

Socialist Challenge

South Wales' message to the Tories

GET OUT

'I have never known such venom against any politician as the Welsh people feel for Sir Keith,' said John Carberry, chairperson of Port Talbot steel workers' strike committee.

He wasn't joking. Outside three factories Joseph was pelted with eggs and tomatoes by angry workers. Lucky for him that he eventually turned tail and fled Wales.

It's not surprising he was nearly lynched. Thanks to the Tories policies there will be a minimum of 42,000 redundancies in steel, mining and related industries in Wales. The knock-on effects in service industries will push that figure up to over 80,000. If the Tories get away with it in South Wales, hundreds of thousands of jobs will be

laid waste throughout the rest of Britain.

The Wales TUC was forced to take drastic action. First they called for a general strike in the region from 21 January. But they caved in to pressure from the British TUC who were more concerned about trying to head off a potential general strike movement than saving Welsh workers' jobs.

The fact that such a movement is developing was proved on 28 January where 200,000 Welsh workers stopped work in mighty display of anger and power. A week later Welsh miners' leader Emlyn Williams called for all-out action to kick out the Tories. He said:

'If the working class movement in this country decides to fight together nobody can stop us'

He's right. But the Tory war machine is now

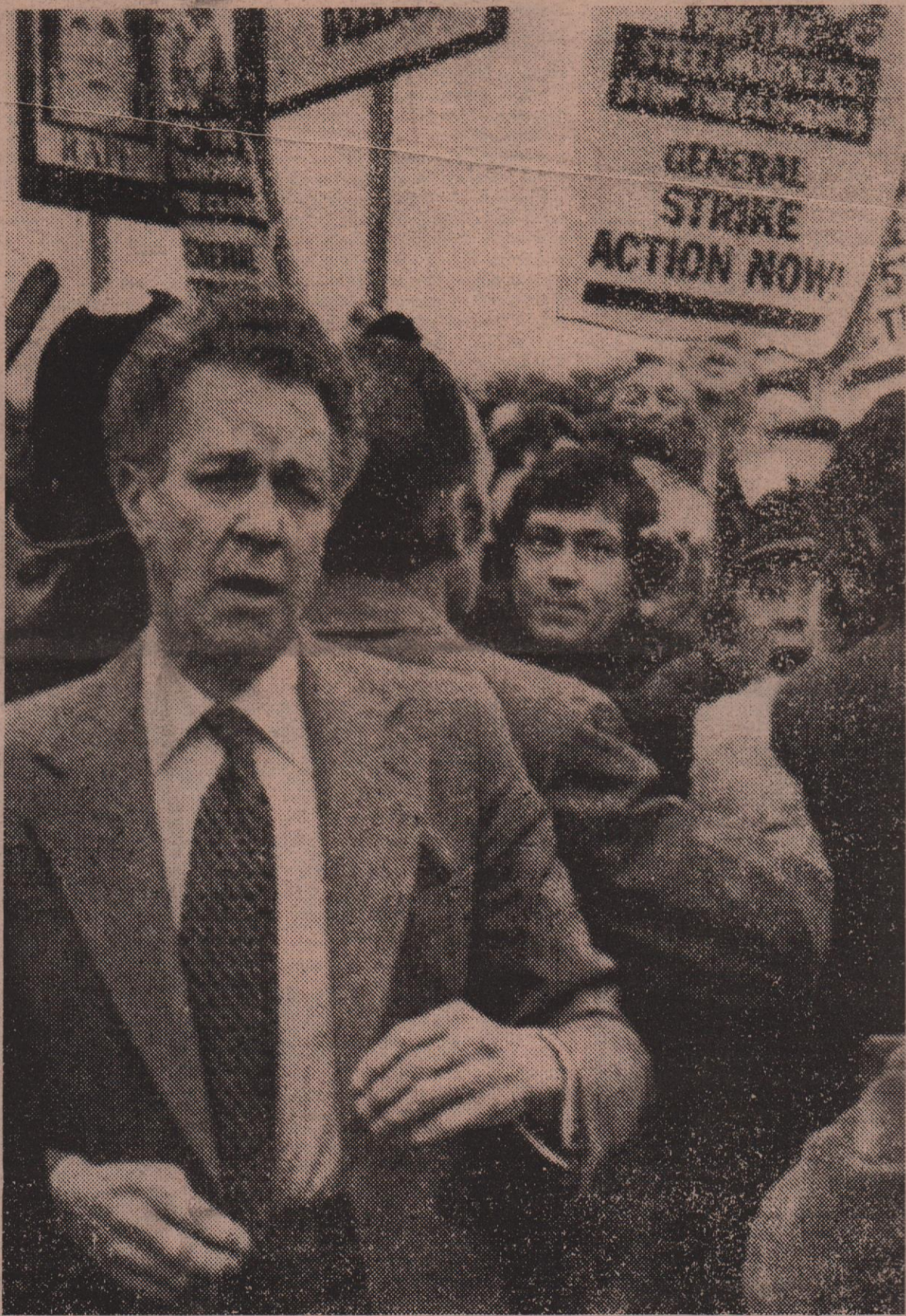
lumbering on from South Wales:

*50,000 workers have been laid off in British Leyland. This is a lock-out of the workers by the bosses to prevent action on the Leyland workers' pay claim or in defence of Derek Robinson, the sacked Longbridge convenor.

*The Tory budget next month aims to slash our social services to the bone.

*New anti-union laws aim to cripple effective trade union action. That means stopping our ability to stop real wages falling, to fight against the cuts and for jobs.

All the separate struggles need to be fused together. The TUC should call a general strike to halt the Tory offensive. And that means kicking out the Tories.



LEYLAND LAY-OFFS: OCCUPY!

BY NOW, nothing should surprise us about Michael Edwardes and the other bosses of British Leyland. But even by their gangster-like standards the decision to 'lay-off' 50,000 workers for 'weeks rather days' takes the breath away.

The company top brass say their cars aren't selling enough. So production has to be reduced. These words come from the same management who for the last couple of years has been moaning on about the lack of 'productivity', saying Leyland's problems have all been caused by the workers not producing enough cars fast enough.

The real reason Leyland has decided to close down

whole plants, or sections of them is found in the workers' rejection of the miserable five per cent wage offer and the decision — reluctant as it was — of the AUEW executive to call for strike action over the victimisation of union convenor Derek Robinson.

In other words the lay-offs are nothing more than a Victorian-style lock-out — designed to ward off strike action on the double issue of pay and union rights. The lock-out is the logical conclusion of the Robinson sacking — the attempted destruction of the trade union movement in Leyland.

Enough is enough. In the past couple of years Leyland has sacked tens of thousands of workers; 25,000 more jobs

are to go under the terms of Edwardes' 'survival plan'. But the writing is now on the wall — in big letters; the only way Leyland workers have any hope of 'survival' is for them to take action against the company in the most decisive possible way. And that is the immediate occupation of all Leyland plants.

Let those who work, on the shop floor of Leyland now start to control it. They could hardly do worse than Edwardes and company have done and as far as their interests are concerned it is the only defence they now have against Michael Edwardes and the rest of the Keith Josephite mafia in Leyland's boardroom.

OUR POLICIES

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

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

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character, grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

- To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Eurocommunist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us.

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EDITORIAL

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Why NATO has to go

'I'M NOT here to take America's whipping,' said a somewhat confused Muhammad Ali last week. 'I'm not here to push nothing to nobody.' Ali, the USA's special envoy in Africa, evidently found his new role of boosting Carter's Cold War politics too hot to handle. He had come a long way from the days when he publicly opposed imperialism's war in Vietnam and refused to enlist in the American army.

Not all of Washington's diplomatic manoeuvres to marshal the capitalist world behind its war threats against the Soviet Union have ended in fiasco.

Despite Carter's failure to get unanimous response in favour of his call for a boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow, the hawks of the Western alliance have succeeded in avoiding a serious split in their ranks. They have put together a package of military and economic measures which increases the pressures towards world war.

The joint declaration by Schmidt of West Germany and Giscard of France followed the Islamic conference in sharply rebuking Moscow for its intervention in Afghanistan. The joint declaration is an ultimatum to the Soviet Union, and calls for the blocking of all progress in detente — including the SALT II talks and the European Security Conference due to be held later this year — until the Russians withdraw from Afghanistan.

A stage two plan has already been discussed by Schmidt and Giscard for a combined military response in the event of further Soviet 'expansionism'. It is clear that both Paris and Bonn have sought American collaboration from the beginning and have subsequently 'reaffirmed their loyalty to the Atlantic Alliance and their determination to honour their engagements.'

These developments have been combined with moves towards economic sanctions in the form of a blockade of the Soviet Union, but not without considerable opposition. Most significantly the escalation of military preparations by the Western powers has been combined with an ideological offensive aimed at preparing public opinion for a more aggressive global policy.

The success of President Carter and Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, in closing the ranks of European capitalism behind the American Alliance and US policy, is a setback for the international workers' movement.

First, it represents a threat to the existence of the Soviet Union, and the advances made by the revolution — advances and gains which socialists need to defend, despite the policies of the bureaucratic elite which has usurped power from the working class.

Secondly, and more immediately, it is a threat to the revolutionary struggles of the people of the

Third World and their attempts to throw off the yoke of imperialist domination.

The 15 billion dollar rise in the US defence budget; the reintroduction of the draft, and the establishment by Washington of special strike forces endanger the unfolding revolutions in Nicaragua and Iran, not to mention Cuba.

Thirdly, the developing cold war atmosphere will undoubtedly allow Western governments to focus attention on 'the enemy within' — the left, and the organised workers' movement in the imperialist centres themselves.

It would be fatal for the working class not to forcibly oppose this escalation in the cold war, for we live in an epoch of war and revolution. The workers' movement must be vigilant and prepared to take any action necessary to halt the strengthening of the imperialist military alliances.

The most immediate requirement is for a campaign for Britain's withdrawal from NATO and against the introduction of the Cruise Missiles, the siting of which has been agreed by the Tory government.

Opposition to the boycott of the Olympic Games needs to be combined with a refusal by the trade union movement to participate in any move towards a trade blockade of the Soviet Union or its allies.

Fulfilling the Tories' worst fears

By Geoffrey Sheridan

EDWARD Heath wasn't quite so unlucky. Nine months into the 1970-74 Tory government and Ted had notched up the defeat of the postal workers after a bitter strike over pay. Nine months of Thatcher's rule have presented her government and party with a bad case of nerves.

The spending cuts so far ordered are still a long way from the Tories' aim of boosting profits by truncating the welfare state. Yet the hostility to the existing measures has installed in the government the fear that anything approaching the £2 billion cuts that the Treasury has suggested for the next round would bring united resistance by the working class.

Meanwhile the steel strike weighs like a mill stone. 'The British Steel Corporation and the government took us on purposely because of my past record of co-operation,' Bill Sirs, the ISTC general secretary, generously acknowledged last weekend.

That co-operation, in abandoning steel plants, jobs, and towns, could not be delivered over pay.

The steelworkers were originally offered 2 per cent. Last Friday, Sirs brought together ISTC's 80-strong negotiating committee only to have them shout down the Steel Corporation's offer of 2 per cent plus 12 per cent pay-for-jobs deal which the leaderships of the craft unions have accepted.

The application of the government's monetarist policies is being tested to the endurance of the steel strikers. The cash limits imposed on the Steel Corporation, in order to prune pay and plants, may well have to be raised — in the hope that in the next confrontation in the public sector they will meet a weaker foe. But the steelworkers have given the working class a clear picture of monetarism at work.

Whether victory is theirs in the end will depend on more than their picketing strength if they are to prevent Sirs cobbling together a deal which does little for pay and a lot for unemployment.

The formation by the local strike committees of a national co-ordinating committee would greatly strengthen rank-and-file control over both the strike and its outcome. On 14 February the craft unions meet nationally to decide on their pay offer, which should follow the example of the mass meeting in South Yorkshire last Friday in rejecting it.



STEELWORKERS march through Sheffield on 21 January

The blockade of steel has shown up a critical weakness of cash limits from the government's standpoint. By linking pay with jobs, the Cabinet has discovered that a strike over wages carries with it the threat of a collective refusal to join the dole queues. That of course is the pace of developments in South Wales, where the *Sunday Times* says there is 'near insurrection'.

The TUC General Council, busily seeking to defuse that situation (see page 5), is no doubt aghast that the government does not appear to be similarly engaged. While the labour

leaders want to see the return of a Labour government, Thatcher's removal by a general strike could be very damaging to their privileges.

It's the pace of developments which is so upsetting the government. They were happy enough with the progress of Prior's proposed anti-union laws until the steel strike was extended to the private sector.

But with picketing now effectively to the fore, the Confederation of British Industry is demanding that the Employment Bill should put a stop to any such action. Sir Geoffrey Howe, Chancellor of the Exchequer

and architect of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, has promised that these legal changes will be made.

Visions of the Heath debacle now loom large in Conservative circles,

not for want of history lessons but because of the dictates of the capitalist crisis. Victory for the steelworkers, a huge demonstration on 9 March against the Prior laws, ensuring that the Wales general strike meets its 10 March date of initiation, and extending that action to the rest of Britain would grant the Tories their worst fears.

Photo: GM COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)



This woman is an ISTC member at the Darnell Engineering firm of Hayden Nilos Conflow Ltd.

Ten per cent of ISTC members are women. Many of them receive very low wages working as cleaners, in canteens, as clerical workers and computer operators.

'We're serious in what we're doing', said a wire department worker. 'We heard there was a lot of steel coming out of the works here! We started at dinner time. We stopped two lorries but two have gone through.'

A woman cleaner said: 'We're behind our husbands all the way. We all want 20 per cent, the same as our husbands and sons.' Margaret Thatcher held no charms for these women pickets.

One woman wearing a 'Smell the Iron Lady' badge put it most eloquently: 'We're prepared to stay out till we get our 20 per cent — and till we get Maggie Thatcher out.'



ALL three women above have been involved in the picketing since the end of the first week of the strike. Pauline told us why:

'We have the same interest in the strike as the men. We want 20 per cent without any strings. So we've been on flying pickets to Birmingham and London. We went on the demonstration to Lord Denning's offices. It was

tremendous.

'Before that we had been picketing the ISTC exec meeting letting Bill Sirs know that we wouldn't settle for anything less than the full claim.'

'We haven't found any discrimination on the picket line. Everyone treats us seriously, although many men can't believe we're steel workers.'



A woman's place is on the picket line

LINDA Humphries is one of the growing number of women in Sheffield who have decided that a woman's place is not in the home, particularly when their husbands are on strike. Every morning Linda and her husband do the rounds of the local pickets delivering coke from the River Don steel works to fuel the braziers that keep striking steel workers warm on the picket lines. 'I couldn't sit at home doing nothing. I had to help in any way I could.'

Marjorie Hill is one of the canteen workers at British Steel Stainless. Both her husband and her two sons also work in the steel industry. She decided to help the strikers by getting the women who work in the canteen to provide food for the pickets:

'There's no work now,' explained Marjorie, 'So we thought we could help out by doing food for men on strike. It also gets us out of the house and keeps us in touch with one another.'

So much for the popular press and its enthusiasm to encourage 'back to work' movement of steelworkers' wives. Sue Lawson, the organiser of the women's group co-ordinating support for the strike, says it's vital that wives and girlfriends should not feel left out.

We agree wholeheartedly. Write and tell Socialist Challenge if women are getting involved in the steel strike in your area.

Without us nothing would be produced

HAZEL ALLEN, Kathleen Barker, Pauline Sendrawich and Hilda Banks work on the production line as table drivers in the Cargo Fleet steelworks in Middlesbrough. Working with red hot metal they produce railway lines, beams, crane pylons. It's a dirty, tiring job. Brian Grogan talked to them on the picket lines in Teesside last week.

'The work is not what is typical of "women's work" although women have traditionally done this job — my mother did it before me', Pauline explained. 'We find few problems working alongside men but we have to work the three shift system including nights.'

'The heat can be terrible', added Kathleen, 'the red hot metal passes underneath us and we have to step over it. We have to concentrate — one mistake and you could get killed!'

Despite the dangerous conditions and anti-social hours the 24 women who work as table drivers receive a pittance. 'We take home between £40 and £45 per week. This includes a bonus which on average is between £7 and £9 per week.' This is nothing like

the men's take home pay.

The maximum bonus the women can earn is 50 per cent while the men can push their bonuses up to 175 per cent.

Complacent

Management and union officials alike are complacent about such blatant discrimination against the women. Despite equal pay legislation women are kept on low pay scales by ensuring that their jobs are graded alongside the lowest grade for men in the factory.

'Our job is put in its own category, although it's equal work to the men's jobs', Hazel explained. 'There are of course some jobs we couldn't do, but our grade is the lowest in the factory along with the "utility sparehand" grade.' When the women are off sick the men in this grade refuse to cover for them because of the low bonus rates.

'We have raised the issue in our union branch and we've been told that the difference is due to productivity. The men sold more jobs than we did so they get a differential increase for this. I don't know whether this is true or not because it all happened before I started here.'

The women haven't got any

special demands themselves. 'Some of the men on the lower grades only take home £40 odd a week. But if we had a special increase for low-paid workers then the higher grades would demand their differentials were restored.' Hilda thought it would be a good time to press home some of their own demands though.

'I've been working here for 26 years and we've never been able to get the women together because of the three shift system. Most of the women are not active in the picketing. Now I've been made the representative for the women. It would be good to get everyone together. We're all in favour of 20 per cent.'

Organising

'If we just got an equal bonus with the men it would push up our take home pay by £20. To do this we are thinking of organising a "go-slow" when we get back. But we have to get all the women behind it and all the men because they'll be affected. Without us nothing would be produced.'

'The men say they'd support us because they've seen how we've pulled our weight in the strike.'

Tories take on student unions

By Mick Archer

EIGHT years ago, NUM general secretary Laurence Daly wrote to the National Union of Students after the miners' victory to say that, 'next to the labour movement, the support that we received from student unions, the NUS, and students generally was the most important during our recent strike'.

At that time the Tories were proposing to tighten control over student union expenditure. The mass campaign launched then to defend the unions' financial autonomy showed that the vast majority of students saw the need to take on the Tory government. Support for the miners was part of that stand.

Today

Today benefits and collections are again being organised in colleges for the steel strikers. Flying pickets have been accommodated and helped out by students in Manchester and Birmingham. And once again the Tories are proposing changes in the procedure for financing student unions.

Tory education minister Mark Carlisle has insisted that the main aim is simply to establish greater accountability. But at the same time he has referred to abuses in expenditure such as the sending of student union coaches to the Grunwick mass pickets in 1977.

At the moment the yearly payment to student unions comes from the local authority which pays the student's grant. In future the fee will be paid by the authority responsible for the college. This will have three effects.

Compete

*Student unions will have to compete with departments and other education facilities for their share of a diminishing cake if public expenditure cuts go ahead.

*With the real income of student unions falling under the impact of inflation, there will be increasing pressure from the right wing to save money by disaffiliating from NUS.

*Local authorities will try to determine how the fee is spent. Oxfordshire has already written to Oxford Polytechnic student union asking them to do something about their affiliation fee to NUS.

Tory attacks on higher and further education can only be resisted by student unions that are powerful and independent. Given the chance, the government will deal with students as ruthlessly as it is trying to deal with the steelworkers.

Choice

The choice for students today, as in 1972, is to line up with the Tory union-bashers or to fight alongside the organised labour movement. *Socialist Challenge* supporters in the colleges will be waging a determined campaign for the latter.

Brian Molyneux calls for National Strike Committee



BILL Sirs, the general secretary of the Iron & Steel Trades Confederation, is a man under a lot of pressure.

After attempting to stop the private sector steelworkers coming out in support of the state-owned sector, many rank and file workers have viewed him with suspicion. 'Not less than 20 per cent' and 'No strings' are common demands raised wherever Bill Sirs goes.

But nowhere is the pressure more on Bill Sirs than in South Yorkshire. Right from the start of the strike, steelworkers here have realised that rank and file control is crucial if mass picketing is to be effective and the strike is to remain solid. Clive Turnbull talked to BRIAN MOLYNEUX, ISTC branch secretary at Stocksbridge and a member of the South Yorkshire strike committee, who has put forward the idea of a national strike committee.

'We're not happy with the way Bill Sirs is running this dispute. Len Murray and others are putting pressure on him not to allow any escalation. We obviously take the opposite view. We would like the dispute to escalate into a general strike.'

We need a national strike committee so we can have a common national policy in order to be more

effective in winning this dispute, to obtain 20 per cent for our members with no strings.

We understand that other areas have a bigger fight on their hands, other than the 20 per cent pay increase — that is closures. We want to know how we can assist these areas.

We are obviously very suspicious of the tripartite meetings of the other unions involved in steel, that Bill Sirs was on the same trip as Bob Scholey, chief executive of BSC, and that they are having secret meetings.

The reason we think members should be more involved is that it isn't good enough for national officials to say members are selling jobs and then hide behind that. They should be responsible to communities and the labour movement as a whole.

Corby isn't just a town in the Midlands; it's people you're talking about. Even if in Stocksbridge melting shop the members wanted to sell jobs, we couldn't accept that because of our wider responsibilities.

There are a number of reasons for members wanting to take redundancy, but mainly it's frustration at having to fight on their own. They need support from other areas, from so called viable plants. That's why we need a national meeting to get that support.

'It's disgusting Sirs plays squash with BSC chiefs' —steel worker

JOHN CAMPBELL, a fitter's mate in the 'B' Mill, Lackenby on Teesside, has similar views to Brian Molyneux. He talked to Dave Carter last week.

'The latest offer's a sell out. I was in London last Tuesday to lobby the executive; Sirs told us '20 per cent or nowt', and everyone shouted 'nice one Bill'. Then he said he'd go to jail, but he backed down.'

Disgusting

'I never thought I would last five or six weeks. The strike has opened my eyes to what goes on. I think it's disgusting that Sirs plays squash with one of the BSC chiefs. Before, I thought that people were daft to strike, but now I understand what makes them. It's changed a lot of people.'

'I'm more determined now than at the start of the strike because I've lost so much money. ISTC not paying strike pay is disgusting.'

'I've learnt a lot. I went to Birmingham to picket at Bore Steels. A lorry came out; we said to the driver if you cross you're a scab. There was an argument and he brandished a pipe out of the cab window. The copper just said we were tormenting him and would do nothing.'

Militant

'There were lads from Corby there. I felt like crying when I saw the Corby people because they were more militant than us and it's their jobs that are on the line. They were really enthusiastic. They got Bore Steels closed — we didn't.'

'I don't agree with the way the ISTC has been negotiating away jobs. Sixty jobs have gone in our mill on the flexibility deal and there's more to come.'

Dave Carter asked John what he



STEELWORKERS' mass picket at Hadfields, the private steel firm in Sheffield where ISTC members are now defying the national executive's instruction to join the

strike. Police reinforcements this week did their best to secure the scabbing.

thought about a national strike committee to take control of the strike out of the hands of the officials. 'I'm all in favour — so long as we can also have our local one.'

This was one of the themes of a Socialist Challenge meeting in

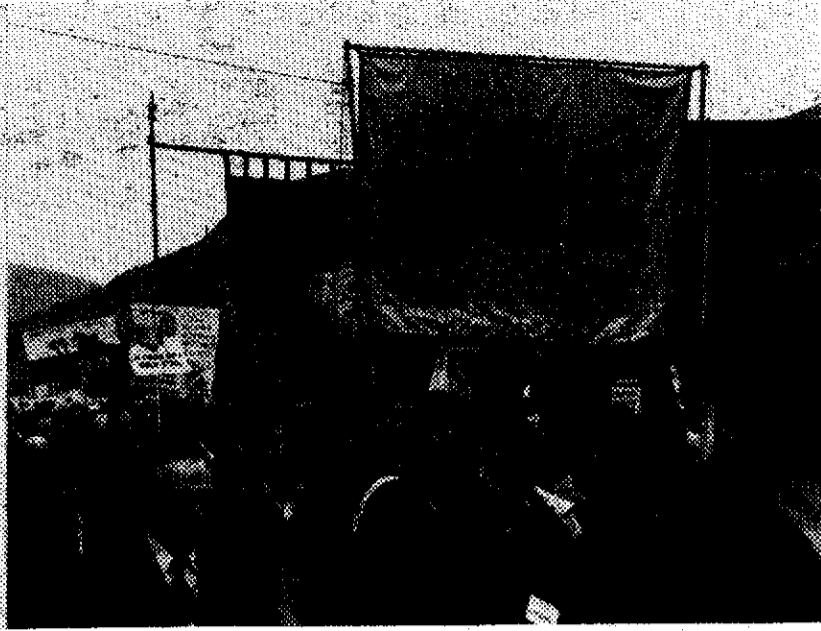
Teesside last Tuesday. John said he enjoyed the meeting:

'The speaker reminded me of our convenor — full of controlled anger. I was interested in what he said about the Welsh strikers. They're on more money than us, but then they're more

militant aren't they?

Send in reports from your area about the steel strike. Phone Socialist Challenge on 01-359-8180/9.

SUPPORT THE STEEL STRIKE



ROGER TOVEY

Tories are callous

By Roger Tovey, member of the Blastfurnacemen's Union, Llanwern.

OVER half the population of Chepstow would be directly affected by the Steel Corporation's planned cutback at Llanwern, together with two-thirds of those who live in Caldicot. That's just part of what it would mean to halve the 9,000 workforce at this South Wales steel plant.

The people affected moved into the area in the early '60s, from Ebbw Vale, West Wales and the Midlands — all from plants that had shut down. They are now in the 35 to 45 age group, most with families, so the social problems of being unemployed will be immense.

The Tory government has shown a callous disregard for the consequences of the orders it has given to the Steel Corporation. On the EEC's council of ministers, the Tories' representative vetoed the £60m available in aid to the steel industry, because this sum would have to be matched by the British government.

What action is required to halt the lunacy of steel closures? The answer is obvious: the war-mongering, uncaring set of arch-Tories who compose the government must be removed from office before the people of South Wales can live again.

The general strike in Wales set for 10 March is a must, and it should begin even sooner because the strikers are not robots — we have human needs which we are sacrificing in this fight.

The official union approach is very worrying to all concerned. Effective secondary picketing is consistently undermined by the compromises sought by the national leaders.

A sell-out could lead to the movement throwing up its own leaders, although one hopes that Bill Sirs and Hector Smith will see sense in the end.

The kind of solutions necessary are available to the government in the form of the measures taken in other West European countries. In Belgium, France, West Germany, and Luxembourg, steelworkers can retire with good pensions at 55. Coal subsidies are from 12 to 27 times higher than in Britain.

The development of local industry to meet the needs of the new generation, together with the maintenance of coal and steel production, is essential.

But all this is beyond the dogmatic policies being pursued by the present government.

BUILD NOW FOR 10 MARCH

By Patrick Sikorski

A MASSIVE 10,000 people demonstrated in Port Talbot, Wales last Thursday in support of the striking steelworkers.

As well as the strikers themselves there were miners, rail and transport workers, delegations from the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru, tobacco workers and building workers. The whole area came to a stop for the morning.

The 200,000 who took part in the Wales general strike on 28 February show the depth of the feeling about Tory plans to lengthen dole queues in Wales. Support for all-out indefinite strike action against steel closures on 10 March is overwhelming. The question now being asked is: what is the British TUC up to?

Slow

The answer hasn't been slow in coming. The leaders of the TUC are running round trying to get 10 March called off. In the cosy world of Congress House they do not welcome

the prospect of hundreds of thousands of workers on strike against the Tory government.

Their attitude was summed up at the last meeting of the TUC general council. Some members said that the TUC had to 'take the reins' and control the militancy shown in Wales. But as General Council member George Guy was reported to have remarked, 'If they take the reins they will have to ride the bloody horse. They can't take it back to the stable.'

Platitudes

But at the Port Talbot rally Emlyn Williams of the South Wales National Union of Mineworkers had little time for such sentiments. 'When the right to work and right to bring up our families is threatened I don't believe in one day strikes and platitudes', he said.

'As far as I'm concerned we should not be channelled into a cul-de-sac by the constitution of this or that part of the movement. When it comes to a catastrophe to hell with the constitution.'

THE Tories' 'solution to job losses in Wales is a body called the Welsh Development Agency. A further grant to the WDA of £48 million has just been announced. But that's a drop in the ocean.

Two years ago the WDA was given £12 million to cover the jobs lost in steel closures at Ebbw Vale and East Moor in Cardiff. As many as 66 factories were planned. But even these, it was estimated, would only offer a total of 3,000 jobs.

As it is, most of these factories have still to be built. In Cardiff, even where these plants do operate, there are jobs for only 1,100 workers. On these figures, and taking inflation into account, the latest grant to the WDA will provide a maximum of only 8,000 jobs.

On 27 February the Welsh TUC meets. The miners should take their arguments about the future of Wales to every steelworker, every docker,

every railwayworker and lorry driver in Wales.

George Wright, Secretary of the Wales TUC, must not be allowed to back down on 10 March as he did on 21 January, when he succumbed to the pressure of the British TUC and refused to call an indefinite general strike in Wales.

Fighting

Catastrophes need to be organised against. For the steelworkers that would mean fighting for a national meeting of strike committees to ward off any sell-out attempt. For all trade unionists in Wales it means insisting that there be no backtracking on the demands for a general strike, and for spreading it beyond the Welsh borders.

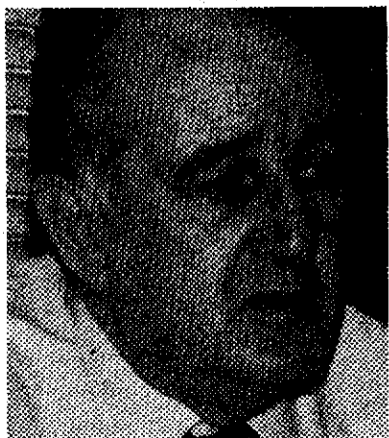
Socialist Challenge supporters will be campaigning throughout the labour movement for both the British and Welsh TUC to give their wholehearted backing to the stand of the Welsh miners on 10 March for a general strike against the Tory offensive. The feeling is there. So let's organise it.

'People want a general strike'

DON HAYWARD is the administration officer of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Wales. He talked to *Socialist Challenge* about the moves towards general strike action in Wales on 10 March.

'THE South Wales miners have been geared up for strike action since 21 January. We only agreed to hold back so that we could keep the movement together. We have had two delegate conferences and a lodge vote, so we have a clear mandate to take all-out action on jobs whenever we like.

'We are very disappointed that other unions in the Wales TUC are not fully committed to going ahead with strike action. We hope that the Welsh recall TUC on 27 February will come out for clear action. But if it steps back then we will go ahead on 10 March. We may even take action earlier than this.



DON HAYWARD

'The TUC has made threats of "drastic action" if the government doesn't come up with a satisfactory answer to their request on Welsh jobs. If the TUC called a general strike it would solve our problems on wages and jobs overnight. Mind you, we have to keep the lesson of the 1926

general strike in our minds and remember how then the TUC let the movement down.

'If Wales came out on strike, we'd expect solidarity strike action from the rest of Britain. And we won't accept any argument that "drastic action" means a one day strike. In Wales the magnificent day of action on 28 January was only to test people's feelings.

'Where I live the lodges went to local factories, the workers there held quick meetings and agreed straight away to come out for the day. It seems to me that the problem is not with the people themselves. It lies with the leadership.

'When George Wright [Wales TUC secretary] says he is not proposing a general strike I think he is talking at cross purposes. If miners, steelworkers and transport workers are on strike and there is a call for solidarity action from other workers then I don't see any way round calling this a general strike. The TUC should make sure this is backed nationally with

all-out action around the country.

'The media are trying to say that we are only motivated by political opposition to the Tory government. We say that if the Tories gave us what we wanted we would not need to take action now. But of course we all know it is a political fight.

'If the government is forced out as a result of our strike action that would be a great bonus for the movement. I am totally committed to getting the Tories out.'

HOW MANY jobs in Wales will be lost if the Tory cuts and closures go through? Ian Kelsall, of the Wales Confederation of British Industry, has claimed that no more than 30,000 redundancies are involved. But the Wales TUC has said:

- *20-21,000 jobs in the steel industry will go.
- *15-16,000 in the coal industry, including pit closures and job losses through the reduction of coking coal producing. And this does not include the threatened closure of three pits through a fall-off in coal demand and BSC closures.
- *6,000 in related industries such as rail, road, docks.
- *30-35,000 indirectly affected in service and retail industries.

The Wales TUC's total estimate: anything up to 81,000.

1926 and 'the question of power'

'THE TUC General Council started out with the ridiculous declaration that the General Strike was not a political struggle, and in any case not an attack on the state power of the bankers, the manufacturers and the landowners, or on the sacred British Parliament. This most respectful and submissive declaration of war appears, however, not to have convinced the government at all; it felt that, through the effect of the strike, the real instruments of power were slipping out of its hands.

'The power of the state is not an "idea", but a material apparatus. If the apparatus of administration and suppression is paralysed, the power of the state will also be paralysed. In modern society, no-one can rule without controlling the railways, shipping, posts and telegraphs, power stations, coal, etc. The fact that MacDonald and Thomas deny on oath that they have any political aims characterises them as individuals but by no means indicates the nature of the General Strike, which, if carried through to the end, brings the revolutionary class up against the task of organising a new state power.

'Nevertheless, those who by the course of events have been placed "at the head" of the General Strike are fighting against this with all their strength. And this is the chief danger; men who did not wish for the General Strike, who deny the political character of the General Strike, who fear nothing so much as the consequences of a victorious strike, must inevitably direct all their efforts towards keeping the strike within the scope of a semi-political half-strike, i.e. depriving it of its power.

'We must look the facts straight in the face; the chief efforts of the official leaders of the Labour Party and of a considerable number of the official trade union leaders will be directed not towards paralysing the bourgeois state by means of the strike, but towards paralysing the General Strike with the aid of the bourgeois state...

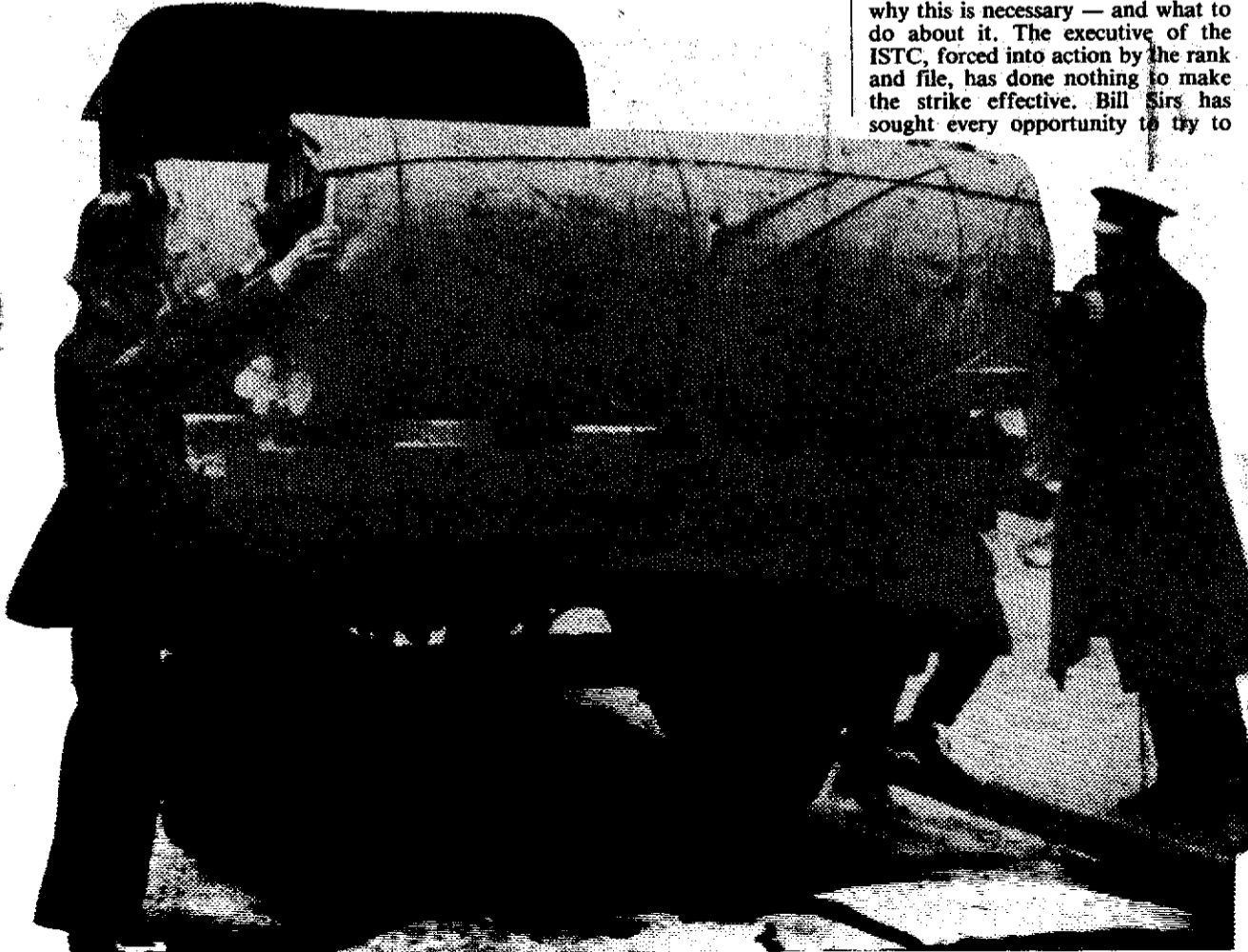
'Success is only possible in accordance with the degree to which the British working class, during the development and the intensification of the General Strike, realises the necessity of changing its leaders and succeeds in doing so. An English proverb says that one must not swap horses while crossing a stream. This practical wisdom is only true within certain limits. It has never yet been possible to cross the stream of revolution on the horse of reformism, and the class which has gone into battle under opportunist leaders is compelled to change them under enemy fire.

'This determines in advance what the really revolutionary elements of the British proletariat must do — above all, what the communists must do. They must support in every way the unity of mass action, but they cannot permit even the appearance of unity with the opportunist leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions...

'The strike in itself cannot alter the position of British capitalism or of the coal industry, especially in the world market. This requires the reorganisation of the whole of the British economy. The strike is only an emphatic expression of this necessity. The programme for the reorganisation of the British economy is a programme for a new power, a new state, a new class. Herein lies the fundamental significance of the General Strike; it brings forward sharply the question of power...

'This by no means implies, however, that the present strike is faced by the alternative of all or nothing... The more widely it develops, the more violently it shakes the foundations of capitalism, the more completely it sheds the treacherous and opportunist leaders, the more difficult will it be for bourgeois reaction to go over to the counter-offensive, the less will the proletarian organisations suffer, the sooner shall we reach the next, more decisive stage of the fight.'

LEON TROTSKY, from the preface to the second German edition of *Where is Britain Going?*, written on 6 May 1926.



Preparing for a general strike

By Martin Meteyard

MILITANTS are beginning to turn into walking calendars as the days of action against the Tories mount up. Already there's 18 February (Yorkshire and the North-West), 9 March (TUC demonstration), 10 March (start of indefinite action to save jobs in South Wales), and then — suitably far off — the TUC's own day of action on 14 May.

No wonder, then, that talk of a general strike is in the air. It's what solidarity means: standing together against the bosses and their government. A generalised confrontation of some kind between the Tories and the labour movement is inevitable sooner or later. But how will a general strike be brought about, and how can we make sure that this time it's not defeated by the kind of sell-out that happened in 1926?

The people who are in a position to organise a general strike are the TUC leaders — the general staff of the labour movement. Determined action on their part could already have brought victory in the steelworkers' strike.

The TUC General Council was set up to lead — not sit about on the sidelines complaining how unfair the Tories are. That is why union branches, trades councils, etc. should be passing resolutions now demanding that the TUC organise a general strike.

Calls

But at the same time it's not enough to make calls on the TUC leaders. A confrontation is the last thing they want. Even if they're pushed into it they will try to call off action at the first opportunity.

This means that the working class must make its own preparations. It must organise its forces on the ground, develop its own channels of communication and coordination.

The steel strike is an example of why this is necessary — and what to do about it. The executive of the ISTC, forced into action by the rank and file, has done nothing to make the strike effective. Bill Sims has sought every opportunity to try to



Troops marching into London's East End during the 1926 General Strike
'The power of the state is not an "idea" but a material apparatus,' Trotsky

hold back the struggle — kowtowing before Denning's judgement and even trying to delay calling out the private sector again after it had been reversed.

But local strike committees have done what the executive has failed to do. They have organised effective picketing to stop 'secondary production', and while the executive has refused to call on other unions for help, they have shown no such reticence.

The strike support committees set up by trades councils in Camden, Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets and elsewhere have been the vehicle for organising local support for the steelworkers and explaining the issues involved. Developing such bodies on a more permanent basis, to prepare the way for the emergence of all-embracing representative Councils of Action such as those that ran the strike in many areas in 1926, is a necessary part of preparing for a general strike today.

Among the tasks of such bodies will be to prepare the defence of the struggle against the repressive actions of the state. The police and — in a general strike — the army will seize every opportunity to break up workers' unity and enforce capitalist order.

Power

This is what is meant by saying that a general strike poses the question of power. To make its struggle effective, the working class will have to take over more and more aspects of the running of society.

In 1926 several Councils of Action established sub-committees for workers' defence. Emile Burns' book *General Strike — Trades Councils in Action* describes what happened in Methil in Scotland: 'At the beginning, the Workers' Defence Corps comprised 150 men, but this rose to 700 after police charges on pickets. The area was patrolled by the Corps, organised in companies under ex-NCOs, and there was no further interference by the police with pickets.'

The organisation of flying pickets in the steel strike shows how it is possible to prepare such defence. Systematising this through organised picket pools in every area would be a further step forward.

Equally, however, a general strike movement has to arm the working

class about what is involved *political*ly. If the question of power — of who runs society — is posed, that immediately raises the question of government. One of the failures of the Communist Party in 1926 was that it didn't make this central.

Preparing for a general strike today means preparing a movement with the clear objective of kicking out the Tory government that is responsible for this offensive against workers' rights. We call for its replacement by a Labour government — not to demobilise the struggle but so that the leaders of the working class are forced to stand naked before their members.

Ranks

But that in turn implies the construction of an alternative class struggle leadership based on the ranks of the labour movement. It has to fight to drag the present leaders into united action, but also be capable of taking its own initiatives to counter a 1926-type sell-out.

This means developing and encouraging local, region, and national meetings and conferences of workers in different unions and sectors. The recent LCDTU conference could have played this role had it not been under the tight political and organisational control of the Communist Party, which is tied to the coat-tails of the union bureaucracy.

It was this kind of fighting role which the Minority Movement launched by the young CP briefly played in the years leading up to 1926. We will be looking at the lessons of this period in future issues.

Intercontinental Press
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ERNEST MANDEL writes on what lies behind the soaring price of gold in the latest issue of the weekly *Intercontinental Press/Imprecor* (Vol 18, No 5). And 'Selections from the Left' looks at the reaction of the Trotskyist movement to events in Afghanistan.

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South Yorkshire prepares for day of action

By Ron Thompson
Chairperson, shop stewards committee,
Eclipse Tools (James Neill Group)

SOUTH Yorkshire promises to come close to a standstill on 18 February — the day of the all-out strike called by the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils in protest at the Tory government's spending cuts.

At a meeting on Monday, Sheffield's Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) confirmed its support for the strike. Already workers at a number of engineering factories in the area — such as Shardlows and Eclipse Tools — have voted to come out.

Yorkshire miners could be out as the NUM has promised full support for branches and individuals who strike. Backing is also promised from local NALGO and NUPE branches.

A foretaste of 18 February was given in Sheffield last Friday when an estimated 2,000 demonstrated against the cuts. Yorkshire NUM president Arthur Scargill captured the mood of militancy when he told the meeting after the march: 'We are witnessing the most



ARTHUR SCARGILL: calling for all Labour-controlled councils not to implement the cuts

orchestrated campaign against the working class and the trade union movement that we have ever witnessed in the history of the movement.'

Scargill called for all Labour controlled councils to refuse to implement the cuts. He added that the cuts, the steel strike and the Derek Robinson victimisation were 'all part of one campaign against working class people'.

Roy Thwaites, leader of South Yorkshire County Council, took up this theme when he said: 'This march and rally has shown clearly that councils and the private sector are not dealing with these problems in isolation. Everyone is united shoulder to shoulder against what this government is doing.'

Thwaites added that the protests would continue until the country was 'rid of the Tory government'.

The call for strike action on 18 February was made last year as part of South Yorkshire Trades Council's contribution to the TUC campaign for 'economic and social advance'. The TUC itself has done little about this campaign, although somewhat belatedly it has now called for a national day of action on 14 May.

The effect of the strike on 18 February may be a little confused if the steel strike is still on. Already the South Yorkshire area is experiencing a number of lay-offs in engineering due to the lack of steel.

A further problem is that there is no concrete focus for 18 February — unlike the Wales day of action on 28 January, which was specifically called on the issue of steel closures.

An attempt was made at a Sheffield CSEU meeting on 4 February to link 18 February more directly with the steel strike by calling for the imposition of a boycott in engineering plants of all steel goods except those entirely finished.

This would have meant that even nuts and bolts would have not been handled. However the Communist Party-dominated leadership of the CSEU rejected this demand, saying it was 'unrealistic'.

To make 18 February an outstanding success more campaigning is necessary. A rather routine approach has been adopted so far. Apart from the issuing of thousands of leaflets, little else has been done to build the strike in workplaces.

Nevertheless 18 February should still be South Yorkshire's most militant stand so far against the Tory government.

Photo: GM COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

STRIKE NOW FOR ROBBBO



An estimated 1,500 people demonstrated in Middlesbrough on Saturday 9 February against the cuts and steel closures

By Alan Turner

THE executive of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers decided on Wednesday last week to back the demand for the reinstatement of Derek Robinson, the convenor at British Leyland's Longbridge plant.

But the executive showed little enthusiasm for the battle against Robinson's victimisation. So wishy-washy is the AUEW's report that Leyland management have been able to use whole portions of it in a propaganda war. As a result the strike action recommended for Longbridge by the union executive has been postponed.

Robinson was sacked last November supposedly because he signed a booklet issued by the Leyland combine committee attacking management's plans to sack 25,000 workers — the so-called 'recovery plan' of Leyland boss Michael Edwardes.

The AUEW leadership responded to the spontaneous strike wave which broke out after Robinson's sacking by ordering their members back to work and announcing their own inquiry into Robinson's activities. While last week's report declared that Robinson should be reinstated, it also provided Leyland management with enough ammunition to argue why he had to stay sacked.

The three-person inquiry team criticised Robinson for 'disruptive action', said he had no right to sign the combine booklet on the 'recovery plan', and concluded that he had been guilty of 'serious failings and lack of responsibility in relation to his duties' as a convenor.

These attacks have now been reproduced in management notices given out to Leyland workers in an attempt to fuel a shop floor revolt against the union executive's call for strike action at Longbridge. The inquiry team hardly helped to build support for a strike when it noted that such action would be 'extremely damaging' and a 'drastic step'.

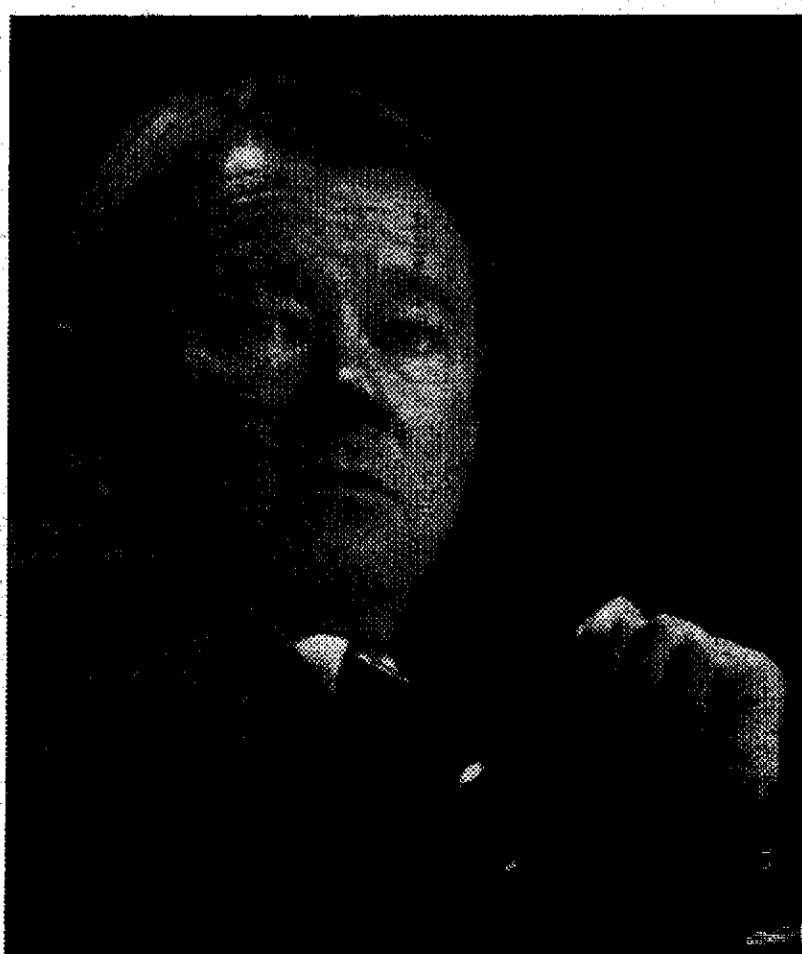
Reflecting such attitudes, the AUEW executive limited its call for strike action to the Longbridge plant itself, whereas the initial strike wave in November spread to a number of other plants.

What this means is that it is not at all a foregone conclusion that Robinson will get back his job. The refusal of Michael Edwardes to re-employ the convenor is based on a gamble that Leyland workers have no stomach for a prolonged fight on this issue. The postponement of the strike call by the AUEW district committee appears to give some substance to this view.

The district committee has promised to build support for Robinson with the 'utmost vigour'. To be effective, this campaign needs to be taken to the shop floor — both in Longbridge and at all other Leyland plants. The date for all-out strike action should be named as soon as possible and should be taken to mass meetings.

The victimisation of Derek Robinson raises issues which are not confined to the Longbridge plant. Involved is the basic right of trade unionists to elect their own representatives, and the right of those representatives to carry out their work free from management harassment.

Derek Robinson faces the prospect of the dole queue, but all trade unionists at Leyland face the prospect of a severe wounding of their union organisation. It is a fight not one worker at Leyland can afford to lose.



MICHAEL EDWARDES, Leyland boss: gambling on the shopfloor refusing to fight for Robinson

Left gains in teachers' union

By Bernard Regan

LEFT-wing teachers scored a notable victory in this year's elections for the officers of the 15,000-strong Inner London Teachers Association (National Union of Teachers).

Socialist Teachers Alliance candidates Mike Lossely and Dave Picton, standing for vice-president and treasurer respectively, defeated their Broad Left/Communist Party opponents.

Unfortunately Amanda Leon of Rank and File lost to national executive member Bob Richardson by 200 votes in the election for general secretary.

The left victory was achieved through united work although Rank and File refused to stand on a joint platform with the STA.

Cuts of 4.2 per cent in the Inner London Education Authority mean the loss of 1,000 teachers' jobs, increased school meal charges, cutbacks in higher and further education. Following this election victory the left now has the opportunity to build a campaign of action against the massive attacks on education in the largest authority in the country.

SEXUAL POLITICS



Photo: LINDA WESTMORE

TUESDAY 1pm: A petition signed by over 200,000 people was presented to anti-Corrie MPs including Jo Richardson, Ian Mikardo, Willie Hamilton and Oonagh Macdonald. The petition forms were carefully packed into boxes that advertised various brands of gin — drinking a bottle of gin in a hot bath was supposed to provoke miscarriage. Many women must have tried it before the '67 Abortion Act, usually with little result other than nausea.

The petition was presented by a number of female writers, including Anna Raeburn and Margaret Drabble.

By the time that the 10,000-strong NUS-organised demonstration reached Westminster the numbers who had turned out for the mass lobby had reached at least 20,000. Many queued up to see their local MPs to express their views in person.

The massive support for the lobby, organised by the Campaign Against the Corrie Bill, showed the huge shift in public feeling on abortion, reflected in recent opinion polls.

The area around Westminster was milling with people; it looked like some expression of popular power. If someone had said the area had been taken over you'd believe it. The anti-abortionists have never been able to mobilise such mass support for their lobbies, and Parliamentary lobbying is one activity they do seriously try to organise.

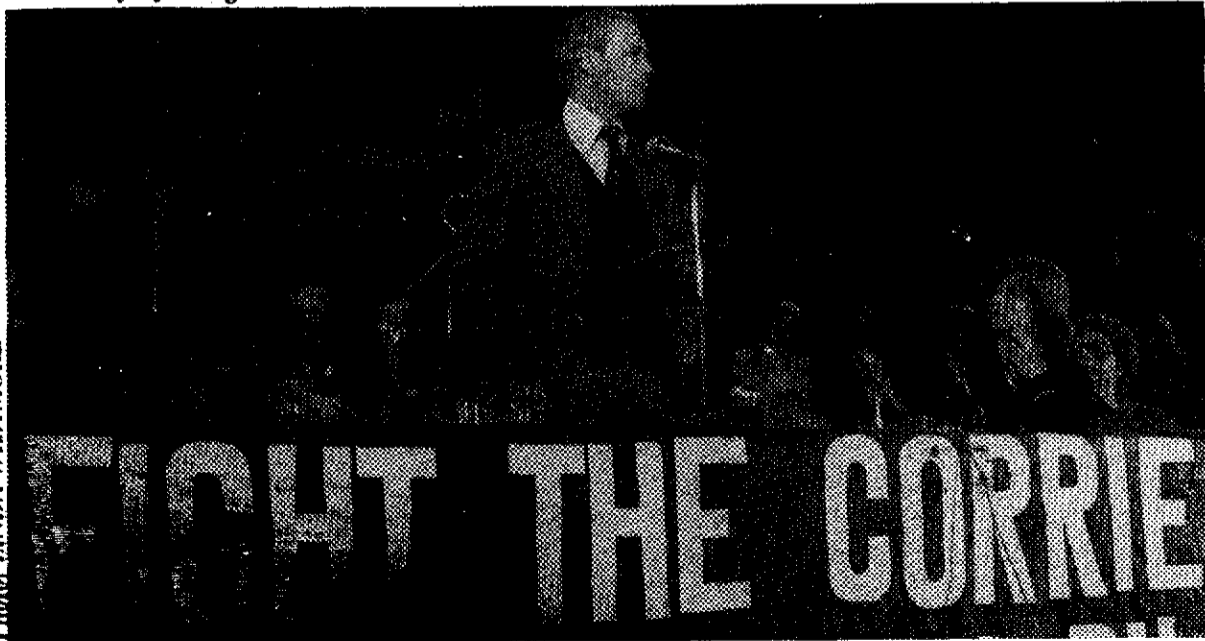


Photo: LINDA WESTMORE

...and linked them to the attacks on the working class as a whole. But even Tony Benn didn't promise any particular action... He pointed to the other attacks on women's position in society...

...and linked them to the attacks on the working class as a whole. But even Tony Benn didn't promise any particular action... He pointed to the other attacks on women's position in society...

A BAD WEEK BUT A GREAT

JOHN CORRIE and his anti-abortion Bill have not had a very good week. On Tuesday 5 February about 30,000 students and trade unionists besieged the Parliamentary lobbies to protest against his Bill. On Friday the debate in the House of Commons if anything strengthened the hands of the pro-choice MPs and virtually sealed the fate of the Bill.

If it doesn't come to a vote this Friday, 15 February, it is unlikely to ever become law. On the same day several thousand women gathered in Central Hall, Westminster to show their anger at what certain male MPs were planning to do about women's rights. Some of them besieged the House of Commons when they heard that women who

A PARLIAMENTARY debate is a spectacle quite unlike anything else. It's hard to believe that this collection of grotesques and fools (particularly on the Tory benches) can take themselves seriously, let alone expect us to respect their words.

Last Friday the whole thing would have been funny if the subject under discussion had not been abortion, with the threat that Corrie's anti-abortion Bill might become law.

The debate on Corrie's Bill began with the presentation to the House of a 200,000 signature petition against the Bill. Oonagh MacDonald carried it in, escorted by two men in black breeches and stockings striking just the right note of antiquated ceremony.

This gothic note was continued throughout the morning's proceedings, especially whenever Bernard Braine got up to speak — which he did with amazing regularity. Braine favour of the Corrie Bill (Corrie himself got up to make only one fairly irrelevant contribution all morning).

Bernard Braine is the caricature of the bigoted Tory—he even looks like something out of Dickens—and he held forth at length on questions of morality and murder. 'It's the pregnant woman who wants an abortion or the innocent child,' he said. Or, more revealingly: 'Medical opinion that approved of the '67 Act was of the lowest ethical and moral standards. I want to take a higher view.'

Green form

Braine claimed that the '67 Act was continuously broken to allow abortion on demand, and held up a green form which, he claimed, authorised an abortion on the signature of only one doctor with the reason given as 'unwanted pregnancy'. 'This is disgraceful, illegal and happens every day of the week.' 'A law that is broken every day of the year cannot be a good law', he concluded. One could only agree, but not when he argued that this was a reason for introducing a law that even more women and doctors would feel compelled to break.

The only debate with any intrinsic interest in the whole morning was that on an amendment introduced by Jo Richardson. Her amendment

allowed for one doctor to authorise menstrual extraction up to the sixth week of pregnancy with full immunity—in other words abortion on request for the first six weeks. Her amendment also suggested that as long as there was medical supervision it did not necessarily have to be performed by a doctor.

This amendment raised the wrath of Jill Knight, a formidable and pedantic Tory matron. Her speech explained that doctors cannot determine whether a woman is pregnant or not at six weeks; that menstrual extraction is a very serious, very painful and quite dangerous operation; and that it is particularly painful if performed on a woman who is not in fact pregnant!

She produced no evidence for her assertions, which were rapidly refuted by the large number of members of the medical profession who seem to have made it into the House of Commons.

Morality

Her concluding remarks were that the provision of menstrual extraction in day care centres on the NHS would be a 'gross waste of public money', which brought jeers

from other MPs and from the gallery.

However, on the positive side, the debate on day-raised some of the really central questions about abortion, shifted the discussion away from 'morality'.

Dr Roger Thomas, from Labour benches, talked about the problems with the pill had led thousands of women

Just you wait, Mr... You'll be sorry, bu... late... We won't tolerate... You'll see how stro... Ha ha ha Mr C... Ho ho ho Mr C... Just you wait

give it up over the last year... said that the question of pregnancy was one that we to look at seriously in the future.

Gwyneth Dunwoody pointed out that the real issues that should be addressing 'Why are so few abortions performed on the NHS?' said the amendment designed to force the House



Photo: JUDE WOODWARD (Socialist Challenge)

FRIDAY 2.15pm: A large assembly of women gathered in Central Hall, waiting to hear a report of what happened in Parliament and eager to discuss the next steps for the abortion campaign.

Peggy Seeger, the feminist folk singer, entertained everyone with songs like 'The right to choose' and 'I want to be an engineer'. Pauline Roe from the National Union of Students explained how student women had built the campaign and what the effects of the Bill would be for younger women.

Eileen Fairweather, who would happen if Corrie's more conventional campaign backed up by 'self-help' wait for the Act to be repealed never become law and this... Outside the hall people of stalls with literature of organisations and political tea and coffee while child

FOR CORRIE WEEK FOR US



Photo: LINDA WESTMORE

FRIDAY 3.45pm: Hearing that eight sisters who shouted from the public gallery were still being held in the Houses of Parliament a number of women proposed that the Central Hall meeting should move to outside the Commons. After a confused discussion — when some women seemed to imply that to question the wisdom of such a move was to be anti-feminist — a few hundred women left the Hall.

Most women preferred to stay in Central Hall and attempt to discuss the way forward for the abortion campaign. The meeting was reassured by a solicitor, who had been to see the police at the Commons, who said the women would be released before long.

Outside the Commons it was not long before scuffles broke out. An attempt to storm the building to win the release of the women inside resulted in a few women getting past the security checks on the main door, only to be trapped in an inner lobby.

The police violence rapidly escalated as the women were ejected and others were pushed away from the doors. Tempers rose even higher, and before long a few women were arrested and taken away.

The question whether the move to Parliament was justified has to be asked, especially when its main effect in the end was to disrupt the meeting in Central Hall. Jude Watson of the National Abortion Campaign was halfway through an eloquent speech describing the plans for the campaign when the meeting was disrupted. It was unisisterly to ignore what she was saying — it was a shame her excellent speech did not get a greater response.

Photo: LINDA WESTMORE



FRIDAY 5.15pm: Over 5,000 women assembled at Temple Place on London's Embankment. Waxed rope torches were sold and a jubilant procession moved off down Fleet Street. The defeat of the Corrie Bill is in sight and this was reflected in the uncompromising lyrics of the songs, the laughter, and the confidence of the chanting. 'No ifs, no buts, kick Corrie in the guts' was chanted by one group of women, as well as the more traditional: 'Not the Church, not the state, women must decide their fate'.

One striking feature of the march was the generalised respect for the National Abortion Campaign. In conjunction with other abortion campaign groups under the umbrella of the Campaign Against Corrie, it has organised a campaign that has provoked a mass response. It looks like achieving its ends in stopping Corrie, as well as putting the campaign for positive legislation on a firm footing for the future.

It is a pity that no demonstration has been called for 15 February, but it is quite likely that one will be organised before then. There will certainly be some events on that day. If Corrie is defeated we have to make sure that there is a real victory march through the streets of London! Ring NAC:01-278 0153.

had protested from the Stranger's Gallery were being held 'at the Speaker's pleasure'.

Then on Friday evening over 5,000 women marched by torchlight through central London. They were singing and shouting — a defeat for Corrie in sight — and the words of their songs were not complimentary. Earlier in the week *Panorama* produced a

programme which was subtly anti-abortion and *The Times* produced a leader that was explicitly so. But these had no effect, and by the end of the week even the *Daily Express* was sympathetic to the anti-Corrie lobby.

JUDE WOODWARD spent some time in the House of Commons and went on the demonstration.

consider very early abortion, and that MPs could not have it both ways. They use horror stories to oppose late abortion but the same ones oppose NHS day-care for early abortions as well, she said.

But it was Renee Short and Jo Richardson who really put the boot in. Both denounced male MPs for thinking they knew more about abortion than

contraception. This always strikes me as a particularly male attitude.'

It was also Renee Short who caused the most red faces among the poor, innocent male MPs. Referring to menstrual extraction, she said that it was a very simple operation and one that women may well eventually want the right to do for themselves. 'I don't fancy the idea much myself,' she said, 'But if women want to do this who are we to say no?'

The very idea of explicitly referring to wombs and vaginas, even if they weren't mentioned by name, made quite a number of male MPs look green around the gills. Others obviously thought it was sacrilegious and tried to look as though they hadn't heard.

Jo Richardson was on the right lines when, later on in Central Hall, she seemed to be saying that as long as the Bill didn't get through she didn't think it was at all a bad thing that the subject was getting a full airing. Many MPs, who maybe plump for an anti-abortion position on largely moral grounds, were brought face to face with some of the real issues for the first time.

The most significant aspect of the affair was the extent to which, willy-nilly, abortion is

becoming a party political affair. There were one or two pro-Corrie speakers on the Labour benches, and vice versa, but they were very low key. Pressure on the Labour Party to take a clear position in the next manifesto should establish this once and for all.



JOHN CORRIE: his Bill looks unlikely to make it as law but a deal could still be patched up

The real highspot of the morning's debate was not anything to do with what the MPs had to say. It came when a number of women in the public gallery began to shout out for women's rights, and threatened that women would not obey restrictive laws. A long banner

was unfurled before they were hustled away and held for questioning. Later a number of women stormed Parliament in an attempt to secure their release.

Danger

Although the consensus now seems to be that the Bill will be talked out of time and not make it on to the Statute book, this is no time for the pro-choice movement to sit back.

David Steel opposed the Corrie Bill, but encouraged the government to introduce its own Bill, reducing the time-limit to 24 weeks, in the next session of Parliament. A number of Labour speakers also said they would welcome a reduction in the time limit to 24 weeks. A bill of this kind now becomes a real danger and, with many pro-abortion MPs prepared to accept it, the pro-choice movement will have its work cut out to prevent it.

We have to start defending the 28 week limit right now, and go on the offensive on the question of 'viability'. It is not whether a foetus could survive that should determine this debate, but whether the woman, already engaged in 'surviving' in the real world, can do without abortion rights.

ie, just you wait our tears will come too

Bill we are, you will

women.

Renee Short was particularly harsh against men who kept worrying about the guilt that women felt after abortion. ...the guilt that men always say they suffer. Women take a different view. It is women who become pregnant and who seek relief and who don't feel guilty. They are also accused of not taking enough care with



Photo: JUDE WOODWARD (Socialist Challenge)

ve Rib, talked about what some law. She insisted that activity would have to be for women who could not hopefully Corrie's Bill will not have to be made. red up and down the rows ous abortion campaign Or they queued to buy ed between their feet.

FRIDAY 3pm: At last Jo Richardson arrived from the Houses of Parliament to bring the good news that there had been no vote on the Corrie Bill. She was cautiously optimistic that the Bill would not go through at all.

She pointed out that there was no way that the pro-choice MPs could be accused of filibustering the Bill — they had attempted to discuss the real issues raised in a serious fashion. 'If anyone is to be accused of filibustering it is Bernard Braine', she said. 'He spoke for at least 55 minutes.'

Her speech was greeted with enthusiasm. Whatever may be said about the Labour Party and Parliament, Jo Richardson has to be congratulated for her determined fight against the Corrie Bill. But will she be as determined in the fight to abolish the 'conscience' clause for Labour MPs and to get a clear position on positive legislation in the next Labour manifesto? We certainly hope so.

WHAT SENSE OF IRELAND?

By Marie McAdam

AT FIRST glance 'A Sense of Ireland', the six-week London Festival of the Irish Arts, seems like the Irish bourgeoisie holding up a mirror to their English counterparts — that way at least they can hope for a spark of recognition, if not outright approval.

The stated aim is 'to make an important contribution to improving understanding and relations between the people of these two islands'. Given the reality of those relations — political and economic — today no less than in the past, and the one-sided cultural 'exchange' which imperialism dictates as part of those relations, certain themes might reasonably be expected to form a large part of any effort to redress the balance. In this respect this 'important contribution' has some huge gaps, and those gaps neatly coincide with the still sensitive areas in relations between Ireland and England — and for that matter between the fast developing Irish capitalism and the working class.

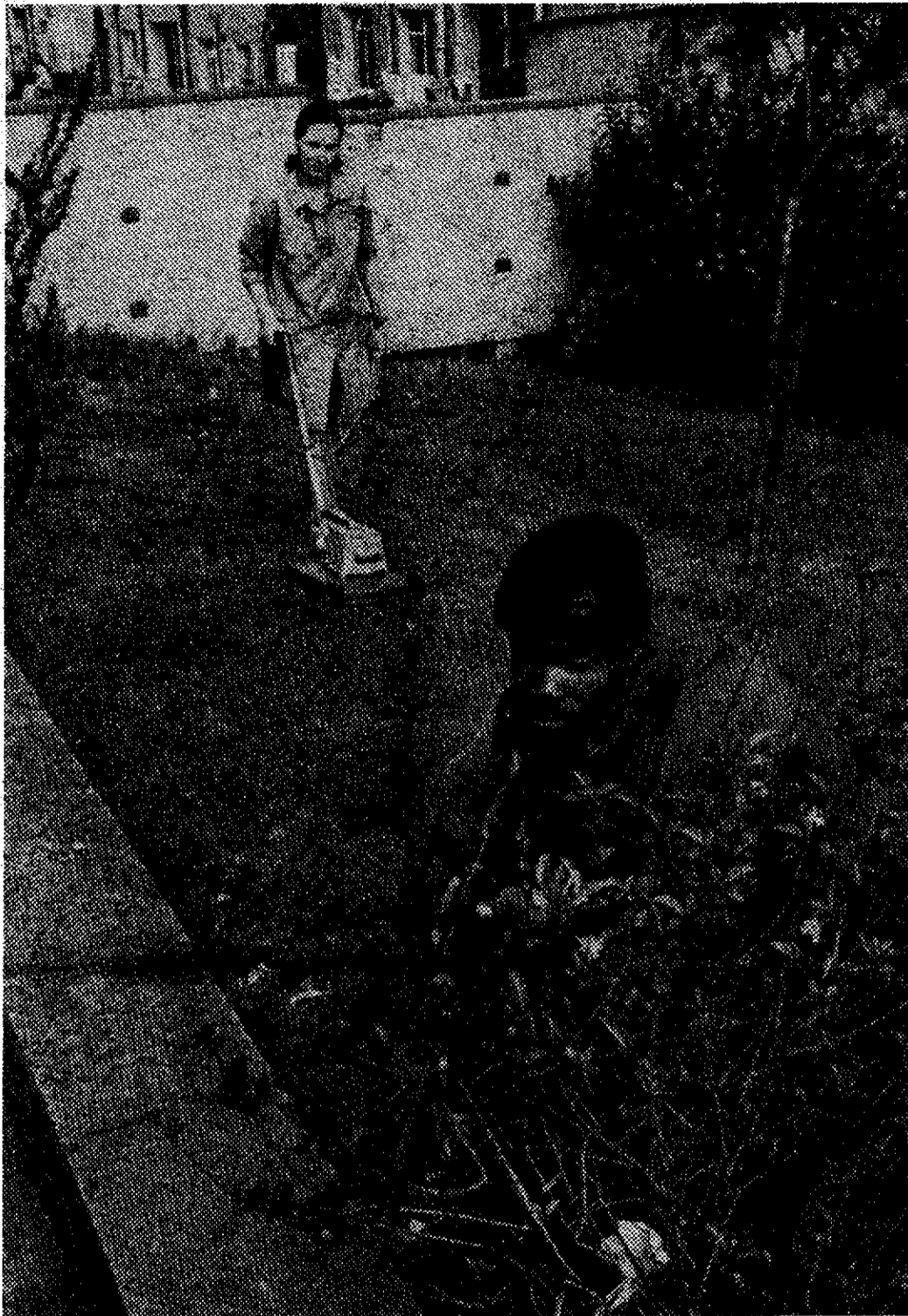
Action Space

When Ireland is mentioned, Britain's presence there is the first thing that comes into most people's minds. Action Space has devoted its whole involvement in the festival to the 'State of Emergency'. The result — a photographic 'examination' of the Falls and Shankill, performances by People of No Property and various Belfast punk bands, an 'art performance' *Echoes of the North*, theatre by the Camouflage Group, video film about Belfast (more new-wave bands), and showings of *The Patriot Game*, *Ireland: Behind the Wire* and *Home Soldier Home*.

In a series of seminars at the ICA we have two on the North — 'Northern Ireland and the Modern British State' and 'Northern Irish Loyalism'. The oppressed minority will nowhere be heard speaking for themselves. On the other hand we have a mirror bureaucrat on 'The Trade Union Movement'. Many of the seminar titles seem to pitch things at a very academic level — 'The Restructuring of the Southern State and Economy' and 'The Social Foundations of Irish Nationalism', for example. In this company, a seminar on 'Women' signals tokenism, especially when the speaker has not been active in the Irish feminist movement.

Larkinism

One of the plays being performed at the ICA will certainly be worth watching. *The Risen People* is about the great lock-out in



Dublin in 1913, when employers — outraged at the use of the 'sympathetic strike' (shades of secondary picketing) — united to smash 'Larkinism'. Workers and their families were helped by food parcels from the British labour movement and the suffragettes were involved in a plan to take Irish children to England to save them from starvation. The lock-out was a fiery baptism for the members of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union, and the bitterness they felt when the English trade union movement refused to support them with strike action is still referred to today.

Only consumers

The Risen People was written by James Plunkett (whose novel *Strumpet City* covers the same period). The production was sponsored by the Workers Union of Ireland (the union founded by James Larkin), a fact not mentioned in the festival brochure.

One of the most surprising omissions in the whole programme is the question of emigration and the part the Irish in Britain have played in both the cultural and economic spheres in both countries. If the organising committee had the Irish community in London in mind at all it was obviously only as consumers.

This fact, together with a general disagreement with the glamorisation of Irish culture without reference to the social and political conditions in Ireland and Britain's role in relation to those conditions, prompted a group of people to organise a 'counter-event'. This will take place in Hammersmith Town Hall on 1 March.

Racist images

Throughout the day there will be exhibitions, music, films, theatre. Speakers will include Irish women talking about their involvement in strike action, a speaker from the Relatives Action Committee, and video interviews with ex-prisoners from Long Kesh. There will be an exhibition of racist images of Irish people and of course traditional music with Christy Moore, Shegwi, and other London bands. This event hopes to fill many of the gaps left by the official festival, especially in relation to Irish people living in England.

The official programme can be had by ringing 01-493 3201, and the venues can be contacted for up to date information on events.

PTA demonstration on 20 February — but you wouldn't know it!

By Mick Archer

ON Wednesday 20 February a most unusual event will take place in London — a demonstration calling for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) organised by the National Union of Students.

Unusual because for the last five years the leadership of the NUS has done all in its power to suppress a genuine debate about Britain's role in Ireland, let alone organise any action in opposition to it.

Many students have consistently argued for a clear anti-imperialist stance by the NUS, for the position of 'Troops out now' and 'Self-determination for the Irish people'. Time after time we were told that we were out of tune with the views of students in the North. Instead the NUS promoted the 'Peace, Jobs and Progress' campaign which emphasised the need for an end to the armed struggle and for social reconstruction, and which ignored the imperialist link and the question of the border.

The decision to organise around

opposition to the PTA in no way resolves this problem. Nevertheless the constant harassment of union officials and the detention of two members of the Northern Ireland delegation on their way to the last NUS conference led to an emergency motion being passed.

Submitted in the main by the North of Ireland colleges and the Socialist Students Alliance, the NUS Executive was forced to support it or risk a breach in its relations with colleges in the North. The motion called for a national demonstration, a picket of the Home Office, and a major campaign organised jointly by the NUS, the Union of Students in Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Region.

No picket

The political problems this presents for the NUS Executive have been made explicit in the last two months. Already they have seriously discussed ignoring the mandate. One of their number argued that a demonstration would do more harm than good.

No speaking tour has been organised, no picket called and no

mention of a major campaign has been made. Even the demonstration has been organised to ensure that non-student involvement is kept to a minimum. The NUS Executive has decided to exclude all but student union banners, and placards are to be in line with NUS policy. The whole tone of the demonstration has been to focus on the harassment of NUS members and staff engaged in 'normal' political activity, and on the 'abuses' of the PTA.

But the NUS Executive has no authority to bureaucratically exclude organisations or alternative political lines from this march. NUS conference laid down no criteria as to who could and could not participate in the demonstration.

Every student activist should build this march, they should build it amongst any and every layer where they can attract support. At the same time it should be clear that within the context of opposition to the PTA every individual and every organisation has the right to raise any position they like. That right will have to be defended on 20 February.

The demonstration will assemble at Paddington College, Paddington Green at 1pm and march to Hyde Park for a rally.



H BLOCK PROTEST FOR BRITAIN

By Ronan Brady

IN 1972 the British (Tory) government conceded that prisoners convicted of political offences in the North of Ireland were political prisoners by granting them 'special category' status. But on 1 March 1976, as part of the (Labour)

government's campaign to present the war in the North of Ireland as a 'war against crime', this status was removed.

But the prisoners are still convicted in a special non-jury court, frequently on the basis of 'confessions' obtained under torture. Now some 400 Republican prisoners in the H Blocks of Long Kesh are refusing to wear prison clothes or do prison work.

Known as the 'blanket men', they are locked up 24 hours a day in filthy conditions, denied physical exercise, fresh air, recreational facilities and association with other prisoners. They are also subjected to humiliating treatment and brutality.

On the fourth anniversary of the removal of political status the Troops Out Movement is holding a series of protests in London and other regional centres.

In London on 27 February there will be a march along Fleet Street for which demonstrators are asked to wear blankets. Letters will be handed in to the editors of major newspapers demanding they 'break the wall of silence on the H Blocks'.

The march starts at 6pm, outside the Law Courts. It will be followed by a rally at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square at 7.30pm. Speakers invited included Pat Arrowsmith, Des Warren, Paul Foot, Tariq Ali, Alan Thorne and speakers from the Relatives Action Committee, Sinn Fein, the Irish Republican Socialist Party and ZANU.



ZAPU leader tells how.. Women have paved their own way

FOR the past 18 years, Jane Ngwenya has been the only woman on the central committee of ZAPU, the wing of the liberation movement in Zimbabwe led by Joshua Nkomo.

Her political involvement began in the 1950s, when she became a member of the African National Congress, which was banned in 1959. She then joined the National Democratic Party, which was banned in 1961, and helped to form ZAPU.

Here JANE NGWENYA describes the problems she has faced as a woman in the struggle for national liberation, and her views on women's liberation.

The colonial phase in southern Africa has done quite a bit of damage to women, just as it has damaged all our people. In the case of my parents, my mother was more affected because if my father went to work in town or on a farm she remained at home.

When the colonialists started destroying their fields and cattle and removing her from one place to another it was my mother who carried all this burden of seeing the destruction of her little bit of property.

There are reactionary facets in our tradition, and this has played quite a part in suppressing us. But since the political struggle in our country, even before the armed struggle, women have started thinking and understanding their rights.

Before that it wasn't easy for a woman to get any education. She and her parents agreed that the boy in the family should be given education and he was treated like a little king. Even if they were very poor, he got his privileges, much more than the girls.

The fact that my father was a teacher played a part in my being sent to school. By then quite a number of parents were really awake; although my mother was one of the very few who could read and write.

Curriculum

Women have paved their own way. I have not seen the men seriously say: 'You join us in the struggle.'

From school I was not very happy when I saw we were learning separately from other children. I was not craving to be in the same school with white children, but I wanted to know if we were having the same type of curriculum. Nobody could give me the answer.



Jane Ngwenya

When I started teaching I happened to be one of those elected on the delegation of the African

Teachers Association, and so I attended a conference.

I had thought that when you grow up to a mature age if things are wrong, you must say something. You must criticise constructively. But I found that the leader of the teachers' association could not accept any criticism. I was expected to speak nice and be English-mannered, by being submissive.

I didn't want to lose my job, so I went softly. I went back to school. I continued to go to church — as a person brought up in a Christian home — I got married in church. But I still was not very happy, because there was never a place for questions.

Arrests

When I attended a political meeting sometime before the formation of the African National Congress, I felt I had found the right thing that I wanted. These others spoke of the same things I had doubted in my mind for a long time.

My husband was not happy at all about my political involvement and this brought serious unhappiness in the family, to such an extent that we separated.

My husband was a supporter of the political movement, but he didn't like my taking a leading part, because

that meant arrests. I was arrested for the first time in 1959 when the African National Congress, which had swept the whole of the Central African Federation, was banned.

At that time, it was a disgrace for a woman to be arrested. Because people couldn't distinguish between political and criminal activity, my husband felt disgraced.

Either I would have had to surrender my own political beliefs completely and be a wife which I think he would have accepted very nicely, or as long as I continued to be arrested and continued to believe in what I was doing, he preferred to be on his own.

When I was arrested in 1959 I stayed only three weeks. It was detention. We were arrested without trial, but because I had a small baby — my little girl was five months old — I was soon released.

In all I've served jail sentences five times, and I was detained with others in Gwanagwazingwe and Wha Wha for nearly ten years. Eight and a half years in one stretch. When I finally got out the last time in 1972, I left Zimbabwe because I needed medical treatment after I was tortured in prison. There were hundreds of women in the prisons.

We don't want to lose our culture. Some parts of our tradition we shall keep, and those reactionary ones of course we will not keep, those which we think are suppressive to the women.

We would like to think it's a natural thing that one must do, get a life partner, look after your own family nicely, bring up these children with love.

But our women became so submissive that they belonged to somebody and they could not do anything, even thinking.

The political struggle has brought a lot of change. In the most recent struggle, the armed struggle, where we have young women and men fighting side by side in actual armed conflict, there is so much change. Men really understand and see the courage of the women.

*This article is taken from an interview with Jane Ngwenya published in Southern Africa magazine. The magazine is available from bookshops and from: Southern Africa Committee, 17 West 17th St, New York, NY 10011, USA. Price \$1.

A death in the afternoon

WHY do hundreds of thousands of black Zimbabweans turn out to cheer the leaders of the national liberation movement which has fought to free their country from the rule of white settlers?

One murder, that of a young woman in the Shamva district in the north of Zimbabwe nearly five years ago, provides a glimpse of that rule. This account of her death was recorded in a report by the Rhodesian Catholic Commission for Justice in Peace.

Helicopter

I am the father of the deceased Erina Muzavazi, female, aged 17 years. I am about 65 years old. Erina left home at about 8am on 20 May 1976 to go and herd cattle to the grazing lands in the foothills of Mount Goora.

At around midday I noticed a lot of army helicopters flying around Mount Goora and I thought there was something the soldiers were looking for. Most tribespeople left the fields around lunch time as they were scared.

At between 2.30 and 3pm my wife said most of the cattle from our protected village had come back from the grazing land and all the people who had herded them were missing.

Loudspeaker

I went to the district assistants' office and reported about my daughter, and they told me to go home and wait as they were going to investigate. The next morning I went to the office to find out if anything had come up, but still there was no news of the missing persons.

At around 3pm the following day I heard the loudspeakers around the protected village calling anybody who had missed a relative to go over to the district assistants' office. I immediately left what I was doing and hurriedly went to the office.

When I got there one soldier asked me to identify my daughter's body. There were six bodies in the jeep, all piled one on top of the other, with their heads to the back of the truck.

My daughter was half naked, except for her pants, and she had a very bad bruise on her left breast which showed she may have been hit by a rifle butt. I later learned she had a bullet hole through her left buttock to the middle of her legs. I could not look much longer as I was already crying.

Burial

After everybody had been to identify the bodies we were told to go home by the soldiers. We all dispersed to our huts. After about an hour the same jeep with the bodies came to my house and I got my daughter's body.

The next morning we took three bodies at a time to the burial ground. Up to now I do not know why these people were killed and we never got any official explanations as to how and why they were shot.

RALLY FOR ZIMBABWE!

Saturday, 23 February

Speakers: Alex Lyon, Labour MP; International Defence and Aid representative; representatives of ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU.

Followed by music by Jabba (black South African jazz band) and Immigrant. Bar and food available. From 6.45pm to 12.30am, at the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1.

Tickets — 50p for rally, £2 for dance, £2.25 for both — from ZEEC, 89 Charlotte St, London W1. Tel 01-580 5311.

HUGO BLANCO TO BE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

Peruvian left unites for elections

By Jean-Pierre Beauvais

ON 18 JANUARY, as night was falling, an enthusiastic crowd of several thousand people from the factories, the university, and the 'pueblos jóvenes', the immense belt of impoverished shanty-towns surrounding the Peruvian capital, gathered in front of the National Election Court in downtown Lima. They had come to show their support for a new electoral bloc, made up of nearly all of Peru's revolutionary and class-struggle forces, that was registering for the coming national elections in May.

With chants of 'a government without generals or bosses', the crowd greeted the representatives of virtually the entire Peruvian left who had come to file the papers to register the ARI (Revolutionary Left Alliance) only moments before the legal deadline.

'Yes'

ARI, which means 'yes' in the Quechua Indian language of Peru's highlands, is running Hugo Blanco for president. Blanco is a leader of the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party), the Peruvian section of the Fourth International, and is the best-known and most respected figure on the Peruvian left.

Blanco's candidacy has the support of the forces in the workers movement and in the peasant organizations that have carried out the mass struggles of recent years that forced the military rulers to begin to prepare for their return to their barracks. He is the candidate of those who are actively fighting for the political and organizational independence of the workers movement.

The fact that Blanco's campaign has received nearly unanimous support from the left and from much of the organized labour movement is of tremendous significance for all the workers and exploited of Peru. It is also a major breakthrough for the Peruvian left, which has been characterised by a long tradition of being extremely divided — even atomized — and sectarian.

Jeopardy

Just a few short weeks ago, when all the workers organisations were still debating what tactic to adopt for the 18 May elections, even the most determined supporters of broad unity behind Blanco's candidacy would not have dared predict this degree of success. It even seemed, in fact, that the gains that had already been made



A small part of the crowd that came to hear Hugo Blanco (centre) during the campaign in southern Peru

in the elections for the Constituent Assembly in 1978, with the establishment of FOCEP and the UDP — two left fronts — might be in jeopardy.

Despite the undemocratic character of those elections, the FOCEP (headed by Blanco) won nearly 12 per cent of the vote. It would undoubtedly have done even better if illiterates and Indians who spoke no Spanish had been allowed to vote, if the left had had equal coverage in the mass media, and if leading leftist candidates had not been deported prior to the election.

The UDP received a little over 4 per cent of the vote, while the

Communist Party received nearly 6 per cent. The three working class slates, therefore, received 22 per cent of the total vote.

FOCEP made a deep impression on the most advanced sectors of the workers movement and the organised peasant movement, which continued to support it and identify with it after the elections. But the preparations for the presidential election led to a de facto split. One of the FOCEP's best known figures, Genaro Ledesma, together with a small group of supporters, broke with FOCEP's line of working class independence from bourgeois political forces to consummate an electoral alliance

with the CP, the bourgeois-nationalist PSR, and several smaller groups that have no real political weight.

Ledesma's splitting operation could have had very serious consequences. Already several Maoist groups, both outside and inside the UDP, had come out in favour of a 'Marxist-Leninist' candidate who would narrowly represent their current alone.

Faced with this situation, the PRT and Hugo Blanco came out for setting up the broadest possible electoral front, within which each organisation would have the right to present all its positions. But this front

would have to be explicitly, and in practice, a vehicle for expressing the need for political independence of the working class. And it would have to be an instrument that would make it possible to move towards concrete realisation of that objective in the present period.

Such an electoral front, the PRT felt, should not try to use muddled compromises to resolve the deep programmatic differences that separate the various Maoist, Trotskyist, and centrist organisations and currents making up the front. Instead, they argued, the front should recognise that these differences exist and should allow each of the organisations in the bloc to put forward its whole range of positions.

The front itself, however, would be based on an action programme that responds to the immediate needs of the masses and to their desire for united struggle.

Being the electoral expression of the independent class mobilisation of the masses, the front would have to exclude any bourgeois organisations from participating in it, no matter how small they might be. And it would have to reject any accord with bourgeois sectors or forces, however marginal they might be.

Chants

The PRT's proposal was, in fact, a response to concrete demands by the masses for unity. These demands have been expressed with growing force in recent months. In late November and December a successful speaking tour through southern Peru was organised by the PRT and several groups in the UDP. At each stop along the tour the crowds broke into chants in favour of 'left unity for a workers government, without generals or bosses', and for Hugo Blanco to be the presidential candidate.

Because the proposal of the PRT was rooted in the present reality of the class struggle, it made rapid headway. Very soon there was an initial discussion between the PRT and the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), to lay the basis for a draft platform for an electoral alliance. This was then followed by discussions with all the component groups in the UDP, again at the PRT's initiative.

In the meantime a national general assembly of the UDP was held. At that meeting there was a last-ditch attempt to block unity. But the acclamation with which the assembly greeted Hugo Blanco, who was literally carried around the hall on the shoulders of the crowd when he arrived to bring greetings from the PRT and express his party's position on the elections, showed how isolated these sectarian tendencies were. The rank-and-file UDP delegates had dramatically expressed the desire of all the Peruvian masses for unity.

Finally, on 17 January, the day before the final deadline for legally registering slates for the election, an agreement was concluded between the PRT and all the components of the UDP, establishing the ARI.

Support

In several weeks the election campaign will start in earnest. It will be waged in a context where the crisis of the present dictatorship is forcing the military officers to relinquish their hold on the government at a time when the bourgeois alternatives are weak and divided.

The People's Revolutionary American Alliance (APRA), the main bourgeois party, which has historically had a big following among sections of the masses, has gone through severe internal conflicts since the death of its historic leader Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre last August.

This is the context in which the ARI and Hugo Blanco will put forward the alternative of the working and exploited masses of Peru.

Latin American revolutionaries and internationalists throughout the world should support this campaign and give it the active solidarity that will enable it to develop to the broadest extent possible.

WHAT'S LEFT

ENTRIES are 5p a word; semi-display £2 a column inch. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication. All payments in advance.

OLDHAM Campaign Against Racist Laws. Public mtg: 'Smash immigration controls — support the Bradford/London march'. Speakers from: Bradford AYO and the IWA(GB). Sun 17 Feb, 2pm, Greenhill Centre, Waterloo St, Gladwick, Oldham.

SOCIALIST STUDENTS ALLIANCE NATIONAL CONFERENCE: 12 March, Sat 10-5pm Manchester University Students Union, Oxford Rd, MCR 15. Evening Disco. Sunday — UMIST Students Union 11-5pm for publicity and further info tel: 061-273 5947.

FUNDS urgently needed for the campaign to stop the closure of the Henderson psychiatric unit which offers a life-line to young people who cannot cope. To: Henderson Hospital, Sutton, Surrey. 01-661 1611/2.

CONGRATULATIONS to Sue Aspinall and Mike Murphy on the birth of their daughter Jessica.

NEW issue of **REVOLUTION** — the best youth paper on the left — out now! Copies from Red, Jude or Mick on 01-359 8371.

RATES and cuts: a new pamphlet from Islington Socialist Challenge Group examines the problems faced by local councils and puts forwards an alternative to 'socialism on the rates'. Available from: Islington Socialist Challenge Group, c/o PO Box 50, London N1, price 25p inc p&p.

Abortion: Our struggle for control

LOOK WHO'S CHOOSING FOR US!



New pamphlet from the National Abortion Campaign, 25p not including postage, from NAC, 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1.

Bookmarx Club

WINTER QUARTER 1980

The Bookmarx Club is now an established method for socialists to get the best of new socialist books at a big discount—and delivered to your door. **HOW IT WORKS.** You send us £4.50 for which you will receive the books on List A below plus those on one other list of your choice. Extra lists can be obtained for £2.50 each. Don't delay, send in the form now with your subscription, you will save pounds on the retail value of the books (shown in brackets on the list).

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First published in 1974, a classic account. A great deal of new material is included in this reprint.
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Now in paperback, this is a highly readable account of the four day insurrection in 1831 at Merthyr Tydfil which proved decisive in the formation of the Welsh working class.

LIST C
DEATH ON THE JOB: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STRUGGLES IN THE UNITED STATES by Daniel M Berman (£3.25)
The fight against employer resistance and against official union lethargy. An indictment of the system that commits violence against the spirits and bodies of workers.

LIST D
THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST by Ursula Le Guin (75p)
Imperialism with strong Vietnam overtones is the theme of this story of the devastation of a planet by invaders.
THE WEALTHY by CIS (85p)
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A youth comes to manhood in Trinidad during World War Two.
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A socialist tramp tells his story.

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WE WILL SMASH THIS PRISON! INDIAN WOMEN IN STRUGGLE by Gail Omvedt (£2.95)
The struggle is described largely in the words and songs of the women themselves.

Special offers to members
NORTHERN IRELAND: THE ORANGE STATE by Michael Farrell
A reprint of the best book on the subject and perfect background reading to War in an Irish Town (normally £5.95) £4.50 to Club members.
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A well-researched, if unoriginal, biography of the famous woman Bolshevik (normally £4.95) £4.25 to Club members.

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SOCIALIST Challenge has received a big boost during the steel strike. Sales throughout the country are increasing, as the figures in the graph show.

South Wales *Socialist Challenge* sellers report record results. On the day of the Welsh general strike on 28 January they sold 300 papers in Cardiff alone!

This has spurred supporters into increasing their regular sales on the streets, in pubs and particularly selling on local steelworkers' demonstrations in Newport and Port Talbot.

Steelworkers in South Wales showed a lively interest in socialist politics when twenty of them turned up to a strike support meeting organised by *Socialist Challenge* supporters on 30 January.

Speakers included Ray Davies (Llanwern steelworker), Don Hayward (South Wales NUM), and Raghil Ahsan (Rover shop steward). All the speakers agreed that the struggle to save jobs in Wales was crucial. A general strike was needed to get rid of this government, Ray Davies told the meeting.

Rab Bird

In Middlesbrough, Rab Bird, a shop steward from Hadfields, spoke to steel strikers on 5 February at a meeting organised by Teesside *Socialist Challenge* supporters.

STRIKE SALES BOOST

Relaying the lessons of the militant Sheffield strikers, Rab told the steelworkers on Teesside how to get the control of the strike out of the hands of the full-time officials and into the hands of the rank and file.

First

The meeting agreed that a strike bulletin would be a good first step to building a strike committee in Teesside that could keep the strike solid and counter the propaganda of the popular press. The graph shows that *Socialist Challenge* supporters here have doubled their sales target.

Socialist Challenge has kept up with the latest developments in the steel strike. It has argued for the full 20 per cent with no strings, pointed out that jobs are crucial, explained the importance of strike committees and strike bulletins to ensure maximum involvement in the strike.

We've argued that this fight is with a Tory government that will only be moved by the most massive solidarity action, including general strike action.

In this issue we show the importance of involving every single steelworker in the strike by interviewing women steelworkers

who point out the specific problems they face in such a male dominated union.

Socialist Challenge has also stuck its neck out by arguing the case for international unity in the steel strike. Jakob Moneta, former editor of the steelworkers union paper in West Germany, and a member of the Fourth International there, found a willing audience for his ideas as he toured the country.

He stressed the importance of steelworkers and others throughout Europe uniting together to counter unemployment levels totalling 17 million people in so-called 'advanced' Europe.

Bennites

Socialist Challenge does not confine itself to covering trade union struggles, however. The world crisis — Iran, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe — has also been a central feature of our newspaper. Next week we will be explaining in detail why *Socialist Challenge* has come out against the call for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Socialist Challenge's decision to make the campaign against John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill a number

one priority has already been vindicated. The mass opposition from women, spearheading a campaign throughout the labour movement, makes it increasingly likely that Corrie will meet with defeat.

The Tories, with their vicious attacks on working people, are giving *Socialist Challenge* plenty of opportunities to win new readers. Make sure your branch is taking advantage of them.

	TARGET	No. 133		
Aberdeen	75	75	Hemel	50
Basingstoke	35	15	Huddersfield	65
Bath	40	30	Hull	140
Bedford	50	30	Leamington	25
Birmingham	300	325	Leeds	100
Bolsover	30	15	Leicester	70
Bradford	50	15	Liverpool	100
Brighton	90	70	Manchester/Bolton	340
Bristol	65	85	Middlesbrough	40
Canterbury	25	40	Newcastle	100
Cardiff	140	185	Norwich	25
Crawley	30	15	Nottingham	120
Colchester	50	50	Oxford	220
Coventry	75	95	Portsmouth	35
Dundee	35	40	Preston	60
Edinburgh	150	110	Reading	40
Exeter	10		St. Albans	15
Glasgow	140	80	Sheffield	65
			Southampton	60
			Shrub Hill	10
			Swansea	60
			Swindon	65
			Wakefield	10
			Brent	75
			Camden	150
			Hackney	250
			Hammersmith	35
			Haringey	120
			Islington	180
			Lambeth	200
			Newham	50
			Notting Hill	60
			Outer West	200
			S. East	100
			Tower Hamlets	140
			Wandsworth	120
			UCL	20
			Totals	5000
				4557

Labour right wing ponders centre party

By David Wax

WHILE the Tory press has been devoting an enormous amount of space to witch-hunting the *Militant* grouping, right-wing plans to launch a new party are proceeding apace. Ever since Roy Jenkins delivered his Dimpleby Lecture last November, the Labour right has been very busy.

Bill Rodgers, one-time organiser for the late Hugh Gaitskell, has been sounding out over two dozen MPs as to what could be done if the next Labour Party conference takes the party further to the left.

What has upset the right the most has been the vexed question of inner-party democracy. Every attempt to make Labour MPs accountable to their party organisation has led to increased anger on the Right.

Neville Sandelson MP (Hayes and Harlington) declares that his loyalty is to his electors rather than to the Labour Party. It is a theme dear to the hearts of Tory leader writers. The last MP to utilise arguments of this sort was the notorious Reg Prentice, who now sits on the Tory front bench!

If the Bennites manage to do a deal with the trade unions and win on the question of electing the party leader, there could well be a break-away from the Parliamentary Labour Party. But it will remain ineffective unless the electoral system is changed to proportional representation. The Tories are, at the moment, strongly opposed to PR (and for roughly the same reasons as Labour) and it would need a total victory for Bennism in the LP and the unions to make them change their minds.

Meanwhile the Tory onslaught against the working class and its organisations has resulted in a sudden increase of the Labour Party membership. And despite the attempt to present this as a victory for Ralph Steadman's skills as a cartoonist what it reflects is a desire to fight back against the Tories.

The Labour Party claims that it has an individual membership total of 284,000. Even though this is a more realistic estimate than the usual figures of 600,000 and more it is still an

undoubted exaggeration. If one were to count the number of activists in the Labour Party on the basis of those who attend an average of one party meeting a week, the figure would be nearer 50,000. In any event the membership figures are pathetic when compared to the Tory Party, not to mention Swedish or German social-democracy. The offensive against the left is becoming more and more co-ordinated. William Rees-Mogg of *The*



Times, Peter Jenkins of *The Guardian* and Mike Molloy of the *Daily Mirror* are all united in a vigorous campaign of opposition to Benn's proposals for the Labour Party. The British labour movement needs socialist politics more than ever before. A socialist vision is almost absent today. If it is not recreated in this period the price paid will be a heavy one.

Torture teaches

I HAVE just read in the Guardian (23 January) how the British Ministry of 'Defence' trains its fighter bomber crews and SAS personnel. Apparently as part of their training our brave lads undergo 'inhuman and degrading' treatment — as first practised in the north of Ireland — at the hands of their military superiors.

Of course, it's strictly voluntary, but it gives an indication of the qualifications needed to gain promotion in Her Majesty's Forces.

Traditionally the army has demanded that recruits should be stupid, gutless, and without character; that they should suspend disbelief, accept brainwashing and humiliation without flinching; run like a dog behind their master, and if necessary kill without thought or feeling.

Now there is a new twist. To qualify in the SAS (shoot first, ask questions later) you are now expected to shed every last trace of human dignity, and voluntarily submit your mind and body to inhuman and degrading torture.

As the 'Great' in Britain increasingly appears small and mediocre, and stirring watchwords like 'national interest' lose their flavour, the enemy within appears a greater threat to capitalism than the enemy without — hence the emphasis on counter-insurgency techniques.

The military experts reason this way: if soldiers are treated like animals they will behave like animals, obeying the most brutal commands without question. This is the kind of specimen that is 'keeping the peace' in the North of Ireland.

Human values and rational thought are enemies of the professional war machine. The latest evidence confirms the complete moral bankruptcy of the British state and the ruling class which it defends.

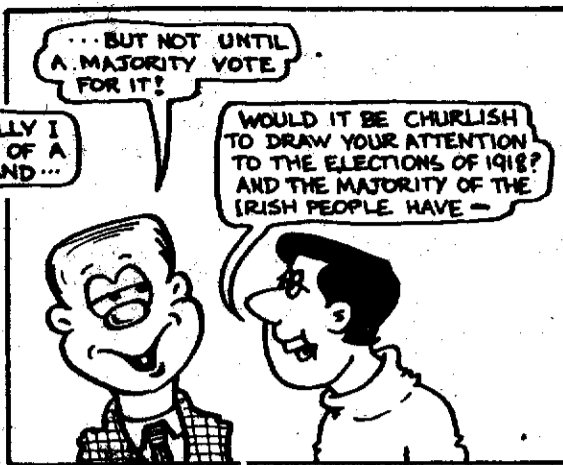
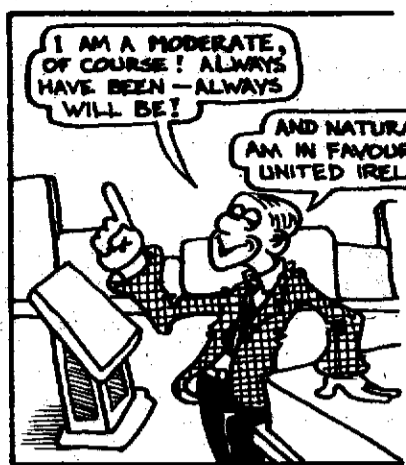
DAVY SHILLINGLAW, Aberdeen

Are we too pro-Soviet?

DO YOU or do you not support the exile of Andrej Sakharov? Your extremely 'balanced' report a few weeks ago (31 January) gives no hint. We learn that Sakharov has been 'removed from the limelight', that 'he will suffer little material hardship', that 'he has not been expelled from the Academy of Sciences', and that this treatment is 'extraordinarily mild'. The nearest thing to a criticism is the comment that this is 'illegal'.

Despite an excellent accompanying article on the round-up of oppositionists (not 'dissidents', whoever wrote the headline — you're even beginning to sound like the KGB), you carefully refrain from any editorial position on this 'extraordinarily mild' deprivation of an individual's democratic rights.

Are Sakharov's politics not to your taste? Until recently Socialist Challenge, alone of the British far left, recognised that socialist



democracy (like national self-determination) applies irrespective of political views. Evidently you now find it prudent to retreat on both these issues.

I am taking out a subscription to Soviet Weekly — a cheaper way of reading the same views more honestly expressed.

RICHARD CARVER, London SW2

Getting industrial jobs

I SEE the IMG wants to get its members into industry (24 January). In my naivety I might be tempted to call this opportunist, if it wasn't for the fact that there are 1.5m people unemployed and hundreds more being made redundant every day.

I'm sure there must be plenty of people among these who are also eager to get into industry, or do the IMG cadres all have special skills greatly in demand by the bosses?

GUSTAV LINDSTROM, Wallsend

Marx Library appeal

THE MARX Memorial Library was founded 46 years ago as a reply to the burning of Marxist and progressive books by the Nazis. Nationally-known figures from all sections of the working-class movement were among its founders.

Our aims now, as in 1933, are: '...the advancement of education, learning and knowledge by the provision and maintenance of a library of books relating to all aspects of the science of Marxism and the history of socialism and the working-class movement.'

We now have a splendid opportunity to extend our work. We have taken over a wing of our building not occupied by us previously. Our decision to expand into the whole of our historic building which housed the Twentieth Century Press, Britain's first socialist press in 1893, is a momentous one.

Recently, we have had a number of important book bequests, including an invaluable section from the vast library of James Klugmann. Our lending section will be increased to about 30,000 volumes. Our research section, which at present houses about 30,000 pamphlets, rare archive material and periodicals, will be enhanced considerably by our new and rare

acquisitions.

With confidence, we appeal to you to help us to raise £50,000, the minimum required to do the work effectively. We are a registered charity, and rely entirely on voluntary support. We have given valuable service to the labour movement during the past 46 years. To ensure that our work continues and expands, our Appeal must succeed. Please contribute a generous donation.

MARX MEMORIAL LIBRARY EXPANSION APPEAL 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1.

Hello, insurrection...

SOMEONE, somewhere seems likely to be listening-in to our phone calls, to judge by the technical capacity for surveillance made possible by computers which can reportedly identify key words and print out relevant conversations.

It would be most unfortunate if these processes were to be disrupted in any way.

For example, if mundane conversations were to begin with a mention of the words 'insurrection', 'bomb', or 'Soviet intelligence', MI5 would presumably be presented with a heap of interesting transcripts.

And if frequent phone words such as 'hullo', 'lunch', 'bad line', and 'goodbye' were substituted for the kind of things that the police are interested in — strikes, demonstrations, meetings, and the like — they would have an enormous printrout if they programme these 'key' words into the computer.

I SPY, London N1

Trotsky only aids confusion

THE PRESENT dispute about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan clearly reveals the inadequacies of the traditional Trotskyist position on such questions. Tariq Ali's demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops is entirely consistent with a Marxist position, and abuse of that does not change it.

All those who have defended the Soviet invasion have demonstrated the confusion engendered by their position. This was most clearly revealed by Charlie Van Gelderen's letter. To quote at length from Trotsky only reveals the source of the confusion and does not clarify the problem.

The whole thrust of what is quoted from Trotsky shows that he ascribed no revolutionary role to the Soviet bureaucracy but on the contrary emphatically attributed a counter-revolutionary role to it. Yet, once this counter-revolutionary formation acts and invades another territory we are apparently to accept its actions at its own face value.

Charlie tells us that we can condemn the policies that led up to the invasion, but says we must not join in the 'chorus of imperialist jackals' by calling for their withdrawal. In the next breath he says the Afghan people can call for such a withdrawal. So it would seem to be an accident of geography or nationality whether one is an 'imperialist jackal' or not.

Apart from the logical inconsistency of such a stand there is the matter of the ability to voice such a demand. We still have the

opportunity to exercise some democratic rights and can demand the withdrawal of the Soviet Army and the British Army from Northern Ireland. The Afghan people will not have the right to do either while under the heel of an occupying army, other than by force of arms.

Did the fact that the capitalist states demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968 stop socialists also saying the same thing? Obviously not, since we cannot let our views be determined in such a manner. The fact that Carter has seized upon the Afghan issue to bolster his flagging electoral fortunes should not deter socialists from taking a firm stand.

The nub of the dilemma resides in the continuation of the view that there is something residually 'socialist' in the Soviet Union, a view that is becoming less and less tenable. It is high time that some socialists stopped using their sentimental attachment to October 1917 as a prism through which to view the present day world.

The Soviet bureaucracy is just as big a block to socialism as is imperialism, and to condemn the actions of one does not automatically align one with the other.

The issues should be relatively simple, do or do not socialists stand for the democratic right of self-determination of all people? The fact that in some cases this will result in a regime not to our liking should not be a reason to 'weasel' out of this simple proposition.

KEN TARBUCK, Hove

'Troops out' not the slogan

I AGREE with the main arguments of Charlie Van Gelderen and Tony Vanzler (31 January) on Afghanistan.

We condemn the 'invasion' by the USSR because it enables obstacles to be placed in the way of the Afghan masses embracing socialism. But we also see that the chief feature of the new political situation, provoked by the blundering of the Soviet bureaucracy, is the war threat of imperialism. Our number one responsibility is to defend the Soviet Union.

Secondly while we continue to uphold the right of the Afghans to self-determination this is not presently expressed by the slogan 'Troops out now'. Those who would fill the power gap are no respectors of any democratic rights.

The only criticism I would make of their positions is that neither raises the key demand to advance the rights of the Afghan people — the immediate convening of a constituent assembly.

Richard Carver's letter in the same issue attempts to raise 'self determination' above the worldwide class struggle.

Lenin was clear on the subject: 'In contrast to the petit-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded all democratic demands without exception, not as an absolute, but as a historic expression of the struggle of the masses of the people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism.'

There is not a single democratic demand which could not serve and

has not served under certain conditions as an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers.

'To single out one of the demands for political democracy, namely the self-determination of nations and to oppose it to all the rest is fundamentally wrong in theory.'

'In practice the proletariat will be able to retain its independence only if it subordinates its struggle for democratic demands, not excluding the demand for a republic, to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.'

Socialist Revolution and the Rights of Nations to Self Determination.

If Socialist Challenge does hold the positions attributed to it by Richard then it has learned, while he has not, the lessons of all historical and recent experience. Among these it is interesting to note that the 11th World Congress of the Fourth International did not demand the immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea as did the USec resolution of one year ago.

Socialists have never demanded 'out now' of a worker's state engaged against alien class forces.

AILEAN O'CALLAGHAN, London NW10

Iran: real fight is at home

IN HIS article, John Leadbetter (7 February) seems to be saying that since a majority of Iranians (in fact the majority of Persians) supported the Embassy take-over, and since they thought they were engaging in some sort of anti-imperialist struggle, this means that in fact the Embassy siege represents an advance of the class struggle in Iran.

The main point of my contribution was that to judge such a question we must ask ourselves not what the Iranian masses think they are doing, but whether a given mass action does in reality bring the masses closer to socialism and a conscious take-over of political power by the working class and its allies? This question, John Leadbetter finds irrelevant.

Instead he implies that having a critical outlook on what the Persian workers and the urban poor are engaged in at present means 'abstaining from any arena in which the proletariat is struggling'. This is nonsense. The point is not to abstain or to participate. That is rhetoric and demagogy.

The real point of difference lies in what we say and how we participate. John Leadbetter thinks we should have participated in the anti-American demonstrations cheering along the 'anti-imperialist' masses, and encouraging them to do more of the same.

My point was that our message should have been that the real fight is at home, against the excrescences that imperialism has thrown up in Iran; against national oppression; against any infringements on democratic rights; against oppression of women; and for pulling the country out of its economic and cultural backwardness.

If we want to say these things, we will have to face up to and prepare the working class to fight the Imam and Islam head-on, because they are exactly what is suppressing this real struggle today in Iran.

AZAR TABARI, London

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

CARDIFF: SC sales Newport Town Centre outside Woolworths 11-12.30; Cardiff British Home Stores 11-12.30. Also available from 108 Books, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.
ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As — for more info ring phone Colin, 574068.
BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.
BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.
BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat 10-4. For more info phone 643 9209.
BRIGHTON: For more info phone Nick, 605052.
Bristol: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fallmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Montpellier, Bristol 6.
COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.
DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.
Huddersfield: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peacocks works.
LAMBETH: SC now available at kiosk Brixton tube, Oval tube, Herne Hill British Rail and Tetric Books Clapham.
SWINDON: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Barnet Centre).
Teeside: SC sales at Newsfairs shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linsthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and at

Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Market, Stockton High Street.
TOWER HAMLETS: SC supporters sell papers every Friday 5-6pm Watney Mkt, Sat 11-12.30pm Whitechapel tube, Sunday 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.
OLDHAM: SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities. Tel. 061-682 5151.
OLDHAM: SC Public Meeting. 'The Socialist Alternative to the Tories'. Speakers include rep from IMG CC. Thurs 21 Feb, 7.30pm at Grange Arts Centre (Room A2), Rochdale Rd.
HUDDESFIELD: SC Public Meeting 'Kick Out the Tories'. Thurs 14 Feb 8pm. Speakers include Jim Ferris (President, Huddersfield NUT), Ron Thompson (AUEW Shop Steward James Neill, Sheffield). Both in personal capacity.
STOCKPORT: SC sold every Saturday 1pm Mersey Square. Tel. 061-236 4905 for more information.
PUBLIC MEETING: 'Fight the Tories', social with live Irish and folk music, Fri 22 Feb, 8pm at the Gardens Arms, Middleton Road.
OXFORD: SC supporters sell every Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.
HARINGEY: SC Public Meeting: 'Afghanistan and South Asia in Turmoil', speaker Tariq Ali, 7.30pm Thurs 21 Feb, Highgate Wood Lower School (corner of Park Rd and Wilsley Rd N8).
Brent: SC supporters sell every Sat Morning at the Brent Collective Bookstall in the Trades Hall, Willesden High Rd NW10.

James T Farrell: The last of America's major left writers

ROBERT HOUSTON, author of the recently published novel *Bisbee 17*, writes on the death of a neglected American novelist.

LAST August, James T Farrell, the last of America's major writers on the left, died in New York at 75. He died in some financial ease at last, pleased in the knowledge that his work was being 'rediscovered'. In the last year of his life he saw a new novel published, saw his most famous work, *Studs Lonigan*, produced on American television, saw an important book of criticism on his radical socialist years appear, and received the prestigious Emerson-Thoreau Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. America was noticing him again, dusting his books off and disinterring his name from the indexes of literary anthologies.

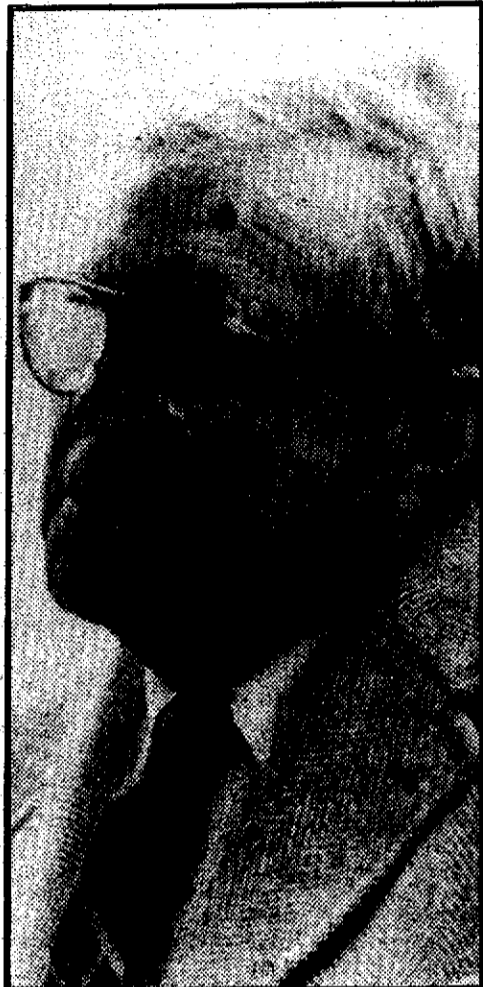
A few years back it had managed to furnish him an annual income of just over two thousand dollars. Many who noted his death would have been surprised ten years ago to find he was alive. For a great period in the '50s and '60s, he practically gave much of his work (his novel output alone was 52 books) to small presses just to see it in print.

Most American writers are liberals. Most younger ones nowadays come out of the quasi-radical tradition of the '60s. But few show active involvement in traditional leftist (ie. Marxist working people's) movements. Causes and 'community action' involve them instead.

Spiritual poverty

Not so with Farrell. Although he insisted his work dealt with 'spiritual poverty' before material, he was one of the major intellects on the left during the '30s and '40s, and would perhaps have continued his leading involvement had not the left itself, hounded and fragmented, abandoned the field to the Stalinists after World War Two.

Yet never did he give himself to the excesses of the narrow partisanship that has so fragmented and immobilised the American left throughout its history. He never claimed to be any sort of 'ite', though his sympathies lay most clearly with Trotsky. In the '30s, when John Dewey led a commission to Mexico to 'try' Trotsky on Stalin's charges, the young Farrell was with him — and voted with the others to acquit. But when he spotted cant, falseness, or excessive authoritarianism in any



James Farrell: When he died at 75 America was just beginning to notice him again.

of his political allies, he never failed to attack it. He was his own man, in politics as in literature.

It was that intransigence that accounted for his eclipse in the '50s and '60s. He wrote what he felt he had to, regardless of fashion. His style remained 'cinder block', as one critic called it. And he continued his role as maverick in an age of literary 'experimentalism'; although he acknowledged his place in the realistic/naturalistic tradition,

he bristled at any attempt to label him. ('Some of my characters are Irish, yes. But some are Jews and Poles and Italians. So how am I an "ethnic" writer?') He remained true to the notion that content in fiction was primary, anathema in a period when word-game writers were ascendent.

There was, I believe, some satisfaction to him in his later years in seeing the incipient return to meaning and story in American fiction. Things mattered to him; the writer's profession for him was the highest calling he could have accepted. He could not betray it by engaging in mere artistic or intellectual frivolity. In the Trollopian volume of his work, he never failed to be the artist, the humanist, the understander.

Baseball and politics

As a man, he was tough as his native Chicago — with a great streak of tenderness — and as American as any writer the century has produced. His passions were baseball and politics. Engage him in conversation and he was as likely to tell you all about what a fine surgeon his son was as to talk about his books. Yet he could never resist the opportunity for a political barb. ('Lillian Hellman? What she's really best known for is defending more Stalinist crimes than any writer in America.') Withal, he was eminently human and accessible — wry, sincere, a faithful friend and a sharp enemy.

A short while before his death, knowing he had had a heart attack last winter, and that he had thrown himself into revising his mammoth 'universal novel', I begged him to slow down. In his last letter to me, within two weeks of his death, he wrote: 'Don't worry about my death. The worst that can happen is that I will die. That's happened to many people. It doesn't interest me.' The ultimate writer, the ultimate intellectual — he rejected death on the most damning grounds he could imagine it was a cliché.

Read him now after his death as before. Even when his work is weakest, it matters. As James T Farrell did.

*The only readily available work by James T Farrell is *Studs Lonigan* (Panther, £1.95). This was also scheduled for screening in ITV's 'Best Sellers' series until the technicians' strike intervened; ITV now say that it hasn't been decided when or whether it will still be shown.

THE OTHER BOOKSHOP
CAPITAL AND LABOUR
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 Fontana, £2.95

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 by Margaret Atwood
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ROLL ON FOUR O'CLOCK

By Tariq Ali



THE Forum Theatre is part of a community centre in Wythenshawe, a working class suburb in Manchester. It was here that Colin Welland decided to stage 'Roll On Four O'Clock', a play written and directed by him and based on his teaching experience in secondary modern schools.

The audience consisted essentially of those who inhabit Wythenshawe's council estates, a sharp contrast with the trendy glitter of London's West End. And they loved the play. They laughed, joined in the school assembly, sang hymns and applauded the fifteen school students from the local school who stole the show.

Welland's play highlighted the iniquities of the pre-comprehensive English school system — a system which divided children up at eleven years old between those who were classified as 'successes' and those who were classified as 'failures'.

He provides us with an anatomy of a secondary modern school: its crude indoctrination, its staffroom conflict, its blatant class bias and its paternalism is savagely mocked.

At the same time Welland does not restrict himself to stating the obvious. He broaches taboo subjects such as incest. One of the central conflicts in the play is about homosexuality.

A young schoolboy, Latimer (superbly played by Nick Campbell), is tormented by his fellow-students for not being 'a man'. The dispute polarises the staff-room where one of the teachers (himself a gay) attacks the bullying and confronts the two teachers who encourage the persecution of Latimer.

Such events of course occur in many comprehensive schools today, but many parents would not normally lend a particularly sympathetic ear to Latimer. Welland however managed to get this particular audience wholeheartedly on his side against his tormentors.

The unguessed silences at key moments testified to this. There were no embarrassed smiggers or awkward nudges.

Large numbers of school teachers, school students and parents in the Manchester area have seen the play. It's a play that would delight audiences in many other areas.

Socialist Challenge

The whites will stop at nothing to get rid of Mugabe

WHAT DO you do if you represent an imperial power trying to prevent a country with an overwhelmingly black population electing a government which could put an end to all the profits you've extracted?

Lord Soames, the British governor of Zimbabwe, has found the answer, employing mercenaries to help the mercenary party ZANU (PF), the political party whose guerrilla army has mounted the fiercest resistance to white colonial rule in Zimbabwe, looks set to win the largest number of votes in the election to be held on 27-29 February.

For the white settlers and the Western powers who have thrived off the subjugation of the Zimbabwe masses that election result could be disastrous.

Their response has been in the shape of terror and threats to ban ZANU (PF). On Sunday, Robert Mugabe, leader of ZANU (PF), narrowly escaped death when 90 lb. of TNT blew up under a convoy of vehicles in which he was travelling.

Grenade

Four days earlier a grenade was thrown at his house in Salisbury.

One official of ZANU (PF), Sango Tafirenyika, and his wife were killed on Saturday when four grenades were thrown into their home. Other senior officials of ZANU (PF) have been seriously injured in rocket and bomb attacks over the past fortnight.

Nine of the 12 attacks on prominent political figures in recent weeks have been against Mugabe and his officials.



LORD SOAMES: supervising murders

Overseeing the election campaign is Lord Soames, the British governor, who has said he is 'shocked and horrified' at these attacks.

Yet Soames and the British and Commonwealth troops he commands have given free reign to the terrorist army established by Ian Smith, and to the mercenaries who make up the 'official' auxiliary force of Bishop Muzorewa, the puppet politician installed as prime minister by the white settler regime.

The TV Eye programme shown here last week revealed the style of the

election campaign being mounted by Muzorewa's forces. The white mercenary commander of one of his units openly boasted that he could guarantee the vote for Muzorewa in three areas under his control.

'They know that if they don't vote for him they'll be babies down the well,' the mercenary added, leaving viewers in little doubt who would put them there.

When these Soames-endorsed thugs approached a village, the black population fled. This was in contrast to a village which supports ZANU (PF), where everyone joined in political songs.

In case bombs and terror are not enough to stop an election victory for ZANU (PF), the British government has banned it in districts of his choosing. He has already banned the party treasurer, Enols Nkala, from all further participation in the election campaign — for making 'inflammatory' statements.

Murder

On Sunday, Mugabe warned the British governor that any ban on his party would be tantamount to a resumption of the war.

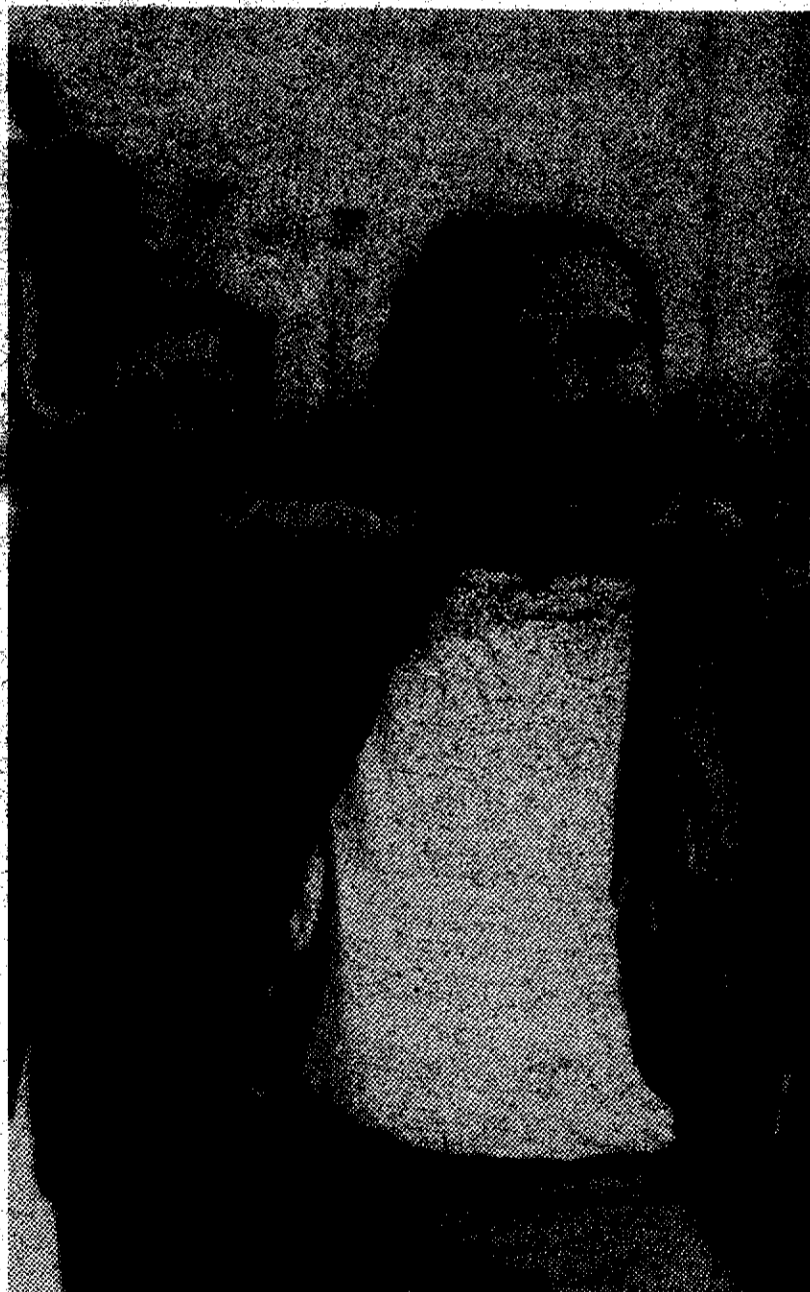
Mugabe said that Britain, South Africa, and the white Rhodesian establishment had worked out a strategy to disable his party in the elections.

That strategy, he added, embraced the murder of the party leadership, the arrest and harassment of candidates, and general obstruction of the party's campaign.

The reign of terror unleashed under Soames' supervision makes civil war a possibility even before the election takes place.

Every obstacle in the way of the Zimbabwean people determining their own future has to be removed now, and the first of these is Lord Soames and his retinue of British and Commonwealth troops.

*Women in the Zimbabwe liberation struggle, page 11.



ROBERT MUGABE: narrowly escaped death during election campaign

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Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Our Fund Drive

NINE more comrades sent us a fiver to fight the Tories. That makes 164 so far. We're almost halfway through our fund drive appeal for this quarter and going strong with almost £1500 in already.

But we need more. If we are to help build the national meeting of steel strike committees that means sending organisers and reporters

round the country to drum up support. It means selling more copies of the paper to steelworkers at our strikers' reduced rate of 5p.

Sales have shot up in the last few weeks — see elsewhere in the paper this week. Let's boost the fund appeal too — organise socials and collections for the anti-Tory fighting fund!

Our thanks this week to:

Brent IMG	£10
Wolverhampton IMG	£5
J Flintoft	£80
Newcastle IMG	£29.30
Oxford IMG	£21
Camden IMG	£10
Plymouth supporters	£10
Total	£165.30
Cumulative Total	£1473.30
Quitted in error last week:	
Camden IMG	£55
Tower Hamlets IMG	£50

ZIMBABWE PICKET

End British collusion!

Saturday, 23 February
Foreign Office, Downing Street
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Called by
Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign
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