

# RED WEEKLY

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# ANOTHER UNACCEPTABLE FACE OF CAPITALISM

by James Drake

QUEEN VICTORIA would not have been amused. Hardly had 'my husband and I's' plane left the ground, when a general strike against rotten wages broke out in Bermuda, ruining the Queen's holiday plans. Meanwhile the natives back home were getting restless at having caught her with her knickers in a financial twist.

The revelations about how the last Tory Government, Buck House lawyers, and Whitehall bureaucrats attempted to conceal the Queen's holdings in industry has exposed another 'unacceptable face of capitalism'. The myth that the monarchy stands above the dirty wheeling and dealing of everyday capitalism and is the embodiment of the so-called 'national interest' has gone by the boards.

Under the first draft of the Tory Government's Companies Bill (which never became law because the Government resigned the Queen might have had to reveal her financial holdings. The Bill required nominees to disclose the true identities of the shareholders they represented if their holdings rose above 5% of a company. The previous figure of 10% had encouraged a series of secret manoeuvres for company takeovers, and led to sharp business practices that were so blatant that the Tory Government had to denounce them as the 'unacceptable face of capitalism'.

But the Queen, second only to God in the defence of all that is pure and holy — the interests of the capitalist class — could not be revealed up to her neck in companies sacking workers and paying sweatshop wages. A 'solution' had to be found, and duly was. An impressive list of people and institutions, including the monarchy, could be exempted from disclosing their shareholdings at the discretion of the Secretary of State for Industry in consultation with the Governor of the Bank of England.

Lord Limerick, who was then Tory Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry, congratulated all concerned 'on a neat and defensible solution to the problem of...the Queen's private shareholdings.'

This dirty little episode raises important questions. Already big business is screaming about Tony Benn's Industry Bill which may require firms to disclose information about their

unions, even though these proposals are hedged around with all sort of restrictions. The Government will not pass on information to workers if it considers this to be against the 'national interest'. A trade unionist could receive a two-year prison sentence or an unlimited fine for passing on to his workmates 'restricted' information.

Even so many firms and institutions will plead special circumstances for withholding information under these limited proposals.

Only the organised workers' movement has the power to get to the bottom of the wheeling and dealing of capitalist firms, shrouded in the mystique of 'business secrecy'. Against commercial secrecy, and in opposition to Labour's weak-kneed plans for 'disclosure', the labour movement must raise the demand for the opening of the books of the monopolies and the banks to workers' inspection.

All the faces of capitalism are unacceptable. By better understanding it, the workers' movement will be more able to quickly put an end to it.

## FUND DRIVE

The last week of February has arrived, but we still need another £146.00. Leeds sent us a welcome £40 last week, Oxford came across with a 'tenner' and York raised £10.75.

From Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen there has been only an ominous silence—and that will not pay the printer. Sheffield, Birmingham, Liverpool, Brighton have also been conspicuous by their absence. No doubt they have something special in mind—perhaps they are doubling their donations this month!

Manchester have sent in two part-payments, but are still a long way short of their target. A number of London branches have still to cough up, but they obviously intend to deliver the money personally this week.

The address, just in case you forget, is 182 Pentonville Road, London, N.1.



Anti-Americanism isn't the answer—British bosses are no better

## IMPERIAL We say: 'Nationalise!'

THE INEVITABLE LOBBY OF parliament was made. The local MPs waxed indignant. The union leaders expressed their suitable and appropriate disgust. But on Thursday, 20 February — one day ahead of schedule—the Litton management still closed down the Imperial Typewriter factories at Leicester and Hull.

Meanwhile Mr. Benn has told the workers that they have his 'sympa-

thy'—which is rather touching, but does not put any bread on their tables.

Over 300 workers responded to the closure of the Heddon Road works in Hull by occupying the factory. This is certainly the first step in the fight to save jobs, but raises the question what is the next step?

The idea of a workers' co-operative is getting support amongst a number of the workers. But this cannot answer the problem for the Imperial workers. Although put forward as a means of saving jobs, it would in fact lead to sackings and redundancies, this time carried out by the workforce itself.

The Scottish Daily Express, when it resumes under a workers' cooperative, will have reduced its labour force by 75 per cent. Workers at Triumph, Meriden only got Benn's agreement to set up a cooperative by accepting that production would go up by 85 per cent, wages be kept below the average for that area, and the workforce slashed from 1,750 to 450.

Workers of Imperial, nationally!



incensed at the sackings. Littons, an American-based company, claimed that their British firms lost £5 million over the last two years. But it is common knowledge that Littons fiddled the books to get this figure, deliberately fixing low prices for exports to their American companies. A loss in Britain then spelt a big profit in the USA home-based companies.

### 'BRITISH BOSS'

This has produced a wave of anti-Americanism, with workers stressing that 'we are British'. When the Hull factory was occupied they even flew the Union Jack over the plant. But what makes a workers' cooperative unsound applies equally to any British capitalist taking over the firm. And British capitalists like their American counterparts are not in business to save workers' jobs. Imperial on its own without the Litton international sales network, is a non-starter. Typewriter production requires a world market and the dwindling British market of 90,000 machines per year would not be sufficient.

A workers' cooperative or a British capitalist firm would have to introduce enormous productivity increases and make a drastic reduction in the labour force to survive in the capitalist market. To switch to the growing field of electric models would require massive capital investment which, in view of the narrowness of the British market and the sharp world competition, looks a pallid prospect.

By occupying the Hull factory the workers have captured the best point to start bargaining from. But that occupation must begin from the assumption that the first priority is keeping jobs, not providing a viable capitalist enterprise for the Labour Government.

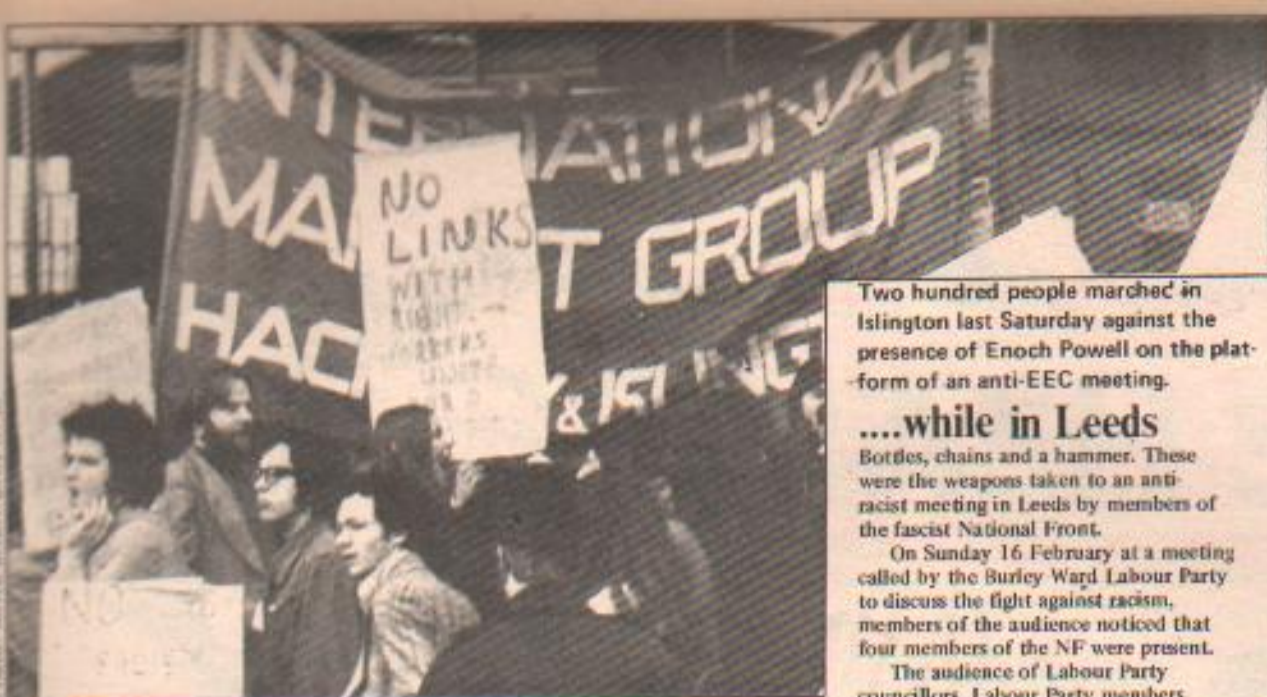
### NATIONALISE

To save jobs the Labour Government must be forced to nationalise Imperial without compensation. But the struggle cannot stop there. The other typewriter and business machine giants, like Olivetti and Olympia who between them produce about 240,000 models a year, must also be nationalised.

By building solidarity amongst the different workforces the fight can be won to save jobs. By adopting utopian schemes of workers' cooperatives or pleading for some 'nice' British boss to stop in and save the firm the workers will remain divided. Either of these two schemes will simply involve leaving matters to competition in the capitalist market, and workers can only lose out in that one.



PHOTO: MIKE SHELDON (11/13)



Two hundred people marched in Islington last Saturday against the presence of Enoch Powell on the platform of an anti-EEC meeting.

### ...while in Leeds

Bottles, chains and a hammer. These were the weapons taken to an anti-racist meeting in Leeds by members of the fascist National Front. On Sunday 16 February at a meeting called by the Burley Ward Labour Party to discuss the fight against racism, members of the audience noticed that four members of the NF were present. The audience of Labour Party councillors, Labour Party members,

representatives of immigrant groups and members of left wing organisations such as the IMG and the Communist Party certainly did not see any need to have racist thugs like NF members at such a meeting. The fascists were told to leave.

Although the NF leaders like to create the impression that they are not an organisation of fascist hoodlums these four worthies did not see any need to keep up such a false pretence.

Out came their chains, bottles and one worthy brandished a hammer. On the way out of the meeting—which was held in the Belle Vue Community Centre—they bumped into an Indian child who is six years old. She was attending some other function in the building.

But that did not deter the fascists. After all she has a black skin so on the way down the stairs they struck the child.

Again the NF has given a clear demonstration of its openly fascist character and members of the Leeds labour movement will be intensifying their fight to drive them off the streets.

# BEHIND WILSON'S MOSCOW VISIT

'WE ARE VERY PLEASED to mark this improvement in American-Soviet relations... I mean Anglo-Soviet relations.' With this rather undiplomatic blunder, the Soviet Communist Party Secretary, Leonid Brezhnev, made clear his real pre-occupation during the five days of playing host to Wilson and Callaghan.

For the British Labour leaders, the loudly heralded visit marked the end of an era of 'cold war' relations between Britain and the USSR. The most widely publicised outcome of the talks (the provision of £1 billion of credits for Soviet imports from Britain) did not fail to arouse some spiteful suggestions that Wilson had got a lousy deal for British capital, but no one has suggested that Wilson has done anything other than bring Whitehall's 'eastern policy' into line with those of the other major imperialist countries.

Not that the famous 'detente' between imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy has been going all that smoothly. Wilson's visit coincided with the first appearance of Brezhnev after more than six weeks absence, recovering from a US Trade Bill that offered a paltry \$300 million credits, whilst attempting to directly regulate Soviet emigration policy. Apparently, the Kremlin has now decided that it has no alternative but to continue trying to force US imperialism into a 'co-operative' frame of mind.

### PROBLEMS

The problems facing the Soviet economy are real enough, and will surprise only those who believed the claim of some years ago that the 'democratic world market' centred on the Soviet Union was about to assert its independence from the world economy and achieve a higher productivity of labour than the United States. By the time of the 24th Party Congress in 1971, it was impossible any longer to keep up this reactionary bureaucratic dream of a 'socialist fortress' against the world economy. Its results were clear: isolation from the latest developments in world technology and, consequently, permanent backwardness in key areas of the economy; inescapable bottlenecks and low labour productivity due to the isolation of Soviet industry from the world division of labour; repeated shortages of consumer goods as resources were diverted for the continual modernisation of heavy ind-

ustry. The 1970 workers' uprising in the Polish Baltic ports against an increase in food prices threw the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe into a panic. They were suddenly faced with a popular demand to make good their promises of a rise in the living standards of the masses.

The importance of 'detente' in Soviet economic policy really dates from a basic rethinking that took place around this time. No longer able to hide from the world economy, the Brezhnev leadership set out to restructure Soviet industry through collaboration with the technologically advanced capitalist countries, principally the United States. Of course, the building of such links does not in itself weaken the foundations of the Soviet workers' state, and any attempt to retreat into isolation would only make things worse.

However, the closer the links become, the greater is the direct, day-to-day pressure of the one system on the other. Contrary to the imaginings of Brezhnev, the 'detente' is not a step forward in the process of co-operation between nations, but one particular phase in the struggle between imperialism and the planned economy. The US credits needed for the expansion of trade threaten more and more to come with all sorts of strings attached. Just before Wilson left for Moscow, it was reported that the creation of Soviet-Western joint business ventures was under discussion for the first time, and an increased penetration of the Soviet economy seems to be one of the major aims of US imperialism in future negotiations.

1975 is the last year of the current five-year plan, and it already seems clear that many of the original targets will not be met, particularly in the field of consumer goods. For the first time, the next plan will be drawn up on the basis of the expected availability of capital from the West. But it is still possible that the colossal Siberian energy project will have to be abandoned. In any case, the key role of US capital is clear on all sides, and explains that slip of the tongue of Brezhnev.

The development of 'detente' is the most striking proof of the impossibility of building socialism in one country, or in one 'bloc'. What the Soviet bureaucracy has concluded from this, however, is merely the need for all-round links with the world capitalist economy, which it presents as a panacea for present ills. At the same time, it extends the hand of 'collaboration' with US imperialism into the sphere of world politics. Such an offer will no doubt be taken up in Ford's hour of need, only to be turned against the Soviet Union itself at a later stage.

US-Soviet links express the fact that no isolated portion of the world can contain the productive forces of modern technology. At every point, however, they also express the basic antagonism between the two world systems. Only the working out of a single socialist plan for the whole world will be capable of organising production harmoniously on an international scale. But to reach that goal requires entering the road of struggle to break down the partition of Europe and to realise its socialist unification. Such a unification

would relieve the countries of Eastern Europe from their isolation, but would also challenge the privileges and power of the present bureaucratic rulers of the workers states, and will therefore be firmly resisted by them and by those Communist parties throughout the world that are faithful to them.

Against the fake unity of capitalist Europe, the socialists must insist on the need for a United Socialist States of Europe. The workers of Eastern Europe belong in the front line of that struggle, which has been abandoned and sabotaged by their leaders. They will not find any inspiration for that struggle in the 'new era' of friendship proclaimed by Wilson and Brezhnev from the Kremlin. Joe Greenwood.

# Chile black still on!

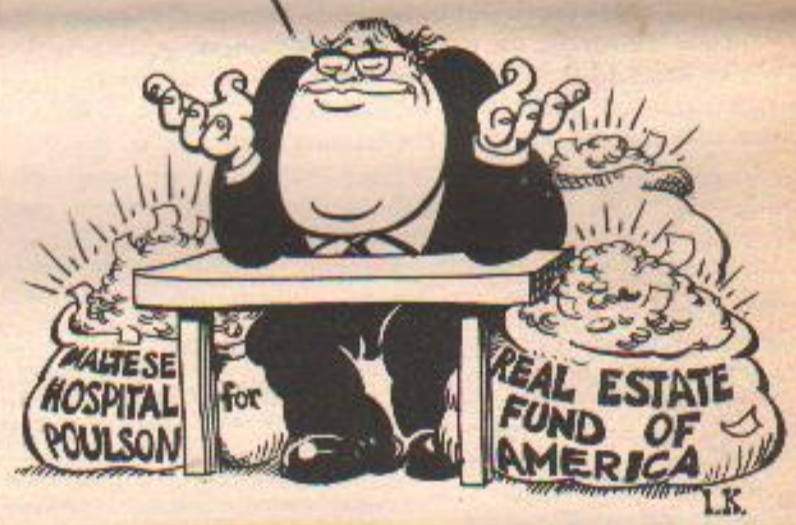
The black of Rolls-Royce Hawker Hunter jet engines destined for Chile was officially lifted a month ago: a fact duly noted by the London *Financial Times* and the Chilean *El Mercurio* as a sign that in Britain 'the anti-junta feeling was weakening'.

Unofficially, however, the black continues thanks to the proletarian internationalism of one section of workers in the East Kilbride plant. These workers must receive the encouragement and solidarity of the rest of the British trade union movement, if they are not to become isolated and victimised. More importantly, the trade union movement nationally should publicise the fact that the black continues, and call for its reimposition as the official policy of the AUEW.

Trades Councils and trade union branches should follow the example of the East Kilbride Trades Council, which has called a public meeting in solidarity with the black, and should send resolutions of support to the Shop Stewards Committee at the Rolls-Royce factory in East Kilbride—taking their cue from local Communist Party members in the area who have been anxious to work with other militants to mobilise support for the Rolls-Royce workers, and not from the national CP and the national Chile Solidarity Campaign, which have let the official boycott fall by maintaining an attitude of studied indifference.

## Maudling returns to Tory front bench

I'VE GOT A KNACK FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS



# STUDENT FORUM PLANS FOR ACTION

140 STUDENTS from all over Britain met in Birmingham last Sunday at the 'Open Forum' called for by the IMG earlier this term.

For them, and the militants they represent in the colleges, the National Union of Students faces a crisis of leadership. The aim of the Forum was to try and establish some minimal basis for unity around the forthcoming NUS executive elections and other activities in NUS campaigns.

IMG students argued that the demoralisation that many militants and the mass of students feel in the grants campaign is due to the present Broad Left leadership. In a situation where the college authorities are playing for high stakes—their money—students have found it difficult to win concessions. Of the 140 colleges taking

direct action last term those making gains could be numbered on two hands. The protest politics of the Communist Party and its front, the Broad Left, are totally insufficient.

Al Stewart, leading member of the Broad Left, told the last national conference in November that the grants campaign 'stood on the verge of total victory'. If only it was so easy as this latter-day Colonel Custer would have students believe. Presumably victory was so close that it was not even necessary to call a national rent strike. Instead the 23 rent strikes that have occurred have been allowed to languish in isolation from each other with no national coordination. Moves are already being made at Surrey University by the authorities to take legal action. But what defence has the national union prepared?

By not preparing students for the

sweeping nature of the cuts in education spending, especially the spate of college mergers, the CP have left the campaign wide open. It is not surprising that at the Llandudno conference the Young Liberals will be standing in the elections, as will the 'Radical Action Group' who openly say that students, like the rest of society, must take a cut in living standards.

It is only by making it clear that the crisis belongs to capitalism and that students and the working class refuse to pay for it that the pitfalls of the right and Broad Left can be avoided. With the authorities taking a tough line, support from the working class is crucial. Joint campaigns must be built with other workers hit by the cuts in the NHS or other sectors of education. Local and area campaigns of direct action, coordinated nationally, can break the isolation and demoralisation

that exist today. But that is not enough. Students face a real problem with inflation. Not only do they need a higher grant, but this has to be defended against inflation, burning a hole through their pockets. The only solution is a sliding scale of grants, tied to a student cost-of-living index. This would immediately compensate students for the effects of rising prices.

The NUS and the Irish student union were to launch 'a major campaign to end the evil of interment', to culminate in 'a mass picket of thousands' this Friday at the Home Office. This was how the *Morning Star* of 17 January described the NUS campaign on Ireland.

So important was this campaign that the Scottish NUS, controlled by the CP, decided not to take it up at all. But worse: the 'picket of thousands' was called off! The police decided they were not very keen, as it offended some statute about banners within a mile of the House when it is in session. Not wishing to shatter the quiet Parliamentary routine, the Executive agreed to cancel the picket.

The reality of the matter is that the Broad Left could not cope with the campaign politically. Their insistence on calling the republicans

**WOMEN'S DAY**

**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.



## IRELAND

# Sectarian violence hits new peak

The campaign of sectarian violence against the minority in the north of Ireland reached new levels last week when the Starry Plough, and McVeighs Bar, both frequented by republicans, were bombed without warning, leaving one dead and 25 seriously injured.

The bombings follow a period that has seen a steady increase in the number of random shootings, the great bulk of the victims being Catholic workers. This period more or less coincides with the Provo ceasefire. Why is this so, and who is responsible?

### CATHOLIC MORALE

The sectarian violence that has flared intermittently since the fall of the Sunningdale agreement is a key factor in breaking the morale and determination of the anti-Unionist population. This is very necessary to force the latter into passive acceptance of the renewed Loyalist ascendancy likely to come from the Constitutional Convention.

Increased army harassment, beefing up the RUC, and continuing sectarian harassment by para-military thugs therefore go hand-in-hand. There are obviously still plenty of useful results to be achieved in the interests of British imperialism, even within the framework of the ceasefire.

There is much evidence to show that amongst the thuggery of the para-military Protestants, the British army has also been at work in the form of the SAS, MRF, and the 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' whom the loyalists disown. Indeed, the mysterious 'Captain Black' of the UFF also claimed responsibility for last week's bombings.

### LOYALIST TENSIONS

The sectarian campaign also reflects the growing tensions and frustrations within the loyalist camp, particularly between the para-military groups like the UVF, UDA, and Red Hand Commandos, and the 'fur coat brigade' of politicians like Paisley, West and Craig.

The demands of the para-military forces were dramatically highlighted last week when 15 of their leaders forcibly invaded a meeting of the United Ulster Unionist Council and called for much greater involvement of their groups in the working out of loyalist policies. To give the demand greater weight, they threatened to set up a provisional government themselves, and also to assassinate anyone at the meeting who opposed

them.

The danger that these currents might get totally out of hand—thus opening the way to a civil war which could bring the structures of imperialist domination in Ireland crashing down—is what lies behind a new emphasis in the British press on loyalist 'gangsterism'. It is not that the loyalists have suddenly got nastier—merely that while it was once convenient to turn a blind eye to their activities, they are now threatening to become a real thorn in the side of imperialism's present plans.

For the moment, however, the loyalist factions have come to an agreement that the anti-Unionists can only regard as ominous. A secret committee involving the para-military thugs and representatives of the UUUC has been set up, and two candidates from the former faction have been agreed for the coming elections.



Clearing rubble from the Starry Plough

For the Northern Ireland Secretary, Merlyn Rees, the coming period must be a very delicate balancing act. Hoping the confusion within the minority will result in all-out backing for the SDLP and relying on the squabbling within the Protestants to provide a chance for the growth of a 'moderate' wing, he hopes the Convention will produce, at last, a stabilisation of the situation.

The divisions within the loyalists may only increase, but on one point there is complete agreement—that the Convention must bring about a firm loyalist ascendancy. Such is their dedication to this 'ideal' that the UUUC even rejected Rees' offer to visit the Netherlands to see power-sharing in action.

It is this determination that will ultimately destroy Rees' dreams of a 'moderate bloc', and expose once again the complete impossibility of solving the divisions of the Catholic and Protestant working class within the framework of British imperialist rule.

Mick Duffy Cross



## The Tories' new spokesman

THE APPOINTMENT of Airey Neave as the Tories' new Northern Ireland spokesman is not likely to bring much relief to the internees, despite his fame as 'the man who escaped from Colditz'.

Neave has close connections with the British military establishment, and his selection is bound to strengthen the hand of those like Monday Clubber John Biggs-Davison who want to break with the Labour-Tory bi-partisan Irish policy to the right, and openly support the loyalists.

The Convention elections, now scheduled for the end of April, will almost certainly produce an anti-power-sharing majority. The pressure will then be on from the army, backed by the Tory right, to hammer the Catholic ghettos and then hand over to a new Stormont-style sectarian regime.

Biggs-Davison, chairman of the Tories' Northern Ireland Parliamentary Committee, in a message to the newly formed Northern Ireland branch of the Monday Club, openly championed this policy. The chairman of the branch is James Molyneux, leader of the Unionists at Westminster. Sir Keith Joseph's newly formed but influential Centre for Political Studies is also known to take a similar hard line.

On the Labour side a growing number of MPs are known to support troop withdrawal, which also cuts across present Government strategy. So Rees may well find the ground slipping from under his feet. The splits is not a comfortable posture, and he will be forced to jump one way or the other. Only by building a massive 'troops out' movement in the working class can we make sure which way.

Albert Cox

'terrorists' raised the question: 'Then why do you want to end internment?' The decision to adopt a position of phased withdrawal, rather than 'troops out now', concedes that the troops have some right to be there. The Executive's stated readiness to adopt either protestant or catholic internees muddles the issue of why internment was introduced.

Because the IMG and militants at the Open Forum see the importance of students taking up the Irish issue and the demand for 'troops out now' we are in favour of a picket on Friday. This will take place outside the Irish Tourist and Government offices in Berkeley Street between 12 and 1.30.

The militants in the Open Forum discussed and selected a platform and slate for the next NUS conference executive elections. (The platform will be printed in these columns next week.) All agreed that it was necessary to capitalise on the leadership the revolutionary left has won in the colleges and translate that at a national level. That is why a major aspect of the revolutionary slate at the conference will be for unity of independent socialists and the far left in action around various issues, such as the Irish picket. It is

regrettable that the IS refuse such united work, especially since a single revolutionary slate in the NUS elections could really begin to challenge the domination of the Broad Left reformist leadership.

The activity that has been organised from the Forum is a step forward. We hope that the representatives of the IS who attended the Forum will go back and reconsider their position. The beginnings of stirrings on the student right and the demoralisation in NUS campaigns does not weaken just the Broad Left, but the whole of the

## Surrey rent strikes conference

Since the start of term students at Surrey University have been on rent strike. The Vice Chancellor has now decided that enough is enough and is threatening 400 students with summonses.

The student union is resisting this unprecedented attack, knowing that the authorities can obtain the summonses if they wish, by mounting a political campaign of defence and calling for national support.

Many messages of support have been received, and the NUS has agreed to pay the legal costs. But what is vital is the

defence campaign of national proportions. Any defeat for a rent strike will be a weakening of the whole campaign. That is why all students must defend the Surrey rent strike, and force the NUS to launch a national campaign around this and the other rent strikes.

Surrey students could not wait for the wheels of the NUS in Endsleigh Street to turn, and have called a conference on higher education and rent strikes on 2 March. All colleges on rent strike, and those others who support the rent strikers should send representatives. Further information from: The President, Surrey University Students'

left, including the IS. The reformists hold over the NUS cannot be combatted by each revolutionary organisation alone. If independent socialists and the revolutionaries unite for various initiatives or around minimal election programmes, then the mass of students could be shown that a real, alternative leadership exists. Militants attending the Open Forum are convinced that only when that occurs will the NUS slogan of 'agitate, educate and organise' take on any real meaning.

Rick Sissons

# IN FOCUS

## Much ado about nothing?

After two days of uproar in the House of Commons, Tony Benn's Industry Bill, which sets up the National Enterprise Board and establishes the principle of planning agreements between capitalist firms and the Government, finally made it through its Second Reading.

It has been bemoaned by the Confederation of British Industry as the death knell of private enterprise; as 'sheer irresponsibility' by the chairman of Unilever Limited; and as the beginning of Marxian socialism in Britain by some Tory MPs.

But the basic thinking behind the creation of the National Enterprise Board is the same that has governed the actions of successive Governments, both Labour and Tory, since the end of the Second World War. British industry is massively under-invested and poorly equipped, relying on ever more archaic machinery and processes while having to face up to the intense pressures of international capitalist competition. The only source for the massive amounts of money needed for the 'regeneration of British industry', to use Benn's phrase, is the state.

One of the main functions of the new Bill will be to promote 'reorganisation' in industry. The last Labour Government's experiments with reorganisation led to a wave of redundancies. 10,000 jobs were lost in the IRC-promoted merger of the General Electric Company and English Electric alone.

Wilson and Edmund Dell, the Paymaster General, have gone out of their way to re-assure big business that wholesale nationalisation is not the aim of the National Enterprise Board. Indeed, the likely appointment of the hard-nosed capitalist Don Ryder as the head of the NEB should have scotched any fears on this point. As it is the NEB will be limited in most cases to possessing 30 per cent or £10 million of the share value of any one company.

The main fear of capitalist spokesmen is that information which they may be forced to reveal to the Government and trade unions could be used by workers to disrupt plans for future redundancy and closures. But the Bill is hedged round with restrictions which allows the Government to stop information going to the trade unions if this is against the so-called 'national interest'. Furthermore, if a trade unionist did reveal 'restricted' information, under Clause 26 of the Bill he could face two years imprisonment.

So why all the fuss? When Benn introduced the Bill in Parliament he was at pains to explain it was not a 'Trotskyist nightmare'. By which no doubt he meant that the Bill would go no further than mutual exchange of information between industry and the Government, and would not lead to widespread calls for opening the books and workers' control in industry. No doubt what the capitalist class fears is that in a period of economic crisis, when wholesale chopping of the workforce will be needed in order to 'rationalise' industry and survive, such a dynamic could develop.

However capitalist industry needs massive injections of state capital. This is why the more far-sighted sections of big business, such as *The Economist*, believe that more stringent safeguards of business secrecy, and not outright opposition to the Bill, is more sensible.

For the workers' movement the lessons of the Industry Bill are the same. The capitalist state only intervenes in industry to defend the overall interests of the ruling class. Even if profitable firms were nationalised this would only benefit the working class if the nationalisation plans were monitored at every stage by trade union representatives to ensure this was not done at the expense of the workers and was not sabotaged by capitalist management.

A fully-fledged system of workers' control would be necessary. The co-ordination of this system of workers' control between industries would involve not 'planning agreements' between capitalist firms and the Government, but the workers organisations drawing up a workers' plan for the whole economy and putting an end to capitalist anarchy.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)



# PORTUGUESE-BRITISH LINK-UP TO FIGHT MULTINATIONALS

Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)



Deniz Correia

AMONG THE WORST perpetrators of economic sabotage in Portugal today are the big multi-national companies, many of which are household names to British workers as well: ITT, Plessey, Timex.

These companies came to Portugal for only one thing—cheap labour. Now that they have difficulty getting it, they are determined to break the power of the Portuguese working class, even if it means wrecking the entire economy.

Last week two delegates from the Portuguese workers' council of the telecommunications multi-national Plessey visited Britain to confer with their comrades on the Plessey Sites Coordinating Committee in this country. Afterwards, at a press conference in London organised by the Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee, the two delegates, Deniz Correia and Fernanda Fortunato, sketched a brief history of Plessey's activities in Portugal and discussed the current struggles in which they are involved.

Plessey arrived in Portugal after the end of the war, but only set up in production operations (telephone assembly) in a serious way in the mid '50s. Ten years later they transferred their 'matrix' (miniature computer-components) assembly work from Britain to Portugal.

## PARADISE

As Deniz Correia pointed out, Portugal under fascism was 'a paradise for the multi-nationals'. By paying just a little higher than local industry, Plessey was able to get all the labour it needed—and still at a rock bottom price.

In the matrix department wages were a tiny bit higher—but working conditions atrocious. The work was so delicate that it had to be carried

out under a microscope (Deniz Correia described it as 'crocheting under a microscope'), and the women doing this job, unprotected by any form of safety laws, were ruthlessly exploited by the company. Forced to work long hours without a break under intense supervision, they had to meet a high production norm which was enforced by the simple device of sacking those who didn't fulfill it.

After 25 April things changed dramatically. The Plessey workers were now able to organise themselves throughout the country, and created the workers' council to represent all Plessey workers, with delegates elected from each department, irrespective of craft or union divisions.

At the same time a huge wave

elsewhere in the company but 400 were still left. Their case was promptly taken up by the workers' council, who took the position that the problems of any group of workers were a concern of the entire

—by—  
**Chris Balfour**

workforce. They point out that most of the remaining matrix workers have poor eyesight (some are almost blind) because of the conditions under which they have had to work, and would find it almost impossible to get work elsewhere. They have therefore insisted that all



'We want to make products that will enrich Portugal' say these Plessey workers

of workers' struggles forced the Government to implement a paltry minimum wage of £13 a week. But even this miserable sum represented an increase of more than 50% for Plessey—so they immediately began to plead poverty, and started talking about having to shut down operations and lay off workers.

First on their list was the matrix department which, they said, was producing an 'obsolete' product and was under fire from the international economic crisis. (The Plessey workers in Portugal have recently heard from their British comrades that the first part of this claim is untrue; in any event, neither problem has prevented Plessey shifting matrix orders from Portugal to Malta.)

Plessey management 'generously' offered to pay the matrix workers 10% above the legally required redundancy pay if they would go quietly. Some 60 workers accepted, and another 70 were redeployed

negotiations must start from the position of 'no redundancies—no short time working'.

Instead of accepting the company's tale of woe about 'adverse international markets', the workers set up their own special committee designed to study the possibility of manufacturing new products in the Plessey factories instead of the matrices. This came up with a list of 51 items which they said could be produced in existing plants with limited new investment, employing all the existing workforce and relieving the Portuguese economy of the need to import a number of important products.

## ECONOMIC POWER

But such a scheme was not of interest to the multi-national bosses, since it would, in effect, reduce their economic power, an important part of which is based on the deliberate spreading of production across national boundaries. For

example, in Portugal, Plessey manufactures entire telephones—except for two key components (the ear and mouthpieces), which are imported from Plessey factories elsewhere in Europe. Such a set-up makes it difficult for the workers or the state to control the multi-nationals, since operations in one country are dependent on those in another. Not surprisingly, the Plessey management have steadfastly refused to allow the manufacture of complete telephones in their Portuguese factories.

So far no progress has been made, although the unity of the workforce has prevented the sacking of a single matrix worker, even though only 100 actually have work to do at the moment. This Friday a mass meeting of Plessey workers is planned to discuss the way forward. Among the moves under discussion are a reimposition of the ban on management, the occupation of selected parts of the company, and the possibility of an all-out strike.

## TIGER

Whatever course the Plessey workers embark on, they will need international support in order to tame this multi-national tiger. Already the management have been up to their usual tricks: they have hinted to their British employees that support for the Portuguese workers would prevent the shifting of work from Portugal to Britain and result in redundancies here.

However the links being built between the Portuguese and British workers can now block such divisive manoeuvres, and lay the basis for a coordinated international strategy that can defend the interests of both workforces. If that is done the day of judgement for Plessey's will be drawing closer—in Portugal and in Britain.



Fernanda Fortunato

# A Sense of Our History

2 MARCH, 1919: With the start of the First World War in 1914, the Second International, formed in 1889, effectively collapsed. Its main parties, in Britain, France and Germany, betrayed the working class and their own internationalist principles by supporting their 'own' ruling-classes in the inter-imperialist mass slaughter which followed. Those small sections of the workers' movement which opposed the war, including the Bolsheviks in Russia, recognised the need to establish a new International.

After the Russian Revolution in 1917, and as a result of the influence and prestige this gave the Russian communists, Lenin and the Russian party worked hard to establish a Third (Communist) International, by breaking off genuinely revolutionary sections of the workers' movement from those thoroughly imbued with national chauvinism. On 2 March, 1919, the first congress of the Third International met.



It is significant that Lenin saw it as necessary to establish the International even at a time when many of its sections were weak, so as to begin to centralise the revolutionary experience of the world workers' movement, and collectively elaborate its line from the very beginning.

The Comintern remained the focus and centralised leadership of world revolutionary struggles for five years, until Stalin's bureaucratic apparatus took over in the Soviet Union and began to use the International as the regulator of Soviet foreign policy, rather than as a tool to further revolutions elsewhere. The documents of the first five congresses contain probably the most sustained and consistent application of revolutionary Marxism this century.

# \*\*\*\*\* 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.

**'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 *Sranj Dal Biplab* (Fourth International paper) contact: Bengali, c/o Internationales, Box 3274, 10385 Stockholm, Sweden.

**CONFERENCE OF RADICAL Scholars of Soviet and East European Studies, 8/9 March in the Students' Union, Birmingham University.** 'After the Revolution? Dilemmas of Progress in Soviet Russia.' Details from CRSSSES, 26 Lonsdale Road, Birmingham 17.

**'THE COMMON MARKET and the Capitalist Crisis'**, Lewisham 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 NUTI). Chairman: Terry Jacques (President Leeds AUEWI). 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

**'PUERTO RICO: Colony of the United States'**—talk, slides, film on Sunday, 2 March at 3.30 p.m., Oval House, Harleyford Street, Brixton (Oval tube).

**WOMEN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE:** ALRA disco 7 March, 7pm—1am, Little Theatre Club, 16-19 Upper St Martin's Lane, WC2. Tickets 50p from Sally Hammond-Haigh, NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Rd, WC1.

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

**'THE CRISIS OF STALINISM':** Stirling Marxist Discussion Group meeting with speaker Alan Freeman (Glasgow IMG), Tuesday 11 March at 7.30 pm in the Cowane Centre, Cowane Street.

**HARROW Socialist Woman Group** public meeting on 'Women and Health', Monday 3 March at 8 pm in the Queen's Arms Harrow Weald High Street.

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

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

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

**'BLACK YOUTH** Against Police Brutality': torchlight demonstration and meeting at HM Prison, Brixton in Jebb Avenue at 8 pm, Friday 28 February. Followed by public meeting in Brixton Town Hall, 7.30 pm. Organised by BLS, BUFP, TBL, BCM, TOM. Bring battery torches for march.

**'THE STATE, the Law and Ireland'**: new pamphlet by Steve Cohen produced for Manchester NCCL—available price 20p. (plus 5p p&p) from Red Books, 97 Caledonian Road, London, N1.

**SURREY UNIVERSITY** Rent Strike Conference. A must for all colleges on rent strike and those supporting the grants campaign. Sunday 2 March at Surrey University, Guildford. Further information from the President, Students Union (0483-65017).

**PAMPHLET** on the struggle at Kent University. Excellent value at 5p. Orders to Joanna Haynes, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury.

**LEAGUE FOR SOCIALIST ACTION** public meeting: Tony Roberts on 'Socialists and the tasks ahead', Friday, 7 March starting 8 p.m. at the Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road (near Warren St. Tube). New pamphlet off the press: 'League for Socialist Action—what we stand for'. Price 10p & post. For further information write: 103 Glencairn Road, SW18.

**EQUALITY FOR WOMEN:** public meeting organised by Selly Oak Labour Party and Birmingham Working Women's Charter Campaign. Speakers include: Tom Litterick MP, and Sue Hardley (WWCC). Friday 28 February, 7.30 p.m. at Tiverton Road Junior School, Tiverton Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham. Creche provided.





Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

Not even the bourgeoisie doubts any longer that the world capitalist system is in deep trouble. Even the most optimistic of capitalist 'experts', who a few years ago were denouncing 'outdated Marxist cant', have themselves become prophets of doom.

The evidence of this crisis is all around us. Inflation—and with it the wearing down of the living standards of the majority of the population—is a worldwide fact of life. In the industrialised capitalist countries, mass unemployment has once again appeared on the doorstep. In the 'underdeveloped' world (the victims of centuries of plundering by capitalist imperialism) the wolf appears in an even more ruthless form: mass starvation.

But the mass of people—workers and impoverished peasants—who are suffering the effects of this crisis are not about to accept it lying down. Increasingly they are beginning to fight back, giving the capitalists a timely reminder of the fact that the age of capitalist crisis is also the *age of revolution*.

Here in Britain the working class has, over the past few years, delivered to the British ruling class several powerful blows—proof of its immense power and determination to resist all efforts to force it to foot the bill for the capitalist crisis. The struggle against the Industrial Relations Act, the fight to free the Pentonville 5, the two national miners' strikes and, finally, the collapse of the Tory Government, are just the most memorable episodes.

The upshot of this is that the British ruling class finds itself in the midst of a crisis-ridden sea without a reliable political vessel in which to place its hope. The present Labour Government is thoroughly devoted to the preservation of capitalism. But a party which depends so heavily on the organisations of the working class and working class votes cannot be counted upon to lead unhesitatingly the kind of offensive against the working class which the capitalists are demanding—and which the capitalist system needs in order to survive.

The present Labour Government—despite the talk of the 'social contract'—cannot operate like previous Labour Governments, handing out a few concessions to the working class in order to better serve the aims of the capitalists. What it will do is try its best to give the capitalists what they want—as Denis Healey and Michael Foot have been doing recently. But capitalism can afford no 'sweetener' in which to wrap up this bitter pill for the working class. The inevitable result will be a growing wave of mass struggles directed against the policies of the Labour Government, and a growing awareness on the part of the more politically aware workers, the leaders of these struggles, of the need to fight the present leadership of the Labour Party and their supporters in the trade union leadership.

The ruling class will not let these developments take place under their nose without trying to resist. Of course they will

# Facing up to the challenge

attempt to use repression against those who are fighting for a better life, as they already have in the north of Ireland and with the Shrewsbury pickets. But, as all the struggles of the past years have shown, repression cannot succeed against a *united working class*.

The main task of the ruling class in this time of crisis, especially as the ability of the social democratic mis-leaders to prevent struggle declines, must be to utilise the demoralisation created by the Labour leadership to *split* the working class. To do this they will use every dirty trick in the book (indeed have already started to use most of them). Racism, anti-Irish feeling, national chauvinism, feelings by men that women should be 'kept in their place' (the home), red-baiting and selective repression of left-wingers, attempting to set the low paid against the slightly better paid, will all be employed to this end.

This situation offers the revolutionary left huge opportunities and even greater responsibilities. Only the ideas of revolutionary socialism can build on the instinctive and spontaneous urge to struggle of the working class to produce a real solution to the crisis. Only the mobilisation of the working class around a programme of socialist measures can prevent the ruling class taking advantage of the confusion that the bureaucracy creates among the mass of workers about the cause of the crisis to sow their divisive ideas and false 'solutions'.

But the revolutionary left in Britain has a long history of political weakness. A lack of genuine internationalism, a contemptuous attitude towards serious political discussion, and an absence of real internal democracy inside their organisations—these shortcomings have stymied the revolutionary left. Most decisive of all in the present situation in Britain, the

revolutionary left suffers from a crippling *propagandism*—the belief that revolutionary forces can be accumulated and the working class won to revolutionary politics merely by propaganda about socialism coupled with denunciations of reformism and stalinism.

Throughout its brief history the International Marxist Group has struggled against these negative features of British revolutionary groups. We have attempted to raise the banner of internationalism through our membership in the Fourth International, our continual efforts to understand political events in Britain as part of a world class struggle, and our emphasis on questions of international solidarity. As well as this, the IMG has marked itself off sharply from the tradition of other revolutionary left organisations by its break with propagandism—by its belief that a change in the relationship of forces between revolutionaries and reformists, and thus the construction of a revolutionary party, can only be accomplished by *practical intervention* in the struggles of the masses and of the vanguard. Hence our emphasis on building the broadest possible unity around campaigns on all the major issues confronting the working class.

That is why the debate at this conference takes the form it does: a debate over the tactical and strategic lines which must govern the intervention of revolutionaries in Britain today.

And it is this *practical experience* of class struggle which makes *democratic centralism* so indispensable to the IMG. In the International Marxist Group debate takes place in an *organised manner*—with written documents, prepared discussions, and representative meetings of our membership—but also in a *democratic manner*, with every member free to propound their point of view in words or in print, and groups of members free to form organised tendencies to work out and present their particular point of view to the membership as a whole.

At the present moment the International Marxist Group is in the midst of just such a discussion, in preparation for our forthcoming delegate conference at which the line of the organisation for the coming struggles will be debated and determined.

Given the present state of the class struggle, the subject matter of these debates is of crucial importance, not just to the IMG or the revolutionary left, but to all those who are concerned to assist the victory of the working class and the defeat of capital.

For this reason *Red Weekly* has agreed to devote substantial space over the next few weeks to the pre-conference discussion of the IMG, publishing the views of our various tendencies on these questions. This week we open up with general statements of position from the two largest tendencies so far formed—Tendency A, and Tendency B (which represents the majority of the outgoing National Committee of the IMG).



# FACING UP TO

## PREPARING A CHALLENGE TO LABOUR'S MONOPOLY HOLD

Revolutionaries face unprecedented opportunities in the coming period and unprecedented dangers if these opportunities are not seized. The maelstrom of capitalist crisis and imperialist decline, of proletarian militancy and war in Ireland, is destroying all the traditional political formulas of the British bourgeoisie.

The ignominious defeat of the Conservative Government in a series of massive class confrontations dealt a body blow to the whole bourgeois political order. The Conservative Party was plunged into utter disarray, and it will not be long before Britain's other great bourgeois party—the Labour Party—is ground between the interests of capital and workers' resistance to an assault on their living standards. British politics is being fundamentally remade—but it is still very much an open question whether revolutionary Marxists will mount any decisive intervention in this process, and become a real factor in national politics.

The Labour Party has become such a familiar landmark—blocking the entire horizon of the British left—that the possibility of launching a credible challenge to its monopoly hold on political representation of the working class is almost literally unthinkable. However much they differ on everything else, the Tribunites, the 'entrists', the Communist Party and the major groups of the far left all seek to devise ingenious scenarios whereby the working class can move decisively towards socialism without a preliminary settling of accounts with the Labour Party. Hence such slogans as 'Move Labour Left', 'Labour to Power on a Socialist Programme', 'Vote Labour Without Illusions', 'Make the Left MPs Fight'—not to mention the eccentric contributions of the IMG leadership in the recent period.

Indeed, many of the problems of the Group stem from a failure to identify the special vulnerability of the Labour Government and the Labour Party in the period we are now entering.

Lacking a coherent and concrete central line, Tendency B in the past substituted phrase-mongering about General Strikes—in the future it seems likely that slogans about dual power will play a similar role. This has led to frenzied and erratic work on a succession of campaigns and issues, a confused private language incomprehensible to advanced workers and sectarian lapses in our approach to other sections of the left.

simply be indicated by referring to its predecessor. In under four years

Conservative Party lost a major portion of its electoral base to the Liberals, it lost Enoch Powell, it lost the Ulster Unionists, and it lost virtually the whole of Scotland. The eventual removal of this Government was the work not of the parliamentary opposition, but of an unprecedented extra-parliamentary challenge which aroused only fear and hostility from Labour parliamentarians—for the most part front bench scabs, failed financial tycoons, 'liberal' proponents of special police powers, 'reformists' in the pay of Poulson, opportunists who have run out of opportunities, 'socialists' worried about how to address the Queen, 'internationalists' eager to share a platform with Enoch Powell, workers' leaders surrounded by an entourage of seedy businessmen and land reclaimers.

Yet the political annihilation of the Labour Government and Labour Party after a few years in office would be a disaster for the organised working class if it merely strengthened the already considerable forces of reactionary demagoguery: the Liberals, the Nationalists, a re-vamped Tory Party, the Powellites or some new manifestation of political regression. Such developments would go hand in hand with the consolidation of a specially repressive state power.

That is why it is now imperative for revolutionaries to prepare against a Labour debacle and ensure that there will be a credible alternative to Labourism. Essentially this alternative must be the beginnings of a juncture between the social forces locked up in the Labour and trade union movement and the programme of revolutionary socialism.

Labour in government during a period of uncontrolled 'slumpflation' will be forced to attack the very concessions to the working class which in the past have sustained reformism: full employment, rising living standards, the welfare state.

No doubt the Labour leadership is counting on Washington and Bonn to bail it out when the deluge comes: but why should they subsidise full employment in Britain when they impose six or nine per cent unemployment on their own working class? The US bourgeoisie may

be prepared to save British capitalism from drowning; but why should it save the NHS? Whatever happens, Labour will seek to safeguard its social base in the organised working



class, but its capacity for social demagoguery will be greatly restricted by the immediate capitalist pressures to which it is subjected in government, by its own powerful traditions of blinkered pragmatism, and by the fact that it faces strong political competition from the right, not from the left.

For all these reasons neither Wilson nor any probable successor will imitate the left rhetoric of French social democracy. As a Labour Government is forced to tighten up the 'social contract' and unavailingly seeks to 'regenerate' British capitalism it will begin to set up intolerable strains between itself and the extra-parliamentary workers' movement. There will be a revulsion against its craven subordination to the interests of capital at home and abroad. For a time ministerial resignations and a neo-Bevanite revolt could contain such opposition to the Government within Labourist limits. But this time the roots of revolt will be in the trade unions, whose militants will be more disposed to translate words into deeds. And this time revolts are likely to erupt early rather than very late in the life of the Labour Government. Though there is likely to be a

growing storm of opposition to Labour both inside and outside its own ranks—there is no ready-made goal which can unite these forces and enable them to lead a mobilisation of the masses. The removal of the Labour Government cannot focus mass struggle in the way that the removal of the Conservative Government did in the past. Indeed, a Labour Government overwhelmed by capitalist crisis will set the scene for an ugly backlash of chauvinism, racism, sexism, as well as a potentially anti-capitalist resistance to falling living standards.

Combatting the reactionary aspects of popular response to the

crisis will be a vital task for revolutionaries. Social democrats—even those verbally opposed to the Government—will not ensure that popular anger finds the right target. The propagation of an anti-capitalist and anti-reformist transitional programme will be essential for clarifying, polarising and orienting opposition to Government policies from its own former supporters. Such a programme should aim to develop the beginnings of an alternative to Labour by uniting resistance to the capitalist crisis in all fields of social and political life: it should furnish the necessary watchwords for struggle within and around the trade unions and workplaces, the constituency parties and local councils.

### AN ACTION PROGRAMME TO MEET THE CRISIS

All those elements of a transitional programme likely to become immediately apitational during the

coming period of crisis should be brought together in an Action Programme which should become the basis for united work in every field. Each element in this Programme should provide a concrete alternative to the politics of Labourism. At the limit, the Government itself might be forced under pressure to adopt one or another of the measures contained in the Programme, and some local parties might go further. But in its entirety such a Programme poses the necessity of a break with capitalism, and this will never be accepted by any Labour Government or Labour leadership.

The propagation of an Action Programme within the mass organisations would aim to encourage the emergence of consistent class struggle currents at their base. Labour rejection of such a Programme would thus lay the basis for a recomposition of the labour movement over the next four or five years.

We propose the following as an initial and provisional basis for an Action Programme of immediate measures to meet the crisis of British capitalism.

No incomes policy under capitalism: smash the social contract and replace it by a sliding scale of hours, wages and social benefits, an index linked emergency plan for the education and health services, a minimum

wage of £35 for a 35 hour week, full pay for the unemployed, half a million houses to be built a year and a programme of other useful public works; an end to commercial secrecy; nationalisation under workers control of the major industrial companies and of all firms declaring redundancies; implementation of the Working Women's Charter and an end to all forms of discrimination against women, racial minorities and gays; immediate withdrawal of troops from Ireland and release of all Irish detainees; disbandment of the SAS and SPG; full democratic rights for soldiers; repeal of the Conspiracy Laws, the Immigration Act and the Dangerous Drugs Act; withdrawal from the EEC and association with Comecon; withdrawal from NATO and all other military treaties.

Together with such an Action Programme we should make consistent propaganda for all the other elements of a full transitional programme: in particular the question of a workers' Government breaking with capitalism and based on organs of workers' power should be a consistent theme of our propaganda and of our campaign work (e.g. on Chile and Portugal). Wherever possible

### BEFORE THE FLOOD

The dangers facing the Labour Party in government can most



# THE CHALLENGE

demands in the Action Programme would be linked to implementation from below by the work-organisation in struggle: action committees, mass pickets, self-defence, occupations, workers' control initiatives etc. The points in the Action Programme should be made relevant on a local basis—in connection with the local council, local employers, etc.—as on the national level.

We do not claim that the demands outlined above are original, nor do we deny that they could be improved and extended. What we do insist is that a revolutionary



exist organisation worthy of the name must seek to develop an agitational programme related to all the burning issues confronting the masses and must make this the basis of consistent campaign work and consistent work within the existing organisations. Such agitational propaganda will be essential for clarifying resistance to the Government and the economic crisis; it is an absolute pre-condition for challenging Labour's monopoly.

## WORK IN THE TRADE UNIONS AND LABOUR PARTY

Within the trade unions, consistent agitation around the points of the Action Programme would encourage the emergence of a class struggle tendency aiming to break the grip of the trade union bureaucracies. We should always be prepared to engage in united work around each demand taken separately and we should shun like the plague sectarian differentiation on secondary questions. But equally we should insist that the different demands in the Action Programme require and complement one another and that for example, the continuation of the war in Ireland would undermine all social provision and destroy any hope of preventing moves towards a strong state. We could advance the full Action Programme within existing left caucuses and rank and file groups with the aim of making them into more adequate instruments of class struggle. The Programme should be presented in a topical way in factory bulletins, where it is possible to produce these, and supporters of the Programme should be organised around such bulletins.

Continued p.8 . . . . .

# THE STRATEGIC LINE OF THE IMG

1. The Labour Government has come to office at a time of fusion of three interlinked crises of British imperialism. Firstly, the dramatic decline of British imperialism requires a complete restructuring of British capitalism—reorienting it towards Europe and developing technologically-based British industry. But the refusal of the working class to bear the costs of this process is producing a big political crisis of the ruling class which has been deepened by the failure of successive policies in Ireland.

This is overlaid by a crisis which is developing as the relationship established between the classes after 1945—based on the 'guarantee' of bourgeois democracy, the establishment of the welfare state, and the policy of 'full employment'—begins to break up. This relationship has undergone a qualitative decline since 1969 with the capitalist class taking the first steps towards a 'strong state'. Thirdly, there is the immediate crisis produced by the inter-relation of the international economic crisis and the working class victory of 1973-74 which finished off the Tory Government.

It is this situation which allows us to say that the developing crisis of British capitalism is the most intense this century—exceeding in scope even that of the early 1920s. For this reason the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in its Theses on Britain defined the present period as one leading to 'a head-on confrontation between capital and labour' (Thesis Three). It concluded from this analysis that: 'Preparation for the appearance of organs of dual power immediately before or during the general strike—or whatever other form the generalised confrontation between the two classes pending in Britain will take—is our main strategic goal in the coming period' (Thesis Seven). Only such a line dovetails both the objective necessities of such a confrontation, including the ability to defeat the state machine of the bourgeoisie, and the creation of the subjective conditions for the emergence of a real revolutionary party of the masses.

Given that neither Tendency A nor Tendency B has explicitly rejected this analysis, the main centre of debate at the conference should be this: *what now, under the present Labour Government, are the decisive links to this period of generalised confrontation which both correspond to the immediate needs of the class struggle and prepare the working class for the appearance of organs of dual power.*

For Tendency B the decisive political weapons in the fight for the creation of organs of dual power are those of the transitional programme and the united front.

## Transitional programme and united fronts

2. The connection between the question of the united front and that of the transitional programme is clear. A transitional programme is not simply a set of demands but is



exactly the instrument for creating the links between the present consciousness of the masses and the needs of the objective situation. In the words of the Transitional Programme of 1938: 'It is necessary in the process of daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands stemming from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.'

Such a transitional programme must take up not merely a specific conjuncture but the tasks of a whole period. However, at any particular moment the decisive links in the struggle between the classes will necessitate a concentration of struggle around one or a few demands, and, not simultaneously on all the demands of the transitional programme.

The tactic of the united front is precisely the way of achieving the maximum fighting unity of the

working class around these decisive points. 'The tactic of the united front', as Trotsky put it, 'is not something accidental and artificial—a cunning manoeuvre—not at all; it originates, entirely and wholly, in the objective conditions governing the conditions of the proletariat' (*What Next*). 'The united front is not at all, either in point of origin or substance, a question of reciprocal relations between the Central Committees of two parties (revolutionary and reformist)...The problem of the united front...grows out of the urgent need to secure for the working class the possibility of a united front in the struggle against capitalism' (*On the United Front*).

the decisive links in the period leading towards the creation of organs of dual power are the construction of united fronts, flowing from the burning issues of the day, on the decisive points of our transitional programme. In a limited way, we have already seen united fronts of this type on unemployment, defence of the welfare state, and more dramatically against In Place of Strife, the Industrial

Relations Act, and for the freeing of the Pentonville Five. They are particular applications, in a specific relation of forces and division of the workers' movement, of Trotsky's famous formula—'Through the united front to the soviets as the highest form of the united front.' Even the demand for 'A General Strike to Bring Down the Tory Government' was not a strategic slogan derived from exceptional circumstances, but a specific application of the axis of the united front within the strategy for the creation of organs of dual power.

Under the present Labour Government it is the building of united fronts above all, against coming attempts to impose incomes policy, which form the decisive links in the preparation of the working class for the creation of organs of dual power. This completely corresponds with the immediate needs of the class struggle, for the problem facing the sections of the working class is the huge disparity between its potential strength, created by its organisational strength at the base of the trade unions, and its practical political weakness in the face of the attacks and manoeuvres of the bureaucracy. The essential prerequisite for overcoming this fragmentation of the strength of the working class between thousands of factory, industry and sectoral struggles is the adoption of a programme of class-wide demands to deal with the developing crisis.

## For united front action involving the mass organisations of the working class

3. Following on from both the general nature of the united front and the strategic line of the IMG in the present situation, it is clear what type of united front action the IMG must attempt to create, and with whom. While a huge range of issues of international and domestic class struggle will arise, for the favourable development of the relation of class forces the decisive field of battle will be the defence of the living standards, organisations and social conquests of the working class.



The successful achievement, or otherwise, of united front action by the mass organisations of the working class in the course of these struggles will determine the ability of the working class to throw back all capitalist attacks, and turn its strength towards smashing the central pillars of Labour's class-collaboration.

Continued p.8 . . . . .



# PREPARING A CHALLENGE (cont.)

We should strive to politicise the resistance of workers to falling living standards, moves towards wage control and the strong state, inflation and social service cuts. In the coming period the traditional tactics of economic struggle will not be able to defend even the economic gains of the workers' movement, let alone its vital political interest in combatting every form of oppression and exploitation.

The content of our demands should be such as to eliminate the many reactionary aspects of the concessions made in the past to the working class. These real concessions to the workers movement have always been made in such a way as to encourage the passivity of the masses and to strengthen the bourgeois state and the bourgeois family. Our demands must have a quite different logic: encouraging the adoption of class wide demands, encouraging the workers' movement to develop a pole of independent proletarian politics defending the interests of all the oppressed.

We should combat the prevalent political passivity of trade union militants within the Labour Party, especially at the local level. We should agitate within the Labour Party for action to be taken at both the local and national level for a working class solution to the crisis along the lines of the Action Programme. Within both the trade unions and Labour Party we should be the most vigorous champions of workers' democracy, of the accountability of all representatives and officials, and of unity in the fighting ranks of the working class. To underline this latter point the IMG should after due preparation apply for formal affiliation to the Labour Party.

We should also seek to promote

the maximum possible regroupment of the forces of the far left around the Action Programme. The prospect of a new upsurge in South East Asia and the Iberian peninsula should greatly assist the task of developing a united revolutionary front. We should propose immediate discussions with all groups who recognise the necessity for the Fourth International.

## Challenging Labour's monopoly hold

A crucial tactical objective of our work around the Action Programme must be to assemble the forces for a challenge to Labour's political hegemony over the workers' organisations and over the masses. As a rule such a challenge should be made on the basis of support from a significant layer of the local labour movement. The crucial arena in which such a challenge should be mounted is that of local elections and campaigns should seek to present in a lively and relevant fashion all the points of the Action Programme. The local arena will express many vital aspects of the crisis of social expenditure and the problems of public sector workers; it provides a natural focus for the agitations of tenants, squatters, the women's movement and solidarity with all local workers' struggles and resistance to repression.

Candidates should be accountable to all their sponsors in the local labour movement. We should aim to run serious campaigns which bring up all the issues of the mass struggle and disrupt the weary routines of local politicking. We should avoid the empty propagandism which so

often plagues the electoral interventions of the far left, making it clear that our aim is to establish the modest beginnings of a real alternative to Labour within the workers' movement and committed to a programme to meet the crisis. The preparation for such campaigns would force revolutionaries to gain an intimate knowledge of the problems of the masses and to develop concrete solutions which stimulate workers' self-organisation.

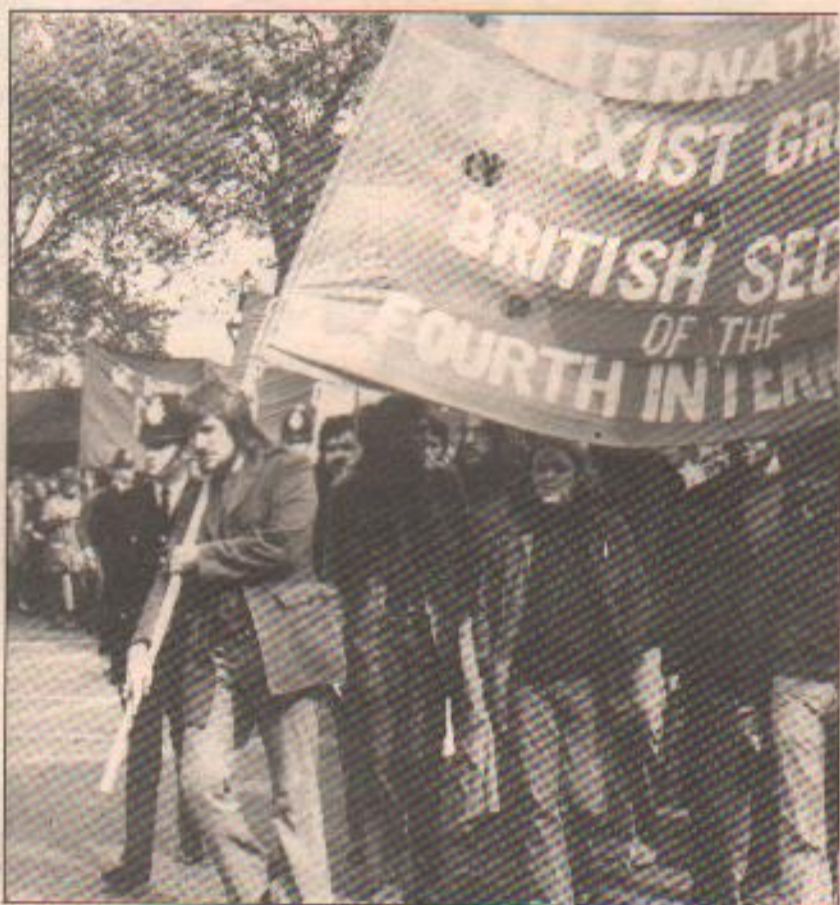
Taken together the tactics which we have outlined should equip the

IMG to prepare for a real political advance within the workers' movement. Labour's monopoly hold is not going to be broken in a day, but that it no reason for postponing the preparations to that end that can now be made. We do not believe that a mass revolutionary party can arise prior to the first experience of dual power. But ruptures within the bourgeois political order will precede a rupture of the state apparatus itself. Challenging reformism all along the line—in the trade unions, in campaigns work, in the consti-

tuency parties and in elections—is the best way of promoting independent working class politics and ensuring the emergence and victory of soviets.

We end with a quotation from Trotsky on the necessity of discovering real paths towards workers' power:

'I stand on the ground of the reality of bourgeois society, in order to find in it the forces and the levers with which to overthrow it. As against the factory councils, the trade unions, parliament, you counter-pose—the soviet system. In this connection the Germans have a very excellent verse: 'Schoen ist ein Zylinderhut wenn man ihn besitzen tut' (Indeed a silk hat is very fine, provided only that I've got mine). You have not only no soviets, you have not even a bridge to them, not even a road to the bridge, nor a footpath to the road. *Die Aktion* has transformed the soviets into a fetish, into a supersocial spectre, into a religious myth. Mythology serves people as a cover for their own weakness or at best as a consolation.' (*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* pp 86-7).



**EXPLANATORY NOTE:** The proposals of Tendency A are based on the theses on the economic and political conjuncture contained in 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe' adopted at the 10th World Congress of the Fourth International (see *International, Vol 2, No. 1*), and on the resolution on the world recession adopted unanimously by the International Executive Committee of the FI in January 1975 (see *Intercontinental Press, 17 February 1975*).

# STRATEGIC LINE (cont.)

Given the weakness of revolutionary marxists in relation to the present leaderships of the working class, it will be impossible to impose on the mass organisations centralised united fronts on a wide programme of demands. Usually only united action around specific questions on a partial and short-term basis will be possible. It is through the fight to build united front action committees around specific issues and struggles that revolutionary marxists can begin to turn the balance of forces within the workers' movement against the bureaucratic leaderships and in favour of those breaking from the general political line of the bureaucracy, the new mass vanguard. Through such a process

the possibility of forcing unity with sections of the mass organisations on aspects of our programme will become possible. Within this strategic framework propaganda blocs—even with other small revolutionary groups—have a relevance. But such blocs are not the aim, but a means to our strategic goal.

It is for this reason that even where we engage in united fronts of vanguard organisations the IMG fights for these to extend their activity on particular issues to create united initiatives in action with sections of the workers' movement. Thus, on Ireland, we call for the Troops Out Movement to organise its main demonstrations through *ad hoc* mobilising committees and

call for its conferences of the labour movement to be organised on the same basis. Similarly, we urge the setting up of local campaigns for the Working Women's Charter while fighting for wider based action on more limited demands—such as against White's anti-abortion Bill, or in support of the recent strike at Salford Electrical Instruments. These are precisely the tactics we are forced to adopt in the present relation of forces in order to force action by sections of the mass organisations around aspects of our programme.

4. Our strategic line, under present conditions, demands a systematic attempt to gain united action with left social democracy. The ex-

perience of the Labour Government will lead a vanguard to break from the Labour Party, but social democracy will continue to exercise

political domination over the masses. Specifically, the most militant layers of the masses remain in the hands of left social democracy. However while, in particular, the organising cadre of the trade union movement at a local level—factory convenors, shop stewards committees, etc—are not prepared to make a clear political break from Labour, they have been increasingly prepared since the mid-1960s to act outside of the framework of—or against the line of—the Labour Party.

Thus in 1974 Labour was unable to get several crucial working class struggles called off—the miners in February, the AUEW against the NIRC in May, Ford's in October. Already under the previous Labour Government the struggle against In Place of Strife showed the increased willingness of parts of the working class to take action against the line of a Labour Government. Unlike 1945 or 1964, the return of the present Labour Government has not led to a downturn in the industrial struggle. Furthermore, the involvement of left social democratic forces in campaigns over Chile and the Shrewsbury pickets would have been inconceivable on the heels of the election of a Labour Government in 1945 or 1964.

It is this increasing willingness to act outside of and against the line of the Labour leadership that opens the way for the building of united front action in defence of the interests of the working class. The construction of united fronts between these layers and the forces of the new mass vanguard has proved already to be the most effective instrument for building political action on the issues of Chile, Shrewsbury, the struggle against private practice in medicine, the Working Women's Charter, the Common Market, and so on. It will be even more crucial in the struggle against unemployment and

the coming incomes policy, and in the construction of a revolutionary trade union tendency.

5. It is differences over these questions of the transitional programme and the united front, and consequently on the strategic line of the IMG, which underlie all the concrete differences with Tendency A.

In our view, for Tendency A the transitional programme is essentially reduced to an action programme whose function is to allow the formation of propaganda blocs with, and eventual regroupment of, various revolutionary and centrist currents. Parallel to this is an apparent concept of the united front not primarily as a problem in relation to the mass organisations of the working class, but as a tactic aimed at forming propaganda blocs with and regrouping the political vanguard. For this latter reason also, united fronts seem to be essentially posed as *outside* of alliances with left social democracy.

The net result of these false analyses is confusion. We are given tips on organising the vanguard, the need to regroup the far left, what to do after the creation of organs of dual power and so on, but absolutely no answer on what should be the strategic line of the organisation. If it should still be for the creation of organs of dual power, then Tendency A gives no indication of what are the decisive links heading in that direction under the present Labour Government. To the extent that the comrades do attempt to put forward any strategic line, for example 'breaking Labour's monopoly of political representation', it may or may not be the best one from the point of view of organising the vanguard, but it is absolutely *not* a strategic line for the class struggle.

As a result of this lack of a real strategic axis, Tendency A's position is like a flashy car without a steering wheel—it has dozens of marvellous gadgets, but no-one knows what direction it is going in.



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)



# Against Britain's secret war

EVERYONE KNOWS about the war in Ireland. But few people know much about Britain's other colonial war: in Dhofar, the southern province of the Sultanate of Oman.

British Governments — Labour and Conservative alike — have carefully tried to conceal their military activities in the Sultanate, putting out false and misleading stories about the role and status of the large number of British military personnel active in Oman. In this they have had an effective ally in the British press.

British troops occupied Oman during the second half of the 19th century because of its important strategic position in relation to India. Ever since then Oman has been a *de facto* British colony.

The British Government has never admitted this, claiming that Oman is an independent country which 'enjoys' special relations with Britain. But facts speak for themselves. The despotic rulers of Oman have only been able to sustain their rule because of British military and financial support. Their repressive state apparatus is run by British 'advisors', and their army of mercenaries is controlled by British officers. In addition the RAF maintains two bases, at Salala and on the island of Masirah.

A century of imperialist domination has reduced conditions in the Sultanate, once an important and flourishing commercial centre, to those of a medieval country almost totally isolated from the rest of the world. The Omani masses live in extreme poverty.

During the 1950's, when oil exploration began in the Omani interior, opposition to the regime and British imperialism developed in the form of several revolts. But this opposition never developed beyond local tribal uprisings, and was quickly smashed by British forces.

## J. Hassan

On 9 June 1965, a very different and much more serious armed struggle was initiated by the Dhofar Liberation Front in the province of Dhofar.

The September 1968 congress of the Front marked an important turning point for the movement. The tribal dominated leadership was replaced by left wing and Marxist elements. The policy of Dhofari separatism was extended to incorporate a perspective of social revolution in the whole of the Gulf region.

This change was reflected in the new name adopted — the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG).



Sultan Qabus reviews his British-backed army

Most important of all, the Front began to implement a programme of radical social reforms in the liberated areas with the aim of eradicating exploitative and oppressive social relations and improving the living conditions of the masses, and it began to establish links with other revolutionary movements in the Gulf.

As the result of these changes, the Popular Front rapidly gained wide support among the Dhofari masses, grew in strength, and within a few years had liberated all the inhabited regions of Dhofar with the exception of the narrow coastal plain around the capital, Salala.

The reaction of British imperialism to the movement was from the first a violent one. The Labour Government then in office tried to crush the movement by the good old imperialist method of indiscriminate killing and terrorising of the population, bombing villages and destroying crops and herds on which the livelihood of the Dhofari peasants depended. But these methods failed to defeat the movement or demoralise the Dhofari masses.

So British imperialism decided to try another trick. Whitehall decided to stage its own 'revolution' in Muscat, the capital of Oman. In 1970 the obstinate and old-fashioned Sultan Said was ousted in a British-organised coup and replaced by a more modern despot — his son Qabus, who had just arrived back in Oman from Sandhurst.

The whole affair was presented to the world as a 'nationalist revolution' against Said's despotism. A few token reforms, such as the banning of slavery and the building of a few schools and hospitals, were carried out; and many empty promises were made. The aim was to confuse the revolutionaries and win away their mass support. But the Omani masses were not fooled, and the revolutionaries were certainly not confused.

### IRAN MOVES IN

The growing economic and political problems of British imperialism — in particular the heavy drain on resources caused by its war in Ireland — meant that it could not escalate its military involvement by very much. So the reactionary Iranian regime, which since the late 1960s had built up a huge and well equipped army with the help of US and British imperialism, becoming the anti-revolutionary watchdog in the Gulf, was called on for help.

Iranian military involvement began with a few helicopters and technicians, but it was rapidly escalated from December 1973 onwards. At the moment there are estimated to be around 11,000 Iranian troops in Oman, which represents a huge force, considering that the population of Dhofar province is only in the region of 100,000 to 150,000.

The Shah has been making arrogant statements about how his soldiers, 'who fight like lions', are going to wipe out the 'illiterate savages'

of Dhofar, because he cannot tolerate 'subversion' anywhere in the Gulf. But his soldiers have not been doing as well as he claims. Their morale is reported to be very low — not perhaps surprising when, according to Jim Hoagland in the *Washington Post*, 'they spend most of their time blazing away at their own positions' — and the Government has had to try and make up for this by giving them large bonuses.

In Iran, in spite of the brutal repression, there has been some organised opposition to the war, as

ment.

### OIL INTERESTS

The viciousness of imperialism's reaction to the movement in Dhofar can only be understood in the context of the important threat that it poses to the vital interests of imperialism in the Gulf.

Sixty per cent of the world's known oil reserves are in the Gulf region, and the economies of the imperialist countries in Western Europe and Japan are totally dependent on imports of oil from the Gulf.

In addition the giant oil monopolies draw huge profits from their



Oman: British soldiers on the warpath



operations in the Gulf. So a revolutionary movement like that in Dhofar, which constantly threatens to spread to the other Gulf states, is a very direct threat to imperialist interests.

That is why imperialism is bent on crushing this movement by any means possible. The US, which has been openly stating recently that it will not hesitate to occupy the oil-fields if its vital interests in the Gulf are threatened, may also soon become involved in the Dhofar war. Already it has been agreed with Sultan Qabus that American military aircraft will be allowed to use the facilities at the RAF base on the island of Masirah.

The Labour Government has proved to be a more than willing accomplice in these developments. Oman was significantly almost the only area of British military operations to escape the cuts in future expenditure announced in the recent Defence Review. And only a fortnight ago David Ennals, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, arrived in Muscat to express his hope that the PFLO 'rebels' would be finally crushed by the end of the year.

So much for the Labour Government's commitment to socialism, a cause which the PFLO openly espouses against the reactionary stooge of imperialism, Sultan Qabus. But the working class organisations on which the Labour Government relies for its support have the power to change this situation by demanding the immediate withdrawal of all British forces from Oman. The demonstration called for Sunday 9 March by the Gulf Committee, the Iranian Student Society in GB, and the Palestine-Gulf-Yemen Solidarity Committee — assemble 2.00pm in Horse Guards Avenue, near Whitehall — will be a first important step in building such a campaign.

## PORTUGAL'S LATEST EMIGRANT

Among recent emigrants from Portugal is the son of the former US President — General Eliot Roosevelt. The General is the former manager of a multi-national firm in Portugal, a partner of the Portuguese tourism and construction monopoly, Torralta, and the proud owner of one of the country's best-known horse-stud farms.

His sudden departure from the country followed hot on the heels of his receiving a letter from the Portuguese tax authorities, pointing out that he had never paid any income tax during his sojourn in the country, and was in arrears to the tune of £57,000. The General was last spotted in the south of Ireland.

## Kurds fight - NUS capitulates

The continuance of the war in Iraqi Kurdistan is once again beginning to create problems for the Ba'ath Government, with the Kurds now consolidating their positions and even moving back into areas previously captured by the Iraqis. In order to secure extra arms, the Iraqis had promised an early, successful conclusion to the war for the USSR. Any extension of the war must be an embarrassment to both parties in this alliance, with the Iraqi Ba'ath fearing a change of emphasis of Russian foreign policy in the Arab east.

The decline of the Iraqi Communist Party (Central Committee Faction) is aggravated by the war. The ICP has religiously followed the whims and wishes of its Moscow mentors, to the extent that its members are now being imprisoned (over 115 in Kurdish areas) and executed by their Ba'athist 'allies' with no complaint from the ICP leaders. It is possible that the ICP will again split under the pressure of its contradictory position.

Internationally, the Iraqi Government is becoming more isolated. Recently Arab student organisations have been to the fore in supporting the Kurdish struggle. In Egypt the General Student Union of Egypt had discussions with representatives of Kurdish students from 14 September to 2 October 1974. This led to a declaration of support for the Kurdish

and Palestinian peoples in their respective struggles and an agreement for further joint work and discussions. Similar declarations have come from Syrian and Tunisian Student bodies.

However, in Britain, the National Union of Students blindly follows the Communist Party in its appreciation of the 'progressive' Iraqi Ba'ath. At the last NUS conference, the NUS executive continually tried to prevent any discussion on Kurdistan. Terry Povey's valiant attempt to out-manoeuvre the rest of the executive and raise the question was jumped on by Steve Parry. The NUS has continued to ignore the Kurdish struggle and attempts to launch solidarity actions in Britain with the excuse that it has no policy on Kurdistan — hardly surprising considering the Broad Left's attempts to brush the question under the carpet.

Once again Brunel University has submitted a motion to NUS conference. We would appeal to all *Red Weekly* student readers to help raise the question within NUS. This can be done by giving the motion on Kurdistan a high priority on the NUS Priority Ballot forms arriving now at colleges. Please contact us for any further information. — KURDISH SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE, Brunel University Students Union, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge.



# WORKERS' HEALTH...

'Private practice—in or out of the National Health Service—must end.' These were the words of Steve Johnson, National Officer of the Health Services Division of NALGO, speaking at the London demonstration against private practice on Saturday, 22 February.

The demonstration, called by the Medical Committee Against Private Practice—MCAPP—was sponsored by at least seven trades councils, various trade union branches—many, like the North London NUR, the Acton Works AUEW, and the Ford's Dagenham TGWU outside the NHS—as well as the *Tribune* group of MPs, the Socialist Medical Association, and Sheffield Brightside Labour Party.

Johnson went on to explain that NALGO's call for the 'blacking' of private hospital construction had been adopted by the TUC in 1973. He added: 'The TUC has done nothing about either "blacking" or combatting private practice in the NHS. We must see that that policy is actively pursued.'

He warned of the alarming growth in private medicine, and pointed out there were close conn-

ections between the NHS and private medicine: 'The chairman of the United Kingdom Hospitals Group is Sir John Prideaux, who just happens to be also chairman of the general trustees of St Thomas's Hospital and a member of the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham area health authority.'

## KENT MINERS

Jack Collins, a member of the National Union of Mineworkers national executive, pledged the support of the Kent miners in the fight to defend the NHS. Said Collins: 'It is up to the labour and trade union movement to put a stop to private practice.' He denounced the parasitic role of private practice, pointing to the way that it used NHS equipment to 'provide easy pickings for the medical sojers.'

Bob Pennington of the International Marxist Group pointed to the full police coaches sent to the demonstration. 'The Labour Government increases the police force, jacking up London police wages by 52 per cent in one year. At the same time it fights bitterly against the demands of health workers for a decent wage and is responsible for the running down of the NHS.'

'Sending postcards to Labour MPs won't solve the crisis in the



Photo: MIKE SHERIDAN (IFL)  
Last Saturday's demonstration against private practice

NHS. The action of the Swansea workers, the solidarity strikes by dockers, miners etc during last year's nurses' pay claim and the embargo of the Charing Cross Hospital workers have given the lead on how to fight both against private practice and defend the NHS.

'The working class movement



# ... OR DOCTORS' WEALTH?

must take up this campaign. But it must use its own strength and that strength must be used to fight against the plans of the Labour Government. That is the only way to make the Labour MPs act.'

## BOYCOTT

Steve Ludlam, a NUPE shop steward and member of the International Socialists referred to the Xmas dinner disaster at Leytonstone Mental Hospital, where 100 women were poisoned and two died, and said that it was not surprising the kitchen conditions were bad since they were built in 1885.

A plan to upgrade them had been shelved because of lack of money.

Ludlam stressed the need for a national boycott of private hospitals to stop the capitalist class bleeding the health service. Like the other speakers, he urged that the way to fight the attacks on the NHS was by mobilising the support of other workers in alliance with health workers.

Dr. Berry Beaumont, who chaired the meeting, said that the demonstration was part of a wide campaign against private practice. She reported that public meetings were

being organised by trades councils in Wandsworth, Westminster and Brent on this issue.

'We should institute workers' inquiries into the health service—inquiries should be run and controlled by the working class movement', she said. 'These should determine the health needs of the working class.'

Before the demonstration left Lincoln's Inn Fields to march on Downing Street it was announced that MCAPP would be organising a national conference—probably in June this year.

## NEXT STEPS ...

As Mrs Castle prevaricates and backpeddles before the demands of the consultants, private medicine steadily goes, ahead with its plans to build an alternative health service for those that can afford it.

One does not need to be an expert on the crisis of social expenditure to see that the NHS is literally falling apart. But the rich with their huge incomes and their private health insurance schemes will not suffer.

For millions of working class people the decline in the NHS means ill-health, longer waiting lists, and all the worry and care that is inevitable when workers and their families cannot get the medical treatment that they need.

The action of the Medical Committee Against Private Practice in calling Saturday's demonstration is an important beginning to bring together all those forces fighting not just to defend the NHS, but to turn it into a fully comprehensive health service based on the needs of the working class.

Many people are in agreement with the demand to ban all private practice. Support is growing for the call to put an

embargo on the construction of new private hospitals and to get the unions to refuse to service existing private hospitals. The ban on the private patient at the Morrision Hospital in Swansea got widespread support in South Wales and gave a clear lead on how to fight private practice inside the NHS.

Such actions need coordination. More support has to be gained for them in the labour movement. MCAPP can play an important role by developing and extending the widespread opposition to private medicine.

Firstly a campaign is needed to get as many trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, student unions, women's groups and local Labour Parties as possible to sponsor MCAPP. Secondly these organisations should invite speakers from MCAPP to address their organisations and arrange local meetings and conferences to win wide support for the campaign.

Finally money is needed so that MCAPP can extend its activities and reach a much wider audience. Donations, inquiries, details of sponsorship, requests for speakers and donations to: Dr. Paul Stern, 55 Bridge Lane, London NW11.

## 'NOT ONE BED!' say Swansea workers

THE DISCHARGING of private patient Anne Colisandro from the maternity ward of Morrision hospital, Swansea, has produced a stalemate in the first private-beds dispute in South Wales.

The provocative actions of the consultants, aided by the Area Health Authorities, shows that they do not intend to give up. They are now threatening to put another private patient in to the Morrision, plus two others into hospitals in the Rhondda.

Seven hospitals in the South Wales area were involved in strike action over the Morrision private patient.

Nurses and ancillary workers in Swansea, Neath, Port Talbot and the Rhondda

undertook to support any initiatives launched by the Morrision health workers and most of them voted to strike every Wednesday until the dispute was over. Last week, representatives of 15,000 hospital workers in South Wales took a similar decision to give full support to any action taken at Morrision.

The ban on all services (food, telephones, bed changes, etc.) to patients and consultants using private beds, and the calling of a mass meeting immediately a private patient is admitted is an excellent initiative.

The resolutions of support for the action at the Morrision sent by local miners, steel workers, car workers, and many others shows that sections of the working class are beginning to realise that they have a vested interest in both

defending and expanding the NHS.

The task now is to build on and extend that support, because there is no doubt that the Glamorgan Health Authority—like Health Authorities all over Britain—will soon be in action again on the private-patient front.

Workers at the Morrision, and health workers from other hospitals in the area, should be speaking at as many trade union and factory meetings as possible in the next few weeks. They should explain how their fight is a fight on behalf of all the working class, and as such requires maximum support.

The campaign should also be directed at the local Labour Councils, insisting that they do not give any planning permission for private hospitals and that they ban all private practice in the area.



IMG speaker Bob Pennington (right) and Dr. Berry Beaumont (left)

## Catering workers fight back against student 'bosses'

The Students Union at Birmingham University has an almost unique system of financing by which it gets a grant each year of around £180,000 from the Government to cover costs for catering and sports facilities, etc.

Last year the Students Union made a £35,000 loss on catering due to rising costs and low student grants. The Union officials, who dominate the Students Union Guild Council and are led by Andrew Vallance-Owen, a leading right-winger in the National Union of Students, decided to sack 21 catering workers out of a staff of 80 to cut their losses. This was only revealed last week, as the Union officials attempted to carry out these moves behind the backs of the students and workers on the campus.

Rather than launch a fight against the cuts in education and for adequate State financing, the Union right-wingers prefer to chop workers' jobs and cut services for their own student members—this in a situation where the women who work in the refectory are already badly understaffed, with long queues developing at lunch-times. However, this stab in the back has not gone unopposed.

Two weeks ago the joint union committee, which covers all the trade unions at Birmingham University, held a conference of trade unionists and students on the campus which passed a resolution rejecting any cuts in education expenditure.

The 80 catering workers have rejected the cuts out of hand, and are threatening strike action—although they have so far had little support from the local T&G WU officials. Also the Cuts Action Committee, which was initiated by the International Marxist Group at a Students Union General Meeting last term around the NUS rents strike, has started to campaign amongst students to force the Union officials to reverse their proposals.

The long-term aim of the campaign is to force the Government to take responsibility for the present crisis in education and cough up the necessary finances. The campus workers are fairly militant over this issue, and last year joined the students in a demonstration against the education cut-backs. As for students, 1,000 turned out three weeks ago to demonstrate against a visit by officials from the University Grants Committee, despite mis-direction of the rents strike by the right wing.

There is clearly a basis for a massive fight-back against these latest attempted cuts, especially as the women workers have made it clear that they are prepared to fight. Already some of them have spoken at Students Union meetings to gain support. Hopefully by next week the students will have been swung behind them and the basis laid for a mass campaign against the cuts in education.



# Labour council backs bosses against scaffolders

THE STRIKE involving 14 scaffolders victimised for union activity at the Eldon Square site in Newcastle has entered its sixteenth week. And the local Labour Council has finally come out in the open over the dispute — firmly nailing its colours to the mast of the employers, McAlpines.

Walter Wilson, Labour Councillor and chairman of the Council Development Committee, has accused the strikers of holding the ratepayers to ransom and has called for tougher police action against the picket lines. This after ten have already been arrested on trumped-up charges.

## PRESTIGE PROJECT

The Labour Council has a 51 per cent stake in the £40 million prestige project, but has taken no action to force McAlpine's to reinstate the men. Now, with the property developers breathing down their necks since the rest of the site walked off in sympathy on 3 February, the Labour Council is beginning to wield the big stick — at the workers of course.

In an area where another jailed Poulson associate, Andrew Cunningham, was head of the General and Municipal Workers Union, the local misleaders of the Transport and General Workers Union and the building workers union, UCATT, are living up to his best traditions. Dave Shenton, the full-time official of the T&GWU, has denounced the strike in hysterical terms and has sent a Telex round T&G branches telling them not to strike.

In contrast to this the striking scaffolders, who now include all the scaffolders on Tyneside, have nothing to hide. Their strike is a model of working class democracy in action.

Regular mass meetings are held to take all important decisions, and the day to day running of the strike is in the hands of a democratically elected strike committee. With the help of local students a regular strike bulletin is produced two or three times a week to keep all strikers informed of developments and inform other workers in the area of their struggle.

One of the main demands the scaffolders want taken up is that the T&GWU, to which they all belong, should make the strike official.

## NEW SUPPORT

It is the democratic organisation of their struggle which has laid the basis for winning support for the scaffolders. Only last week delegates from the strikers spoke to a mass meeting at Motherwell Bridge Off-shore site at Leith, and to the stewards committees at the Robb-Caledon shipyard and Parsons-Peebles Engineering, and at the Bovis-Myton site in Edinburgh.

In Aberdeen the scaffolders spoke at the Hull-Russell shipyard and to stewards at Aberdeen Docks, as well as at a meeting in the University. All the meetings were set up by the International Marxist Group in Scotland, and the stew-

ards on all the jobs covered are arranging further mass meetings and collections.

Student support is also broadening. A mass meeting of 400 students in Manchester heard Geoff Ryan of the IMG put their case. A collection of over £18 was raised. Meanwhile the Newcastle Area National Union of Students is arranging for the scaffolders to tour all the 22 local colleges.

## ATTACKS ON PICKETS

Chairman of the NUS Area and IMG militant Steve Faulkner told *Red Weekly*: 'We believe it is vital that the scaffolders' strike is won. Since the Labour Government came to power, not only have the Shrewsbury pickets remained in prison, but there have been more attacks on pickets — at Wingrove & Rogers in Liverpool, at Salford Electrical Instruments, Manchester, and during the recent Intex strike. Most important for students, there has been the decision in the 'Prebbles' case just before Christmas in which the judge ruled that picketing in anything but industrial disputes was illegal.

'This decision must be reversed, and we must also get the charges dropped against the ten pickets arrested in Newcastle. Otherwise the Labour Government will feel free to step up its harassment of the whole labour and student movements, as we have seen in the way the police and Special Branch are using the so-called "Anti-Terrorism Act".'

'Furthermore, the Eldon Square dispute has raised the burning question of to whom Labour Governments and Labour Councils are responsible — their cronies in the ruling class, or to the working people who elected them in the first place. We should be demanding an enquiry into the building programme of the local Labour Council, to be carried out by delegates from the trade union movement, and for resources to be put into municipal housing, schools, and welfare buildings which will benefit the working class — not into costly "prestige projects".'

## MASS PICKET

The scaffolders themselves are well aware of these problems. Last week they supported a demonstration by students protesting against the closure of the teacher training college at Alnwick. Now their aim is to build a mass picket outside the court on 10 March when the ten imprisoned pickets come up for trial.

Every militant in the Tyneside area should fight for token stoppages and take time off to support the demonstration outside the court on 10 March. Further messages of support for the scaffolders' strike and the demonstration should be rushed to the Strike Committee, c/o Eddie Brady, 86 Benwell Lane, Newcastle (tel. 0632-32365).

Newcastle  
IMG

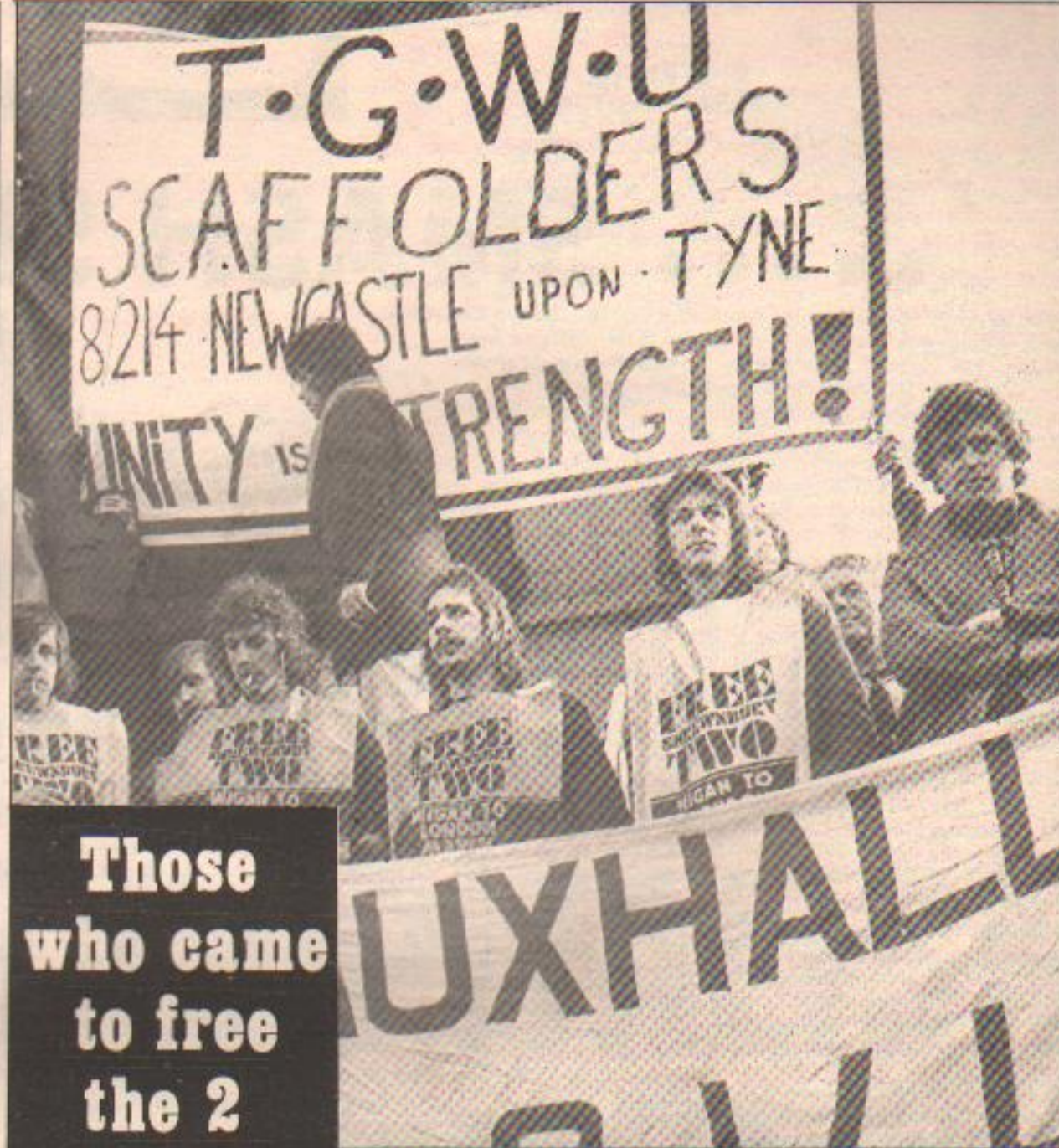


Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

Those  
who came  
to free  
the 2

Newcastle scaffolders on Saturday's march to free the Shrewsbury 2

The Wigan to London march to free the Shrewsbury 2 finally reached London on Saturday 22 February. Though 80 striking scaffolders from Newcastle were on the march, and several union branches sent delegations, the majority of the demonstrators were supporters of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

However, in the face of inactivity and extreme hostility from the trade union bureaucrats and the Communist Party, the march took the question of the Shrewsbury pickets into many sections of the labour movement and correctly posed the need for a general strike as the only way to free the two.

However the WRP (the main force behind the Wigan Building Workers Action Committee) simply saw the march as a means to build their own organisation. Instead of fighting for the maximum unity of all those forces opposed to the betrayal of the two by the TUC and their allies in the Communist Party,

the WRP pursued their own sectarian ends.

In order to do this the WRP have broken every norm of working class democracy. In Liverpool, Manchester and Coventry, members of the IMG who wanted to support the march were physically prevented from selling their papers and carrying their banners on the march.

Even before the coach to London left Newcastle last Friday night, three members of the IMG who had fought for a £20 donation to the march through the local National Union of Students were grilled by WRP members before being allowed to travel. Then they accuse us of not wanting the march to be a success! *Workers Press* has even printed slanderous lies accusing other revolutionary organisations of 'conspiring with the TUC' against the march.

The sectarian practices of the WRP cannot aid the fight to free the two. It is only by allowing all organisations of the working class to put their point of view, and involving all organisations in joint action, that a real campaign can be built. Working class democracy is a necessity if we are to defeat the

manoeuvres of the trade union bureaucracy and the Communist Party.

The Wigan march can still provide a start. The support it has mobilised in various areas can lay the basis for action committees campaigning for strike action. Sections of the labour movement like the Kent and Yorkshire miners have gone on record calling for a one-day stoppage. They should set a date for the strike as a first step to a general strike to free the two.

However, we must not limit the struggle to the Shrewsbury pickets. Under the Labour Government there have been more attacks on pickets. Most recently ten pickets have been arrested at the Eldon Square scaffolders' dispute in Newcastle.

Only a united campaign on all these fronts can really seize the initiative from the bureaucrats and the Communist Party

# Those who gloat & those who act...

The *Morning Star*, newspaper of the Communist Party, gloated on Tuesday 18 February over the differences between various revolutionary organisations on the question of the Wigan march.

The IMG says this to the leaders of the Communist Party: 'Yes, we have our differences with the WRP over the Wigan march and how to get the Shrewsbury 2 out. But those disagreements have nothing in common with the type of disagreements we have with you. When the Shrewsbury pickets first came up for trial, you systematically played down the issue because it upset your allies in the trade union bureaucracy who were denouncing them as "criminals".'

When a movement did develop, largely because of the work of organisations like the International Marxist Group, you entered it only to deliver it back into the hands of the same trade union bureaucrats. While you know that only all-out strike action can free the two, in the same way as it freed the imprisoned dockers in 1972, you refuse to campaign for this and instead organise endless lobbies of the TUC, who in turn organise lobbies of Parliament.

You may well argue that the situation over Shrewsbury is different from the Pennington Five, that then the working class was prepared for strike action because of the campaign, however confused, waged by the TUC against the Industrial Relations Act. But instead of condemning the miserable failure of the TUC to explain to

the workers' movement the political meaning of the Shrewsbury trials, you gloat before them, pleading for them to call another lobby or a one-day strike. And what do they tell us? Changing the law is more important than freeing the two.

Everyone knows that it was only mass strike action by vast numbers of workers which forced the TUC helmedly to call a one-day general strike to free the jailed dockers. We have often said that a general strike to free the 2 would be harder to achieve because the working class is less well armed politically to defeat militants attacked under the 'criminal law' and this allows the bureaucracy to get off the hook more easily than over the Industrial Relations Act.

Yet you have demonstrated precisely the sections of workers most militant and most educated over Shrewsbury by a series of lobbies and one-day strikes called by your own organisation or bodies which you control, instead of organising them to take unofficial strike action at the appropriate moment, releasing forces to travel the country drawing other rank and file trade unionists into an indefinite strike to free the pickets. In fact, when this actually started to happen in Liverpool and Birmingham, you opposed it and refused to publicise it.

We say to the comrades of the Communist Party: draw a balance sheet of the Shrewsbury campaign and see who has done more to hold it back — the Communist Party or the so-called 'ultra-left'.

## 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

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## ..... SMASH SHORT-TIME WORKING!

WITH AN ESTIMATED ¼ million workers now on reduced hours, short-time working has turned from a gale to a whirlwind in the crisis-torn motor industry. The 'big three' manufacturers—Leyland, Fords and Chrysler—have become the big three short-time merchants.

Chrysler's already has 10,000 of its 21,000 manual workers on a two or three day week at its Ryton and Linwood plants. The firm's 'guaranteed week' agreement has now run out, and workers' wages have slumped by as much as £26 from the former £54 per week average, even including benefit money. A survey carried out by engineering employers in the heavily dependent components industry suggest that there are another 25,000 workers on short-time in the Coventry area alone, even excluding the Chrysler plant.

A further 7,000 are on a three-day week at Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port factory, while Jaguar have a similar number on short-time. The crunch came last week when Fords announced it was putting 11,000 of its 55,000 workforce on three or four day weeks from 3 March. Hot on Ford's heels, British Leyland informed 11,000 workers at the massive Longbridge plant that they would be losing a shift a week from next month.

### FORDS

The most dramatic effects will be seen at Fords. At the Halewood Transmission Plant on Merseyside 450 will be going on short time, along with 2,700 workers at the transit plant in Southampton, and 8,000 at the Dagenham body and assembly plants.

At the moment mass sackings would be met by a wave of factory occupations, which is why Ford management present short-time as 'Cutbacks to avoid Redundancies' in their paper *Ford News*.

But even short-time working on this scale will not solve the car bosses' problems. Along with natural wastage, which cut British Leyland's workforce by 10,000 in a year, short-time is just part of a softening-up process for future mass redundancies.

Workers at Fords will get some protection from an 80 per cent lay-off agreement. But this only covers a total 15 days, and will be eaten up after ten weeks of short-time working.

Management have used the pretext of the introduction of short-time to reorganise the shift system of the

Dagenham maintenance men, allegedly to bring it into line with short-time working. The maintenance men have instituted a system of 'non-cooperation' with management, as the new shift system means harder work and more anti-social hours. While the plant leadership and the Communist Party are giving a certain support to the policy of non-cooperation, they are basically trying to keep the lid on this dispute, as management would use the excuse of strike action to provoke lay-offs which would not be covered by the lay-off agreement.

Instead of fighting for the unity of the workforce around the struggle of the maintenance men and for smashing short-time working, the Communist Party and the stewards have contented themselves with confused and chauvinist rhetoric against Ford's foreign expansion plans. This implies that 'foreign' workers can go to hell in the fight to save 'British' jobs. In fact these are the only allies of British workers in the fight against the multi-nationals.

### NO LAY-OFFS

Ford workers must reject the company's lay-offs. In place of the Blue Book Agreement on lay-offs workers should be demanding the sharing of the available work with no loss of pay and under workers' control. Management is claiming that the present measures are due to falling sales of 'big' cars (Consul, Cortina and Granada), which demands a 30 per cent cut in produc-



tion. This claim should be assessed at its face value by opening all the books on Ford's investment, production and sales plans to workers' inspection. Shop meetings should then work out line speeds and shift schedules, and an average working week with no loss of pay should be calculated for the whole work force to coincide with the cuts in production levels. Such a plan should be presented to management and refusal to comply should be met with occupation.

The Communist Party stewards are collecting signatures for a petition to Benn to launch an enquiry into Fords UK. But this enquiry must be a workers' enquiry in the workers' interests, not a carve-up in the interests of the car bosses by Benn's whizz-kids. All Ford's plans and accounts should be published to the workers' movement.

Barking MP and *Tribune* group

member Jo Richardson has called for the nationalisation of Fords 'for the good of the workers and the economy.' But what's good for the capitalist economy will certainly not be good for the workers. That's why nationalisation must be carried out in the workers' interests. The only way to enforce this is through workers' control. At every stage workers must be able to monitor the plans and arrangements of any proposed nationalisation, block any attempts at sabotage by the management, and resist reorganisation of production which is against their interests.

All Fords stewards and combine delegates should meet immediately to hammer out a common policy on jobs and against short-time, as a first step to a meeting of the union plant leaderships of the entire motor industry to set in motion a campaign for the nationalisation of the whole industry.

Sam Boyd

The car industry is in the throes of a massive crisis. In many factories workers have already accepted short-time working. But at Wilmot-Breedon, a car components factory employing 2,500 workers in Birmingham, a section went out on strike last week against some of the effects of this process. Among them was an IMG militant in the AUEW whom we interview below.

—What was the immediate cause of the strike?

Last year the trade unions—the AUEW and the National Society of Metal Mechanics—accepted a scheme of voluntary redundancies and non-recruitment of labour. The result has been that many sections in the factory, especially the more weakly organised ones, are badly under-manned. In my section, there are meant to be 56 workers employed, and we would claim even more are necessary for the jobs. But at present only 43 of these jobs are filled.

The management clearly wanted the same work done by fewer workers. Several weeks ago we started a go-slow in opposition to this. As a result, management tried to use other workers and even staff to do our jobs. Last week we told them this practice must cease. However, the company took no notice, so we called an unofficial strike.

Of course, it's much easier to get unity over issues like this than on short-

time working or voluntary redundancies, which tend to divide the work-force. Everybody on the section went out. By the end of the first day production was seriously affected throughout the factory, and management was faced with the prospect of having to lay everybody off.

They have now given us a written statement that on no occasion will anybody attempt to cover our jobs, and negotiations are starting over filling up all the vacancies and the extra ones we claim are there. On this basis we agreed to return to work.

—Do you think this is the end of the story?

No, quite the contrary, it is only the beginning. The company used to cut back manning levels on all sections and speed up work. Indeed, managers have informally told me that this is what they intend to do. For instance, two weeks ago they attempted to stop the women on the tracks from using the toilets during working hours. We will let neg-

otiations start, but unless they fill up the vacancies we are prepared to take action again.

—Do you think this has wider implications?

It is a sign of the times in the car industry. Every car plant, component plant, rolling mill, etc. is in the same boat. Unfortunately few shop stewards in the industry realise what is about to hit them.

Last week at a meeting in Birmingham, John Deacon, secretary of Austin-Longbridge works committee, claimed that all that was necessary was basically an injection of Government money coupled with some restrictions on Japanese and EEC competition in order to solve our problems. He did not see any crisis of over-production. To the extent that there was one, he felt this could simply be solved by more specialisation in the car industry.

What is really necessary is to begin to prepare car workers, who are in the forefront of the present crisis. That will mean mass meetings on the shop-floor combined with conferences of factory delegates from right across the industry to hammer out an alternative strategy around demands for nationalisation of the car industry under workers' control.

But because most shop stewards don't understand what is happening, they see little need for these steps. When we were faced with redundancies at Wilmot-Breedon there were no mass meetings. At BLMC in Birmingham the situation is the same. Few workers know what is going on in the factories, and so they are not prepared for a struggle. Unless this changes, and the work-force in the car industry is prepared for major struggles, there is a danger that major defeats will be suffered.



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