

# RED WEEKLY

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## FUND DRIVE

Well, last week's call for money for our fighting fund started the ball rolling. We got £25 from a group of readers in Belfast 'as recognition of the Red Weekly's constant support for the anti-imperialist struggle being waged by the Irish people.' An East London accountant sent us £15 and other donations topped the Fund up to £212. But we are still struggling. We have not yet heard from our generally reliable friends in Birmingham, Coventry, Manchester and Leeds or Scotland. Will they make sure that they get their regular donations in as soon as possible. A number of London branches have still to pay up. You know the address - 182 Pentonville Road, London, N.1. Make sure we get our money.

## FOOT STAMPS ON THRESHOLDS

# STOP LABOUR'S WAGE-CUT PLANS

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT is unloading another round of massive price increases onto the backs of the working class. Using the miners' settlement as an excuse, the Electricity Council is calling for a price rise over and above the 30 per cent already applied for. This will be the fourth increase in electricity prices in twelve months, affecting a basic item of every worker's living standards.

Meanwhile, milk, butter and cheese prices will all rise again in the next few weeks - milk by a penny a pint, butter and cheese by five pence a pound. We can be sure that the hacks of the press will somehow manage to blame these increases on the miners! Yet in January alone retail prices rose by 2.6 per cent, the second highest monthly total on record. In the past three months the annual rate of inflation has been a staggering 25.9 per cent!

With the railwaymen, power-workers, and many other workers looking for rises similar to the miners to keep just ahead of inflation, the Labour Government is waving the big stick. Chancellor Healey has threatened massive unemployment at a time when 800,000 are already on the dole - an increase of 20 per cent since November.

The Government's favourite 'left' Michael Foot, fresh from his 'triumph' in South Wales (see centre pages), has echoed Healey's threat. He warned that if settlements followed the pattern set by the miners' deal, 'all the warnings on unemployment and the economy generally, which Mr Denis Healey has recently given, would come true.' (*Financial Times*, 15/2/75).

Waving the battered remains of the social contract, he argued that 'comparability' of pay levels was not recognised as a reason for 'special' pay rises under the TUC's wage guidelines. This is of central importance for the railwaymen and power workers, whose wage rates are now far below the £41 a week that miners on the surface will be earning, and with which their wages are usually comparable.

Foot is also putting the boot in on threshold agreements. The social contract is based on the claim that in return for self-denial by the more powerful sections of the workers movement, wages of the weaker sections will be defended against inflation and the social services improved. Yet public sector employers, including the National Coal Board, are now being instructed to stand

firm against further threshold deals which could provide permanent protection against inflation.

The bluff of the social con-trick must be called. Against the attempts of the Labour Government to introduce some form of statutory incomes policy in the coming weeks, whether through Healey's budget or some other means, the labour movement should launch the fight for a 'nil-norm' threshold.

This would give automatic and complete protection to all those living on wages and state benefits against every increase in the cost of living. The miners themselves could have opened the road for the weaker sections of the movement by campaigning for such a deal to be part of their final settlement.

James Drake

## JOURNALISTS OCCUPY AT EAV



The National Union of Journalists' executive has made official - by 16 votes to one - the occupation of Educational Audio Visual Limited in North London by journalists resisting the attempted closure of the company by its American parent.

EAV's six editorial workers were informed on 6 February that cuts in education spending in Britain, and increasing costs, meant that the subsidiary here was no longer viable. EAV's offices in North London produce sight-and-sound teaching material.

Occupation began immediately, on a 24 hour basis. Daily pickets are being held from 8am to 10am. Workers at E.J. Arnold in Leeds, the largest distributor of education equipment in Britain, have said that

## SHREWSBURY MARCH



International Marxist Group contingent on Mold demonstration, May 1973 - on the march from the start of the campaign to defend the Shrewsbury pickets

When the 24 Shrewsbury pickets were charged in early 1973 the International Marxist Group began a campaign for indefinite strike action.

IMG militants - often in the teeth of bitter opposition from the union bureaucrats and the Communist Party - were responsible for setting up Shrewsbury Defence Committees. The IMG was to the fore in mobilising support for the mass pickets outside the courts, and getting sympathy strikes.

The IMG has organised countless meetings, written innumerable articles in the *Red Weekly* and produced three pamphlets on Shrewsbury.

### SIDELINES

After remaining on the sidelines of the Shrewsbury campaign the Workers Revolutionary Party flickered to brief life when it agreed to a joint meeting with the IMG on this issue. But no action came out of the meeting. After breathing verbal fire the WRP turned back to the sectarian ghetto.

When the Wigan March organised by the Wigan Builders Action Committee was announced we wrote: 'A new initiative to get the 2 out has been started by the Wigan Builders' Action Committee. It is an initiative that can unite into a national campaign all those militants who recognise the need for a general strike to force open the prison gates.'

### SUPPORT

We called for resolutions of

and the sending of the biggest possible delegations to join the march.'

Unfortunately the opportunism of the WRP has dominated the whole exercise. In Coventry they refused to speak on building sites where IMG building workers had arranged meetings. This despite the fact that one of these building workers was a member of the Coventry Trades Council sub-committee responsible for organising support for the march.

With the exception of the chairman of the Coventry Trades Council all the platform speakers at last Friday's meeting were either WRP members or supporters. Instead of urging a united campaign these speakers spent most of their time denouncing the revolutionary left.

The Trades Council chairman had to point out that the IMG and the other left organisations had been campaigning in Coventry for two years on the Shrewsbury issue. This WRP performance played right into the hands of the CP and the right wing who want to make sure no independent campaign gets off the ground over Shrewsbury.

The tale of sectarianism stretches from Liverpool through to Manchester, Birmingham and Coventry. Such actions do nothing to help get the 2 out of jail.

They damage the prestige and credibility of the revolutionary left and, above all, they demonstrate the bankruptcy of an organisation that puts its own narrow interests above



# BEHIND THE IRISH CEASEFIRE

It is often said that war is the continuation of politics by other means: the Provisionals should learn that politics is simply the continuation of war by other means. The calling of the ceasefire became inevitable as the Provisionals proved more and more unable to get out of the blind alley of their bombing campaign. But the same wrong politics which produced that impasse are continuing to be applied in the new situation.

In the short term, it is obvious that the ending of hostilities—as the most obvious sign of the continued resistance against British imperialism—will be demoralising for the nationalist minority. The ceasefire signifies a setback for the struggle of the minority. But the longer the bombing campaign in its present form had continued, the more irrelevant it would have become to the needs of the minority and the more disoriented they would have become.

It is to the credit of the Provisional leadership that they have recognised this. It is because the Provisionals recognise the need for a new orientation that they will fight for the continuation of the ceasefire, despite the feeble concessions that they have achieved from British imperialism.

But the self-deluding way that the Provisionals have politically explained their negotiations and justified the ceasefire—their newspaper *An Phoblacht* says it has been

'declared from a position of strength'—augurs very badly for any critical assessment of future perspectives.

## GOVERNMENT

It is true that the British Government itself wants to see the ending of hostilities for a period—and for that they will make some small concessions. But these concessions won't be made because they are about to be defeated by the Provs. All the British are interested in is using the lull in the fighting to put together a new 'moderate' coalition composed of elements of the Loyalists and the SDLP, as a way of keeping a life line open towards the Southern Irish ruling class. But even such a 'moderate' bloc could only emerge on the condition that the fighting spirit of the minority was smashed.

It is in this context that the whole agreement on 'policing' is so dangerous. No-one is opposed to the Provisionals getting the best deal they can from the British. But it is the height of lunacy to trust that Rees will keep his word as long as the Provisionals keep theirs.

The only way that any verbal concessions can be guaranteed is through alerting the minority and mobilising for the defence and extension of such 'concessions'. Anything else can only play into the hands of Rees and the British army. The idea that the Provisionals should 'police' the truce—whatever good intentions the Provisional leaders might start with—will, in the actual balance of forces, mean



British troops being surrounded in Belfast by Republican youths. They recognise that the role of the troops is to protect the Loyalists and suppress the minority. The only answer is to demand their immediate withdrawal.

collaboration with the British forces of 'law and order'.

The army may be adopting a 'low profile' for the moment, but as one British commentator put it, it is still keeping up its guard. In such a situation, any attempt by the Provisionals to referee any confrontation between the minority and the army can only mean intervening amongst elements of the minority. This can only lead to further confusion and demoralisation.

The Provisionals cannot change the balance of forces by wishful thinking. The dangers are obvious just from looking at the way that Seamus Loughran, Provisional Sinn Féin leader in the North, is developing. After explaining that the Provisionals were setting up vigilantes to police the Catholic areas he said: 'After consideration, more serious crime might be handed over

to the British forces of law and order.'

Whichever way you look at it, such a statement implies a clear willingness to collaborate with British imperialism. We can only hope that the Provisional leadership will dissociate themselves from such proposals. But unfortunately, concessions of this type are built into the very logic of the situation.

## LOYALISTS

Rees is playing an extremely delicate game. His project is to hold off the extreme Loyalists until he has time to fudge together some 'moderate' bloc. The ceasefire will help him do this by undercutting the support for the more extreme Loyalists.

If the SDLP can be guaranteed an overwhelming voice from the minority as a result of confusion

at the Provisionals' stance, only slightly more than 10% of Protestants need to be won to melt the extreme Loyalist majority away. Such a dream is what Rees is gambling on.

It is true that in the next period tensions are bound to increase amongst the extreme Loyalists. But the idea that some back-stage manoeuvres by Rees will shatter them completely is a pipe dream. Indeed, the ongoing quarrel between the para-military thugs and the United Ulster Unionist Council politicians over who gets what after a Loyalist victory in the Convention elections has recently been patched up in a rather ominous way.

A secret committee has now apparently been formed which, as the *Dish Times* explained, will have the function of 'bringing the paramilitants into policy making and bringing the politicians into planning for extra-parliamentary activity should this become necessary in the event of a Convention breakdown'. The Loyalists' notion of a Convention breakdown is any outcome which doesn't give them a majority. This is what will stymie Rees' project.

All in all, the ceasefire does not alter the fundamental features of the situation. The minority still has to be crushed and the Loyalists are still after the whole cake, despite Rees. But, the tempo of the inevitable clash between these two irreconcilables has been slowed. The spectre of civil war will recede a little. The 'Ulster Roundabout' will go for one more turn.

# STRENGTHEN THE TROOPS OUT DEFEND THESE MILITANTS CAMPAIGN!

Without doubt the new situation in Ireland will be used to create illusions in the possibility of a 'Constitutional' settlement in the framework of the Six County statelet. But such illusions need not undercut the growing sentiment for troop withdrawal amongst the British working class.

Such illusions have hit the dust too often already. What we are more likely to see is the opening of a major debate inside the working class on how the situation in Ireland can be resolved.

The *Tribune* group of left Labour MPs have already staked their claim. As far as they are concerned the crucial thing is to recognise 'what has always been the really mountainous obstacle to peace in Northern Ireland: the fears of the one million Protestants'. Their answer is that the Labour Government must show that these fears are unjustified, by creating a system

whereby power can be handed back to them.

We have to assert on the contrary, that the major factor preventing peace in Northern Ireland is the presence of British imperialism and the continued division of the Irish nation. The Loyalist organisations are the political arm of British military strength which ensure the continuing division of Ireland. The Loyalists will have to be smashed rather than sucked up to.

The Communist Party policy of a Bill of Rights enforced by the British Army will not do that job. Indeed, the next period will show that this approach too ends up in prostration before the Loyalists. The only consistent policy, and the only one which can guarantee

a 'true and lasting peace', is that of the complete withdrawal of British imperialism—militarily, economically and politically. Getting the troops out will be a first step to that.

Bringing clarity to this question must be the outcome of the trade union conference called by the Troops Out Movement for 24 May. In the light of the approaching elections for the Constitutional Convention and the development of this debate inside the workers' movement, this conference could not be more timely in cutting through the manifold false positions on Ireland and alerting the British workers' movement to its real tasks.

Red Weekly is pleased to print the following article calling for work to be stepped up in defence of the 14 BWNIC militants charged with offences under the Incitement to Disaffection Act. Although we have certain political differences with Pat, this will not in the slightest prevent the IMG from giving its full support to this campaign.

Support is gradually developing for the 14 defendants from the British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign, but the working class has yet to be mobilised on the issue. There needs to be a massive campaign demanding the immediate dropping of the charges and the abolition of the Incitement to Disaffection Act if these people are not to be victimised and jailed for years for opposing British imperialism in Ireland.

Like the Shrewsbury pickets, they have been charged under the disgraceful conspiracy laws—laws that can imprison someone for life for 'conspiring' with others they have never even met before. It is alleged that they conspired to break something called the Incitement to Disaffection Act: a piece of legislation which gravely infringes the right of free speech in this, our supposed 'democracy'. Specifically, they have been charged in relation to a fact sheet for soldiers advising them on various ways—orthodox and unorthodox—of getting out of the army if they dislike the vicious role they are required to play in Ireland.

The labour movement should see the charges in the context of other repressive measures at present being taken in this country (and of course in the six north eastern counties of Ireland) against the working class: the imprisoning of the Shrewsbury pickets; the establishment of control units in prisons; the army 'exercises' at Heathrow and elsewhere—which no doubt, among other things, constitute admirable training for strike breaking and 'preventing a bloodbath in Northern Ireland'. Trade unionists should bear in mind that the day may come when they too could be charged with Incitement to Disaffection if they leafleted troops brought in to break strikes.

So it is essential that the labour movement takes up the cause of the BWNIC 14 and does everything it can to force the Labour Government to live up to its Socialist principles and drop these charges. It is equally essential that all demanding an end to British imperialism in Ireland recognise that the case of the 14 is their case.

BY PAT ARROWSMITH

They are in the dock because BWNIC calls for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and an end to the union between Britain and Northern Ireland. If the charges are dropped, this will be a victory for the entire Troops Out movement.

So far, some small public meetings have been held, a petition is being circulated, and solidarity action has been organised by a group in Manchester. Recently an open forum held in the House of Commons, and chaired by Maureen Colquhoun M.P., was



Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

attended by about 70 people including representatives from about half-a-dozen peace groups and a number of civil liberties and left wing organisations: IMG, IS, BPC, TOM and a couple of trade unions.

Two major decisions were made: to hold a large public meeting with a broad platform; and to organise a mass picket (starting at 10 am) outside Lambeth Magistrates' Court (Renfrew Road, London S.E.11) on Monday 3 March, the first day of committal proceedings.

This will be the first major opportunity to demonstrate support and solidarity for the BWNIC 14. All who want Britain out of Ireland now and an end to the victimisation of these BWNIC activists should take time off work that day and join the picket. Pat Arrowsmith

## TOM plans labour movement conference on Ireland

The following letter is being circulated to potential sponsors of the National Conference of Labour Movement delegates—'Ireland and the Labour Movement in Britain'—planned by the Troops Out Movement.

Events in Northern Ireland are now moving rapidly towards a new and potentially even more dangerous climax.

The elections to the proposed Constitutional Convention are likely to result in a majority for supporters of the United Ulster Unionist Council. The Government will then be faced with a choice between handing over power to Messrs. Paisley, Craig and West or continuing with Direct Rule. Either way means continued violence and repression.

A change in policy is essential. The

Government must break with the traditional approach of Britain to Ireland. Military repression and repressive legislation will not work—whether in Ireland or in Britain. There can be no more British-made 'solutions'; the people of Ireland must decide their own future.

But such a change will not come about unless the labour movement begins to come to grips with the problem, formulates a policy, and having done this, makes its voice heard.

The National Conference of Lab-

our Movement Delegates on 24 May, called by the Troops Out Movement, is an important opportunity for all sections of the labour movement to discuss the role of the British army in Ireland, and the way forward to a just and lasting peace based on the right of the Irish people to self-determination.

We therefore urge the labour movement to support this conference as one step towards developing an informed policy which will ensure a progressive solution to the 'Irish problem'.



# COMMON MARKET REFERENDUM

## Croydon Co-op members fight for socialist campaign

As the campaign around the Common Market referendum begins to warm up, most of the running on the anti-Market side has so far been made by the 'Get Britain Out Campaign' (GBOC). But although this broad front body is the campaigning vehicle for most of the anti-Market trade unions, and is indeed largely funded by them, some distinctly odd figures have already distinguished themselves.

At Folkestone, for example, I've Jenkins of ASTMS was joined the platform by that well-known tan of the trade unions, Enoch Powell. At Bristol the speakers included both Tribune MP Ron Thomas and Monday Club MP Richard Body. As for the audiences, they have generally consisted of Communist Party members, Tory backwoodsmen, National Front supporters, and the odd, rather bewildered trade unionist.

### FASCIST EXCLUDED

The London Co-op Political Committee, which made the initial financial contribution to the establishment of the GBOC, has now taken a first nervous step towards challenging this rather curious lineup. At their suggestion, the GBOC has decided to exclude members of the fascist National Front from its meetings. But while it is clearly a positive step for the workers' movement that the most ardent potential liquidators of its strength and organisations have suffered a setback, this is only the very tip of the iceberg.

The Tories, Liberals and even Fascists may differ from the fascists in that they do not presently envisage the destruction of the trade unions and working class political organisations. But they do have one thing in common.

Capitalism is in crisis. But for these representatives of the capitalist

class, capitalism itself is naturally unchallengeable, because if there was no capitalist class there would be no capitalist politicians. So they are agreed that there is only one solution: the working class must pay for capitalism's crisis!

The trade union leaders in the Get Britain Out Campaign and their brothers in the Labour left, Communist Party and Cooperative movement are not half so clear-sighted. By allowing the capitalist politicians into their anti-EEC campaign, they are hitching their wagon to people who have no strategy but to reduce working class living standards. By fighting the campaign on the basis of 'sovereignty', they are strengthening one of the most important ways in which the ruling class divides the working class: by suggesting that British workers have more in common with their 'national' British exploiters than with workers in other countries faced with similar attacks from their own ruling classes.

What is more, despite organisationally excluding the NF, they are helping all the forces of the extreme right to pose as friends of the workers' movement by fighting the EEC on exactly the same reactionary political basis.

### POLITICAL STRUGGLE

But not all the anti-Market forces are willing to go along with this sort of campaign. In Croydon, members of the South Suburban Co-op Political Committee, disgusted by the reactionary content of, and presence of fascists at, a Co-op anti-Market meeting on 15 January, have launched a political struggle for a socialist campaign against the EEC.

S. Supramaniam, the secretary of Croydon Co-operative Party, told *Red Weekly*: 'We are not anti-European, we are anti-capitalist. We are not in favour of a chauvinist campaign against the EEC but for one which fights for the idea of a United Socialist States of Europe.'

'For this reason, we disagree



Anti-EEC march 1972—room under its chauvinist umbrella for contingents from both the Communist Party and the National Front

with those Co-op members who just want to exclude the NF, and that only under pressure. We are for the exclusion of all Tories, Liberals, and other capitalist figures. That's why we are organising a meeting for members of the labour movement alone, to organise a socialist campaign against the Common Market.'

### WALKED OUT

Stan McMillan, a Labour Party member, USDAW shop steward and member of the South Suburban Co-op Political Committee, explained what happened when, together with several other people, he walked out of the 15 January meeting.

'In the meeting I challenged the right of anybody not in the labour

movement to be present, and said I would fight the Common Market only on the ground of socialism and not of nationalism. When I walked out members of the Communist Party followed me and said I was wrong to oppose working with anyone who wanted to get Britain out.'

'Jack Knight, a leading member of Surrey CP, explained to me that "the ends justify the means" and that "the CP would unite with anyone and do anything to get Britain out of the EEC". I totally reject this sort of argument. NF members and Tories shouldn't even be allowed into Ruskin House—the local headquarters of the Labour Party and trade unions—where our meetings are held.'

At a meeting on Friday 14 February, the Croydon Co-op Party

voted by 17 votes to 3 to endorse this line and exclude all forces outside the labour movement from their anti-EEC campaign. The South Suburban Co-op Political Committee has also voted its support to such a campaign, and has sent a resolution to the London Co-op Society deploring the 'broad front' campaign which it is trying to build.

*Red Weekly* has always argued that the only way for socialists to oppose the EEC is to fight against all attempts by the ruling class to make workers pay for the crisis of capitalism. The example of this excellent initiative in the Croydon area must be rapidly taken up elsewhere. For further details contact Bro. S. Supramaniam, Croydon Co-op Party, Ruskin House, Coombe Road, Croydon.

## Cuts bite as support grows for Leeds conference

Nowhere can the Labour Government's dramatic failure to stem the cuts in social expenditure be seen more clearly than in Leeds.

Last summer and autumn saw big struggles against attempts by the local council to slash spending by reducing teaching staff levels and cutting grant awards to local students and youth clubs. The housing situation is a disaster area. With 30,000 on the waiting list the council managed to build 450 new houses last year!

New schools have had to be closed because to save time, and therefore money, high alumina content cement was used in their construction. This is now crumbling away, disrupting schooling for thousands of kids. Public works are grinding to a halt with maintenance of existing council housing particularly hard hit. Not surprisingly social workers have one of the heaviest case-loads in the country—an average of 50 families a piece.

It was this situation that led militants of the International Marxist Group in Leeds to start campaigning for a local labour movement conference against the cuts. With increasing sections of the labour movement seeing the necessity of defending the social aspects of their living standards as much as the wage-packet, support for the conference is snowballing.

Two events in particular highlight its timeliness. The Labour Government has recently authorised the cancellation of a £12 million programme for rebuild-

ing and extending sections of the Leeds General Infirmary. £15 million of the £27 million project has already been spent. Meanwhile the local council has given planning permission to Allied Investments to spend £4 million converting an empty mansion into a private hospital.

No wonder support for the conference is growing! The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers shop stewards committee at Tangy-Epco, a local engineering firm, has reacted enthusiastically to the circular advertising the conference. They have sent a resolution to the AUEW District Committee urging it to get as many shop stewards as possible to attend. Discussions are also under way to work out the kinds of proposals the conference should adopt to

develop the campaign against the cuts.

Any proposals will have to come to grips with the following facts:

Firstly, the depth of the crisis is revealed by the failure of the local capitalist mg, the *Evening Post*, together with a bunch of consultants, to 'save the Leeds General Infirmary'—despite collecting 120,000 signatures.

Secondly, the local Labour councillors have opposed the joint Tory/Liberal scheme to allow the private hospital not because such schemes damage the medical care of the working class by undermining the National Health Service, but on the basis that granting planning permission to Allied Investments would set a precedent for building in the 'green-belt'! They hoped this would split the Liberals!

### As free as a bird?

IN A WEEK which saw a renewed outcry against the alleged threat to the 'freedom of the press' contained in the closed shop provisions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Amendment Bill, one incident which completely summed up the nature of this so-called 'freedom' went largely unreported except in the *Guardian*.

On Monday, 10 February, Mr Alexander Paton, a Glasgow barman imprisoned by the Soviet authorities for setting fire to a Leningrad hotel, flew into Heathrow airport after his release as a goodwill gesture before Mr Wilson's visit to Moscow. Two days later the *Daily Express* carried a lengthy interview with Paton prefaced by extensive references to the fact that he was now 'free as a bird' and 'for the first time... free to speak'

An innocent observer of the press might have been surprised to note that Paton's extensive revelations were confined to the *Express*. Perhaps the other papers weren't interested? Not so. The previous day a piqued *Guardian* reporter had spilled the beans:

'The Heathrow interview was cut short when Mr Paton was hustled away by *Daily Express* reporters. As he left he shouted: "I've had 14 months of the RGB—now I'm back in their hands again. This is absolutely ridiculous." The *Express* is thought to have bought Mr Paton's story through his mother.'

'Free as a bird', did they say. It seems they forgot to mention the expensive gilded cage. No wonder the Fleet Street editors are so determined not to yield an inch to the National Union of Journalists. After all, the freedom of the chequebook is at stake!

- \*\*\*\*\*
- \* LEEDS CONFERENCE Against Cuts in \*  
\* Social Expenditure, 8 March all day at \*  
\* Kitson College. Speakers: Joan Maynard \*  
\* MP, Mick O'Shea (T&G shop steward, \*  
\* Kings College Hospital), Geoff Fawcett \*  
\* (secretary Leeds Area NUT), G. Roberts \*  
\* (NUPE shop steward, St. James Hospital) \*  
\* Chairmen: Terry Jacques (President \*  
\* Leeds AUEW). Sponsors include: \*  
\* Councillors Ron Sedler and Jim Roche; \*  
\* AUEW District Committee; Leeds \*  
\* Trades Council; Crabtree-Vickers AUEW \*  
\* Shop Stewards' Committee; NUPE No 3 \*  
\* branch; ATTI Liaison Committee; Leeds \*  
\* Poly Students Union. Details from: \*  
\* Conference Secretary, 31 Sissons Terrace, \*  
\* Leeds 10. \*  
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The labour movement won't get far with this kind of rubbish. Against these failures the conference must begin to map out an alternative workers' solution to the crisis in social expenditure.

Blacking all work on the private hospital and direct action to force the council to reverse its decision would be a first step in this direction. Furthermore, a local demonstration could be held demanding the reversal of the cuts on the Infirmary and the turning over of the mansion to the NHS or to accommodate the homeless.

Another practical move would be the setting up of a workers enquiry into the local health service. After all, half the consultants involved in the 'save the Infirmary' campaign are also involved in the private hospital scheme! A workers enquiry could look at the needs of the Infirmary in terms of staffing levels, equipment, re-building programmes and so on, which correspond to the needs and requirements of the working class as opposed to the consultants and their friends.

It is to mapping out such a campaign that the conference will have to turn its attention.

Ed Waller (Joint Conference

## EEC OPEN LETTER

At the initiative of the local branch of the International Marxist Group an 'Open Letter' calling for a socialist campaign against the EEC is now being circulated in the Bristol labour movement (see *Red Weekly*, 13 February for full text). Already there has been a good response. Among the signatories so far are:

- Steve Bell (TGWU delegate to Bristol Trades Council, CSL factory)
- Alan Beynon (TGWU delegate to Bristol Trades Council, Shift Spokesman CSL)
- Mike O'Dey (Branch Chairman, TGWU 3/83)
- Jack Matchet (TGWU Shop Steward, ISC Chemicals)
- Dave Williams (Branch Secretary, TGWU 3/83)
- Tony Cooksley (TGWU Shop Steward, Site Chairman CSL)
- Bill Campbell (TGWU Shop Steward, CSL)
- Mark Wilson (Branch Secretary, TGWU/ACTTS 3/336)
- Brian Myers (TGWU Shop Steward, ISC Chemicals)
- Paul Swain (TGWU Senior Steward, ISC Chemicals)
- May Carey (NALGO Delegate to Bristol Trades Council, Bristol NALGO Health and Teaching Branch Executive)
- John Malos (Prospective Labour Party parliamentary candidate, Bristol West)
- Ellen Malos (Bristol Working Women's Charter)
- Gill Crozier (NUT delegate to Bristol Trades Council, Bristol Teachers Association committee rep.)
- Pat Minelli (Bristol Teachers Association committee rep.)
- Patrick Benefield (Bristol Teachers Association committee rep.)
- Mike Alderson (Branch Secretary, NUPE Frenchay Hospital)
- Mike Essale (TGWU delegate to Bristol Trades Council)



# WORKERS' CONTROL VS BOSSES SABOTAGE

After the downfall of the fascist dictatorship Portuguese workers began to flex their muscles: launching militant struggles against the starvation wages which almost half a century of ruthless dictatorship had imposed on them; for the reinstatement of militant workers who had been victimised under the old regime, and for the immediate dismissal of reactionary managers.

The capitalists were not at all happy about these developments, and did everything in their power to combat them. For a while they could count on the armed forces to sort things out, either by putting pressure on the workers to call off their struggles or by sending troops in to break them up.

But recently the army has not been able to deliver the goods. The workers have become even better organised and more class conscious, many sections of the army (ordinary soldiers and lower rank officers) sympathy with them and even the top brass are either trying to balance between the capitalists and the workers, or are afraid of a show down.

So the capitalists, unable to crack down on the workers through the usual weapons of the state machine, have turned to using their economic power and launched a wave of deliberate economic sabotage. Many companies have been

deliberately cutting back in production and trying to lay off workers in order to break their militancy. All workers' demands are resisted ferociously, management often refusing to pay workers their wages, and in some cases just abandoning their factories altogether.

Among the worst offenders are the big multi-national firms who rushed eagerly into fascist Portugal in order to take advantage of cheap labour, and are now unwilling to pay even the abysmal legal minimum wage of £13 a week. Many of these companies have just rolled up the carpet and suddenly disappeared from the country, leaving empty factories and unemployed workers behind.

As a result there are now something like a quarter of a million workers unemployed in Portugal—equivalent to about 2 million out of work in this country.

But the Portuguese workers are not taking this lying down. They are pushing their fight forward to get to the root of this new problem, in some cases waging struggles to establish workers' control over the capitalist management, and in others taking over abandoned factories and running them.

## 'We started to run the factory because we had to in order to survive'

Over the next few weeks *Red Weekly* will be investigating some of the most important of these struggles. This week we look at how the workers at the NEFIL factory are fighting back against their bosses' sabotage.

NEFIL is a middle-sized furniture factory in the northern part of Portugal. At the beginning of December the workers blocked an attempt by management to victimise a worker. Management then replied by refusing to pay any wages for the month and dragging

commission, divided into 8 sub-committees and assisted in technical matters by sympathetic outsiders (most technical and office staff having left). The workers commission does not make policy or major decisions, but takes all such questions to the general assembly.



their heels in the negotiations over workers' demands.

The workers held a general assembly of the whole plant and decided, in view of these problems, to take over the factory and run it themselves. They found about £4000 in the company's safe, which they promptly divided up equally among the workers to compensate for the loss of past wages. They then sent a picket squad into the nearby city of Porto, where the company had its warehouses, to expropriate and guard the company's stocks of raw materials.

Next a delegation from the workers went to visit the factory which supplies their raw materials. The workers at this factory agreed to tell their management that they would immediately strike if there was any attempt to cut off supplies to their comrades at NEFIL.

The day-to-day running of the factory is in the hands of a democratically elected 17-member workers

which meets almost every day. The assembly can recall its representatives on the commission whenever it wants.

The payment of wages is being organised according to the particular needs of individual workers—so those with the largest families will receive the highest wages.

The fact that business has been going well has not blinded the workers to the limitations of their action. As one member of the workers' commission put it: '... we do not have any illusions in workers' management under capitalism. We are using it as a weapon, as an emergency solution. We started to run the factory because we had to in order to survive after the management had abandoned the factory on 27 December ... we are thinking about demanding that the Government nationalise the firm—under workers' control. We do not want a phony nationalisation which only helps the bosses.'

## Yugoslav dissident speaks on crisis

Mihailo Markovic, one of the eight dissident Marxist professors recently dismissed by the Tito regime, spoke at a public meeting in London last Sunday about the present crisis in Yugoslav society. The meeting was organised by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, which has recently published a book of Professor Markovic's theoretical writings, *The Contemporary Marx*.

Dr Markovic, who was sacked along with the entire staff of the Belgrade University Philosophy Faculty (of which he was the Dean), explained that behind this move lay the bureaucrats' fear that the professors' writings might inspire a struggle against the privileged bureaucracy by the students and other sections of the population.

He pointed out that Yugoslavia has an inflation rate of 30%; that there is considerable discontent within the working class, sharpened by the return of immigrant workers unable to find work in Germany; and that the coming months could see a renewed



Tito: had dissident professors expelled

upsurge among the students attempting to link up with the working class against the regime. He explained that in Yugoslavia today the perspective of a mass struggle of students and workers against the regime is widely understood as a realistic possibility.

after the experience of anti-bureaucratic struggle there in recent years.

Dr Markovic showed how the Government's economic reforms and efforts to attract Western capital into the country have had severely damaging effects on the living conditions of the working class. He also explained the one-sided and ineffectiveness of the 'self-management' programme: the failure to develop effective workers' democracy at the level of the state institutions means that all the decisive issues affecting the life of the masses remain outside the control of the working class.

He pointed out that the solution to the political problems of the working class in a country like Yugoslavia does not lie in abandoning strong central political institutions in favour of local autonomy, but rather in combining effective local initiatives with strong democratic central institutions in place of the present bureaucratic regime.

An international campaign has been launched in defence of the Yugoslav professors. The regime chose its moment to attack when the students were on holiday, but the struggle for the re-instatement of the professors is far from over, both inside Yugoslavia and internationally.

## Czech regime sends Kurds back to certain death



Servile Husak (left) with mentor Brezhnev and late president Svoboda

In the last four months, the 1968 Soviet occupation has continued to 'make itself felt' throughout Czechoslovak society and, above all, in the actions of the servile regime of Gustav Husak.

It is through the selective repression and slander of its most courageous socialist opponents that the regime succeeds for the moment in keeping up the 'appearance of stability. Left to rot in Husak's jails, the health of many of these prisoners is steadily worsening—former student leader, Jiri Mueller, for example, is now in danger of completely losing his sight as a result of his conditions of detention.

We have already mentioned in *Red Weekly* the systematic attempt by the authorities to crush Ivan Dejmal, a former member of the

Revolutionary Socialist Party, who has recently been re-arrested after completing a previous sentence.

But this is by no means the only way in which Husak serves the world interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy. As is well known, an alliance with the reactionary Iraqi Ba'athists is an important goal in the Kremlin's Middle-East strategy, and it has been particularly active in supporting the war against the Kurdish partisans fighting for their national rights.

Baghdad's campaign to force the submission of the Kurds stretches into the capitals of Eastern Europe where Kurdish students are studying. From now on, their access to Czech higher education depends on their taking an oath of allegiance to the Ba'athist regime. The price

of refusal is not merely expulsion from university but immediate deportation. In at least three cases in recent months Kurdish students have been put on a plane to Baghdad to face certain death on the gallows.

The Jan Palach Memorial Committee and the Kurdish Activist Group have announced the organisation of a joint demonstration and hunger strike on the sixth anniversary of the self-burning of Prague student, Jan Zajic. This action by Czech and Kurdish socialist militants is in support of demands for the release of Czechoslovak political prisoners and for an end to Czech complicity in the Ba'athist war against the Kurds.

Both the Jan Palach Memorial Committee and the Kurdish Activist Group can be contacted c/o Box 68, 197 King's Cross Road, London N.1.

The demonstration, which is supported by the IMG, starts at the entrance to Millionaire's Row, Notting Hill Gate, at 2.00pm on Saturday, 22 February. The hunger strike will continue until 25 February.

THE SECOND ISSUE of *South Asia Marxist Review* is now out, and contains an important article by Brian Davey on the debate currently taking place in India on the question of the mode of production which exists in the sub-continent; the beginning of a lengthy analysis of the Chinese Cultural Revolution; and articles on Sri Lanka, the Naxalites, and the struggle in the Arab East.

All orders to Upali Cooray, c/o 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.—cost 25p plus 5p p&p. 10% discount on all orders of 10 or more; 20% discount on all orders of 50 or more.



# CARABANCHEL TEN' WIN VICTORY OVER FRANCO REGIME



duced on appeal to periods varying from 2 to 6 years, instead of 12 to 20 years. This means that four are eligible for immediate release, but the other six must remain in the dictatorship's prisons—the worst off, Marcelino Camacho, for four more years.

## Chris Balfour

But even this limited victory would not have been won had it not been for the magnificent displays of solidarity mounted by the Spanish working class. On the Sunday before the appeal opened 3,000 people demonstrated their solidarity in Madrid, 100 of whom were arrested. The following day hundreds of workers and students again braved the wrath of the police to demonstrate outside the Supreme Court. Still undeterred by police attacks and the drafting of tanks and helicopters into the city to 'maintain public order', 100,000 city workers struck the following day in solidarity with the Ten, who had launched a hunger strike and were calling for an amnesty for all political prisoners.

### ACTORS

This mass solidarity with the dictatorship's opponents came at the same time as many groups of workers were going into struggle. For a week before the appeal all Madrid theatres were closed as actors and actresses struck to back up demands for trade union rights. Popular support for their struggle was widespread. When an actor at one theatre went on stage to announce that the cast was stopping the play in solidarity with their striking comrades the audience greeted him with applause!

On the day the appeal opened secondary schools were shut down across the country as teachers struck over job security. Two days later 5000 construction workers in the city of Malaga went on strike to protest against unemployment. Police in the Basque city of Bilbao

had to move into the Firestone tyre factory to evict 300 workers who were sitting in (management later announced they were sacking all those involved), and in the northern city of Oviedo 5000 miners were locked out for ten days for striking.

The unrest also hit the universities, with police invading all the major campuses to break up student demonstrations. One university has been shut down by the authorities for the rest of the year.

This massive wave of discontent has given the ruling class something to think about. Increasingly some sections are beginning to think it would be better to allow a small dose of democracy now than to have large quantities of it shoved down their throat by the working class later on.

### AFRAID

The Government, however, is afraid that the workers will try to use any new freedoms which are conceded to push the struggle forward for further democratic rights and to advance their own class demands. The regime has thus launched a full scale attack on the organisations of the revolutionary left, to try and break their influence before any political concessions are made.

The Communist Party has for some time now been at pains to convince the ruling class that they are 'responsible', and would not actually use political rights to fight for 'unreasonable' working class demands. They would seem to have made some progress in this, since the regime has not recently bestowed the same attention on them as on the revolutionary left, and a number of capitalist opposition parties (including the Christian Democrats) agreed to co-sign a letter to the Prime Minister along with the CP calling for democratic reforms.

Whatever happens over the next few months one thing is sure: the Spanish working class is not likely to remain content with any phoney face-lifting of the present dictatorship, and is bound to use any concessions wrung from the ruling class to push for far more than the capitalists will be prepared to grant.

Just before Christmas, Rohana Wijeweera, main leader of the now banned Sri Lankan revolutionary organisation, the JVP, was sentenced to life imprisonment by the special courts of the Bandaranaike regime.

Despite constant harassment of the defence—which included cutting off legal adviser Bala Tampoe in the middle of his final summing-up speech—Wijeweera was able to make a speech from the dock in which he proclaimed his adherence to Marxism-Leninism and based himself on the struggle of the world working-class movement, rejecting the charges of 'conspiracy' and 'terrorism' as a frame-up.

The Fourth International has launched an international campaign to secure his release. Below we print a letter smuggled out at the end of last year from the jail in which Wijeweera and other political prisoners are held, paying tribute to the FI's role in organising solidarity action around his case.



We have learnt that the Comrades of the Fourth International, at their tenth world congress held in the beginning of this year, have passed a resolution expressing their solidarity with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) of Sri Lanka and the members of the JVP imprisoned by the Sirima Bandaranaike regime. Furthermore, we came to know through the literature of the Fourth International that the comrades of the Fourth International are engaged in building up a world-wide agitation to compel the capitalist and reactionary rulers of the countries such as Chile, India, Pakistan, Ireland, Sri Lanka, etc., to release all the political prisoners imprisoned and detained by them, unconditionally.

We think that, at this moment, our revolutionary gratitude should be extended to the Fourth International for its solidarity expressed with us.

It is essential to mention here the assistance given to us by Comrade Bala Tampoe (the General Secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union and the Revolutionary Marxist Party of Sri Lanka) by defending several comrades before the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC).

At a time when we were attacked by the capitalist regime of Sri Lanka—supported not only by the American and British imperialists, but also by the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies and by the so-called leftists in this country including the ex-Trotskyites of the LSSP and the various varieties of Stalinism—Comrade Bala came forward to defend the JVP politically and its comrades legally, although we had political differences. The task performed by Comrade Bala by defending our comrades charged before the CJC and by exposing the brutal repression of the capitalist state and the reactionary nature of the CJC Act, before and outside of the CJC, will be remembered by the younger revolutionary generations with revolutionary gratitude.

It is our revolutionary wish to see the complete success of the movement that is being carried out by the Fourth International in order to get all the revolutionaries released who are imprisoned by the rulers whether they are of capitalist countries as in Chile and India or of degenerated bureaucratic countries as in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

Long live the World Socialist Revolution!

Rohana Wijeweera  
James Myangoda  
Lionel Bapege

AN IMPORTANT—if partial—victory was won by the Spanish workers' movement last week when the Supreme Court reduced the sentences handed out to ten leaders of the underground workers' commissions over a year ago.

The 'Carabanchel Ten', as they are known (after the notorious Carabanchel Prison in which they have been held for the past two and a half years), had their sentences red-

## TUC GIVES CASH TO RACISTS

THE TUC's POLICY of collaboration with the racist South African regime received another boost last week with the announcement that they would be donating £11,000 to the Urban Training Project in Johannesburg. This comes on top of a similar donation to the Institute of Industrial Education (IIE) in Durban.

The TUC defends these donations on the grounds that they are helping 'black trade unionism'. But, as their critics point out, these projects are conducted under strict supervision by the Government, and simply serve as a means of tarting up that vicious regime.

The TUC's policy is in contradiction with the guide lines laid down by the International Trade Union Conference Against Apartheid, which met in Geneva in 1973 under the sponsorship of the International Labour Organisation. This conference unanimously adopted a stand calling for a total boycott of the regime. They urged support for black workers 'through their authentic trade union and political organisations'—none of which have anything to do with the schemes being subsidised by the TUC.

Instead of endorsing this policy and taking up the conference call to 'establish national trade union committees against apartheid and the racist and colonial regimes', the TUC sent its own committee of enquiry to South Africa, headed by 'left' bureaucrat Jack Jones. It was on the basis of this committee's recommendations that the present collaborationist policy was adopted.

Meanwhile students at Ruskin College Oxford are threatening to take militant action over their College's links with the Institution of Industrial Education, and with the Club and Institute Union, which refuses to expel the racist Preston Dockers Club, who have a colour bar against blacks.

## James Best

Last Tuesday (11 February) a meeting of the Ruskin Student Association heard a report from their representatives on the College Executive Committee, who had presented the Student Association's report on the IIE to the Committee. Students were told that they had met with determined refusal by the College Authorities to break the link.

The students had also presented a resolution demanding that the Club and Institute Union representative on the College EC explain his position on the Preston Dockers Club affair. (The CIU refused to disaffiliate the club after the Race Relations Board found that it had been practicing racial discrimination.) The CIU representative just repeated his organisation's excuses for its complicity with racism.

The students decided to organise a demonstration outside the next EC meeting against the IIE link, and to demand the withdrawal of the CIU representative from the EC. The resolution warned the college authorities that failure of the

CIU representative to withdraw would lead to militant action.

### STOCKPORT

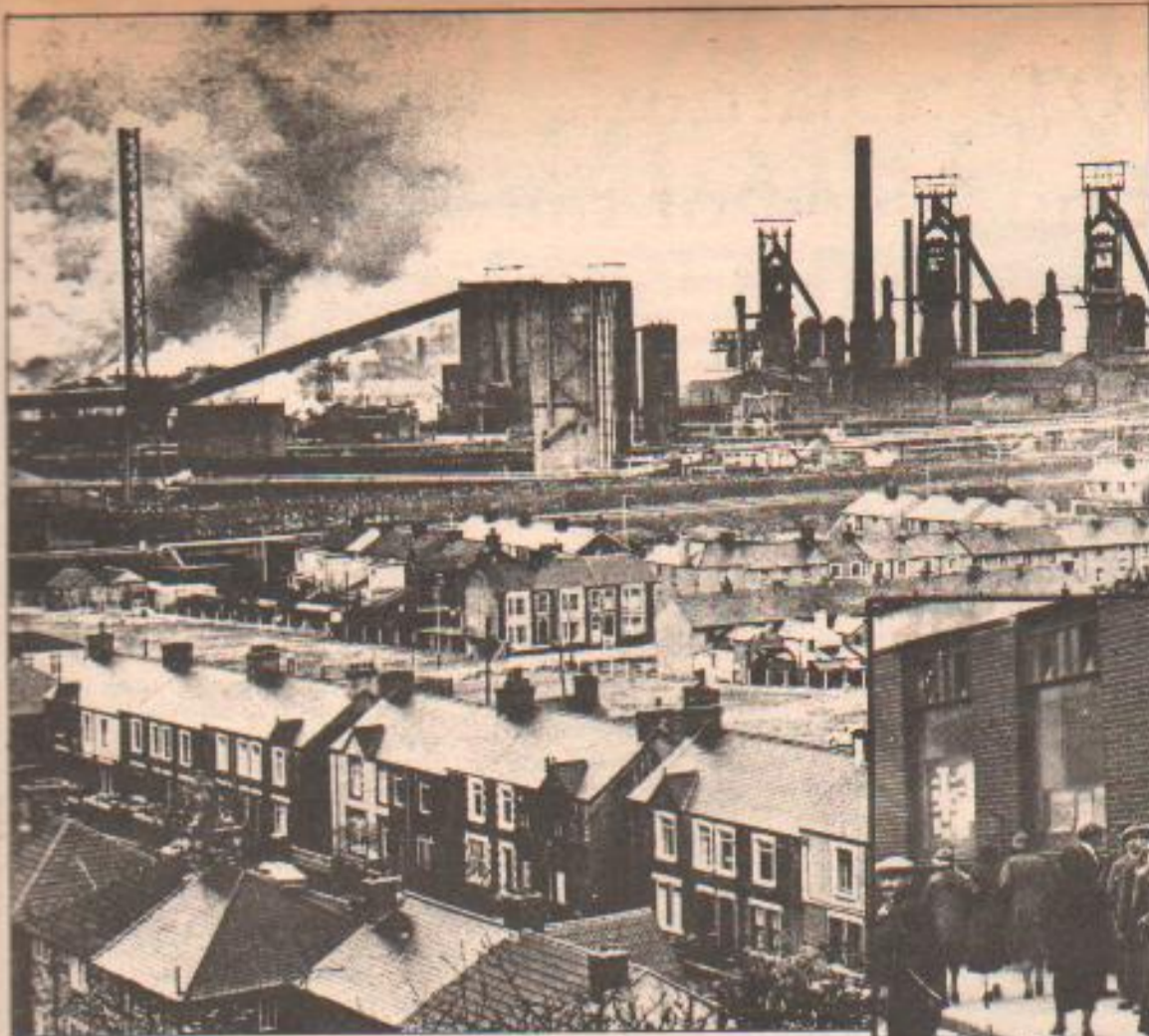
And in Stockport plans are going ahead to protest against Hawker Siddeley's agreement to build a power station for the South African regime in the occupied territory of Namibia ('South West Africa'), much of the work for which will be done in the Stockport Mirlees Blackstone factory.

Despite Foreign Secretary Callaghan's description of the South African occupation of Namibia as 'unlawful', Hawker Siddeley informed the Namibia Support Committee that 'in view of the complex political and legal matters concerned, the advice of the Department of Trade and Industry was obtained, and it has been confirmed that the companies concerned are in order in proceeding with this contract.'

A meeting is planned for Stockport on Friday to take this matter up. In addition to representatives of the local labour movement, it will be addressed by a representative of the Namibian liberation group, SWAPO, who will be calling on the Mirlees Blackstone workers to black the job, and by a member of the Government—Joan Lester, Junior Secretary at the Foreign Office.

The meeting will take place at 8pm on 21 February, in the Our Lady Social Centre, Flint St. (near Greek St.), Shaw Heath, Stockport. (For further details on the campaign against the contract in Stockport contact Jan Cosgrave, tel. 061-427-3952)





# GHOST OF HAUNTS TH



## WORKERS CALL FOR ACTION

Workers in Ebbw Vale told *Red Weekly* what effects the redundancies will have on the town and what they think should be done.

Noel Davies is a crane driver and a member of BISAUKTA who explained: 'The main closures are in the furnaces and the hotstrip mill. At the end of April 300 will be finishing. I am even more worried about the next five years or so because I don't see any jobs being kept at all.'

'If they invested about £75 million to keep the bottom end open for re-building two furnaces and two coils it would be OK.'

Noel said that he did not think people in Ebbw Vale believed that more jobs were on the way.

'People will have to move and with Ebbw Vale having a population of 36,000 it will be dead. So will Trodegar Brynmawr as well.'

### OBLIGATION

'The Labour Government has an obligation to put money into the plant to keep it going. There has been talk of asking Benn to step in but I think that they are bent on closure. If that happens 4,000 go down the road.'

'My idea is if the men go on the dole in April then we stop the whole plant. We contact other parts of the steel industry for support and stop indefinitely until Foot comes here and does something concrete about jobs. We cannot support BSC so I will support the Works Council in what it does to fight closures.'

Roy Beynon, who is secretary of the Production Works Council, was asked what are the differences between the two works' councils?

'The craft unions in my opinion were brainwashed into accepting the BSC's original proposals because there was all the talk about the Hoover factory expanding. That was supposed to give another 3,500 jobs at Merthyr. What happened was that we were all trapped into waiting to see what would happen about the new jobs because that's what the Government and BSC were talking about.'

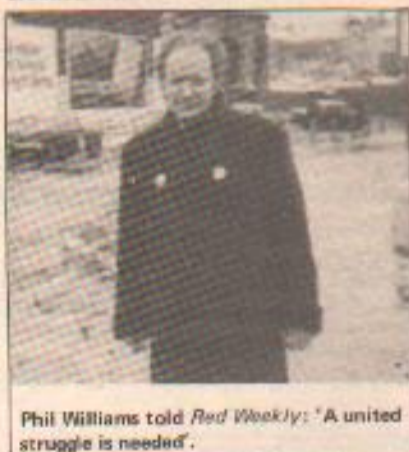
'We now know that despite the Labour Government saying they would delay any closure or modification until there had been a review. BSC has been going ahead with its plans continually all the time. They promised there would be 1000 jobs here before the rundown started ... it's been a two year con trick in my opinion. BSC and Whitehall have been deceitful all along.'

'I don't see how Benn can direct £200m to private industry and not to the nationalised industry which means that the private investor benefits and not us.'

'Michael Foot talks about an experiment in changing from one industry to another, but I don't want to be a guinea pig in an experiment which means that a town will be made into a ghost town.'

tion Works Council and a member of the AUEW constructional section was asked—will there be support from elsewhere?

'Ken Monte from Shotton Action Committee has already pledged his support. When we were at the Steel Action Committee Meeting in Scotland there were 35 delegates there representing 70,000 steelworkers. They unanimously pledged support to anyone fighting redundancies.'



Phil Williams told *Red Weekly*: 'A united struggle is needed.'

Roy Morgan is the EPTU convenor at Whiteheads Steel Works in Newport and explained: 'What is happening at Ebbw Vale must be seen in the light of the tactics of the capitalist class.'

'What they are trying to do is pick off the steel works one by one. Whether they get away with that or not is determined by the militancy in the plants.'

'Ebbw Vale shows the real meaning of nationalisation under the Labour Government. Its job has been to provide the capitalists with cheap steel.'

### WORKERS' CONTROL

'It is not enough to simply chant nationalisation as many of the Labour Party lefts do. Ebbw Vale shows the need to take up the fight for workers' control.'

'It is not the job of the workers to solve the capitalist crisis and that means that they should not be trying to produce plans to prove how the steel plants can be run to make a profit. That will only lead to workers sacking other workers.'

'A fight must be organised to unite all steelworkers against any redundancies or sackings. Every worker must be involved in this struggle—not just steel-

'Mass meetings must be organised and the leaders must be responsible to those meetings. Women are just as affected as the men and they must be involved alongside the men and brought into the fight.'

'It is good that wives and women relatives of Ebbw Vale steelworkers have formed an action committee to fight the planned closures. More than 100 women attended their first meeting and this must be built on and strengthened.'

### A FOCUS

'Many industries in Newport are on short-time and that is not just steelworkers. Ebbw Vale should become a focus to organise a South Wales fight back against unemployment.'

R. Ahsan is secretary of the TGWU branch at Crompton Parkinsons, Newport and went up to Ebbw Vale to discuss with steelworkers. He told *Red Weekly*: 'What is happening here is going to affect the whole of the valleys. By having 4,000 to 4,500 redundancies there will be over 8,000 people affected in the outlying industries which depend on the works.'

'Also there will be ruin in a lot of small businesses in the town. If you look at the South Wales area as a whole, in Newport there are a whole series of redundancies and short time working going on now ... 19 firms are on short time there now; I am on a three-day week myself.'

'Talking to the people here I see that although they are prepared to fight there's a lot of apathy because there has been no proper leadership over the years that these redundancies have been on the cards. The only political groups in the town up to now have been the Labour Party and to a lesser extent Plaid Cymru.'

### HARD CORE

'I think though that there is a hard core in the town who will take strong action if some political leadership can be given. That action, though won't be successful unless we get the support of the craftworkers, the triplate workers and every worker. Beyond that we must get support from the unemployed and short-time people here and throughout the area.'

'Since the 1930s there's been no militant action up here at all, and the Labour Government thinks it can sacrifice the jobs with no trouble. Also, of course, what militancy there has been has been directed by the Labour Party itself, which is now administering the cuts.'

'It is no use relying on Benn and Foot. The Labour Government has been running down steel since 1966 and Benn has been involved in those plans.'

'Only by taking their own action can steelworkers force any concessions out of the Labour Government.'

'We will try and organise support in Newport for this struggle. We will be holding a meeting to try and draw militants together to build a united campaign against redundancies and short-

## Two Works Councils — One Struggle Needed

Ebbw Vale was the first major steel plant to have a united works' council. Its setting up in 1959 was a big step towards overcoming the traditional divisions between craftsmen and production workers.

In 1973 the council split in two. One group consisting of a majority of craftsmen, plus the staff unions with a small number of production workers set up one council. The other council was mainly made up of the production workers.

The split came over differences on how to oppose the threatened

closures. The craftsmen said they did not mind the works closing, providing that alternative jobs were made available at an equivalent rate of pay.

### DEAD

They claim Ebbw Vale is dead as far as steel production is concerned and that the quantity and adaptability demanded by steel buyers is provided by Llanwern and Port Talbot. Their main criticism is that the Labour Government has reneged on its promise to provide alternative jobs.

# THE STEEL UNION WITHOUT METTLE

Workers faced with redundancies at Ebbw Vale, but also eventually throughout the British steel industry, will confront not only a hostile management and Government but they also face an extremely conservative union leadership.

The largest union in steel is the British Iron & Steel & Kindred Trades Association—BISAUKTA (as it is still known in the industry, although it is now formally the Iron & Steel Trades Confederation—ISTC), 60 per cent of British steelworkers



# THE 30s E VALLEYS

## FOOT: 'a patriotic Englishman' but no friend of the workers

**MICHAEL FOOT, 'FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE' AND LABOUR LEFT,** has somewhat tarnished his image by his support of mass sackings in Ebbw Vale.

Foot, however, is not some good left who has gone off the rails. Foot's acceptance of the sackings and his urging of the workers 'to show some guts' as they faced the cold bleak walk to the Labour Exchange is entirely in character with Labour's acceptance of the capitalist system.

Like his colleagues of the parliamentary left Foot has no alternative to either the capitalist system or the institutions—like parliament through which it rules.

Unlike some sections of the trade union movement and Labour Party members the establishment are not surprised at Foot's role as the butcher of Ebbw Vale. Shortly after his appointment by Wilson to the Ministry of Employment, a top civil servant caustically asked: 'How long before Foot turns hawkish against the unions? Three months?'

### REALISM

His colleague, bred in the cynical realism of Whitehall, laconically commented: 'More like three weeks.'

Nor did the journals of the capitalist class get too hot under the collar when Foot was appointed to that post. The *Observer* wrote on 10 March 1974: 'He has come into the Government with a firm belief in the new Social Contract.'

Alan Watkins in the *Sunday Telegraph* of the same date warned his readers not to see 'marxism: where nothing of the kind exists.' Writing for the deeply conservative readers of the *Sunday Telegraph* Watkins assured them: 'Most of his [Foot's] instincts are deeply conservative, as his alliances with Enoch Powell have shown ...'

Foot has always had great admiration for Powell because of the latter's epic defence of the parliamentary system. Being a more logical defender of capitalism Powell

would however be prepared to discard parliament in favour of an even more repressive form of capitalist rule if he thought it was necessary. Foot pathetically hangs on to this rotting institution.

Because Foot has no alternative to the capitalist parliament he sees no independent role for the working class and it never enters his head that this class must overthrow capitalism and institute its own form of rule. Instead he looks to 'talented' people who will work together to paternalistically legislate a 'better' life.

This explains his sycophantic admiration for that ruthless Tory buccaneer Lord Beaverbrook. Foot's wife recalls that Beaverbrook was always delighted when they had dined with the press baron: 'AJP Taylor and Michael Foot would then rise to their feet and sing the Red Flag.'

Singing for your supper is one way to please the ruling class. No wonder Beaverbrook gave the Foots a grace and favour cottage on his Cherkley estate!

### NEVER HAPPIER

Foot was never happier than in the days of the war-time coalition. He told Patrick Cosgrave in an interview in the *Spectator* (15 July 1972) 'Britain had a common life and purpose'. As Cosgrave says, 'this was his definition of socialism.' Peace and tranquility reigned in Foot's beloved war-time parliament.

Labour had dropped its differences with the employing class and their Tory Party. The workers were subjected to super-exploitation to serve the employers' war effort, the employers waxed fat and grew richer, but at least it was all sanctified by a 'united' parliament.

Foot's indifference to the role of the working class is shown in his personal life-style. The *Observer* profile says: 'the axis of his life remains solidly Westminster-Hampstead'. Worker militants are not regular visitors to his 'capacious Victorian house in Hampstead where his circle is largely Hampstead intellectuals and journalists.'

Above anything else Foot is as Alan Watkins says 'a patriotic man with a deep love of England.' These are sentiments echoed by Cosgrave when he says that 'communal and national identity is a very strong force in Foot.'

Foot is all those things: 'a radical parliamentarian', a 'patriotic Englishman', and an admirer of the Beaverbrooks and the Powells. He was formed not in the crucible of the class struggle but in the traditions of British liberalism and as his brother Dingle wrote in the *Daily Express* in September last year, his upbringing in the West Country Methodist Church 'was of great importance.'

This has produced one more reformist in a never-ending line of Labour Cabinet Ministers. The crisis of capitalism leaves Foot and many of his colleagues no room to manoeuvre. This is why yesterday's darling of the left is beginning to qualify for the title of the most hated man in Ebbw Vale.

JEFF KING

## How to Exorcise the Spectre

The International Marxist Group puts forward the following demands around which it considers the struggle against the Ebbw Vale redundancies must take place:

- No closures—no redundancies in steel.
- Occupy the plant as a focus for organising the struggle. Keep the plant in working order.
- Occupy the tin-plate plant and stop all production.
- Lianwern to black all production switched from Ebbw Vale.
- The Labour Government to make available the funds for a major re-investment programme to be carried out at the heavy-end of the Ebbw Vale Steel Works. The amount needed and its use to be determined by a workers' inquiry.
- All work to be shared with no loss of pay to any worker during the period of the investment programme.
- The main furnaces to be re-lined—the Government to make £600,000 available immediately to carry out this job.
- The Works Council to call an across-steel Conference in South Wales. The Conference to discuss solidarity action and adopt the demand that work-sharing be fought for with no loss of earnings to workers in any steel plant.
- Contact be made with Ravenscraig in Scotland, another steel plant where redundancies have just been announced.

The production workers claim that the works are economically viable and it is only mismanagement by the BSC that has put the works in the 'red.' They say BSC should develop a fully integrated steel works, using the highly skilled workforce at Ebbw Vale. The production workers are not just against closures but also demand the expansion of steel making.

### CRAFTSMEN

The craftsmen point out that even an automated plant would only need 500 workers to run it and this would still mean redundancies of over 3,000.

With British capitalism slithering further and further into chronic debt and private enterprise banging at the door of No. 10 Downing Street for bigger and bigger handouts to stave off bankruptcy, Ebbw Vale is going to be low down on capitalism's list of priorities.

The £12.6 million pumped into Ebbw Vale by the Government is claimed to have found 1,350 new jobs. But another 1,000 have been

made redundant and there are 3,000 more to follow. The £70 million being invested by BSC at the finishing end of the works might create a maximum of 400 new jobs in 1979.

Capitalism is only interested in producing steel in the cheapest and most efficient way possible. It has no interest in preserving jobs and its policy of closures is dictated by its need to survive. Any plans for making Ebbw Vale viable in capitalist terms means redundancies and ruthless speed-up.

What confronts the workers at Ebbw Vale now—and steel workers throughout Britain later—is who shall pay for the capitalist crisis.

### UNITE

Ebbw Vale will only be kept open and new industry will only be built there if the workforce unite around a policy of all-out action such as strikes and occupations.

Labour is committed to trying to save British capitalism. It will only provide money for Ebbw Vale if forced to do so by the independent action of the workers.

BISAKTA has been consistently on the right in the trade union spectrum and its leadership has never been subjected to a serious challenge from the rank-and-file militants. The conservatism of the union means that the problems of today are often misinterpreted in the terms of the past.

The sixties are rife with examples of how the fight against technological change and redundancies was turned into a fight against the non-BISAKTA workers in the plant. This played right into the hands of the management and the more reactionary people in BISAKTA's leadership who love to create the impression that the problems of the membership are due to the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, etc. This means BISAKTA gets off the hook and does not have to fight management and the management enjoy the fruits of the inter-union squabble.

The domination of the right wing

conservative elements in the union evolved out of the 'seniority' system that has operated in steel. The head men in the team were those whose jobs called for the greatest skill: Other workers in the team worked further down the 'skilled' ladder and right at the bottom of the heap were the semi-skilled, who were often transferred from one team to another.

This ladder system was strengthened by a complex wage structure of differentials. In the mid-sixties workers at Port Talbot were organised into 1300 different job categories and each more or less had its own wage scale.

### COMMON INTEREST

The way that the productive system was broken up meant that day-to-day conditions on the job worked against developing a common interest, as the work-force was divided along lines determined by the differential payments.

The organisation of BISAKTA mirrored the divisive way that work was organised in the plant. BISAKTA

branches were not organised at the level of the plant. Instead they were built around a particular process or a shop. The best-paid workers were generally the senior men in the team who therefore dominated the branch and almost automatically became its officials.

The branches of the union above all else were interested in preserving the 'seniority' system which provided a direct link between themselves and the right-wing full-time officials.

The senior men in the team—who often had a direct financial incentive in keeping the production process running—therefore had a vested interest in avoiding stoppages. Concerned with the protection of their craft interests they naturally turned to the official structures for settling disputes, which meant that disputes were turned over to the full-time officials and the management. The shop stewards' committees were often by-passed and they have never had the power enjoyed by such committees in other industries.

The growth of the piecework system plus the elaborate pay differentials gave rise to the joint wages board. The joint wages boards were organised on a regional basis and determined wages on the basis of the tonnage produced and the price of steel. It was out of the wages boards that the arbitration and conciliation machinery grew up. This method effectively took the power away from the shop floor and located it in the hands of management and the union bureaucracy.

### FRAGMENTED

The fragmented growth of the privately owned steel industry strengthened this method of agreeing what wages should be paid. No tradition of national bargaining in steel was developed—particularly over wages—and the shop stewards' movement had little or no power on these matters.

The massive technological changes and the sweeping rationalisations which have begun to transform

the industry have made the methods of organisation and the ideas of the BISAKTA leadership even more inadequate.

The growth in the number of craftsmen, the break-up of the 'seniority' system by technical change, the erosion of 'skill' content and the extension of closures all undermine the privileges of the past. But these do not automatically lead to a breakdown of conservatism. Although the material basis on which the past privileges rested and from which the bureaucracy drew its strength is being rapidly undermined the old ideas lie like a dead-weight on the union.

It is around fights against redundancies which raise the issues of workers control, the extension of mass democracy and an unremitting fight against the bureaucracy that militants can begin to challenge the right-wing ideas and organisation that dominates the union.

Alf Jennings

THE  
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WHAT  
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DOING

J.K.



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FIGHT FOR ACTION NOT WORDS!

The United Nations has declared 1975 to be International Women's Year. But most of the gentlemen at the UN would hardly approve of those who first set aside occasions to celebrate women's struggle for equality.

On 28 February 1907, women socialists in the USA organised the first 'Women's Day' to demand political rights for working women. Then, in 1910, Clara Zetkin proposed to the second International Conference of Socialist Working Women that an annual celebration of Women's Day should be held.

These women selected the actual date with care. The first one, held in 1911, was on 19 March - the anniversary of an uprising of the Prussian proletariat in 1848.

In 1913, the date was changed. International Women's Day was shifted to 8 March. This time it was the anniversary of a very important strike by women workers in the New York textile industry in the 1880s.

These events are hardly remembered today. But International Women's Day is associated with a more recent event - and one which the delegates from Moscow and Washington would rather not recall.

The women of Petrograd were determined, in 1917, to celebrate 8 March (23 February by the old Russian calendar). Against the advice of the Russian social democrats (the revolutionaries), who felt that a strike would lead to an uprising for which the workers were not fully prepared, the women textile workers struck and called on the metal workers for support. This was the spark that led to the February Revolution which overthrew Czarism and opened the way for the October Revolution and the appearance of the first workers' state.

This is certainly not the sort of activity envisaged by the UN when it declared that the purpose of International Women's Year is "...to promote equality between men and women; to emphasise the important role women could and should play in economic, social and cultural activities, and to encourage their full integration into the life of the community; and to secure recognition of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly relations and co-operation between countries and to the strengthening of world peace."

In other words, women should fight against their oppression, but not in such a way that it might upset the status quo.

But the liberation of women cannot come as a gift from the UN or anybody else. The UN in fact represents the very systems that serve to oppress women!

When a 'respectable' body like the UN, 'guardian of world peace', 'co-operation' and other laudable objectives, calls 1975 International Women's Year, then all 'respectable' bodies and persons should pay due homage.

Always anxious to prove their 'respectability', the trade union bureaucracy in many countries have launched an appropriate 'campaign'. Meetings will be organised all over Britain on 8 March. For example, the South East Regional Council of the TUC have called a delegate conference of trade union-

in the weight of the organised working class to such struggles as those against low pay and for equal pay, free abortion and contraception on demand, and freely available nursery facilities.

We must use the opportunities opened up by the activity of the bureaucracy to organise against women's oppression.

And we must also use these opportunities to draw links with the struggles of women internationally. Women's oppression is not confined to Britain's boundaries. For example, women in many countries are fighting for free contraception and abortion on demand. In Europe alone, major campaigns are underway in France, Italy, Germany and Britain. In all these countries the state



A picket in defence of the right to abortion was organised outside the Italian Embassy last Saturday. The latest repressive moves by the Italian authorities include compulsory medical examinations for all women suspected of having had an abortion.

ists to be addressed by Shirley Summerskill (Labour MP), Len Murray, Marie Patterson (Chairperson of the TUC), and Stewart McKenzie (secretary of the South East Regional Council).

But the aim of the trade union bureaucracy will be to get away with making a lot of speeches congratulating themselves on how much the labour movement has done for women's rights, but doing as little as possible. The trade union bureaucracy, even more than the UN would rather not remember the activities of those women who first called for International Women's Day.

The Working Women's Charter Campaign has proved to be an effective way of beginning to draw

has made moves to restrict the limited facilities available at present. The gains made in any of these countries will have a positive effect on the outcome of others.

**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC MEETING**  
Friday Feb. 28 7.30pm  
Conway Hall,  
Red Lion Square WC1  
Speakers include women from  
Ireland, France, Belgium, Italy, Spain etc.

# SNATCHER THATCHER HATCHED

Margaret Thatcher has emerged as the leader of the series of squabbling factions that was once known as the Tory party. Although one of her main backers was Sir Keith 'Stop the Workers having Babies' Joseph, the gutter press hailed her victory as a triumph for Women's Liberation!

Margaret Thatcher got International Women's Year off with a bang whimpered the Sun. 'To her it may have seemed a short step, but to women's libbers throughout the country it was a great leap... she has become a hero of women's lib.' Exactly which supporters of women's liberation regarded it as a great leap forward was left unclear.

Perhaps the Sun meant Mary Kenny, billed by the London Evening Standard of 5 February as a 'radical and leftist'. Grovelling in front of her gaymasters, she wrote: 'It would be an absolutely marvelous victory for women all over Europe to see a woman, and such an able woman, leading one of the two principal political parties in this country.'

Mary Kenny said she would consider voting for Thatcher, but didn't think her friends who sympathised with the Italian Communist Party would approve. Perhaps she should encourage the PCI to speed up its 'historic compromise' with capitalism.

There is a reason for all this press garbage. Before Thatcher beat Heath in the first round of the Tory leader-

ship stakes not a single paper said it wanted Thatcher to win. Now they are all trying to present the tin-hoarder and milk-snatcher, with her collections of Kipling and porcelain, her tinkling vowels and antique morals, as a 'woman of the people'.

After all, according to the Daily Mail she buys her tights at Marks and Spencers - the place where that well-known 'man of the people', Ted Heath, buys his sweaters.

This window dressing is partly an attempt to make working people forget her last ditch defence of direct grant and grammar schools, abolition of free school milk and slashing of educating spending when she was Secretary for Education and Science in the Heath Government. But it is also designed to draw together the dismembered body of the Tory Party as quickly as possible to make it a credible electoral alternative.

This is why the capitalist press has been united in urging her to curb her 'Keith Joseph' tendencies in matters of economic and social policy as quickly as possible. Policies of massive deflation and unemployment would not only mean electoral doom, but run counter to the immediate interests of the decisive sections of big business. Such policies might well suit grocers and their daughters - the small shopkeepers being crucified by inflation - but are hardly appropriate to capitalist industry.

So the trivia will continue. There will be more pictures of Margaret putting on make-up, Margaret putting out milk bottles (unconscious irony?), Margaret going to the laundrette, and so on. Perhaps they will even turn it into a Saturday Matinee for kids - 'MT Conquers the Universe', now showing in East Cleam and Chelrasford.

## DANGER

For the working class, indifference will not be enough. They may be amused by the spectacle of Labour MPs falling over themselves to denounce the milk-snatcher when the Labour Government has not restored free-school milk or other Tory education cuts. But Margaret Thatcher may yet be a danger.

For many working women who have been ignored by the trade unions and the Labour Party for decades any woman in a position of power might seem a step forward. That of course would be deeply wrong. Margaret Thatcher's policies will be as much against their interests as that of any male Tory leader. But unless the organisations of the working class champion the interests of all oppressed groups, then other leaders, however false, could emerge. Mary Smith.



# \*\*\*\*\* WHAT'S ON? \*\*\*\*\*

**SEXISM AND EDUCATION** Conference: Saturday 1 March at Nottingham Teachers Centre, Cranmer Street, Nottingham. Workshops include: women and the teaching unions; non-sexist books and teaching materials; gay oppression and education; Working Women's Charter; sex education. Creche and accommodation available. Registration, including discussion papers, 50p (postal orders, etc. payable to T. Pamplin) from 18 Corporation Oaks, Nottingham.

**FOR CHEAP RELIABLE** IBM Typesetting with fast turn-around phone Carl or Martin on 01-837 9987.

**'NATIONALISATION and Workers Control - the Crisis in the Car Industry.'** Birmingham IMG public meeting, with speakers Bob Pennington (IMG National Secretary) and IMG carworker from Cowley. Sunday 2 March at 7.30 p.m. in Digbeth Civic Hall, Lecture Theatre 11.

**BENGALI FRIENDS** in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and *Svan Dal Biplab* (Fourth International paper); contact: Bengali, c/o Internationales, Box 3274, 10365 Stockholm, Sweden.

**'SMASH THE NATIONAL FRONT':** Public meeting Thursday 27 February in Hornsey Town Hall, Crouch End Broadway, N8, at 8pm with speakers Brian Nicholson (T&GWU) and John Kotz (London Co-op). Organised by Hornsey LPYS.

**'THE COMMON MARKET and the Capitalist Crisis.'** Lawsham IMG public meeting, Friday 28 February at 7.30pm at Dartford Town Hall, New Cross Road, London SE14.

**LEEDS CONFERENCE** Against Cuts in Social Expenditure, 8 March all day at Kitson College. Speakers: Joan Maynard MP, Mick O'Shea (T&G shop steward, Kings College Hospital), Geoff Fawcett (secretary Leeds Area NUT). Chairman: Terry Jacques (President Leeds AUEW). Sponsors include: Councillors Ron Sedler and Jim Roche; AUEW District Committee; Leeds Trades Council; Crabtree-Vickers AUEW Shop Stewards' Committee; NUFE No 3 branch; ATTI Liaison Committee, Leeds Poly Students Union. Details from: Conference Secretary, 31 Sissons Terrace, Leeds 10

**MEETING** for all women health workers and students, Tuesday 25 February, 7.30pm at Westminster Hospital Medical School. For further information phone Anna Livingstone, 274 4460.

**WOMEN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE:** ALRA disco 7 March, 7pm-1am, Little Theatre Club, 18-19 Upper St Martin's Lane, WC2. Tickets 50p from Sally Hesmondhelgh, NCCL, 185 Kings Cross Rd, WC1.

**IMG GAY GROUP:** contact J. Mills, 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds.

**WATFORD RED FORUM:** Next meeting - 'The attack on the Welfare State', Tuesday 25 February in the 'Green Man', Watford High Street.

**WORKERS FIGHT FORUM:** 'The Class Nature of the Soviet Union'. Speaker Alan Haslam Sunday 23 February, 8.30am, at the 'George', Liverpool Rd., N1 (Angel underground).

**SHEFFIELD RED CIRCLES:** Every Wednesday at 7.30 p.m. in the Lion Hotel (corner of the Wicker and Nursery St.).

**'DHO FAR AND THE GULF':** Public meeting with speaker Fred Holiday, Monday 24 February at 6.30pm in Room 542, Mechanical Engineering Dept, Imperial College, London SW7. Organised by ULU Iranian Society.

**AGAINST PRIVATE PRACTICE** and the consultants' work-to-rule - picket and rally, Saturday 22 February, 2 p.m. at Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2 outside Royal College of Surgeons. Speakers include Sid Bidwell MP, Brian Nicholson (T&GWU), Jack Collins (NUWI), Steve Johnson (NALGO), Bob Pennington (IMG), S Ludlam (IS).

**DEFEND VICTIMISED TEACHERS!** Picket Thursday 27 February, 4pm, at County Hall, London.

**FREE DESMOND TROTTER!** Public meeting, Thursday 20 February, 7.30pm in Raiton Road Community Centre, London SE24.

**THE MIDDLE EAST** Research and Action Group is holding a meeting at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Sunday 23 February, starting 3pm. Film 'To Live in Freedom' will be shown, followed by discussion on the present situation in the Middle East.

**RED LADDER THEATRE** is expanding. Wanted: 1. Actors/Actresses for work in a non-hierarchical touring company, producing its own material and performing for predominantly labour movement audiences. Ability to play instruments is an advantage. 2. Administrator/Organiser - labour movement experience, ability to negotiate bookings in labour movement context, all helpful, but also a willingness to participate in other areas of the work (except performance important). Applications for both jobs in writing by the end of February stating (i) theatrical/administrative and political experience (ii) reasons for interest in this work (iii) when you can start (iv) ability to move out of London to the North by the summer (v) where advert was read (vi) telephone number if possible, to 58 Wray Crescent, London N4 (tel. 01-263 1053). All work Equity rates £30 p.w.





# LETTERS

## HARASSMENT OF PRICE SISTERS OUR REPLY

I was surprised and rather disturbed to read the article called 'Repatriate the Price sisters' in *Red Weekly* 6 February.

While I share your views on the repatriation of the sisters and similarly call for an end to all harassment of them in prison, I was disturbed to find the following unexplained complaint included: 'overt lesbian behaviour towards them by some prisoners', and also Delours' complaint that 'I've been banished to another part of the wing beside a lesbian.'

Whilst I recognise that these may be valid assertions of harassment from the authorities, this by no means comes across in your article. Unfortunately what does come across is that you in no way dissociate yourself from these anti-gay remarks, or endeavour to state that you are against the oppression of gay people in capitalist society.

I understood from previous issues of your paper that you stood firm on the position of denouncing all sexual oppression, including that of gay people. In fact your paper has been one of the only ones on the revolutionary left to give coverage to the struggles of gays against their oppression. Please tell me whether or not I am right in this respect. LYNNE BAXTER, Birmingham.

## HOODLUMS IN THE WORKERS MOVEMENT

*Red Weekly* has received several letters along similar lines. The comments which our correspondents object to were taken from statements issued by the Price sisters and their relatives, and the grievances which they refer to are legitimate: that the prison authorities have been manipulating lesbian prisoners, taking advantage of the brutalising effects of the prison environment (particularly in sexual matters), to harass the Price sisters.

However we agree that the way in which this grievance was stated was quite wrong, giving the impression that what the sisters objected to was the sexuality of their fellow prisoners, rather than its exploitation by the authorities.

We also agree that *Red Weekly* should have indicated its view, which is, of course, unequivocal defence of the right of gay people to freely express their sexuality, and against all forms of sexual oppression.

The article by cde. Pennington on Healy's WRP (*Red Weekly*, 30 January 1975) says all that may be needed about the political side of the matter. But there remains also another question in connection with that organisation's behaviour. In *Intercontinental Press* (13 January 1975) were reprinted two letters from cde. Thornett which expose the ugly side of the story—the charge of gangster behaviour by Healy and his minions towards his members. This is a matter that concerns the working class as a whole. We are opposed totally to gangsterism within our ranks, of one section against other sections. It is typical of the hoodlums that while they preach law-and-order they practice the very opposite. And this WRP organisation has the temerity to publish Trotsky's *Their Morals and Ours*! —BEN HARRIS, London.

## RED WEEKLY MISSES THE BUS

Your article on the subject of violence against London bus crews (*Red Weekly* 30 January) was an utter disgrace.

Capitalist commentators tell us there are people around called 'thugs' who go about beating people up for no reason. As a deterrent, they recommend longer jail terms, flogging, and so on.

What does *Red Weekly* say? People who assault someone who happens to be a trade unionist are just 'thugs', never mind their motives. The answer is a more civilised, 'proletarian' deterrent. Alsatian dogs are to replace bourgeois cops and screws.

This is hopeless. In order to re-direct the violence towards the real enemy, we must first unmask the causes which the Fleet Street hacks conceal. Even if *Red Weekly* had no analysis, it could at least have urged the unions to set up their own inquiry to discover them.

However, some of the reasons are hardly very difficult to find. To take one obvious example. Every day of the week, passengers who have waited an hour or more for a bus understandably refuse to pay their fare. If conductors respond by ordering them off the bus tempers get lost all round.

The bus services in London are appalling. Yet it is the bus crews rather than the state bureaucrats who bear the brunt of

public anger. Consequently, the union should educate its members to develop class conscious reflexes to deal with this situation. They should be taught to explain the reasons for poor services: that capitalism has run down public services; that the public have an interest in bus crews getting higher wages (to attract more staff to run the buses that now stand in the garages all day). And they should be trained how to win over the more class conscious passengers on the bus in the course of such confrontations.

The unions should also demand that bus conductors are not contractually obliged to demand payment of fares, and bus crews should only adopt forms of industrial action that win over the public. For example, why not have a 'fares strike' (i.e. give free rides to all instead of stopping work)?

What is more, why doesn't *Red Weekly* have the courage to state the fact that some bus workers are racists? Telling black youths 'If you want to swing on something, go back to the jungle' will not improve the safety of bus crews. The unions should campaign against racism among their members and set up a complaints procedure open to members of the public who feel they have been victims of racist attacks.

Self-defence, yes. But in this case, politics are a better defence than Alsatian dogs (even if necessary as a last resort). Dogs educate nobody. Socialist revolution comes about only through changes in the political consciousness of the masses, not by a proliferation of 'proletarian self-defence guards'. —JOHN KILBANE, London

## Review

*"...an amusing and sympathetic testament to working class courage and character. Unfortunately, to be part of the struggle to change the workers' lot, it has to be more."*

*Fish in the Sea*, by John McGrath, presented by the 7:84 Theatre Company.



Photo: PETER HARRIS (Report)

A common weakness of agitational theatre is a two-dimensional effect, with the characters represented simply as caricatures of 'workers', 'women', or 'bureaucrats'.

*Fish in the Sea* is a refreshing change—a full-length play with an overtly political theme, which uses the characters to live out political ideas and positions, rather than mouth them. The contradictions and confusions of the characters are portrayed rather than ignored or minimised, and there is a richness of plot, dialogue and musical expression seldom found on the left.

It is overall an amusing, moving and sympathetic testament to working class courage and character. Unfortunately, to be part of the struggle to change the workers' lot, it has to be more.

### CONSCIOUSNESS

The main theme is the developing political consciousness of a Liverpool working class family in the face of an attack by the multi-national corporation which takes over the firm—a thinly disguised Fisher Bendix—that the father works for.

We see Maconochie, the father, touchingly played by Shay Gorman, re-awaken his memories of the class struggle between the wars, while Willy, the boyfriend and then husband of Sandra, one of Maconochie's daughters, progresses from being an unorganised 'lout' to a class-conscious militant. We also see Yorry—the vicar's son, a friend of the family and secretly in love with Mary, one of the other daughters—develop from sappy,

tionary and then editor of the strike-occupation bulletin at the factory.

All this is encouraging. However a central weakness of the play is its treatment of the relationship between the industrial, economic struggle and the home life of the Maconochie family.

In direct contrast to the men, the women do not develop at all during the play, and remain totally trapped within the confines of their own distorted emotions, their conditioned desire for security in marriage, and their individual, isolated view of the world. Even Fiona, the 'brainy one', is defined essentially in terms of her sexual attractiveness. She takes no interest in the occupation or Yorry's political ideas and the last we hear of her, in the midst of the family's economic and personal crisis, is that she has retreated behind the bottle of sleeping-pills.

It's not as if some awareness of the dreariness and oppression of the traditional role of working class wives is omitted. In an early song, sung by the sisters, Fiona says: 'I feel like I'm on a bus going the wrong way, I ring the bell, but it won't stop, and I'm too scared to jump off'. But no possibility or desire for rebellion is allowed to intrude into their stunted lives.

The mother, for instance, simply sinks into maudlin world-weariness and passive acceptance of their lot. She is critical of no-one, not even her son who joins the police force, although her class-conscious husband rejects him immediately. For her the family ties pardon everything. It is the failure to challenge this view of the family and the woman's role within it which is the central weakness of the whole

*Fish in the Sea* will be performed in the following places:  
11–22 February: Half Moon Theatre, London  
24–26 February: Nuffield Studio, Lancaster  
27–28 February: Blackburn  
6–8 March: Sherman Theatre, Cardiff  
10–12 March: Stephen Joseph Studio, Manchester  
13–15 March: York Arts Centre, York  
17–27 March: Liverpool and Merseyside Tour  
31 March to 5 April: East Midlands Tour.

For further information about this tour, or about 7:84 generally, contact Sandy Craig, 164 Regents Park Road, London N.W.1.

The family is seen essentially as a buttress to and refuge from the class struggle, rather than the oppressive, limiting institution it is at best, and positively tragic brake on the class struggle it can be at worst. The deep implications of Yorry's mocking remark, when Sandra breaks down in tears because Willy goes on strike three weeks before their wedding—'We almost had to knuckle under to the giants of US imperialism, so that Sandra could have a white wedding'—go totally unexamined.

In spite of the fact that the play firmly sides with the working class movement, it depicts a very partial, fragmented view of the world. Ireland—which startlingly impinges on the plot when Mary takes up with a murderous Scottish protestant who joins the UDA and becomes a sectarian assassin—remains, like the family, unexamined or undiscussed by the main characters.

Its vision of the future struggle consists merely of hopes and wishful declarations that things will change, that things can be done, coupled with an equivocal view of the Labour Party, whose past failures are put down to leaders who 'didn't have the determination to carry things through'. The occupation-tactic on its own is recognised as a limited form of struggle, but alternative perspectives are thin. The play vividly depicts working class consciousness, but fails in the essential task of helping to advance it.

Yet despite these weaknesses this play still remains a rich, entertaining and fascinating piece of theatre which militants should see and discuss. Its drama and optimism almost make up for its flawed politics. Carl Gardner

## TAX MEN HIT RUSSELL FOUNDATION

The persecution of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation by the British Inland Revenue is provoking widespread political opposition. The Revenue wish to over-rule the Special Commissioners, who have decided that the Foundation's interpretation of the amounts of tax payable on Bertrand Russell's gift of the first volume of his autobiography is a just one.

The Revenue say that they wish to make a test case, in order to reverse the precedents established by judges on this matter. They have announced that they will appeal against the Special Commissioners' verdict to the High Court, the Court of Appeal, and the House of Lords. They will impose the costs of all these actions on the Foundation if they are able to do so.

In a nut-shell, this means that the Foundation is being asked to pay nearly £30,000 more tax than is justifiable, on

courts. The effect of this policy if it remained unchallenged, would be to force the Foundation to close its printing press and to severely curtail its activities.

Large numbers of protests about this policy have already been filed with the authorities. Members of Parliament have expressed their concern, and a large number of them have sent donations at the same time as they have pledged themselves to take action in Parliament on the question. A letter signed by Audrey Wise, Tom Litterick, Martin Flannery, Bob Croyer, Jo Richardson and Stan Newens, condemning the Revenue's action, was published in the *Guardian*. The Executive Committee of the Engineers Union have voted a donation to the Foundation as a gesture of support. Numerous artists, writers, and scientific workers have begun to organise solidarity.

Queries should be addressed to Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 100, Strand, London WC2R 0AL.

## A Sense of Our History



21 FEBRUARY, 1965: Malcolm 'X', one of the first modern black revolutionaries, was assassinated on the balcony of his home in Harlem, New York. He was one of the first black leaders to point out the necessity to break with the pacifist, integrationist methods of people like Martin Luther King. He summed this up in his famous phrase: 'We must free ourselves by any means necessary'.



24 FEBRUARY, 1834: Six Dorchester farm labourers were arrested for trying to form a trade union. Charged with 'administering an oath' under a law passed in the previous century (shades of Shrewsbury!), they were eventually deported to Australia. Despite a widespread campaign to free the 'Toipuddle Martyrs', as they became known, this attack by the employers was successful, and inflicted a considerable defeat on the working class and the right to organise. It took 20 years to firmly re-establish that right.





**'This is a capitalist crisis and the capitalist class can pay for it. I don't see why the miners or any other section of the working class should give up a penny for their crisis.'** — ARTHUR SCARGILL, Yorkshire miners' leader

# CON-TRICK BITES THE COAL DUST

Last week the Executive of the National Union of Mineworkers voted by 16 to 10 to recommend acceptance by its members of the improved Coal Board offer, which gives faceworkers £61, other underground workers £47, and surface workers £41. In the following article MICK GOSLING looks at the deal and its importance for the miners and the whole working class.

The proposed miners' settlement has delivered another smashing blow to the Labour Government's social contract. But despite giving rises of between 28 and 35% per cent, the deal worked out with the National Coal Board is not as brilliant as the figures suggest.

The increases include the consolidation into the basic rate of threshold payments of £4.40 a week which miners were already receiving. The actual 'new money' increases are £4.60 for surface workers, £6.60 for general underground workers and £11.60 for those at the face.

### DELEGATE MEETINGS

The claim falls far short of the £25 across-the-board increases voted for by delegate meetings of miners in Yorkshire, Scotland and South Wales. And with inflation running at an annual rate of 20 per cent there is no protection of the real value of wages in the deal. The NCB is only committed to future discussions on a threshold deal at an unnamed date.

Furthermore, despite deep opposition in the fields to productivity schemes, because of their intensification of work effort and the consequent dangers of increased dust and more accidents, the NUM Executive has accepted one. Miners will be paid a national bonus for every million tons of coal produced above the current 115 million tons per year. Although the base figure set is relatively low, the acceptance in principle of productivity dealing will be used as the thin end of the wedge in future deals.

Nevertheless, miners in the fields will probably vote to accept the deal. They are aware that to launch a purely sectoral struggle for an even higher settlement at the present time would probably not win the massive working class support that previous miners' strikes have. Besides, with coal stocks high after a very mild winter, even all-out strike action would take considerable time to bite.

Relative to other sections of the working class the miners have done comparatively well in their recent settlements. To win broad support it is now necessary for the miners to use their tremendous industrial strength for the benefit of the whole working class.

Already we see other unions, particularly the railwaymen and power workers, attempting to follow the miners through the breach in the social contract. Even that notorious right-winger Frank Chapple, head of the Electrical Trades Union, has been forced to say: 'We shall want — no, we shall insist on — exactly the same interpretation of the social contract.' And next month three million engineers resume wage talks.

### CONTRACT BREACHED

After the settlement Yorkshire Miners' President, Arthur Scargill, commented: 'The social contract is breached and to that extent I welcome the advances that have been made.' Earlier he had argued: 'This is a capitalist crisis and the capitalist class can pay for it. I don't see why the miners or any other section of the working class should give up a penny for their crisis.' Scargill is dead right on both counts. But we have to go further.

The social contract is based on the gig-

antic that if only the powerful sections of the workers movement — like the miners — accepted wage restraint, then the weaker sections could be protected against inflation and the social services improved.

But not every group of workers has the power of the miners to smash the social contract. The miners could protect the real value of their own increases and lead a fight of the entire working class against the social contract by taking up the demand for automatic increases in wages to compensate for every percentage increase in the cost of living.

By fighting for a 'nil-growth' threshold, the miners would show what a workers' solution to inflation is and help win this demand for the weaker sections of the movement — such as hospital workers, who are struggling to defend the health service against cutbacks in staff and conditions in the interests of the whole working class.

### CLASS-WIDE FIGHT

To achieve this, super-militancy and appeals for solidarity on the basis that 'miners do a totten job and deserve more' are not enough. Although Scargill and McGahey both say the settlement is inadequate and vie with each other in their denunciations of the social contract, neither has put forward a platform for a class-wide fight against the con-trick.

Such a position would have an electrifying effect on the whole workers' movement and begin to pose the possibility of a workers' alternative to the social contract. A decision by the miners to name a definite date for indefinite strike action until the Shrewsbury pickets are released from jail (several areas have already voted in support of strike action) would have a similar effect.

In the coming period such ability to break from the traditional sectoral practices of trade unionism and begin to impose a workers' solution to the crisis will be vital if the capitalist offensive is to be rolled back successfully.

## LABOUR OKAYS NORTH SEA OIL PLUNDER



The token resistance put up by the Labour Government to the plunder of the North Sea oil reserves by the multi-national oil companies has collapsed.

According to the *Sunday Times* (9 February), amendments to the Oil Taxation Bill will be tabled by the Government at the end of the month to relieve the tax burden on North Sea oil companies. The average effective rate of the Petroleum Revenue Tax, it is suggested, will be reduced to 20%. When it was first announced in November 1974, it was indicated that a single rate tax of 65% would be introduced.

The Labour Government's participation in the exploitation of the oilfields has now become largely symbolic, the *Sunday Times* pointed out. Although when 'participation' was first announced (in the Labour Party's election manifesto) it was thought to mean that the Government would take a controlling share in companies engaged in North Sea oil exploitation, it has been made quite clear now that the Government's 51% shareholding will not be used to control the oil companies. Nor will the government take 51% of the profits.

willingness to take control of a major oil company is shown by the way they have treated the BP shares that came into their possession from the ailing Burmah Oil Co. Burmah needed cash to stay afloat, and it sold its 22% stake in BP to the Government, which already had a 49% holding. But by pretending that Burmah's BP holding was purchased by the Bank of England

and not by the Government, and by assuring the oil companies that the Government would continue to act as if it only controlled 49%, Labour hopes to avoid the embarrassment of controlling one of the largest companies in the world.

The Labour Government's retreat can only be understood in the context of firstly the strategic role played by North Sea oil in allowing Britain to borrow abroad in an attempt to stave off the worst effects of the world economic crisis, and secondly Labour's general inability to challenge the forces of international capitalism.

The British economy is bankrupt. Years of low profitability and lack of investment have left British capitalism with very little ability to compete for markets in the present world crisis. More than any other of the advanced capitalist economies (apart from Italy), Britain was heading for a disastrous balance of payments problem long before the Arabs put up the price of oil.

The Government has to borrow massively to sustain consumption at somewhere near its present level. But the international banks will not fork out unless they have some security — which is where North Sea oil comes in. As a recent article in the *Scottishman* (3 February) concluded: 'It is difficult to find adjectives to describe adequately the importance of North Sea oil and gas discoveries for the balance of payments. In the absence of the major discoveries of recent years the total oil deficit over 1975-80 might have amounted to a horrifying £22,600m.'

But to act as security to overseas

leaders, it must be seen that the oilfields are being developed as rapidly as possible. The oil companies know this, and by continually threatening the Labour Government with a slowdown in oil exploitation they have been able to win concessions which will bring them truly massive profits.

It is clearly necessary to halt these manoeuvres once and for all by taking North Sea oil exploitation out

of the hands of the companies. But the Labour Government has never nationalised key sectors of the economy without the agreement of important sections of the capitalist class. Because a Labour Government bases itself on parliament rather than on the organised strength of the working class, it will always be vulnerable to the pressures that the capitalists are able to exert.

Eight more teachers in the Inner London Education Authority area are facing disciplinary proceedings, bringing the total number to fifteen. Among them are five in South Hackney who supported the official TUC protest against the imprisonment of the Shrewsbury pickets. A gay teacher and two teachers in Westminster who were delegated from their school to attend a picket against the Houghton recommendations on pay are also involved.

An ad hoc defence committee meeting called at short notice on Thursday 13 February to take up their defence was attended by more than 40 teachers. Here it was stressed that the victimisations come at a time when both the ILFA and the executive of the National Union of Teachers are desperate to stop any unofficial action around the teachers' April pay claim.

This explains why the NUT-Executive has now sent out a circular saying that the action taken over Shrewsbury by the Hackney teachers was unofficial, despite the fact that an earlier NUT official circular had drawn members' attention to the call.

## HEAD-COUNT OF VICTIMISED TEACHERS GROWS & GROWS

A second reason is that the ILFA's nil-growth budget will in fact mean cutbacks in staff and equipment from next September as running costs continue to rise. The first to be cut will be part time teachers, causing a decline in educational and working standards for both staff and children. By scotching any rank and file activity now the ILFA hopes to be able to push through the cuts without any major disruption.

John Warburton, sacked from St. Marylebone C. of E. Secondary School, told *Red Weekly* that he saw his case as straightforward victimisation of a gay teacher'. The London

For all these reasons it is up to the British working class movement to force the Labour Government to nationalise the whole oil industry under workers control, and demand that the oil be extracted in line with an integrated energy plan produced and enforced by the workers to meet their needs and not those of the oil companies and international capital.

Gay Teachers group has actively taken up the campaign, and the National Council of Civil Liberties and the National Union of Students gay rights campaign are also lending support.

John spoke at his old school, Holland Park Comprehensive, last Friday and received unanimous support. Holland Park teachers are now forwarding a motion to the West London Association condemning his victimisation. As John said: 'Given the present hostility of the education authorities to gay teachers, it's going to take a hell of a lot of people to change this decision.'

Teachers who attended the defence committee meeting on 13 February will be making defence of the victimised teachers a cornerstone of the campaign to fight the April pay deal when a teachers' conference called by the Wandsworth Association of the NUT meets on Sunday 9 March. A picket to protest against the victimisations has also been called for 4pm on Thursday 27 February at ILFA headquarters at County Hall.

John Duveen and Hilda Keen



# LONDON SQUATTERS HIT BACK

LONDON SQUATTERS are organising an offensive against the massive propaganda attack on them by the Labour-controlled Greater London Council.

At a press conference on 28 January, they launched a campaign of demands on councils and Government under the general slogan 'No Fictions—Decent Housing For All!'

The GLC in its propaganda attack has created the bogey of 'Smash and Grab Squatters' in an attempt to link squatters with the damage to houses caused by vandals.

The background to this struggle is the failure of the GLC and local councils to contain the squatting movement by 'official' (licensed) squatting groups, coupled with the obvious successes of the squatting movement—in for example taking over Cornwall Terrace, Regents Park, from the Crown Commissioners.

The 'official' squatting groups were essentially intended to provide 'housing on the cheap' for the much revered waiting list—slum roofs to cover-up for the cut-backs in building programmes. However these groups have gradually turned against the State, and their main organisation—the Advisory Service for Squatters (formerly Family Squatting Advisory Service) in fact fully backs the squatting movement against the GLC's 'Smash and Grab' attacks.

Another such group, Patchwork, a large 'reasonable' official squatting group in London, is facing imminent bankruptcy and a revolt by their membership after the discovery that 70% of their weekly contributions (licence-rent) go straight to Barclays Bank shareholders as interest repayments on money borrowed to buy houses from speculators.

## MANOEUVRE

The Labour GLC has therefore launched an attack on effective squatting groups especially that in Elgin Avenue, Paddington, which has become a symbol of opposition to the State's housing policies. Using emotive rhetoric, it is attempting to isolate squatters without having to answer politically for the massive cuts made in the housing programme. The GLC squatters' press statement exposed this manoeuvre:

'It is not the actions of the homeless but those of the GLC, councils, speculators and Government which are to blame for the housing crisis.

'Squatters are generally just ordinary working people who are homeless because they cannot find suitable accommodation at reasonable rent. They are the 'Can't Wait Homeless'. No-one should have to wait for housing. There are 100,000 good empty properties in London which should be taken over for all the homeless.

'The GLC's idea of reasonable squatters is people who will voluntarily make themselves homeless at the Council's request. Those who demand housing for all are labelled 'Smash and Grab'.

'Accusations that squatters smash houses are absurd. The squatting movement is opposed to all forms of vandalism and makes great efforts to repair the large scale deliberate vandalism of the GLC and councils.

'We have many examples of GLC vandalism and keeping of houses empty for long periods without reason. For example, in Spring last year the GLC deliberately destroyed the inside of 111 Watterton Rd., Paddington, for which there were no plans, just before squatter families were to move in. The GLC smashed the lavatories of 60 flats in Ritchie House, North Islington. This is a commonplace method for making houses uninhabitable used by the GLC and councils all over London.



One of the lavatories smashed by the GLC in the Ritchie House flats in Islington

The squatters are also launching an inquiry into GLC housing policy, which will include investigation of the GLC's strategic housing policy, the waiting list, and tenants' problems (including vandalism caused by alienation in tower blocks). Their main demands are:

- immediate requisitioning of all empty property for the homeless,
- a crash programme of repairs, rehabilitation and building on derelict space,
- the financing of housing programmes by crash grants and interest-free loans from central government. The high interest repayments by councils to City financiers must be stopped. (FACT: 90% of the rent income of the GLC is spent on interest repayments),
- democratic control by area conferences of tenants, trade unions and squatters' organisations over all housing and development plans and usage of empty property.

For information and speakers on the campaign, contact: ASS, 44 Nelson Square, London, SE1 (01-261-1477) or Maida Hill Squatters, 19 Elgin Avenue, London, W9. (01-286-2186).



Newcastle scaffolders and their supporters on the march last week to defend the ten arrested pickets

# SCAFFOLDERS STRIKE OUT FOR VICTORY

With the crisis in the building industry deepening—two thirds of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers are already working at three quarters capacity or less—the building bosses have gone on the offensive.

In LONDON they are trying to breach an agreement with the unions by bringing lump labour onto the Leach's site in Mitcham. The workers have responded by going on strike, and moves are on foot to bring out other Leach's sites in solidarity.

In NEWCASTLE, the strike of 14 scaffolders victimised by McAlpine—the same firm that provided the so-called 'evidence' to convict the Shrewsbury Two—has entered its fifteenth week. Below we print a special report from Newcastle IMG, who have been active in building support for the strike both in Newcastle and Scotland.

All Transport and General Workers' Union scaffolders on Tyneside are now out on strike in support of the 14 victimised scaffolders at the McAlpine's Eldon Square site in Newcastle. The site itself, a £40 million prestige project in which the Labour Council has a 51 per cent stake, has been completely closed since Monday 3 February, when the rest of the workforce walked off in sympathy.

Meanwhile support for the strike is steadily growing. Edinburgh Central branch of UCATT passed a resolution on Monday 10 February calling on the Union's Executive Council to investigate the alleged misuse of union funds to finance strike-breaking adverts in the Newcastle Evening Chronicle.

They have also demanded from the Northern Regional office and the national headquarters of UCATT an

explanation for why one of the Northern Region organisers, Barney McIntyre, voted with the two management representatives in the original industrial tribunal set up over the Eldon Square dispute. Had he voted with the two other trade union representatives, the decision would have gone in favour of the fourteen scaffolders.

London dockers have sent a donation to the strike fund and are blacking Godfrey Davis vans, which have been used to transport the scabs. Strikers have explained their case to workers in Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham and London, where collections and messages of support have been organised.

The International Marxist Group has reproduced large numbers of the strike committee's collection sheets and circulated them in Motherwell Bridge Engineering, Leith and Aberdeen docks and via Stirling Trades Council. Strikers will be doing a series of meetings arranged by the IMG on rig module construction jobs in Edinburgh and docks and shipyards in Aberdeen.

## BREWERY DRIVERS

The most impressive acts of solidarity have been in Newcastle itself. On Wednesday 5 February, drivers at the Scottish & Newcastle brewery came out on a one-day solidarity strike, and led over 700 workers in a protest march to T&GWU and UCATT headquarters to demand that the union make the strike official. Despite this Dave Shenton, the T&GWU regional organiser—the same man who scabbed on victimised shop steward Jean Jepson in Hull—has sent a Telex round T&G branches telling them not to support the strike.

Some of the pickets who went to London were kept waiting 2½ hours by Peter Kavanagh, a member of the Communist Party, who told them of the Telex. Brother Henderson at Transport House—number three in

the T&G—claimed he knew nothing of the strike. Newcastle Trades Council, who after an informal meeting decided to send a videotape machine to the picket line following the arrest of ten pickets, have now been sent an hysterical letter by Shenton saying the T&G will withdraw their delegates from the Trades Council unless it stops 'interfering' in the dispute.

The striking scaffolders and their supporters have reacted quickly to the arrest of ten pickets in late January. A public meeting on Thursday 6 February, attended by 200 trade unionists and students, and chaired by Jim Murray—convenor of the massive Vickers, Elswick works—voted to set up a defence committee for the arrested pickets. The following Monday 200 scaffolders marched to the court with the ten arrested pickets at their head. The ten were remanded on bail of £25 each to the Crown Court on 10 March.

## HIGH MORALE

The morale of the strikers is extremely high and they are now confident of winning. There will be no return to work unless all the scaffolders are taken back—the original 14 plus any sacked for supporting the strike, whether by McAlpine's or any other firm. This will maintain the tremendous unity of the scaffolders, many of them only recently unionised.

With the help of the local student unions the strikers are now bringing out a bulletin two or three times a week to explain their case to workers in the area, and flying pickets are still touring the sites and factories. The T&G 8/214 branch (scaffolders), to which all the strikers belong, has also passed a resolution that 'in the event of a call for a national strike to release the two Shrewsbury pickets, this branch pledges to lead the strike in this area.' A delegation will also be going to the Wigan Building Workers Action Committee march when it arrives in London.

The action of McAlpine's and the police, the open scabbing of UCATT and T&GWU officials, and the complicity in their actions of the local Labour Council makes it vital that this strike is won. It is a test case for militant union organisation not only on Tyneside but nationally.

All messages of support and donations should be rushed to the Strike Committee, c/o Eddie Brady, 86 Bunsell Lane, Newcastle (tel. 0632

## International Marxist Group



(British section of the Fourth International)

97 Caledonian Rd., London N.1.

I would like more information about the IMG and its activities

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Continued from page 1

they will come out on strike if the occupation is made official, and the NUJ is now contacting the union which organises them, SOGAT.

The workers at EAV are not the only journalists to have been brought up hard against the effects of the capitalist crisis. Struggles over redundancy have broken out at Penguin Books, where the management wants to eliminate 54 jobs, and at the Stratford Evening where on all cost

strike last month forced the management to withdraw redundancy notices and to open its books. Plans are now in hand for organising a media workers' conference on redundancy and closure, sponsored by chapels which have been directly involved in these struggles. An ad hoc committee was being formed this week.

## EXCELLENT FOCUS

The EAV occupation provides an excellent focus for building this

conference. For example, the skills of the editorial workers, who produce slide and tape kits, could be used to produce material about their own struggle and on the general issue of combatting job cuts.

It is in fact crucial that journalists and other workers support the occupation not only to save the six jobs but to indicate to their own employers that all redundancies and closures will be rigorously resisted. A demonstration called in the lunch hour but

be an important step in this direction.

Nationalisation under workers' control is the official policy of the NUI, but so far this has remained a commitment on paper only. The struggle for the nationalisation of EAV, without compensation to the American owners, would force the union to take up this issue in a serious way.

Resolutions and financial support to Hilary Horrocks, EAV Occupation, 30a



# RED WEEKLY

## HOSPITAL WORKERS SAY NO SERVICES FOR PRIVATE PATIENT

Hospital workers at the Morrision Hospital Swansea, are out on strike again.

On Saturday 15 February, after a four-day strike over the admission of a private patient, the 500 workers returned to the hospital. But within two hours they were out again after the West Glamorgan Area Health Authority had said their return-to-work terms were 'impracticable'.

Last year, after Morrision hospital workers had got local miners to come out on a one-day sympathy strike in support of the nurses' pay dispute, Ken Price, chairman of NUPE at the Morrision hospital, told *Red Weekly*: "If management admit a patient to the only private bed in the hospital NUPE will come out on strike". These were not empty threats. On Tuesday 11 February NUPE staff at the hospital took strike action on precisely that issue.

### RESPONSE

The action quickly gained a response amongst other health workers. Meetings were held at the Singleton and Mount Pleasant hospitals in Swansea and also in hospitals in Neath, the Rhondda, and as far east as Newport. Mount Pleasant struck, and the others voted to take support action in line with anything decided at last Friday's NUPE meeting at the Morrision.

Support was also pouring in from Port Talbot steel workers, from miners, students and the local Labour Party. There are four private beds in Swansea - one in Morrision, three in Singleton. But the authority has not dared to use them during the last year because of the militancy of local health workers.

The first strike ended after votes were taken on three resolutions:

proposing a boycott, escalation, or an unconditional return to work - the latter being completely rejected. The NUPE meeting voted to return to work, but to boycott any ward in which the 'floating' private bed was located.

The boycott was not only to apply to private patients but to all consultants who have private patients. They decided not to serve the consultant with food, answer the telephone or provide any other services for him.

### ACCUSATION

The boycott was a response to accusations that NUPE was jeopardising the health of many NHS patients due to their action over one private patient. This boycott put the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the consultants and the authorities. All the authorities and the consultants had to do was to put the patient in an isolated ward - and feed her and change her bed linen themselves!

But the consultants would prefer the NHS to do the 'shit' work, and the authority have backed up the consultant (Dr. Lawrence) by refusing to move the patient. Instead they have launched a slander campaign through the local press, accusing hospital staff of closing the maternity beds (the private patient had had a caesarian operation).

During the week student nurses in NUPE were threatened with the ending of their training (nurses have to satisfy very rigorous duty requirements to qualify as a state registered nurse - SRN). Three were forced to leave the union. To back up this campaign, the local press eagerly published a letter from a handful of nurses attacking NUPE.

The health authorities have clearly provoked the hospital workers' action in an attempt to defeat and weaken the growing strength

## Interview with Dr Berry Beaumont, a leading activist in the Medical Committee Against Private Practice and a member of the IMG



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

working class lose out with a very inferior medical service. Unless private practice is thrown out completely in this country, the NHS will be strangled.

What sort of effect is private practice having at the moment?

In purely money terms, private patients do parasite on the NHS, because they don't pay out the full cost of treatment they receive in NHS hospitals. And the £12 million that was collected from them last year went straight into the Exchequer, and not into the NHS budget.

But the really harmful thing about private practice is the way it distorts the use of the available resources in the health service, in terms of staff and equipment. These are diverted to the profitable areas of medicine, regardless of the medical needs of the majority of patients. And of course this brings up the question of the way in which the 6,000 or so part-time consultants, who make the money out of private practice, use their powerful positions to manipulate the NHS for their own benefit.

What do you think about the Labour Government's position?

It's also obvious that Labour has no intention of stopping private practice outside the NHS. They are using the phasing out of NHS pay beds as a token gesture towards keeping their side of the social contract. But they know perfectly well that the five years they have allowed for this gives private firms plenty of time to build up hospitals outside. More over Labour hasn't even restored the £111 million Tory cutbacks. Let alone tried to improve the NHS for the workers of this country.

What sort of things has MCAPP been doing then about the NHS situation?

We believe that the only way to improve the NHS is for all sections of the

trade union movement to work together, and as a start, end all private practice. Hospital workers are already banning private patients in many areas.

But it will only be when all workers realise the importance of defending their health service that we can get rid of private medicine completely. For instance, last week one of us spoke to meat workers in the T&GWU who are now prepared to boycott meat supplies to private beds.

What do you see as the important things to take up after the demonstration?

I think that the publicity and mobilisation for the demonstration will have laid a good basis for trade unionists to take up the issue of the defence of the health services in their local areas. I know several trades councils are planning public meetings on the crisis in the NHS in the near future.

At these meetings, a plan of action can be worked out for that area, and some sort of action committee elected, to co-ordinate a local campaign. It might be a campaign to fight the closure of a hospital, or prevent a private clinic being built, or to get better abortion facilities for women, or whatever. The important thing is that all workers should be involved, not just health workers.

What is MCAPP planning in the next few months?

We are hoping to organise a 'working conference' at the end of June, together with labour movement organisations taking these kinds of initiatives. This will be a further stage in building a really strong campaign to work for a decent health service which provides for workers' needs, not the decrepit one we have to put up with now. What we should be aiming for is an NHS that gives everyone the sort of service that you only get now if you can afford to be a private patient.

MCAPP was set up last year by health workers who attended a conference on the 'Crisis in the NHS' organised by the Central London Medical branch of ASTMS. It's mainly made up of doctors and medical students who are very concerned about the state of the NHS. The health service is now dangerously near to total collapse, because over the years every Government has failed to put enough money into the welfare state.

It is the working class who are now suffering the effects of this. The social services, including the NHS, are a part of their real wages, and unless the labour movement takes action now to defend their health service, things will get even worse.

How does private practice fit into this?

We believe that good medical care should be freely available as a basic right to everyone when they need it. But at the moment the NHS simply cannot provide it. There is a drastic lack of staff - we need 75,000 more nurses alone because health workers are so badly paid, about three quarters of the hospital beds in this country are in buildings put up before 1918; and more than half a million people are waiting for treatment.

In this situation there is a real danger that private practice will expand, because anybody who can afford to bypass the NHS to get quicker and more comfortable treatment will naturally do so. We would then get a two tier system rather like they have in the USA, where you get as good as you can pay for, and the

of NUPE in the area. The response of local health workers has so far been excellent, but in the face of such attacks support action and messages of support from other hospital workers and indeed all sections of the labour movement will be crucial.

Messages of support should be sent to: Ken Price, Chairman Morrision NUPE, Morrision Hospital, Swansea, West Glamorgan.

Swansea IMG

## How to fight Private Practice

The working class must have an alternative solution to that given by the Labour Government, whose only answer is to allow the private sector to grow at the expense of the NHS.

● Hospital workers should immediately set up action committees or act through existing joint shop stewards committees to organise to ban all services to the consultants in administrative, portering and domestic services, and apply bans on private patients.

● These committees, together with the local labour movement, should fight the autonomy of the consultants. They should exercise veto powers over medical executive committee decisions with regard to the priorities of the health service - building programmes, equipment, specialised services, etc. - but without taking any responsibility for the lack of resources available.

● Working class organisations should insist that local councils refuse planning permission for private hospitals, and organise pickets of existing private hospitals to demand that the beds be turned over for the use of the NHS.

● If local authorities allow planning permission, as has happened in Leeds, then the trade unions in the area should put an

embargo on all work connected with their construction and servicing.

● Established bodies should set up a workers' enquiry into the local health service - liaising with the local joint shop stewards committees in the hospitals, working out the priorities for the area, and organising action against closures of any hospitals.

● The labour movement should demand:

1. That the Labour Government abolishes private practice completely, both inside and outside the NHS, now. It is already official TUC policy, as well as that of NALGO and NUPE, to oppose all forms of private practice. The working class must ensure that these policies are implemented.

2. The immediate injection of £1,500 million into the NHS simply to meet immediate needs.

3. A sliding scale of NHS expenditure - i.e. an automatic percentage increase in the NHS budget to cover the effects of inflation.

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