is coming in and the enthusiastic response the strikers are receiving at meetings throughout Britain is a great encouragement to the strikers and they are very grateful for it.

The stewards will be speaking as far north as the Ravensraig works in Scotland. Wyn Bevan, before rushing off to another meeting explained:

'In the main, the broad support that we have had has been generated from the left wing of the trade union movement. The left wing is the most active part of the movement and that is the part that will always rally to a cause like

ours in Port Talbot.

'As for the right wing, it is their apathy that has allowed the Labour Government to be in the situation it finds itself in. But I'm very pleased with the support we have had from the left, and I'm sure all the shop stewards committee are.'

He left, leaving Tom Lyons to give his personal views on some of the broader lessons from the strike. Tom had just returned from Manchester where he was very impressed by the united meeting which *Red Weekly* supporters had been prominent in building.

'One of the greatest things that emerged from Manchester wasn't only the support they were able to give us, but was also several left groups seeing our strike as a central feature, cooperating with each other. And this came home in the public meeting with the assurance that the joint work between them would be maintained and would be used to further the fight, and further support for like disputes.

'This is a marvellous feature of the meetings

up there, and they were telling me about the new paper, *Socialist Challenge*, which is coming out soon. Unfortunately I could not go back up to Manchester to their public meeting, but I did tell them that I would go back up in my personal capacity to speak at a meeting, to wish it well, and to call for support for the paper.'

Strikers are aware that they are up against Government policy even if they think their pay claim is within the Social Contract. But the support from the traditional lefts in the Labour Party and the official Communist Party has been slow in coming forward.

'No, the resistance to the Labour Government is coming from the unions directly employed by them — NUPE, NALGO, healthworkers and so on who are facing a much harder fight than we are — they do not have our industrial muscle. They are coming forward to support us and emerging from this is a marrying together of the movement

which I hope will eventually assist those in a weaker industrial position — but whose fight is just as important, if not more important, than ours.

'Ours is just a matter of wages, theirs is for the very quality of life. And because in our dispute we have had a response from them, we are more appreciative of the situation they find themselves in. As the struggle continues, then this coming together will increase.'

And will this sort out the Labour Government?

'Well, if the Labour Government is standing in the way, it has to radically change its policies to overcome the situation. It would have to bring in new socialist policies to overcome the problems — and socialist policies are the only way that the problems can be overcome lastingly. So if the present crew are not fit or able to do it, then it must mean change.'

Interview by Gordon Gibson

## OPEN LETTER TO THE LABOUR MOVEMENT FROM EETPU SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE BRITISH STEEL CORPORATION, PORT TALBOT

Fellow Trade Unionists,

We, 560 members of the EETPU on strike against the BSC, Port Talbot, appeal for your assistance.

We are now in the eighth week of a bitter struggle against a reactionary employer who refused to negotiate our just claim with the elected shop stewards.

The response and interest in our strike has been tremendous. It is heartening to us that the rank and file have rallied to our cause, and we thank you.

We ask you for further assistance to actively, morally and financially support us. Our resolve is as determined now as on the first day of the strike. Help us to maintain this resolve.

We have produced our own detailed Strike News. Supplies can be requested for your distribution.

Yours fraternally,

Bill Curtis [Secretary of the Stewards Committee]  
23 Hawthorne Avenue,  
Baglan Estate,  
Port Talbot.



that we are doing — on top of the support that we are getting — that we are able to contribute to the closer working of the left groups. I was discussing with some of the people

# NALGO Unity of the Left Appeal

Although the London election results for the National Executive of the National and Local Government Officers Association have not yet been officially announced, it is now known that the two left candidates, Jean Goldart and Bob Ford have lost their seats.



This is a new victory for the right wing in the union who in the last few months have chalked up a series of successes. There has been:

\* The virtual collapse of the overtime ban, called in protest against the cuts, and agreed to at last

\* The calling off of the one day strike action in Scotland on 9 March when seven NALGO members took NALGO to court to get the action stopped. The court obliged and the NALGO leadership preferred to obey the instructions of judges rather than its own membership in Scotland who had voted overwhelmingly in favour of the action.

\* The scaling down of action against the cuts. In January 1976 NALGO was pledged to oppose any cuts, but in January this year this was whittled down to stressing 'job protection'. On top of this comes the election results.

It is a far cry from 1974 when a united left campaign carried the Socialist Workers Party's Will Fancy and the Communist Party's Jack Riddell to second and fourth

places respectively in the eight vacancy election for London.

It is in response to these reversals that London IMG members have this week sent out a letter inviting all those whom we know to be active in London NALGO who advocate a socialist alternative to the policies of the right wing to meet and discuss how to fight for the active unity against the offensive of NALGO's right wing and Labour leaders.

The letter is prompted not only by the successes of the right, but by one of the factors which have led to these successes — the disunity of the left. This led to the disastrous situation in London where the District elections had two left slates for the National Executive and six left wing candidates for two TIC delegate

places.

One slate was of a 'Broad Left' type, dominated by the Communist Party, while the other was that of Nalge Action Group, in which the Socialist Workers Party is the major influence. Even though the 'Broad Left' slate made some concessions to NAG by including two prominent NAG members, the NAG did not reciprocate and scorned an offer from the 'Broad Left' to discuss the situation.

Not that the CP was free from this type of behaviour. It was they who originally split from NAG. They used the excuse that the NAG platform included support for the Right to Work Campaign. Although the SWP were sectarian in making this inclusion, it was obvious that the CP members

were only too happy to have this excuse to leave NAG.

But whatever the precise reason for these divisions as the letter from London IMG members in London points out, 'this disunity can only benefit the ruling class and its reformist servants in the labour movement'. This is especially the case in view of what the letter describes as 'the burning need for a real fight against the cuts and the social contract'.

The need for the left in NALGO to combat the right-wing offensive and the social contract policies of the Labour government is obvious. It is hoped that the proposed meeting on 4 June will be a step towards securing the type of left unity necessary for such a fight.

## Irish solidarity in Britain

LAST WEEK'S statement on behalf of a defeated minority at the Troops Out Movement national delegate conference was given uncritical and unexplained support from the IMG. Several glaring omissions from that account and the circumstances surrounding it, should be made known.

Firstly, on organisation: For about three years now it has been the practice of certain people to arrive out of the blue at TOM conferences and claim membership, and delegate status, on the spot. Acceptance of such spurious delegate status was always accepted with strong side-line cheering from a Greek chorus of IMG observers.

This time, however, a majority of the paid-up and registered delegates refused to accept a continuation of such false democracy, particularly as one of the 'branches' in question refused to pay membership dues on the day itself.

But the basic political divisions, which Red Weekly completely ignored, are more important. In a document to the conference produced by Big Flame, the predominant political group in the minority walk-out, it was stated:

'We believe in mass work with workers in struggle — at a national and local level — as the main activity. Those with whom we disagree see the main activity as lobby work in Parliament, trade union branches and the Labour Party.'

If one disregards the way this tiny group describes their local work as 'mass' and the building of the largest and most successful trade union delegation to Ireland as 'lobby work', this description by our opponents of the political issues at stake is a fair one.

The IMG membership have a right to know why their leadership has aligned itself with such simple simon, infantile ideas — and aligned itself, mark carefully, not on a question of some tactical difference within TOM, but in an alliance in support of a political breakaway.

In the same document, Big Flame describes the people they broke away from as:

'Apparently very influenced by their close ties with the sectarian traditions of much of the Trotskyist movement in this country.'

While we have many criticisms of that tradition, we are not as ashamed of it as the IMG appears to be.

We think the explanation for such opportunism is to be found in the original disagreement three years ago that resulted in members of the IMG Irish Commission and other leaving the organisation.

The IMG leadership then claimed that TOM could not be built, and instead they would provide 'an independent IMG initiative' in its place.

Three years later, we are still waiting for that initiative.

Another indication of the demise of the IMG's once proud position as the champion in Britain of the Irish struggle, has been its attitude to the Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland. Not only did the IMG initially refuse to support the proposal for the delegation, but they later demanded that the delegation give a platform to the UDA in Belfast, later threatening to split the delegation if it did not meet Loyalist and Unionist groups.

P. Prendiville [Press Officer],  
Jane Crawford [Secretary/Con-  
venor], Troops Out Movement.

IMG Irish Secretariat replies:

The statement reprinted in Red Weekly [5 May] on the division in the Troops Out Movement was very restrained. In the best interests of the movement the statement limited itself to explaining the political divisions that led to a majority of those in attendance at the National Delegate Conference [NDC] on 23 April to withdraw from the meeting. It purposely refrained from listing the organisational manoeuvres employed by a 'grouping', confined to the North and North West London TOM branches, both before and during the conference to impose their idea of the TOM, i.e. a small London-based committee, on the majority.

Likewise we have no intention of giving a blow by blow account in these columns of the events which led up to and took place at the NDC. If the signatories to the above letter want to complain about 'several glaring omissions' we will remind them that we have also omitted reporting and commenting on the testimony given to the conference by a former member of their 'grouping' on the political practice of the same 'grouping'. The testimony was a damning indictment of the 'grouping'. We get an insight into this practice when we examine their letter. It makes the astonishing charge that Red Weekly ignored 'the basic political divisions'. In our naiveté we thought that 'the basic political divisions' were between those who wanted to maintain TOM as a broad independent campaign and the 'grouping' who wanted TOM transformed into a small London-based committee.

The letter has a totally different view of the 'basic political divisions'. Selectively quoting from a document submitted to the conference by Big Flame, it tries to portray the differences that Big Flame has with the 'grouping' as the reason for Big Flame's withdrawal from the NDC.

If we read the whole document and not just the quotes presented in the letter, the main reasons for Big Flame's withdrawal become quite clear: the threat to internal democracy in TOM caused by the 'manipulative and undemocratic methods which those comrades have used to maintain control'.

The letter-writers want to identify themselves with a Trotskyist tradition: there is alas a Trotskyist movement in this country with which the politics of this letter are in harmony. The misrepresentation of the political positions of others and the use of bogus amalgam are the hallmarks of Healyism.

The last NDC marked the end of an era. The Recall Conference presents a fresh opportunity for reviving interest in the building of a mass campaign for troop withdrawal. Already we are seeing a positive response by many groups and individuals in many areas to the appeal for the conference. The supporters of the letter have a clear choice. They can continue to posture as 'the movement', a decision which would leave them no alternative but to attempt to become a front for the SWP. We have already seen this development with the TOM! SWP Bloody Sunday Rally and the recent speaking tour organised jointly by NDCSS and the so-called TOM. On the other hand they could take the honourable course: they should drop the pretence that they, a handful of people, are the movement and participate in the recall conference.



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Red Weekly)

# TROOPS OUT NOW not enough

# BIG FLAME

I SHOULD like to clear up any confusion which may have resulted from an item in your issue of 12 May.

In your section on fund raising, you stated that at a meeting in Sheffield I explained Big Flame's support for the project of the new paper. What I explained in fact, was the general position of our organisation, which was to welcome any initiative on the left which contributed to a greater understanding and more joint action between left groups.

In addition, I said that it was likely that Big Flame members would make contributions to the content of Socialist Challenge. Your publication of our open letter to the Socialist Workers Party was a good example of the kind of constructive cooperation and debate we are seeking. However, this does not negate the political differences which of course reflect themselves in our two newspapers.

STEVE BOND (Sheffield)

WHILE I was glad to see the front-page coverage you devoted to the Loyalist lockout and was in absolute agreement with your general line — Solidarity with the Republican Resistance, Troops Out Now! — I feel that when it comes to spelling out exactly what revolutionaries and militants in Britain ought to be doing, your coverage is considerably lacking.

Mason's immediate response to the lockout was the introduction of 3000 extra troops, and the mobilisation of the entire UDR. The troops appear to be stationed in anti-unionist areas, and Mason himself made no attempt to conceal the fact that they were for use against 'terrorists', i.e. the nationalist population.

But it is not good enough to simply demand 'troops out now' without saying how this is to be done, where it is to be raised; in other words what tasks face the British labour movement in this present crisis. And the answer is clear — the call should have gone out to block these extra troops, to block all arms and supplies going to the 17,000 troops in Ireland.

When it was reported that Ulster Defence Association members were travelling from Scotland to the 6 Counties to help enforce the lockout, notable attempts were made to organise blocking of the UDA by dockers. These attempts ought to have been extended to include the troops — block the Army! No arms! No supplies to the occupation forces in Ireland.

This leads on to the question — who is going to break the 'strike', which for us is the question — in whose interests is the 'strike' going to be broken? Clearly the British Government are flatly opposed to the demand for a return to Stormont, and clearly it is in their interests that the 'strike' is defeated, in their own terms. Similarly it is in the interests of imperialist investment that there is no return to Stormont and that the 'strike' is ended — again in their own terms.

What are these terms? That under no circumstances should there be any steps towards the independent mobilisation of the Irish working-class in active opposition to the Loyalists, or any mass activity in the anti-unionist ghettos against the British occupation.

In this way Mason can be free to use the eventual collapse of the 'lockout' to launch a major offen-

sive against the resistance.

Thus the twin themes of a class opposition to the Loyalists, to imperialism, and to the trade union bureaucracy must be no reliance on the troops or the RUC — workers' self-defence — no collaboration with the bosses; and secondly, troops out now.

Because of their special relationships with the Irish trade unions, because of their similarities in programme (Bill of Rights, etc.), British trade unions have a specific responsibility to take up this orientation in the British working class. Revolutionaries ought to have a direct orientation into the workers' movement, against the bureaucracy, demanding that they speak out against reliance on the troops and the RUC, for workers' self-defence; that they organise contingents of workers to go to the 6 Counties to promote and help in self-defence; that resolutions of solidarity are sent.

They must spell out these measures as the minimum required to defend the right of the Irish trade union movement to exist and to organise. In this context they should raise the question of the immediate withdrawal of troops.

Furthermore the bureaucracy must be forced to act on their own programme, no matter how reformist. They are in favour of 'an end to repression', what about the total capitulation of their Irish cohorts to demands for increased 'security'?

At this time in particular, when the Irish trade union movement is under attack, the need for an orientation of solidarity towards the British trade union movement is crucial. And it is no good to sarcastically refer to the attempt by Len Murray to organise a back-to-work march in the 1974 UWC lockout, and the dismal role of the Irish trade unions at that time.

It is the class-collaborationist policies of the leadership that is at fault, and it is that leadership which we fight to remove. What was wrong with Murray's initiative was not that he attempted it, but that he made no attempt to mobilise all workers, and in particular anti-unionists, in their own defence, in defence of the unity of the trade union movement, independently of the forces of the British state.

MIKE PINTER [Belfast]

## National wage bargaining

The successes over the last few years of the unholy alliance of employers, Labour Government and trade union officials in enforcing the policies of the Social Contract has resulted in an important debate on the left over the way forward for trade union organisation within industry and the public sector.

This is partly a result of a recognition by militants that plant-by-plant union organisation is totally inadequate to meet the challenge of both the increasing national and international specialisation and rationalisation of private industry (especially Ford), and the tripartite front of supporters of the Social Contract.

In Lucas Aerospace, Lucas Electrical, GEC, GKN, Vickers and many other large firms militants have taken up the fight increasingly for combine committees of shop stewards which have met in many cases with fierce opposition from not only employers (Lucas Aerospace) but also from trade union officials (including those of the 'left') who see such moves as an attempt to 'undermine' their

have come together to support national, or what they call 'corporate' bargaining.

This in turn has led certain groups of militants and even organisations of the revolutionary left (Workers Socialist League) to adopt a position against ALL forms of company-wide organisation in favour of plant-by-plant or even shop-by-shop bargaining on the grounds that only under these conditions can workers stand a chance of controlling their representatives and launching a fight.

In principle socialists should be in favour of the broadest possible unity of the working class against the employers and thus would support the fight for combine shop stewards organisations and other forms of national organisation of trade unionists within companies. But it is of vital tactical importance to examine the quality or precise form of the 'unity' being argued for.

It is obvious that the support lent by Ford management and BL to national wage bargaining is because they hope to use it (and

within the car industry. However our opposition to such schemes cannot be confined to calls for plant-by-plant bargaining and often abstract calls for 'unity in struggle'.

Many militants correctly recognise that the heady days of the fifties and early sixties, when sectoral strikes and union organisation could win the day, have ended with the growing crisis of British capitalism and the successive imposition of various bouts of incomes policy.

It is therefore necessary to spell out clearly under what conditions such forms of national or company bargaining are acceptable unless the logic of the argument against company-inspired corporate bargaining is to disappear up the back-side of the 'leave us alone, we're not interested in your problems' i.e. backward sections of workers, who are not interested in a fight back and therefore see no need for a broader unity.

The argument that once you accept the principle of national wage bargaining in BL, you must therefore accept the man-

agement inspired 'corporate' bargaining and democracy that the political awareness of workers can be strengthened which is in the last resort the only safeguard of their independence from the management and not any negotiating structure (plant-by-plant bargaining for instance) in the formal sense. The argument that one of the most dangerous demands of the toolmakers in BL was for national negotiating rights clearly exposes the falsity of such positions.

What made the toolmakers strike so much more effective this year than in 1975 was their national action as opposed to the plant-by-plant action of 1975 which made it much more difficult for the trade union officials to drive them back to work. That is why it is perfectly correct to fight for democratically controlled national and company wide union organisation as a way of giving militants both a perspective for a successful struggle and at the same time to champion the independence of groups of workers by exposing the real nature of management inspired 'corporate' bargaining.

# SWP - explain please

I FOUND the first part of 'The Nature of the SWP' very interesting, but I would like to say that there are probably many readers of Red Weekly, like myself, who are not familiar with the theoretical positions taken to justify opposition to the view that the USSR is a workers state.

In order to evaluate the SWP's position that the USSR is state capitalist, it is impor-

economic analysis and a historical materialist understanding of the USSR.

I, personally, will try to look at Readings in State Capitalism, as suggested in the footnotes, but I think that Red Weekly should speak to the needs of the new readership, and not just assume we are all well acquainted with the debate between state capitalism and workers state.

# IS DEMOCRACY COMING TO SPAIN?

RICHARD CARVER contributes an assessment of the Government's reform plan.

Four demonstrators were killed and 20 wounded when police attacked marches of hundreds of thousands last Sunday in the Basque country.

The killings were the climax of a week of violence. Sixty-year-old Rafael Gomez Perez had been gunned down by police in Renteria earlier in the week. Four others were seriously wounded after two thirds of the workforce in the San Sebastian industrial belt had come out against the continued holding of political prisoners by the Suarez regime.

Yet Adolfo Suarez continues his relatively untroubled course towards the general elections on 15 June — Spain's first in more than 40 years. How can the man who authorised his police to shoot down demonstrators, bans the May Day marches and refuses legalisation to most of the working class parties be leading Spain towards democracy?

But that, in a deformed way, is what is happening. Or, to put it another way, the project of reform of the Francoist system which seemed almost impossible a year ago has gone further than even its most optimistic champions can have hoped.

When Suarez succeeded Carlos Arias Navarro as Prime Minister last summer everyone saw him as a stop-gap. In fact he represented a turn away from the almost imperceptible reformism of Arias to a more full-blown attempt to set up a bourgeois democracy. The reason for this turn was that in a number of respects the old Francoist apparatus had outgrown its use for Spanish capitalism.

## ECONOMIC

On the economic terrain, for example, the impact of the world recession from 1974 made it all the more important for Spain to integrate itself into the European economy as a whole. Practically this meant entry into the Common Market. The different strategies for the economic and political future of Spanish capitalism could no longer be left to the discretion of a single Bonaparte. Some forum was needed to resolve these questions — a bourgeois parliament.

Above all it was hoped that the growing militancy of the working class — far greater than in Portugal before the fall of Caetano — could be bought off by these political concessions.

Of course this was always intended as a face lift for the old regime, not a radical break. While instruments of capitalist democracy would be set up — from which large sections of the working class were to be excluded — the old repressive machinery of the dictatorship would be left intact. Only the direct participation of the army in politics would be ended, through the abolition of the military tribunals.

Red Weekly has pointed out all along that three main problems faced this project — the very problems it was designed to solve. The economic situation would never allow for sufficient concessions to buy off the workers movement; the working class had

a whole series of political parties while the bourgeoisie had none; and the militancy of the workers movement and its growing experience of direct, workers democracy would make it impossible to sell them this project.

So why has the project got so far? The reasons are complex but one stands out above all others: the reformist parties of the working class, the Communist and Socialist Parties, have been prepared to back the bourgeois reform up to the hilt.

Only twice has there been any threat to Suarez from the right. Firstly in January when fascists initiated a week of slaughter in Madrid and again last month when prominent army officers resigned in protest at the legalisation of the Communist Party (PCE).

In January the PCE supported Suarez' handling of the crisis. It hardly raised a murmur when he arrested 1,200 left wing militants and only a handful of fascists. In April the party tried to pacify army opinion by giving open support to the Juan Carlos monarchy.

These are the most striking chapters in a long story of collaboration by the PCE and the Socialist Party (PSOE). They were happy to abandon their strategy of 'mass pressure' to bring about the 'negotiated break' with the dictatorship and replace it with a strategy of rarefied talks in which the masses do not even play a token part.

This has given Suarez the breathing space he needed to begin to construct an array of bourgeois political parties. Of the 150 parties registered for the elections four have put themselves at the front of the field. Fraga Iribarne's Popular Alliance, to the right of the Government, is reckoned to get up to 20 per cent of the vote — a product of its months of campaigning while the workers parties remain illegal. The Centre Democratic Alliance is led by Suarez himself, a figure of considerable prestige and vindicated in last year's referendum as 'the man who brought democracy to Spain'.

## LARGEST

The Centre, which naturally stands by the Suarez project, is expected to be the largest single party with up to 40 per cent. Most opinion polls reckon that the Socialist and Communist Parties will be rewarded for their subservience with about 20 and 10 per cent of the poll respectively with another 10 per cent going to the smaller social democratic parties.

That, you may notice, adds up to 100 per cent. So the estimates



The Civil Guards' plastic hats may be antiquated but their repressive techniques are not.

are probably optimism on the part of the Suarez supporters. Certainly there are other slates which can expect a proportion of the vote, notably the four from the far left, if they are allowed on the ballot papers.

Our comrades of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria initially proposed joint slates of all the workers parties and independent organisations of the class, elected by assemblies of local factory and neighbourhood representatives. In this way they were fighting both for a united working class response to the Government which could argue the need to overthrow the dictatorship finally and to develop the organisation of the working class in its own representative bodies.

It is hardly surprising that the PCE and PSOE went ahead with their own party slates. The LCR has managed to come to an agreement for a joint slate with two other revolutionary organisations: the Left Communist Organisation (OIC) and Communist Action (AC). Both have, or have had, links with the Socialist Workers Party in Britain.

The tasks of this slate are rather different from the LCR's original proposal. One aspect is the fight for a unified revolutionary organisation in Spain. Although there are a number of Maoist parties which have explicitly backed alliances with the capitalist parties, the revolutionary left does not suffer the same fragmentation as in Britain. Particularly in recent months a process of unification has been underway.

The LCR, by far the largest of the revolutionary organisations, continues to be in the forefront of this struggle. Talks have been held to try and resolve the many differences our comrades have with the OIC, a process which can only be advanced by this agreement.

The central task of the slate will

be to explain the need to overthrow the institutions of the dictatorship. That means calling for elections to an assembly which would have the power to redraw the whole constitution. The preconditions for that would be a full restoration of democratic rights: the legalisation of all working class parties, a total amnesty for political prisoners, assemblies of the oppressed nationalities, the dissolution of the repressive bodies of Francoism and election by proportional representation.

## PLATFORM

It is because of the need to provide a platform for these demands that the three organisations rejected arguments for a boycott of the elections. This is not because we believe that the elections are fully democratic but to take full advantage of the semi-legality granted to expose the undemocratic nature of the regime and, just as importantly, to stimulate workers' struggles against it.

Nothing can be finally resolved by these elections. For example, the competence of this new legislature to appoint the Government — or rather the willingness of the king to recognise its decisions — has nowhere been established. There is a giant contradiction between the stated aim of the elections and the continuation of the apparatus of dictatorship. In the longer term the obstacles to the stabilisation of a bourgeois democracy remain.

The economy goes from bad to worse: the capital goods industry stagnates and investment drops; inflation runs over 20 per cent by the official index; the trade gap widens and the balance of payments worsens. In particular the return of emigrant workers because of the European recession has put greater pressure on jobs and cut off an important source of foreign exchange.

## STRIKES

The bourgeois political alliances exist in embryo and will survive the elections, but little more. Simply the number of political parties indicates that.

And, most of all, the working class has suffered no major defeat. Despite the open collaboration of the PCE, struggles have continued around political demands and in defence of living standards, making the Government's attempts to resolve the economic crisis in its favour unworkable. Struggles like the general strikes in the Basque country and the Roca strike show the readiness of large numbers of workers to break with the PCE's pacifism. Even among the Catalan building workers — a PCE stronghold — there has been an overwhelming rejection of the PCE's attempts to stop their strike.

All these are indications that the problems of Adolfo Suarez and his paymasters are far from over.

## World Outlook



Hong Kong colonial police arrest Trotskyist.

### ★ Hong Kong

Seven comrades of the Revolutionary Marxist League, sympathetic organisation of the Fourth International, have been arrested in Hong Kong for trying to organise a May Day rally.

Two militants were arrested on 29 April, when they were organising a contingent for the demonstration in one of the working class neighbourhoods. On 1 May itself the decision to ban the demonstration was announced. The RML defied the ban by having two comrades march with banners and slogans — a demonstration is defined as three or more — while about a thousand people followed on behind!

They marched to the police station to protest at the arrest of the two, who had started a hunger strike. When the march arrived at the Star Ferry area there were clashes with police in which five more people were arrested.

### ★ Israel

This week's elections in Israel take place in an unfortunate climate for the governing Labour Party.

Firstly there was the replacement of Prime Minister Rabin as Labour Party leader, after the scandal of his foreign bank account was revealed. Now the 'doves' who comprise the majority of the Labour Party have been undermined by a series of rumours that American military support to Israel was to be cut and then by President Carter's talks with Syrian President Assad.

Of course no Israeli ruling class politician favours a Palestinian state, even a West Bank mini-state. But recent events have placed obstacles in the way of those in the Government

who were looking to cook up a 'permanent' settlement.

Opinion polls indicate that neither Labour nor the right wing Likud will win more than a third of the seats in the Knesset, leaving the king-making role with a cluster of smaller parties.

### ★ Poland

A student leader and member of the Workers Defence Committee died in mysterious circumstances in Krakow last week. Stanislaw Pyjas' body was found at the bottom of a stair well. He is reported to have died of head injuries.

A local paper report claimed that Pyjas had killed himself by falling down the stairs and that his blood contained a high level of alcohol — an explanation which did not impress the two thousand people who attended a regular mass and demonstration through Krakow last Sunday.

Protests at Pyjas' death have been the signal for further repression against the Workers Defence Committee, set up after the strikes last June which reversed the Government's price increases. A number of representatives of the committee were arrested as they tried to go to the funeral, among them Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik.

### ★ France

A new monthly journal called *Police and Nation* has appeared in Paris.

It is aimed at 'police officers and all those who are concerned for the safety of citizens and the protection of their property'. It promises that 'the police, as a public service, as citizens, will be able to play their full role in working for a more just and safer society'.

The journal is produced by the Communist Party.



Four demonstrators, police in Bilbao demonstrate head-on.

# Workers' Jubilee 1917-1977



The Provisional Government, which had been elected in the 1917 congress, was a coalition of the Social Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks, and the Bolsheviks. From the end of the congress the Soviet and Peasant Executives met together, strengthening the hand of the Mensheviks.

The SRs finally made a clean breast of their position when at their national congress in June they formally opposed land seizures, informing the peasants they must await the convening of the Constituent Assembly.

The agrarian movement was steadily advancing. Records of the Provisional Government state that in March land disturbances occurred in 34 counties, in April 174, May 236 and June 280. The ruling class having originally encouraged some limited agrarian reform, froze in horror. The fuse they had helped to light threatened to blow up in their faces.

No effort was spared to stall the land seizures. In the first months of the revolution the peasants, under the influence of the right SRs peacefully tried to push forward the agrarian reform. In the months that followed their frustration led them to violent action and over to the side of the Left Social Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks.

Lenin, in speaking to the Peasant congress, echoed the future action of the peasants—'If you wait until the law is written, and do not yourselves develop revolutionary energy, you will get neither law nor land.'

Russia in 1917 was overwhelmingly a peasant country. The land question, and the urgency of agrarian reform, became issues that every class and party had to provide answers to. The peasants themselves increasingly began to settle the issues of who owned the land.

In the first weeks after the February revolution the villages continued as before. The countryside had been stripped of the younger generations for the cause of the imperialist war.

Only the aged, the infirm and the young remained. As the soldiers deserted the trenches and hurried home, reports arrived in the cities of disturbances in the provinces.

From Novgorod came reports of 'unwarranted arrests'; from Tambov 'attacks on estates'; in Simbirsk 'landlords imprisoned'; in Kazan 'sensible people are terrorised'. The response of the landlords was to sell their property and quit while the going was good. They certainly had no desire to do the Spring sowing. The peasants called on the Government to decree the halt of all land sales.

The first Provisional Government, with the Kadet Shingarev as Minister of Agriculture, proposed the establishment of land committees. The Lvov government had no wish to see these committees giving the land to the peasants. In fact on 29 March the Prime Minister urged the landlords to join these bodies.

In the next two months the Kadet Prince made insistent appeals that in the countryside 'violence and robbery' be put down and that 'decisive measures' taken against 'unlawful and in certain cases even anarchistic actions'. Sukhanov, the Menshevik and Soviet leader, added his weight:

'It would be dangerous to force the agrarian problem in the next few weeks, and moreover there is not the slightest need of it.'

Among the peasantry the Social Revolutionary Party dominated. This peasant socialist party had been formed at the turn of the century and reflecting the waverings of its supporters began to show signs of splitting in 1917. At the start of May the all-

Russian congress of peasants met for a month in Petrograd. The Social Revolutionaries held a large majority.

The congress passed a motion calling for the land to be handed to the peasantry. Unfortunately the leaders of the Social Revolutionary Party had no intention to see the decision implemented with any speed. In Yelain the land committees seized the land.

In 16 of the 17 district committees in this region the provincial commissar took the decision to prosecute the land committees for taking the land. The commissar in question, Efimov, was a member of the Social Revolutionary Party.

During the peasant congress, Chernov, the SR Minister of Agriculture in the coalition government, prepared a decree to halt land sales. At the same time, Pereverzev, Minister of Justice, sympathetic to the views of the Social Revolutionaries, made it clear that no such decree would be tolerated. The right hand knew nothing of the actions of its left hand.

In Orel the local land committee seized the lords' meadows and cut the grass. The local SR protested. Their protests did not



OVER one hundred delegates representing 30 colleges heard Bernadette MacAlliskey (above) explaining the need to build solidarity with the Irish resistance. The conference, held last Saturday, in Middlesex Polytechnic, was called by the Student Movement Campaign on Ireland.

Photo: SKIP BALL (Food Weekly)

RIC SISSONS

## IMG Notes

- International Cadre School, Jubilee Weekend 4-7 June for IMG members and sympathisers. Agenda: Introductions and workshops on — 'The Current state of the world revolution.' 'Revolutionary strategy in Europe.' 'Marxism, women's liberation and the tasks for the FI' 'Main issues facing the World Movement'
- Reading list from local branch organisers. Pooled fare. International leaders from the FI will introduce each session.
- B. Africa Campaign Caucus. Sunday 22 May, 2pm. At National Centre.
- National NALGO Fraction. Saturday 28 May. All IMG members in NALGO to attend. All close sympathisers to be invited. Prior to meeting, NALGO members to write brief report of their last year's activity in their branch and send to Jack Lewis, c/o 97 Caledonian Road, 11am-4.30pm. At Caxton House, St Johns Way, London N19. Nearest tube Archway.
- National Transport Fraction. Saturday 28 May. At new National Centre. All comrades in transport to attend. Pooled fare.
- National Committee. Sat/Sun 11/12 June.
- National Branch Organisers Aggregate. Saturday 25 June.
- NC Area Report Backs. On weekends, 9/10 July and 16/17 July.
- Socialist Review No. 2, 'SR' No. 2 now out. For members and sympathisers. Contains resolutions and documents from the IMG April NC. Price 10p. Get a copy from your branch organiser.
- LONDON TEACHERS EDUCATIONAL SERIES: For all IMG members and sympathisers in NUT: Monday 16 May — The Record of the Labour Govt since 1974 and its implications for struggle — Brian Grogan, National Secretary IMG. Reading — IMG pamphlet 'Socialist Challenge to Labour's Cuts'. Monday 30 May — Analysis of NUT: Who is left in the NUT. What is the role of the Communist Party — Bernard Regan. Reading — 'Struggle in Education' — D. Bailey, 'Notes on the NUT' — Dennis. Monday 13 June — How do we fight to take up the Programme. What is the Programme based on? — Rich Palmer. Monday 20 June — How do we build a left-wing opposition? Phone National Centre for details of time and venue — 278 9525.

# SOWETO STUDENTS' SOLIDARITY CALL

**A PACKED press conference in London last week heard some of its most prominent sponsors launch the Soweto students' appeal for solidarity action on the first anniversary of the demonstrations and killings in South Africa.**

He described how the demonstrations had started against the teaching of Afrikaans in black schools. The violent response of the racist regime provoked widespread mobilisations throughout South Africa, an upsurge whose effects are still being felt today.

'Many of you will remember the massacres at Sharpeville', he said. 'Whereas that massacre led to the defeat of the struggles against apartheid and a consequent stabilisation of the political and economic situation in South Africa, the same cannot be said about the massacres at

Soweto and subsequently. 'Rather it can be seen that the response to the violence of Vorster at Soweto has met with widespread response amongst the black population of South Africa and an escalation of the strength and confidence of the masses against their oppression.'

He went on to explain that Vorster was not just protecting his own interests in South Africa but those of international capital invested in the country. The best form of solidarity with the struggle of the black masses in South Africa is to 'isolate the Vorster regime politically, militarily, economically and in every way.

'The British Government's provision of arms to South Africa through NATO must be ended. Its investments must be removed immediately. The Labour Government in Britain must be forced to break all links with Vorster.'

The appeal calls for world wide solidarity on the first anniversary of the Soweto massacres. In Britain the National Union of Students has called for a demonstration on 18 June. That must be supported as a first step towards carrying out these tasks.

The publicity officer of the African Students Union explained the background to the Soweto events and the need for soli-

# REMEMBER SOWETO

June 16th 1977, will be the first anniversary of the Soweto demonstration which was the first of a series of protests by the oppressed black people of South Africa and which continue until today.

Thousands of people have suffered at the hands of the brutal South African repressive forces since then. Hundreds have been shot dead, thousands injured and driven into exile and a countless number languish in jail.

We members of the Soweto Students Representative Council Executive Committee which organised the original demonstration, call upon the progressive peoples of the world to mark this anniversary by demonstrating their solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa and against all forms of support for the brutal Vorster Apartheid regime.

- Tsietshi Mashinini President of the Soweto SSRC
- Barney Mokgatle Secretary of the Soweto SSRC
- Selby Semela Treasurer of the Soweto SSRC
- Khotso Sealholo President of the Soweto SSRC after Tsietshi

- ENDORSED BY (individuals in a personal capacity):
- Dave Bowman, President NUR
  - Jack Collins, NUM National Executive
  - Mike Cooley, Past President TASS
  - Lawrence Daly, General Secretary NUM
  - Jack Dunn, Secretary, Kent Area NUM
  - Drake Koka, General Secretary, Black Allied Workers Union of South Africa
  - Michael McGahey, President, Scottish Area NUM
  - Ernie Roberts, Assistant General Secretary, AUEW
  - Alan Sapper, General Secretary ACTT
  - Arthur Scargill, President, Yorkshire Area NUM
  - Tim Webb, National Officer, ASTMS
  - Emlyn Williams, President, South Wales Area NUM
  - Bob Wright, Assistant General Secretary Elect, AUEW
  - Charles Clarke, President, National Union of Students
  - Sue Slipman, President Elect, NUS
  - Mike Gapes, Chairperson, National Organisation of Labour Students
  - Frank Allaun MP, Joan Maynard MP, Syd Bidwell MP, Stan Newens MP, Martin Flannery MP, Ron Thomas MP, Joan Lester MP, Stan Thorne MP, Tom Litterick MP, Audrey Wise MP
  - John Alderton, Ronald Segal, Miriam Karlin, Basil Davidson, Glenda Jackson, Tariq Ali, Peter Hain, Bernadette McAlliskey (Davlin)
- ORGANISATIONS
- Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation
  - Institute of Race Relations
  - South Wales Area, National Union of Mineworkers
  - Anti-Apartheid Movement
  - National Union of School Students
  - National Union of Students National Executive
  - African Students Union
  - International Marxist Group
  - Socialist Workers Party
  - Roy Buckton, General Secretary ABLEF
  - Denis Skinner, MP
  - Joan Lester MP
  - Mark White, President Warwick University Student Union
  - Coventry Area Student Council
  - Daniel Guerin (France)
  - Africa Committee, Basle, Switzerland

## WHAT'S ON

- WOULD DAVID HUNT — early 40s, recently returned to England from visit to Russia contact Chris Bard 01-821 9088.
- MARKISM AND MEDIA Forum. 'Towards a "Proletarian Culture"?' Speaker: Carl Gardner, Sunday 29 May, 7.00pm. London Film-makers Co-op., 44 Fitzroy Rd., London NW1 (Chalk Farm tube or Primrose Hill BR).
- BIRMINGHAM TOM Meetings. Sunday 22 May. 'Anti-Imperialist Unity in the 8 Countries'. Speakers from the 'Irish Front'. Tuesday 25 May. 'Irish Solidarity Work in Britain — Past, Present, Future'. Both meetings at 7.45. Conference Room, Labour Club, Bristol St., Birmingham.
- LSE CRITIQUE Society Seminar. Patrick Camiller on 'The Popular Front and the Communist Parties'. Tuesday 24 May, 7.30pm. London School of Economics, St Clements Building, Houghton St., W1.
- AGITBIT DIARY: This poster diary is available for use by all progressive and alternative groups. 500 copies posted throughout London. Copy in by 20th of the month previously. For rates and further details contact AGITBIT, 31 Regina Rd., London N4. Phone 272 3810.
- BURNLEY 'The Social Contract and Unity of the Left' — joint Workers League/IMG public meeting. 7.30pm, Tues 24 May. The Old Red Lion pub, corner Manchester Rd/Burnley High St. Burnley. Speakers: Rob Pooley (NUT and Liverpool Workers League), Davy Jones (IMG National Committee).
- OUTCOME: magazine of the NUS Gay Liberation Campaign's North West Region. 20p (inc p&p) from Lancaster University GaySoc, c/o Students Union, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg, Lancaster. For more information on the campaign, speakers, etc. contact Brian Windley, 9 Fern Bank, Lancaster. Tel: Lanc. 69336.
- RUSKIN History Workshop 1977. 'History of Rank and File Movements'. 21/22 May. Tickets for weekend £2.50 from History Workshop Collective, Ruskin College, Walton St., Oxford. Further details phone Gordon Williams (08655378).
- ONE OR TWO comrades wanted to share purchase of N. London house. Own room, semi-communal. £300 deposit needed. Contact Sue — 802 0911 (work) or Kathy — 624 6628, as soon as possible. Will start looking for a house with garden as soon as possible.
- WORLD REVOLUTION Public Forum. Spain — The Democratic Way to Asterbury. Saturday 21 May, 2.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.
- PLANNING MEETING to organise conference on 'No Racism in the Media'. Supported by Campaign Against Racism in the Media and Journalists Charter. Friday 20 May, 6.30pm. Earl Russell Pub, 381 Pancras Way, London NW1.
- PORTUGAL on the cheap — Fly to Porto from Heathrow for amazing £58.50 (usually £119) return. Date — Sunday 26 June for a fortnight. One or more people needed — contact Penny at 061-881 3252.
- DERRY IRISH FRONT MEETING: Conway Hall (Small Hall), Red Lion Square, near Holborn Tube. Thursday 26 May 1977, 7.30pm.
- MAY 28. A Socialist Festival of Music. Over a hundred musicians will be taking part including Carol Grimes, Red Square, Henry Cow, People Liberation Music.... Tickets available in advance at £1.50. Postal Orders to Battersea Arts Centre, and sent to May 28 Bookings, Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11.
- REMEMBER SOWETO! 16 June 1976. Demonstrate 18 June 1977, in London. Assemble Speakers Corner, 1.00pm. Rally Bullring (opp County Hall), 3.00pm. Called by National Union of Students, supported by the National Union of School Students and the Anti-Apartheid movement. Contact NUS International Dep., 3 Endsleigh St., London WC1. 01-387 1277 for details and publicity material.
- COVENTRY Debate on 'The British Road to Socialism'. Speakers from the Communist Party and the International Marxist Party. Fri 10 June, 7.30pm. Room D14, Lancaster Poly.

# LAIRD PORTCH STRIKERS REJECT TRIBUNALS, TURN TO LABOUR MOVEMENT



Equal Pay strikers at Laird Portch mount a strong picket line.

East Kilbride is supposed to be one of the showcases of modern Scotland. As a new town it has just celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, but on an industrial estate on its outskirts, there are over four hundred women who didn't join in the festivities.

For three weeks now, the mainly female workforce at Laird Portch factory in East Kilbride have been out on unofficial strike. Despite the inactivity of their union, the National Union of Garment Trade Workers, they have mounted a 24-hour picket on the plant.

## WORKING WOMENS CHARTER CAMPAIGN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

'Which Way Forward for the Charter Campaign?'  
City University, St Johns St., London EC1.  
Delegates credentials £1.50 from Jill Daniels, 1a Camberwell Grove, London SE5.

Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

## Fighting sexism in the unions

GRAHAM SMITH is group secretary of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs at Guys Hospital in London. He is also a reactionary.

At union meetings Smith has stated openly that he considers women incapable of taking positions in unions, incapable of representing themselves, and in particular incapable of representing men.

Smith does not try and hide these opinions, he elaborates on them at great length by saying that there are not only physical differences between men and women, but that women are mentally inferior to men. Smith is 22 years old.

He is not getting away with his sexist mouthings. Already a resolution demanding an investigation by the National Executive of ASTMS into his statements has been passed by the South East London Medical Branch of the union. More importantly the Smith case has highlighted, albeit in a particularly crude form, the problems women face in unions.

The women workers at Guys are now organising themselves to discuss not just Smith but the general problems of women's oppression both at work and in the unions.

The first meeting of this women's caucus decided to step up the campaign for nursery facilities at Guys. A

questionnaire is being circulated which seeks information on those who have left the hospital because of the lack of nursery facilities; how many people would want to start a family if such facilities were available; and how many would support the nursery campaign, regardless of whether they would use such facilities.

The second decision of the caucus was to organise a rally on 'women and trade unions' for all members of ASTMS in London. The rally will feature the recent play on the Trico strike, and will discuss the many problems which women face at their places of work. Most important, the rally will discuss how to organise and take up such problems as low pay, lack of job opportunities and the absence of nurseries.

Already the women's caucus at Guy's has shown the effectiveness of women's self-organisation in the unions. ASTMS may already have special women's advisory committees, but their powers are limited, and they are controlled by the union bureaucracy. That people such as Graham Smith can hold union positions shows how ineffective they are.

In contrast the women's caucus at Guy's sees itself and its planned rally as stressing the need for women themselves to discuss and develop their ideas so that they play a full and active role inside the trade unions. JANET MAGUIRE

## WORKERS OCCUPY TO SAVE LONDON HOSPITALS

The old general had not changed his wiles. A lover of manoeuvres but a hater of battles his purpose was not to engage the enemy but to avoid them. This time his foot soldiers were thousands of hospital, local government and other workers demonstrating their willingness to fight against cuts in the public sector in London.

To suit the occasion he needed a disguise, and left-sounding rhetoric was the chosen one. But nothing could hide the bodily form of Alan Fisher, General Secretary of the National Union of Public Employees.

Now the sound and fury are over and while Fisher and his lieutenants are safely behind their desks hospital workers are busy preparing at the front line of the battle to save London's hospitals.

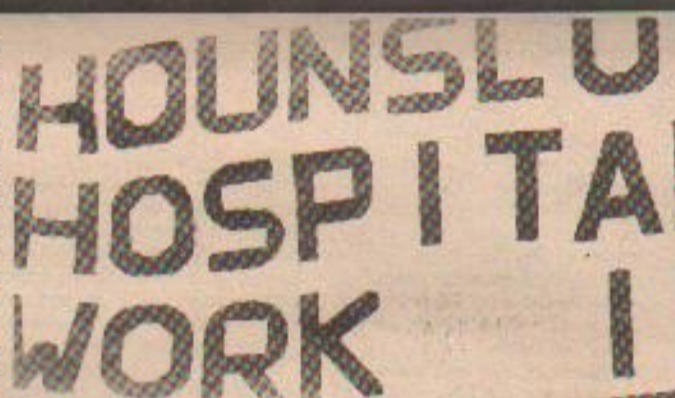
Since the beginning of April workers at the Hounslow Hospital have been staging a work-in to prevent the Hounslow, Hammer-smith and Ealing Area Health Authority from closing the hospital. Shop stewards have been preparing the resistance inside the hospital where a staff defence committee responsible to regular mass meetings has now been set up. They have also been building support within the local labour movement.

### MARCH

Last week 200 trade unionists including delegates from the Heathrow Joint Shop Stewards Committee, the Hounslow Trades Council and St. Bernard's Hospital rallied outside the Hounslow in support of their struggle. After the rally a march through Hounslow to the AHA offices took place which demanded that the AHA refuse to implement the proposed hospital closures.

Although the AHA chairperson refused to give any guarantees, the effect of the struggle in West London was shown when the AHA voted against plans to close all the surgical wards and the operating theatre in the Acton Hospital.

The workers at Hounslow know a long battle will be necessary to



Hounslow Hospital workers turned up in force on 11 May march.

save their hospital, but they are determined that it will not go the same way as the other 25 hospitals which have already been closed in London. From 1 July a 24-hour picket is being organised to prevent any removal of equipment by the AHA, who have said that the hospital must close by the end of August.

Across the river in South West London other hospital workers and trade unionists are taking steps to prevent another hospital closure. The Weir Maternity Hospital in Wandsworth has already suffered cuts in its facilities.

The special unit for the treatment of premature babies has virtually closed down following the non-replacement of the nurse in charge. The AHA have already taken over two newly upgraded wards and turned them into offices for themselves. Two weeks ago a successful strike, demonstration and public meeting were held, organised by the Wandsworth health unions in support of the Weir.

This type of support must now be stepped up. As Ernie Taylor, NUPE shop steward, told Red

Weekly, 'We need outside help. We're in a difficult position as a maternity hospital because we do not deal with general patients. We also need the help from local practitioners. With this help we will attempt to keep our hospital open in the same fashion as the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson'.

While the local NUPE officials sit on their hands, the Weir workers and local trade unions are taking steps to build this support. On 23 May at Balham Library the first meeting of the Weir Defence Committee will take place. This is already supported by the Community Health Council Trade Union Liaison Committee, the local Trades Council and the Save Our Hospitals Campaign.

Together with the workers at the EGA the workers at the Hounslow and Weir Hospitals are showing how a real battle can be begun against the cuts. But to save these and other hospitals a general offensive is needed. CLASH (Committee of London Health Stewards for the Health Service) is attempting to build such a campaign on a London basis. COLIN SMITH

### ORIGINS

The origins of the dispute go back some fifteen months to December 1975 when the basic rates were challenged. After considerable delay and protracted negotiation, a new grading scheme was drawn up. Although this placed the women workers in the skilled section of work, considerable differential between male and female bonus rates meant that an unskilled male was earning three pounds a week more than a skilled woman worker.

The women were left with no alternative other than strike action. The dispute has wider implications than at one plant. As Ellen Nicklin, convenor at the plant, explained to Red Weekly:

'Our employers are caught in a vice. All wages structure in the textile industry are similar to ours, and we know that every employer is really sweating over the success of our claim.'

### SPREADING

Laird Portch is only a subsidiary of one of Scotland's largest firms, Coats Paton, and the dispute is already spreading throughout the other branches of the huge textile giant. Jaegers in Kilmarnock are out on strike and Ladybird workers are blacking all materials from the striking factories.

One of the main factors behind the strength of the women is their total distrust of Equal Pay Tribunals. 'They're just a farce', explained Ellen Nicklin, 'We'll get nothing from these people'.

### CHARTER

Instead it is the trade union and women's movement that the strikers have turned to for support. One striker summed it up by explaining that:

'The rally [on equal pay] last week was very good. These Women's Charter people seem very determined and if we get really organised then we can really get something going.'

\* Send messages of support and donations to: Ellen Nicklin, 153 Leeward Circle, Westwood, East Kilbride.

\* A Saturday night social in Glasgow collected £25 for the Portch Laird strikers. It was organised by militants who attended the successful Sex Discrimination Act Rally held two weeks ago.

Photo: LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFLU)



NAME..... SUBSCRIPTION RATES  
ADDRESS..... DOMESTIC: £7 per year  
£3.50 for six months  
FOREIGN: £9 per year surface mail  
£12 per year airmail