

Socialist Challenge

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Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)



Photomontage: PETER KENNARD

YOUR PAPER DOES IT AGAIN



Last week Socialist Challenge published exclusive revelations about Willesden Magistrate Dorothy Oakley. We accused Oakley of bias against Grunwick pickets.

Within 24 hours of publication, Oakley was hearing no more Grunwick cases.

see page 9

Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

You can help the Firefighters by

*Building meetings of shop stewards from every workplace, through trades councils and stewards' committees, to plan local action.

*Building for local solidarity strike action to attend demonstrations with all other workers in support of the firefighters.

*Winning your workplace to 'adopting' a local firestation, to make sure that the firefighters strike remains solid and merry over Xmas.

*Sending resolutions to your union executive and the TUC demanding massive financial donations to aid the strike, and a campaign in their support.

*Lobby the TUC General Council on 21 December to demand they support the strikers and campaign against the 10 per cent limit. Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council Fireman's Support Committee have already called for a lobby — see your union branch or stewards committee do too.

Len Murray:

CALLAGHAN'S GREEN GODDESS

Editorial

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Workers versus the state

SOLDIER X: I don't think we should be doing the firemen's job. My dad said that during the 1926 strike they hated scabs as much as the bosses. Anyway, it's not our business.

SOLDIER Y: 'We've got to do it because we obey orders. If they ordered us tomorrow to flatten the House of Commons we would have to do it. But I ask myself where we soldiers should draw the line. We should try to call a meeting to discuss this strike...'

This conversation did not take place in Aldershot barracks. But if it had, then (a) we could have been prosecuted for publishing it, and (b) the soldiers, if identified, could have faced a court martial. These are not unimportant considerations when considering how to organise a fightback against the growing state interventions to defeat strikes. It is indicative of the present political situation that neither the Labour Party left nor the Communist Party's industrial arm has done anything on this question — in contrast to the Twenties, as we explain elsewhere in this paper.

In 1977 alone, the Labour Government has authorised the use of police, the Royal Air Force, and the Army in an attempt to defeat a number of strikes. Strike breaking on such a scale by the State has not been seen since the Second World War. The response to the use of the repressive apparatus cannot be limited to mere denunciations.

What is needed is a campaign to demand democratic rights for soldiers. For no-one has given them the opportunity to discuss whether or not they should scab, or whether the firefighters should receive a decent wage. In fact many soldiers, after the experiences of recent weeks, will probably appreciate why the firefighters need better wages.

NEW MODEL ARMY

The structures of the British Army are a far cry from the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell. They are totally bureaucratic and authoritarian. The soldiers are zombies, well-equipped and programmed robots. They are not allowed to form a union or join a political party. If caught having political discussions they face instant dismissal and prosecution. What goes on in the officers' mess is, of course, not considered politics. The fact that 99 per cent of the officer caste in this old, imperialist army are true blue Tories is probably an accident of birth.

The soldiers are cut off from political activity. They are bombarded by anti-union, anti-Irish, anti-Third World and anti-socialist propaganda by their officers in the barracks. It would be revealing to study the briefing soldiers were given before last weekend's Bermudan expedition. The concern of both Tory and Labour leaders for the troops does not extend to campaigning for their democratic rights. In fact, their concern over the conclusions the soldiers have reached to put up with their present scabbing role is simply a prelude to increasing their wages beyond the pay norms.

The right to strike and the right to form unions must be extended to soldiers as well as police officers. True, they might strike on occasion for reactionary aims. In that case we would oppose their strike action (as we opposed the dockers who marched for Powell in 1968, or the Ulster Loyalist strike). But we should understand that the involvement of soldiers and police in the unions would allow discussions to take place and would open them up to at least listen to the view of the labour movement. The National Association for Freedom, the Tory and Liberal parties and the Labour leaders will not campaign for the extension of democratic rights. It will be the left which will have to take up the campaign inside the labour movement. Fred Mulley, the Defence Minister, recently stated that he had no objection to the idea on principle. The unions should put him to the test.

Our New Look

READERS will note that the paper has changed a little in size. We would like to assure you that this shrinkage is not a result of Dobson or Oakley's curse; merely that we have been obliged to change printers. We trust our readers will quickly adapt to the new change.



Lessons of 1971 Remember the Postal Workers' strike

The firefighters' strike is not the first occasion when a government has taken on public sector workers in order to enforce its general economic policy. Nor is it the first time that this group of public sector workers has been very badly paid, and received massive public sympathy for their strike. One such case was the 44-day postal workers' strike of 1971. The similarities between the two struggles are in many ways striking, as RICH PALSER reports.

In October of 1970 the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) submitted a pay claim for £3 or 15 per cent — whichever was the greater for each grade — and for an end to the pay for age increments. This was not at all a huge increase — a postal worker would take home, for a 43 hour week, less than £16. A young woman telephonist, because of the age increments, would take home just under £8 a week. Many of the UPW rank and file saw a figure of a £5 a week rise more in line with their needs.

Tom Jackson and the executive of the UPW had no desire to lead their members into a strike to win the claim. Jackson's strategy for increasing wages was summed up in a letter he wrote to the *Times* newspaper in January 1971.

FACE A CHANGE

He said: 'We are one of the rare examples of a union which is prepared to face a change.... It is the policy of our union as far as posts are concerned to seek a gradual reduction in the number of staff employed on the basis that those left in the service will be better paid as a result.'

In return for chopping jobs and increasing workloads, Jackson wanted increased wages from the post office. Thus a claim for £3 rather than

£5, as this was more in line with what he expected Lord Hall, post office boss at the time, to concede. But this was not to be.

£350 A WEEK

Lord Hall was ousted by the Tory government, and Ryland took over on a salary of £350 a week. After an initial offer of 7 per cent, Ryland offered a further 1 per cent and said if the union was worried about the increments system, it could allocate the bulk of the 8 per cent to the lower paid.

On 19 January 1971, the UPW executive was forced to call a strike. It was 98 per cent solid. The massive public sympathy for the 230,000 UPW members prevented the press carrying out a hysterical campaign against them, as they had against the power workers just before that. Instead they concentrated on reporting the scabbing of groups of telephonists — very badly paid young women who were intimidated by the post office to returning to work.

Playing down the effectiveness of the strike and playing up its weaknesses was the way in which the press attempted to demoralise the strikers.

That some telephonists were continuing to work was hardly surprising. The union had never really taken up its members' interests, and they

were consequently poorly organised. On top of that, strikers were receiving no strike pay: the union strike fund had not been built up; it stood at a mere £330,000 on 16 January — 3 days before the strike.

Most important of all, no steps were taken by the union leadership to turn the massive sympathy for the strike into active support. On the 21st day of the strike the UPW strike bulletin said: 'It would be very easy for you to get into the frame of mind that nothing is happening, because on the surface nothing seems to be happening. And that's just it — nothing seems to be happening, but it is. Under the surface this strike is biting, and it's biting deep.' Taxes were not being collected, dividends were not being paid. All we need do is keep the strike solid, was the executive's advice.

LEFT TO IT

Meanwhile the other union leaders were leaving the UPW members to it. No boycott of the railways or on road haulage was instituted. The massive 140,000 strong demonstration against the Industrial Relations Act which took place during the strike was used to collect some money but not to call for solidarity industrial action. Even financial help was limited, with Jack Jones and the T&GWU offering a mere £7,500 (enough to give 1 per cent of the strikers £3.50 a week for 2 weeks) on day 21 of the strike. Meanwhile the UPW failed to fight for active support. As one London UPW executive member put it at the beginning of the strike, they did not want financial help on

'principle' since: 'We are going to fight this strike on our own two feet to show that the postal workers can do it; if we win, it will be our victory — if we lose, it will be our own look out'. Even the regular marches of the postal workers were not used to bring other trade unionists on the streets in their support, let alone any call for solidarity strikes. The executive further added to the demoralisation of the strike by lowering the sights to a 13 per cent rather than 15 per cent increase as the strike wore on.

'PEACE PLAN'

The outcome of this strategy for the strike was a heroic 44-day strike by poorly paid UPW members, with no strike pay, and a gradual demoralisation within the strike. As a result of this, a deal to sell-out the strike was finally forced on the membership. On 3 March the UPW presented a 'peace plan' to the post office, including a committee of inquiry with an 'impartial' chairperson. A better offer would come out of this in return for further job loss and rationalisation. Meanwhile the strike was to be called off.

This deal was rapidly pushed through the branches, without adequate discussion and with many members either not knowing what was happening, or too demoralised to care. The postal workers suffered a defeat from which they have not yet recovered, and Jackson was able to get back to 'business as usual'.

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trades 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 the 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 candidates 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 'Euro-communist' 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.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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:

I am interested in more information about activities in my area.
I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.
(Delete if not applicable)

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/329 Upper Street, London N1.

'Rees protects property not lives' Liverpool firefighters hit back

Liverpool firefighters launched the fight for their claim long before national strike action was called. As far back as June, FBU members at 26 fire stations began a work-to-rule against the pay policy union leaders were attempting to put forward. When the local council sacked firefighters over this action, the city's fire services closed down in a solid show of support.

MICK McMANUS and BOB ROXBURGH at the Bootle fire station on Strand Road told Socialist Challenge what they think is at stake and what they know they are up against from last summer's experience.



MICK McMANUS

Mick McManus, FBU branch chairperson at Strand Road, is particularly concerned with how union leaders handled the June work-to-rule. 'When we first began our action, regional officials advised us to go back to normal working. "Go under the flag of the union", "solidarity with the union", they told us. But we rejected that.

'At branch meetings, the unofficial committee advised us to go back to work. We finally decided to return to normal work. But the week before we were scheduled to return, senior fire officers on every station were posted with sack notices.

'Each individual was taken up to the office and delivered an ultimatum — if there wasn't an immediate return to work, everyone would be sacked. We refused, and they sacked us. By the end of the day 14 stations were out in support thanks to flying pickets which put the case in each station. By the next day, 26 stations joined the strike. The same day the chief officer and local council agreed to all our conditions.'

Liverpool firefighters gained a great deal of experience from their work to rule. That's why they utterly reject the arguments put forward by Mervyn Rees. McManus explains that behind Rees' concern for life lies a deep-rooted attachment to property.

'The papers say Rees' big concern is lives. I say it is property. I'll give you an instance. There are two large risk areas in our area — Walton Hospital and the dock estates. The total complement of men turning out to the hospital on four machines is five men. The total being sent to the dock estate can range from between 24 men on five machines to 28 men on seven machines.

'Now you tell me how come there is one incident where there's an awful loss of life involved and only 15 men going to it yet where there is property the numbers are doubled.

Our Troops are today putting out fires in Britain, Ireland and Bermuda! Tomorrow The World!



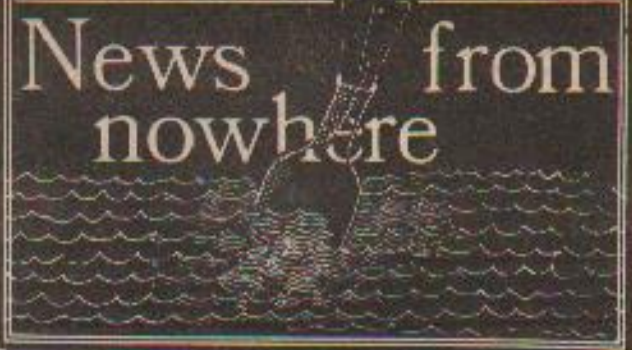
Emperor James Callaghossa I



BOB ROXBURGH: 'Party has no option but to follow our line'

Bob Roxburgh, Strand Road branch secretary of the FBU, shows how the support from dock workers is going to make Rees' job of protecting property at the expense of lives just that much more difficult. 'At the Canada docks', he explained, 'the lads have agreed to handle no cargo that is dangerous and may need the fire brigade in — especially chemicals and anything that might spill. They also won't clear out any cargo from ships that have caught fire which they normally do.'

The determination shown by Liverpool firefighters and by the rest of the labour movement, including their wives — who have so far organised both a successful meeting and demonstration in solidarity — can only give the ring of truth to Mick McManus words: 'It is the 32,000 full-time firemen that make up our union. We are solidly behind the strike and Terry Parry has no option but to follow the line we have given him. We have rejected his 10 per cent claim at Eastbourne. And we stand by that.'



Martial thoughts

LADYBIRD produces a number of books on scientific and technical subjects for 9-15 year olds. The publishing company was therefore somewhat surprised when some weeks ago it received an important order from the Ministry of Defence for a particular children's book. The Ministry had discovered that technological developments had left not a few officers and other soldiers well behind. In order to remedy this deficiency, a requisition was put through for 'Learn About Computers'.

The book is written for nine year olds. There was only one specification: the books should be supplied in plain brown covers as the 'chaps' might be a bit embarrassed otherwise. But Ladybird refused: 'We are proud of our own covers, they replied. 'We reckon our book on computers is the best possible book to introduce children to the subject... Our experts keep everything straightforward.' The Ministry capitulated and the order went through.

Our military correspondent writes: My information suggests that even the Ladybird version proved a little advanced and special tutors had to be brought in to explain some elementary concepts. An explanation is therefore needed as to why a Ministry of Defence circular to universities and schools offering lectures states: 'There is among Army Officers a wealth of knowledge and experience on a variety of topics...' Section B of this circular is related to 'Technical Subjects' and No. 13 on the list of lectures is 'Use of Computers in Defence'.

However, aware of its deficiencies, the lecture is declared to be suitable only for sixth (General) Somewhat presumptuous, one would have thought. Other free lectures offered are the routine ones on 'Counter Insurgency', 'Urban Guerrilla Warfare', etc. But do remember to give at least four week's notice so that the robot coming to give the lecture can be properly trained.

Whites only

ACROW ENGINEERS Ltd. employs a number of Asians among its accountancy staff. They are underpaid, but given the colour of their skin — which makes employment difficult, particularly in these times — they accept the fact as inevitable. Acrow makes large profits. It also has a South African subsidiary. Perhaps the latter fact is now dominating the firm's racist social policies.

For the second year running, the firm's annual booze-up at the Kensington Hilton will be attended only by persons of Northern European extraction. The only exception is a Welsh born Chinese.

This apartheid development follows large-scale redundancies in the accounts office. The Acrow boss, William Alpine de Vigier (described in the Daily Express as a 'magnanimous employer'), was trying to avoid making any redundancy payments at all, but under pressure he agreed to pay the State determined minimum rates. As most of the staff concerned are Indian, Greek, and Armenian, the mood within Acrow's shabby offices is one of despair. Trade unionism, naturally, is not encouraged.

Slipman's historic compromise



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report) AT THE NATIONAL Union of Students conference last week a

combination of Tories and the Broad Left (an alliance of Communists and social democrats) defeated the far left on the question of denying a platform to fascists. See Slipman's politics were given an airing in the Jewish Chronicle before the conference.

According to reporter David Nathan, the Communist Party's assistant leader: 'talks kindly about some of the more liberal Tories, reserving her real contempt for the Socialist Workers, International Marxist, and sundry assorted Trots on the far left.'

What Slipman should explain is how it is that the 'ultraleft' is getting as many or more votes than the Communist Party in local and national elections.

What the doctor ordered

THE NATIONAL press often embarks on a campaign against militant students in polytechnics. It almost never follows the movements or actions of the Directors of these establishments. The Director of Middlesex Poly is Dr Ray Rickett. At a recent bar confrontation our learned doctor tried to prevent an acquaintance from listening to the views of a senior NALGO officer, John Findley. Rickett screamed: 'Don't listen to him. He's nothing but a lazy son of a bitch. He does no work.'

Findley denied this, whereupon the director doctor told him to 'Shut up and push off'. An over-tired and emotional Rickett was pacified by his family and taken to bed. The poly students' paper is conducting a vigorous campaign against Rickett's attitudes in the name of what a correspondent describes as 'an affront to the values of rational discourse'.

Hypocrisy Inc.

SEEMS JOHN JUNOR, editor of the Sunday Express, must have read our scathing remarks about the Daily Mirror journalists. Junor wrote last weekend: 'I rejoice that the Daily Mirror is once again on sale and that its splendid journalists fresh from their demand for an extra £5,854 a year across the board, will again be urging firemen and miners to put the country first and settle for 10 per cent. Nothing like sincerity is there, for selling newspapers.'

Nice of young John to echo our thoughts, which of course apply across the board to Fleet Street's reporters, columnists, and editors. Well, almost. The National Union of Journalists' chapel at The Guardian, notorious for its supine attitude to management, has just surpassed even its own outstanding record of non-militancy.

The Guardian scribes have voted to accept a miserable £4 increase, after a debate in which certain members of the chapel put up the following devastating argument: 'Since we now take part in forming policy for the leader articles, and these have called for the pay norms to be observed, it would be quite hypocritical of us to do otherwise.'

Meanwhile, over at the increasingly frenzied Daily Mail, journalists stopped production last Thursday when management suggested they should not only accept 10 per cent but also return to a five instead of four-day week. It's a great pity that the justified militancy now evident on the Street of Shame is in no way reflected in the copy these journalists turn out, and that they show no sign whatever of actively supporting their vastly lower paid colleagues in Darlington who have now been on strike for over five months for a closed shop.

The case of the Republican Tree

A LOYALIST councillor in Larne, Co. Antrim, has refused to plant a tree in the town. His reason is that the tree was to be planted next to one planted by a former member of the reformist Social Democratic and Labour Party, who has recently joined the new Irish Independence Party. Explaining his action the Loyalist, Tom Robinson said the member of the IP was trying to 'sur up sectarian hatred'. Furthermore, it is understood that the leaves of the proposed tree were green. Claret's a Republican plot!

The Labour Lefts Fine words and sympathy not enough

Left-wing members of the Parliamentary Labour Party succeeded in forcing a vote in Parliament on whether soldiers should have the right to refuse to scab on strikes.

Unfortunately this did not happen last week as a response to the role the troops are playing in the firemen's strike. It occurred in the early 1920s during the life of the first Labour Government — a government even more dependent on Liberal support than Callaghan.

That opposition to the use of troops in a strike situation is worth recalling. If nothing else, it provides a suitable contrast with the antics of left Labourites today.

Take, for a start *Labour Weekly*, which is meant to be the voice of the Labour Party run by that 'oh so left' national executive. But on the firefighters' strike *Labour Weekly* is the voice of sweet reason itself. It has warned that neither the Labour

Government or the FBU can afford prolonged 'bitter dispute' and suggests that a cut in the working week along with a commitment to increase wages in the future 'might be enough to get both sides back around the negotiating table'.

A similar tune is whistled by *Tribune*. The issue dated 2 December has a front page article by Audrey Wise MP, headlined 'The Labour movement must make the fireman a very special case'. Ms. Wise is concerned about the consequences of the strike.

'The very attempt to hold wages down in this rude and crude way, without reference to the merits of the cases, brings about a wage pressure which will inevitably burst the dam and probably bring down



Two eighteen year old soldiers at London's largest recent fire — at ropemakers in Barmobsey.

PHOTO: MARTIN SLAVIN

the Government at the same time'.

Ms. Wise is not protesting about the wage cutting policies as such, but only that they are cut in a 'rude and crude' way. She argues that the firemen are a 'very special case', and that 'this does not mean that the firemen are a suitable case for other sections of the trade union movement to regard as a battering ram for their own struggles'.

This is rather typical of the

down the country.

The best way that organised solidarity will materialise is through workers everywhere regarding the firefighters' strike not as a 'special case' but as a test case against the 10 per cent norm. Even the leadership of the FBU asked the TUC to turn their fight into a general fight against the 10 per cent.

That the TUC told the FBU to take a running jump surprised nobody, but what of the 'lefts' in the TUC?

Alan Fisher, of the National Union of Public Employees, whose members are asking for a £50 minimum wage, involving increases well over the 10 per cent was absent from last week's 'inner cabinet'. NUPE have given £10,000 towards the FBU strike, which is a fine gesture, but in reality smacks more of conscience money than anything else. As far as action in support of the FBU goes, Fisher waits for the outcome of the FBU strike before pursuing his own union's claim.

Striking alongside the firefighters is far from his thoughts. As to others, yesterday's left Jack Jones says he is 'sympathetic' to the firefighters, but recommends a cut in the working week as the best way of settling the strike. Ken Gill, Communist Party and TUC general council members, does nothing to organise solidarity action, despite fine words.

Such attitudes provide a further contrast to the 1920s. Then, the organised left in the trade unions — the National Minority Movement — pledged itself in March 1926 to: 'Urge each trades council to constitute itself a Council of Action by mobilising all the forces of the working class movement in its locality... by holding continuous mass demonstrations in support of the sections attacked... by using every means to bring all workers, men and women, organised and unorganised in the struggle.'

Such were the policies fought for when wages were being cut in the 1920s. They are the type that are needed today to avoid a third successive year of wage cuts. But equally, what is needed is a left leadership pledged to fight for such policies.

WOMEN are sitting the first round of examinations currently being conducted by the New York fire department in its recruitment drive.

Over 27,000 men are being joined by 363 women in tests which include a three hour civil service written exam, a mile-long walk and run — including scaling walls and walking along ledges, and running up and down stairs with a 120lb dummy.

Firefighters receive a wage of £9,000 a year, in New York, and the current examinations are the first to be held for seven years. Women have been excluded from the city's fire service in the past.



Soldiers take ten hours to put out a fire at a rag warehouse in East London.

EXETER Trades Council is to take action against a local electrical shop which has refused to serve firefighters and other workers in dispute.

The shop, Kirk Radio of Sidwell Street, Exeter, placed a notice in the window at the beginning of the recent power workers' dispute stating that 'strikers and go-slowers' would no longer served. The owner of the shop, Neville Kirk, is applying this to the FBU strikers.

Exeter Trades Council has called for a boycott of Kirk Radios. Action against supplies to the shop is also being considered.

political kindergarten which Tribunes enjoy playing around in so much. From a purely practical point of view it is obvious that the firefighters need the organised assistance of trade union militants up and

A special case?

DO YOU see the firefighters as a special case? This is what Ronnie Robertson, vice-chairman of the Strathclyde Brigade Committee, told *Socialist Challenge*:

'Personally, I would not argue that we are a special case. We have the same things in common with other working people in this country: our living standards are being reduced by successive governments' incomes policies and wage restraints. The only difference between

us and other groups of workers at the moment is that we are prepared to fight.'

Bill Craig, Scottish Regional Chairperson of the FBU put it this way:

'The nurses are as necessary to the firemen as we are to them. That's why after we win we'll be supporting the rest of the public sector in their fight for a living wage. Not one worker will get as much as one penny over the 10 per cent if the firemen are defeated.'

Civil Servants

A massive mood of discontent

by SUE LANDAU

Delegates to the recent Rules Revision Conference of the Civil and Public Servants Association in Southport had the right idea about how to smash the 10 per cent pay policy. They marched to the local fire station to present the firefighters with the £1,020 collected at the conference, and stayed to mount a mass picket at the station to show their support for the firefighters' strike.

The march was organised by members of the Broad Left in the CPSA, who held a meeting the night before with Terry Fields, Liverpool Regional Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union.

Now the civil servants themselves are in dispute over low pay, and last week was a 'Week of Action' for CPSA

members throughout the country. They were protesting at the Government's refusal to restore the Pay Research Unit, a unit which calculates rises for civil servants on the basis of comparisons with similar workers in other industries. The Government claims that restoring it would breach their pay code.

In Manchester a meeting of 400 civil servants voted overwhelmingly in favour of a claim for a £25 a week increase, with further increases linked to a monthly cost of living index worked out by trade unions.

Socialist Challenge supporter Viv Lacey, branch chairperson, called for a campaign to set up such an index in the CPSA, a policy adopted at the CPSA conference.

In Glasgow, 500 members of the DHSS branch voted to ask their executive to proceed with a full claim of £25 if the week's negotiations did not result in restoration of the Pay Research Unit.

In West Scotland there were

guerrilla strikes during the week of action, and in Glasgow, two of the largest Social Security offices were on strike for three days.

In London, CPSA members struck on Wednesday and rallied in Westminster Central Hall to hear speakers from their executive and from the firemen's union. A fringe meeting organised by the Broad Left and *Redder Tape* held that evening attracted 800 civil servants.

The action was extremely successful. CPSA militant Stuart McLellan, a *Socialist Challenge* supporter, said: 'There is undoubtedly a massive mood of discontent over pay. In West Scotland we

had 96 per cent of our members out. That's the highest of any previous industrial action.'

In most areas, the action has run completely out of the executive's control. It is being used as a means of demanding a pay rise.

'The union's executive is wasting as much time as possible so they don't have to put in a claim. But more and more members want a claim to be submitted immediately in view of the fact that Pay Research is not being restored in 1978.'

The CPSA's policy, as from last conference, is to demand that the Pay Research Unit be restored in 1978, which would

mean wage increases for civil servants exceeding 10 per cent.

But that same conference also recorded the highest vote against Pay Research after campaigning by the left in the union, with over 70,000 members voting against the scheme. The reason for this is simply that the Pay Research Unit system institutionalises low pay.

The Broad Left in the CPSA is campaigning nationally for the demand of an increase of £25 per week, plus further increases to meet rises in the cost of living and reductions in the social wage. *Socialist Challenge* supporters in the Broad Left agree with and fight for this demand.

For FBU victory 'A solid strike is not enough'

Losses due to fire in 1976 were £231 million. Losses due to fire on Wednesday, 16 November 1977 alone were estimated at £200 million.

Cost of FBU claim per year would be £48 million.

So why doesn't the Labour Government meet the fire-fighters claim in full? After all, insurance companies like General Accident, whose profits for the first nine months of this year soared 89 per cent above last year's profits, will be severely hit by the strike.

Firemen know only too well what their strike means for the wealthy. They constantly risk their lives not just to save other people's lives, but to save property — private property. They know that the scab troops are not trained for this.

There is still a strong sentiment among the fire-fighters that, with a solid strike, Callaghan will back down, despite the scabs.

This sentiment was reflected

in Rank and File Fireman's daily strike news which said, 'If anyone asks what the cost of a fireman is, just tell them "Tilbury".' The fire at Tilbury power station in Essex was the most dramatic indicator of the financial loss caused by the strike.

So why isn't Rees giving in? Because the Labour Government is not just concerned with protecting the profits of the insurance companies. It has the profits of all the capitalist class at heart, and particularly manufacturing industry.

So the incomes policy comes first. If Rees cannot impose the 10 per cent in the public sector, then there will be no chance of imposing further cuts in real wages in the private sector. He

himself said that the dangers resulting from a breach of the 10 per cent norm would be 'far greater for the community (sic) as a whole' than the dangers of the firemen's strike.

A solid strike is essential. It is the necessary starting point. But in itself it is not enough. The question is whether those on strike will now be given a lead that will organise to not just staff the picket line, but lead a campaign to win the active support of other unionists in a campaign of mass action.

Terry Parry, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union says: 'We don't see the FBU as being the spearhead of millions of trades unionists. That is the TUC's job'. Exactly right. But if the TUC fails to give that lead, then the firemen's leadership must be prepared to appeal over the heads of the TUC to the rank and file.

Firstly, that the unions make massive interest free loans and

donations to keep the strike solid over Xmas. Secondly, that the TUC support a mass national demonstration in support of the strike and against the 10 per cent limit. The FBU leadership must go ahead and organise that demonstration. With the present massive support for their strike a demonstration the size of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act demonstration could be built.

ORGANISE

Meanwhile other trade unionists should not wait either for the TUC to cease its treachery or for Parry to stop engaging in endless negotiations when no new offer is being made by the Government, and get on with winning the strike.

We must organise through local support committees, in conjunction with rank and file FBU members, to build the mass action needed.

Government blackmails Swan Hunter workers

OUTRIGHT blackmail. That's the response of the Labour Government to the Swan Hunter workers. 1,700 outfitters have been banning overtime at Swan Hunter shipyards on Tyneside since August. They are fighting for a rise of £7 per week which would give them parity with the boilermakers in the yard.

by GEOFF RYAN

The Swan Hunter workers were promised their rise two years ago and it has been blocked by the Government every since. This time the Government claims it would break the 10 per cent limit. Its response to the overtime ban amounts to outright war against the outfitters.

Swan had been given a contract worth £50 million, to build seven ships for the Polish government. Because of the overtime ban, Swan, which is part of the newly nationalised British Shipbuilders, claimed they could not guarantee to meet the order date.

The Labour Government,

probably in collusion with the Polish government, then told the outfitters to either get back to work or lose the order.

HUMBLED

The Polish government has something of a record where shipyard workers are concerned. It was the shipyard workers of Gdanak and Szczecin who launched the nation-wide strikes against food price rises in 1971. Government bids to repress the strike failed — only the party militias were prepared to fire on their fellow workers.

Eventually the Prime Minister and First Secretary were humbled by being forced to go into the Szczecin yards to discuss the demands with the workers.

It is a humiliation they have not forgotten.

Swan Hunter workers are also fighting back. Not only have they refused to bow down to the Government's blackmail, but the drawing office workers have threatened to seize plans for the ships.

OCCUPATION

The outfitters face difficult odds. If the Government succeeds in transferring the ships, there will be virtually no work left in the yard. 800 workers are already faced with redundancy, and they could be joined by another 500 next year. Other shipyard workers should follow the example of those in Sunderland and refuse to work on the ships. If Swan Hunter declares redundancies, there should be an immediate occupation of the yard and solidarity action throughout the whole industry.

Where was Fisher?

THERE WAS an empty chair at the TUC meeting which decided to stab the firemen in the back. Alan Fisher of NUPE refused to turn up to fight for support for the fire brigades union despite knowing full well that the fate of his union's wage claims depend entirely on the result.

Not so squeamish was David Bassett, chairperson of the TUC and leader of the General & Municipal Workers Union. No sooner had he told the firefighters to go back to work, than he rushed into print with a plan which threatens to crush all militant action in the public sector.

Both men's unions are in the middle of negotiating wage claims on behalf of over a million local government manual workers and a quarter of a million hospital ancillary staff.

An offer for the manual workers has already been made while next week health workers will be deciding in specially convened meetings their attitude to an offer due to be

published by the employers next weekend.

The manual work offer has already been rejected by NUPE, 'reluctantly' accepted by the G&M, with no response forthcoming from the T&GWU.

The employer's offer falls well short of the £50 minimum wage target decided by that conference. Their 10 per cent means increases of between £3.90 and £4.50 a week. The offer is £7.50 short of target. Other aspects of the claim like a 35 hour week, improved sick pay and a system of threshold payments to compensate for inflation are ignored or not offered.



ALAN FISHER

Instead, Fisher and Co. are dragging out the negotiations with a 'wait and see' attitude toward the firemen.

The Bassett plan published in the Sunday Times last weekend aims to stop any militant action in support of wages. Accepting that the public sector will always be policed by a wages policy, the G&M leader proposes:

- *That the Government is recognised as paymaster;
- *That review bodies tie public service workers to private sector workers' wages;

*That to facilitate this process settlement dates be synchronised.

Militants in public service unions have argued for years that the public service should unite their claims, instead of the present system where manual workers put in claims in November, hospital ancillaries in December, nurses in April and so on. But this is to unite action to win the claim, not to

bureaucratically impose wages settlements from above. Furthermore these wage settlements would reflect the fall in living standards in the private sector, instead of the task of maintaining living standards.

Fisher's inaction on the claim prepares the ground for Bassett's plan. Neither can be fought merely on the basis of organising one section of workers by themselves. It demands organisations that links hospital workers to social services, water authority workers and the rest of public services. In NUPE, one such grouping of militants is holding its first national conference next weekend in London.

The Campaign for Action in NUPE has already issued two bulletins demanding no retreat on the union's policy for a £50 minimum wage, organisation of action to pursue the pay claim, and support for other workers in struggle against the 10 per cent.

Workers in public services need to be told honestly that to win their claim they need to take national strike action around the claims that are already in. And that the best time for that action is now, shoulder to shoulder with the fire fighters.

Left teachers double vote in union elections

THE left in the National Union of Teachers obtained a credible vote in the recent election for the union's Vice-Presidents. National executive member Dick North of Rank and File Teacher obtained 3,728 votes. Socialist Teachers Alliance candidate Dave Whiteley received 2,179. Together they received 12 per cent of the votes cast, twice the percentage left wing candidate Dave Picton received in the same election over two years ago.

John Murphy topped the poll with 14,366 first preference votes. Though Murphy had the support of the Communist Party, he is the chief architect of the union's support for the Social Contract.



BERNARD REGAN

SUCCESS

A notable success in the campaigns of North and Whiteley was that both publicly called for their supporters to transfer their second preference votes to the other left candidate, a step which marked a healthy break from the sectarian in-fighting which has dogged the left in the NUT over the past years.

Members of the Socialist

Teachers Alliance are hoping this co-operation will be maintained for next year's elections to the national executive. For the two seats in Inner London, for instance, both North and Bernard Regan of the STA have been nominated by six local associations. Yet despite this obvious support for Regan, Rank and File are proposing to put up a second candidate of their own.

PROSPER

Rank and File are following a similar policy in London's Extra Metropolitan Area. They are fielding four candidates for the four places there, while three STA candidates have so far been nominated. The STA have indicated that they are willing to discuss this clash, and to withdraw candidates if necessary. Rank and File have so far refused such discussions.

An opportunity to rectify this situation still exists between now and mid-January when the election process gets underway. The Socialist Teachers Alliance will be using that time to try to persuade Rank and File of the need for united fightback in the NUT.

— Advertisement —

CAMPAIGN for ACTION in NUPE National Conference

Saturday 10 December 11.30am
NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Inn Fields
London WC1.

- * Fight for Action on the Pay Claim!
- * No to the Cuts
- * For Union Democracy

Credentials from Ron Pearson,
30 Friar Road, Portsmouth.
Tel: 0705 817707



TED KNIGHT, at Saturday's FBU solidarity rally.

THE TREACHERY and betrayal of the TUC were condemned at a rally in support of the FBU strike in North London on Saturday. Bob Brown, chairperson of the local 'J' Division FBU said: 'How can the TUC say we have got to accept 10 per cent? They weren't speaking for any of us marching today', he told the 100 strong crowd. 'It is a shameful act. It's a black day for the trade union movement that will be remembered for years to come.'

North London trade unionists from Haringey NALGO, NATFHE, North London NUJ, Hornsey Labour Party, Enfield and Edmonton Trades Council, and the National Association of Tenants

and Residents marched in support of the FBU on a demonstration called jointly by the 'J' Division and Haringey Trades Council.

'It was not a conference decision of the Labour Party or the TUC to walk away from the firemen. We must walk away ourselves from the treachery going on at the top', said Ted Knight, prospective Labour candidate for Hornsey. 'If the firemen are left to stand alone it is a betrayal on our part. And if our leaders refuse to take a stand and be counted they must be removed.'

'If the TUC want to break conference decisions against the 10 per cent we must say we need a new leadership in the TUC just as we do

in the Labour Party.

President of Haringey Trades Council Dick Bearne reported that the Trades Council had collected over £100, and Haringey NALGO had collected £500 for the strikers. Dave Challoner, from the executive of the FBU, summed up the feelings of local members when he said: 'The TUC and the government won't stand in our way. We are going to win.'

The North London Firemen's Support Committee held a meeting in Edmonton Town Hall on Wednesday to extend support for the strike among local trade unionists.

Photo: TED STORMER

Broad Left gets broader NUS turns right

TWO IMPORTANT developments dominated the Xmas Conference of the National Union of Students in Blackpool. The first was the grotesque, but revealing, alliance cemented between the Tories and the Broad Left. To celebrate this 'historic compromise' the Tory students produced a badge showing students' president Sue Slipman and Pete Ashby (both members of the Communist Party) with the caption: 'We're Tories Too'. The second feature of the conference was the emergence of the Socialist Students Alliance as the main oppositional force to the Tory/Broad Left leadership.

The Tories and their new friends reversed the previous NUS position on not allowing a platform to racists and fascists. This reversal was made possible by the 'historic compromise': in fact it was a Tory who proposed the joint Broad Left/Tory motion on racism to the conference.

DOORS OPEN

The NUS decision opens the doors of the campuses to the National Front and the fascists. Slipman and friends are now in a situation where they will back the right of fascists to organise on the campus. This makes a complete mockery of the democratic rights of the large numbers of black and foreign students in polytechnics

and universities, as well as Jewish students. The Tories and the Broad Left also defeated a resolution which wanted to make the NUS into a campaigning union, but the emergency SSA resolution on the necessity to preserve the autonomy of student unions was defeated only by a minuscule majority of less than ten votes. On every major question the SSA, extremely well organised after the first day, succeeded in systematising an alternative strategy to the Broad Left.

100 DELEGATES

On most questions its hard core of over 100 delegates were supported by the 20 or so delegates consisting of Socialist

Workers Party student supporters (NOISS), though an attempt by the latter to deny funds to Zionist societies was not supported by the SSA and received a derisive vote.

ZIONISM

On Zionism, a motion was passed accepting the rights of both Israeli Jews and the Palestinians to their own states, though Slipman, in an amazing display of blind bigotry, referred to those arguing for a Palestinian state as being in favour of 'barbarism against the Jewish people'. Presumably this refers to numerous members of the Communist Party as well, since support for Zionism is by no means universal within that organisation.

On the explicit scabbing by Slipman on a recent strike by NUS staff workers, the conference overwhelmingly voted to censure its executive for crossing the picket lines, a clear sign that the 'historic compromise' wasn't totally



On Friday night of the conference students picketed St. Anne's police station demanding the release of Emmanuel Hand, a student at the Belfast College of Business Studies. Hand was held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on his way to the conference. He was released the following day.

Photo: NEWSLINE

effective in suppressing solidarity with the striking workers.

The shift to the far left obviously worried the Broad Left's more hardline supporters. The Leeds delegates drove this fact home by symbolising in a disgusting way their fears: they presented (to the loud

applause of the Tories) an ice-pick replica to Slipman with the hope that it would help her deal with recalcitrant elements on the executive.

Colin Talbot was loudly cheered when he attacked this disgraceful and sectarian display, but Slipman — an avid defender of democratic rights — said that SSA

supporters were being 'moralistic as the thing was merely a joke'.

It is on such jokes that bureaucrats of all stripes flourish. Meanwhile the Socialist Students Alliance is determined to make the going a bit tougher for the 'historic compromise' next Easter.

COMMENT

Defending Colquhoun

MAUREEN COLQUHOUN was sacked because she is a lesbian and an outspoken feminist. She was not sacked either for being a racist or for making statements that seemed to support racism. Northampton North Labour Party management committee themselves withdrew the accusation of racism after allowing Maureen to explain her position, which has been clear and consistent. As a local councillor in 1972 she was voted off her committees for advocating positive housing discrimination in favour of poor blacks.

The statement she made which obscured her superior anti-racist record was 'Powell is not a racist'. This was a clumsy expression of her view: 'Powell is not the real bogeyman. The real bogeymen are in the Labour Party, who use soft words and put no money into solving the problem of poor blacks and poor whites in the inner cities.'

She has repeatedly attempted to correct the misapprehension that she either supports Powell, or underestimates his pernicious influence. Whilst deploring Powell's 'appalling racist solutions' her argument is that the Labour government is racist by default. It was naive of Maureen Colquhoun not to predict the distortion of her arguments in the right wing and supposedly revolutionary press. One instance of political ineptitude, looked at in the context of her record, is not grounds for not supporting her reinstatement.

The Maureen Colquhoun Action Committee is calling for her reinstatement because, as feminists and lesbians, we see the attack on her as an attack on all women — particularly those who are trying to be independent from men. Her sacking is just one example of



Photo: ANDREW WIAARD (Report)

the current backlash against oppressed and dissenting groups in this country. Is the weekly policy declaration in Socialist Challenge in support of the struggles of women, blacks and gays anything more than lipservice to fashionable causes in order to recruit picket fodder?

Socialist Challenge, by its appalling editorials and coverage of lesbian issues, has forfeited the limited credibility that lesbian feminists ever grant to the straight revolution-

Gay socialists explain why Colquhoun should not be reinstated

The Labour Party's national executive committee will be voting on Maureen Colquhoun's appeal against her removal as the MP for the Nottingham North constituency Labour Party at its meeting next week. The NEC has a responsibility to clearly disassociate itself from the reactionary attacks on women's and gay rights which have been associated with the Colquhoun affair. At the same time, Colquhoun's appeal for re-instatement should not be supported. PHIL DERBYSHIRE and JAMIE GOUGH — both IMG members active in the gay liberation movement — explain why.

'Whole districts (in Britain) have been transformed into foreign enclaves... Pensioners and their days in streets of nightly terror.' Just two extracts from Enoch Powell's infamous speech on 21 January this year. He implicitly referred to repatriation as the 'cure' for this 'evil' in the same speech.

Maureen Colquhoun, Tribune MP, responded the next day by declaring 'Enoch Powell is not a racist'. This opinion was later confirmed by Colquhoun in an article in the *Northampton Echo*. She has since 'interpreted' her statement as saying that attacking Powell is not the solution to racism.

This point is ultimately correct. But it is not what she said. She has never retracted her original statement, nor has she acknowledged its damage to the anti-racist struggle.

OPPOSED NOW

Immediately after this statement appeared, local Young Socialists unsuccessfully put forward a motion against her reselection on these grounds. For the same reasons, we are opposed to her reinstatement now.

In contrast, the August motion passed by the Party's local general management committee consisted only of nebulous innuendo: 'This GMC feels that in view of her recent statements and public behaviour Maureen Colquhoun is no longer acceptable as the representative in Parliament of Northampton North.'

What does this reference to 'recent statements' and 'public behaviour' mean? In 1976 Colquhoun came out openly as a lesbian. She has always been a strong supporter of women's rights, and has been attacked previously on these grounds. Against this background, the August motion can only be construed as referring to her lesbianism.

This kind of attack is now new. For instance, Norman Ashby, chairperson of the Northampton North CLP, made this criticism explicitly in the *Sunday Times*: 'Maureen got in on the supermarket vote as a solid wife and mother', he

said. 'This business has blackened her image irredeemably.' (2 October, 1977).

The subjective motivation of each member on the GMC is not of special interest. More important is the objective effects of the GMC's decision in reinforcing the current backlash against lesbians, women, and gay men. Just as Colquhoun is responsible for the support she has given to racism, so the Northampton North CLP is responsible for the support it has given to the reactionary forces out to strengthen the family.

The CLP should produce a clear public statement expressing its reasons for not reselecting Colquhoun — backed up by evidence. In addition, it must dissociate itself from any attacks on Colquhoun on the basis of her lesbianism. Further, Labour Party branches and the NEC should go on record condemning and actively organising against any discrimination — both inside and outside the Party — on the grounds of sexuality.

'The backlash' referred to in the above article is not just ideological warfare. In June this

year a lesbian was attacked and blinded outside a women's disco in South London. In July a gay man was murdered outside a gay club in North London. And those are just two examples.

Action currently being taken by the lesbian and gay movements included a picket last week of the Ministry of Defence. This was in response to the rape of a lesbian and the murder of two gay men this year by guardsmen.

The army's encouragement of the extreme 'macho' ethic was made clear when a former guardsman told Gay News: 'The Guards have always looked on homosexuals as creepy-crawlies. Doesn't matter if you squash a few. It proves you're a man somehow, doing a queer.' The picket of about 30 women and men spent two hours chanting and leafletting, but the Minister refused to see them or even take a leaflet. 'Defence' at what price is the question.

Repeal the trespass law!

by PIERS CORBYN

PREPARE FOR action to stop the Trespass law in its tracks! This was the clear message of the 250-strong national conference of the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law held in Birmingham on 26 and 27 November. The conference pledged to mobilise support for any occupation or squat threatened or attacked by the new laws which became effective on 1 December.

The need for united action between trade unions, students, squatters and community groups was stressed by speakers. Trade unionists — two-thirds of those at the conference — recognised that squatters had been used as an excuse for the new laws, and would probably be attacked first. For this reason — and because of the strength of squatting action in the fight for decent housing for all — working class support for the first victims of these

new laws is vital.

The conference called on the TUC and national executives of all trade unions and the Labour Party to campaign actively against the use of the new law and to work for its immediate repeal. Workshops were organised on a wide range of issues including industrial occupations, the struggles in hospitals, student sit-ins, squatting. It was agreed to recall the conference by May of next year and the plethora of tasks until then were mapped out.

Many speakers argued for action committees based on Trades Councils and Labour Parties — especially important in the light of the virtual collapse of local CACTL groups. To this end, it was suggested that Trades Councils should be approached to set up special campaign sub-committees to fight the new law.

Further information from CACTL, 35 Wellington St., London WC2, 01-289 3877.

Socialist Challenge supporters: 'We're going for a woman's right to choose'

Our series of articles on the future course for the National Abortion Campaign concludes this week with **Dodie Weppier** talking to Socialist Challenge supporters **CHRIS WALTON** (Leeds NAC and Labour Abortion Rights Campaign), **JUDITH ARKWRIGHT** (S.W. London NAC and IMG), **PAULINE SIMMONDS** (Oxford NAC and IMG), and **SARAH ROELOFS** (IMG Rep., NAC Steering Ctte.).

Q. Do you, or people in your local campaigns see positive legislation as an important part of the strategy for building the abortion campaign?

Judith: It's difficult moving from our present position of having to defend the limited gains of the 1967 Act to a more positive campaign. The first

limit would simply be the thin end of the wedge in losing the minimal rights we have won. That's why I strongly disagree with Betty Underwood of the Communist Party when she said earlier in the series 'It's nonsense to refer to the draft Abortion Law Reform Association Bill, which would give women the right to choose up to 28 weeks...as a compromise'. **Chris:** Leeds NAC is against any

possible with the minimum delay.

Q. Has the criticism that NAC has a parliamentary approach been made to you?

Sarah: We're facing an ideological attack focussed on parliament, and I don't think anyone is in favour of ignoring it. But we don't want to rely on a few sympathetic MP's. Defending the 1967 Act certainly shouldn't prevent us developing positive and offensive tactics.

We need a positive focus for the campaign, such as the national campaign around day-care facilities that Sheffield NAC are proposing, and a broadly-based movement outside parliament that takes up all the attacks on abortion rights. Fighting attacks from parliament is an integral part of this. **Judith:** We could learn from the Italian experience here — the movement there was unclear about how many concessions it was prepared to make. We've got to be clear now that we are going for a woman's right to choose, in law and in practice, which necessitates free abortion on demand.



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

PAULINE SIMMONDS

Pauline: Mainly that NAC hasn't taken up what a woman's right to choose means in terms of sexuality. One of the things we hope to discuss at our day school in December is that a woman's right to choose should include the right to define her own sexuality as well as the right

steering committee discussions — groups like Feminists Against Benyon who organised the occupation of Westminster Cathedral last June.

Q. What ideas have your local groups discussed for activity in the coming months?

Chris: Leeds NAC is involved in a campaign for day-care facilities. We have done quite a lot of research around it. We are now going to our local Community Health Council. We have a public meeting planned to explain why we are campaigning for these abortion day-care facilities.

Pauline: It's relatively easy to get an abortion in Oxford — it's a research centre, and women are basically used as guinea pigs! We have a campaign for an out-patient clinic based on this. The area health authority has recommended cutting the number of abortions to save money, so we have to be prepared for a drastic change in the situation.

Q. How do you see Socialist Challenge relating to NAC?

Sarah: I think one of the major factors that alienates women from left groups — not only within NAC but in the women's movement as a whole is the constant bickering and squabbling, rather than clear political debate, about perspectives. By providing space for these debates to be carried out openly I think Socialist Challenge can do a lot to help build a united opposition to Labour's sellouts on abortion. So I would like to see activists in NAC and in the women's movement contribute to the discussion — write for the paper — on this basis.

Sarah: I would like to see more women from the women's movement contributing to the



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

JUDITH ARKWRIGHT



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

SARAH ROELOFS

step must be to clear up both our attitude to positive legislation, and exactly what we mean by a woman's right to choose. **Sarah:** There's certainly a strong possibility that the Labour Government will try to wrap up the abortion issue before a general election by supporting some private member's bill focussed on a reduction in the time limit for abortions. We've got to be clear whether or not we are willing to compromise.

I think that if a woman can only choose up to viability, 28 weeks or whatever, then abortion is not in fact a woman's right but a doctor's choice. A bill lowering the time

compromise on this. We had a series of discussions with the local Socialist Women's Group on the ALRA bill, the principle of a woman's right to choose, and so on. The SWG supported a woman's right to choose all the way up to term if necessary. I think this was a big step forward for our campaign.

Sarah: No bill should be conditional on what is acceptable either to MPs or the parliamentary experts. If it was, we would compromise our right to control our own bodies. No woman wants an abortion in late pregnancy — we're fighting for free and easy access to abortion facilities so women can have abortions as early as



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

CHRIS WALTON

Q. What kind of approach have you made to the labour movement?

Chris: We've not had much response going through the official channels locally, except in cases where we've already had sympathetic contacts. The teachers' union passed a pro-choice motion around the time of the restrictive James White bill, but recently anti-abortionists threatened to resign if the union discussed it again. We really need people inside the unions to put pressure on the bureaucrats. NAC's trade union liaison sub-committee will be very important in co-ordinating activity here.

Judith: I think we must be more outgoing and not just wait for unions to send delegates to our meetings. If I can give an example, we picketed our MP, sponsored by the electricians' union, who was flouting the union's pro-choice mandate. As a result of this action, the Trades Council and other groups supported us. The national day-care campaign gives us another opportunity to do more work in local communities, and we should be able to make direct approaches to the unions with policy on abortion.

Q. What have been the criticisms of the abortion campaign from feminists?

Cardiff on the offensive

After a four-year delay, Cardiff's big new teaching hospital is at last to provide day-care abortions by the vacuum aspiration method — one of the easiest and safest developed.

Up until now, over 50 per cent of Cardiff women have had to go outside the area to obtain legal abortions. They had been obstructed by reactionary consultants at the hospital, and by the disgraceful inaction of the South Glamorgan Health Authority.

But this latest 'victory' is less complete than it seems. The new facilities involve one theatre session a week, which will be completely inadequate. No extra staff will be

employed to do the extra work. And there will not be enough beds for women to recover in. Two women will have to share a single cubicle.

Health workers in Cardiff, which has been one of the worst areas for abortions in the country, are already up in arms over the way these changes have been implemented. Local pro-choice activists are demanding an immediate half-day abortion session to meet the needs of local women, and full consultation with the health unions over staff levels and facilities at the unit. After years of impasse, the abortion campaign in Cardiff is at least moving onto an offensive footing.

What's Left

Rates: 3p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3.00pm Saturday before publication.

EDINBURGH: support anti-fascists on trial in Edinburgh. Picket Sherriff's Court, Lawn Market, Edinburgh. From 9am, Tues 13 Dec.

WHAT'S ESPERANTO? Read for yourself explanatory booklet by Bernard Cavanagh MA (Oxon) DSc (Lon). 20c from Dave Watzel, Trade Union and Co-op Esperanto Group, 28 Penderel Rd., Houslow, Middlesex.

ROADGANG touring women's socialist theatre group based in the North East need address from January. Above Equity rates. Apply in writing giving details of experience and any other skills e.g. driving, musical etc. to 13 Swinburne St, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear.

EAST GERMAN opposition. Gunter Minnerup speaks at IMG forum, 7.30, 9 Dec, Room S066, LSE, Houghton St, London WC2. **BLACK YOUTH** under attack. Colin Prescott, sociology lecturer and editorial committee member of *Race and Class* and the *Black Liberator*, will lead discussion at Institute of Race Relations, 247/9 Pentonville Rd, London N1, 13 December at 6.30pm. **NEW YEAR'S** eve party. The final grand party at 37 Alphonso Rd, Clapham. In aid of the Lewisham and Grunwick defence funds. West Indian food plus Real Ale. 11pm till dawn. Book now, numbers limited. Ring 720 4701 for details.

ITALY: What's happening? Meeting with speakers from Workers Autonomy (Autonomia Operaia) 7pm, Mon 12 Dec, South Island Library, South Island Place (Oval Tube).

4 COMRADES (including 3 full-timers) looking for flat/house in London. By mid-January we will be sleeping on the street — neither comfortable nor good for our work! Please let us know if you hear/know of anything — write/ring to the Centre, PO Box 50, Islington, London N1 — Redmond, Sarah or Roger.

NATIONAL Socialist Feminist conference, 29/9 Jan, Manchester. For details of venue, papers, transport etc. London women please contact Karen Margolis, 65 Regent's Park Rd NW1. 7229621.

NE ANTI-RACIST demonstration and rally in Middlesbrough, Sat 10 Dec. Assemble 12.30pm outside Albert Park gates in Linthorpe Rd. Rally 2pm in AUEW Hall, Borough Rd/Abingdon Rd. Organised by Cleveland Anti-fascist cities.

EDINBURGH Socialist Unity: public meeting to report on national Socialist Unity conference and discuss united left election campaign in Edinburgh, Tues 13 Dec, Trades Council, Picardy Place, 7.30pm. Speakers from IMG and Big Flame.

MANCHESTER NAC and Big Flame party — attractions include Clapperlaw, Music for Socialism, Sat 10 Dec, 8-11.30, The Squat, Devas St (off Oxford Rd). Admission 50p.

MANCHESTER Big Flame: The Crisis in Education, Wed 14 Dec, 7.45pm BF Office, 14 Piccadilly.

JOINT benefit for Metropolis and Rolls Royce strikers 8pm, Sat 18 Dec, School of Intensive English Studies, 21 Star St, London W2. Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre present play 'Divide and Rule Britannia' followed by songs and discussion. Admission 50p.

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Group public meeting, 'Ireland: The Law and the working class'. Speakers: Jennifer Tail (RCGI), Brian Rose-Smith and a speaker from the Trade Union Committee Against the PTA, Tues 13 Dec, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Admission 20p.

REPRESSION in Iran: meeting Fri 9 Dec, 7.00, NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields WC1. Organised by Liberator, Hackney Trades Council and Wandsworth Trades Council.

CAMPAIGN Against Repression in Iran. London Sub-Office meeting 17 Dec, 11.00am Imperial College Students Union, Prince Consort Rd, London SW7.

ALMOST FREETHATRE

485 6224

A PINPRICK OF HISTORY

By Margaretta D'Arcy

Mon-Sat, 1.15pm until 23 Dec

Which way forward for the anti-fascist movement

In the aftermath of Lewisham and Hyde a wide-ranging set of discussions has been taking place within the anti-fascist movement. They have centred on the most effective way of constructing a viable anti-fascist organisation in this country. The reason for this is not difficult to understand. There is a growing realisation amongst anti-fascist militants that street demonstrations confined to the far-left and its periphery are not sufficient and that broader sections of the population have to be brought into the movement. At the same time there is a growing awareness of the necessity to intervene electorally against the racists and the fascists. The Socialist Unity campaign in the East End is a salutary reminder of the fact that a united effort can have its impact.

ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE

The outcome of these discussions has produced different, and often unreal, initiatives. The Socialist Workers Party took the main initiative in launching the Anti-Nazi League. They did so in collaboration with a number of left social-democrats and explicitly ignored both the Communist Party and the rest of the far-left. The main thrust of the ANL is to counter the Nazis on the terrain of electoral politics by the production of mass propaganda. As a corollary, the ANL comrades organised the creation of 'Dockers Against Nazis' and 'Students Against Nazis' as well as appointing the

SWP militants as organisers in Manchester and Leeds.

There also exists a Joint Committee Against Racism (JCAR) which is backed by the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Indian Workers Association (Southall) and the other wing of the IWA, sympathetic to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) as well as the Liberal Party, the Labour Party and the North-West TUC. Tom Jackson is now mounting pressure for the TUC as a whole to back this committee and in the North-West, Colin Barnett has launched a £10,000 appeal for this organisation. It is obvious that it will be this body through which the liberal and Labour establishment will co-ordinate its anti-racist and anti-fascist initiatives.

Thirdly there is the National Co-ordinating Committee of Anti-Fascist Committees (NCCAFC), to which nearly 60 AFCs are now affiliated. These are organised on a non-exclusive basis and consist essentially of grassroots militants fighting in the localities. They recently endorsed a move to back nationally the anti-fascist paper CARF, which is both well-produced and contains detailed information for anti-fascist activists.

LUXURY

Now while all these initiatives are positive and deserve to be supported we nonetheless have to state that the way things are developing it does seem to be something of a luxury to have three nationally organised anti-fascist organisations.



Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

What then needs to be done? In our opinion what is needed is a single campaigning organisation which can co-ordinate and carry out the different, but related tasks necessary to defeat fascism and racism in this country. The model for such an organisation should be some of the features of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which was organised on both a broad and a non-exclusive basis. The way to combat any sectarianism (and undoubtedly it will not disappear overnight) is by isolating it politically and not by organisationally restrictive proposals or measures. For the only way in which a mass campaign will get off the ground is if local activists feel that they determine how the organisation is run and what

issues it prioritises. The analogy with CND is, as is the case with most analogies, a partial one. For CND based itself on the strength of constituency Labour parties. These are now clearly in decline. However the layer which could be attracted to such a campaign would be the thousands of unaffiliated individuals and local groups. This means that the structure of the organisation we would like to see would be such as to encourage the maximum possible initiatives from below in the localities and the regions. The national leadership would exercise largely a co-ordinating function. In addition the political organisations affiliated to such a body would retain the right to independent activity.

Such a broad-based and democratic body is needed rather desperately today. The only way it will get off the ground is if it is seen as a genuine and united body and not as the adjunct of any particular political organisation or a cluster of individuals zealously and jealously guarding their 'monopoly' of anti-racist initiatives or propaganda. For that reason a national conference of all anti-fascist militants and organisations to discuss and decide the tasks necessary in the present period is an urgent necessity. The NCCAFC have scheduled their own conference for May. *Socialist Challenge* readers will, naturally, be present, but what is needed is the presence also of the SWP/ANL and the Indian

Workers Organisation if a big leap forward is to be made. Many anti-fascist committees while doing excellent work locally have tended towards a certain introversion. This is largely because most of the comrades involved have been working in them for a whole period in an isolation imposed by objective conditions. We believe that it is now possible to break that isolation provided the correct steps are taken. We must also state that although the possibility of building such a conference is not very high at the moment, it must be fully explored. We would stress that no national organisation can be built on the basis of exclusion, bureaucratic manipulation and covering over political problems.

Anti-racist Struggle

BIGGS-DAVIDSON TO SPEAK ON RACISM

The Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) launched a campaign against racism on 17 November. The main aim of this campaign is to fight for community integration especially as the FCS feels that conservatives 'should be seen to be doing more to promote racial harmony'. Not because as our more cynical readers may think and as Joseph Egerton, GLC candidate for Lewisham Deptford, said 'The NF costs us more votes than Labour; we would be better off electorally without them'. The briefing papers however are useful in the way they provide an amount of facts. It appears that the main thrust of the two week campaign is to put forward a moderate campaign around the Community Relations Council

approach of countering the more extreme racist appeal and allowing the Asian middle class to become pillars of the establishment. 'How far can we begin to project the view that because a person is coloured their primary interest is not necessarily race relations'. The local groups are advised not to have anything to do with the labour movement organisations such as anti-fascist and anti-racist committees which are 'Trot dominated'. Emphasis throughout the campaign kit is on education, petitions, posters and leaflets, some of which point out that the NF is Nazi. Among those suggested to speak against racism is the pro-Rhodesian MP, John Biggs-Davidson. The third briefing paper states: 'Broad local community campaigns must be launched to meet the growing tide of envy and hatred peddled by racist groups and their supporters. In that task Conservatives should play a prominent role and be proud to do so.' That this is done without

involving the labour movement is extremely doubtful. In fact it is the Tories and their Broad Left allies who campaigned to lift the ban on fascists and are threatening anti-Zionist unions with suspension. This campaign is therefore a smokescreen behind which the Tories fought last weekend to remove 'No Platform' and at the same time inflict on its supporters in the NUS a constitutional bashing. Whatever their motives, the FCS campaign could broaden the anti-racist campaign. Their tactics, however, are totally inefficient.

ANTI-RACIST WALK

AT 11AM ON Wednesday December 14th, 21-year old Vernon Williams will be setting out from Hoxton in London to walk 160 miles to Oxford and back in aid of CARF — the anti-racist anti-fascist paper of the All London Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee. Vernon, a Jamaican is a seasoned long distance walker. He has already walked from London to Glasgow in 1972 and this summer walked from Lands End to John O'Groats to raise funds for the National Playing Fields Association. This time he is walking for the anti-racist committee of the college he attends, City and East London College. Recently a student-teacher body was set up to

combat racism and National Front influence in Hackney and especially in educational institutions. The students decided to raise money for the anti-racist movement in particular for CARF through a sponsored walk.

CARF [Campaign Against Racism and Fascism] is a bi-monthly paper which was set up in May this year to co-ordinate opposition to the National Front at the GLC elections. Since then it has gathered some 30 affiliates throughout the London area and has helped strengthen, support and co-ordinate anti-racist work throughout London.



On Wednesday 14 December the students' anti-racist body will be holding a conference at their college on racism to which local six form schools' and fellow further education students are invited. Vernon will be launched by the students in the morning and will be received back by them on Saturday [December 17th] when a social in Hoxton will celebrate his return. Other welcoming bodies will greet

him in High Wycombe and in Oxford as he carries out the walk.

The following individuals and groups have already supported this initiative of a conference and a walk: Bishop Trevor Huddleston, the Mayor of Hackney, the chairperson of Hackney Community Relations Council, the Director of the Institute of Race Relations, Ian Mikardo MP, Ron Brown MP, John Berger, Tony Bunyan, Colin Prescott, Nigel Harris.

FIRTH AND THE JAVELIN

ROLAND RANTE, the editor of *Javelin*, the Bradford students union newspaper has been subjected along with other members of his staff to a visit of the local CID. After printing the poem about Christ by James Kirkup and also reports on anti-fascist activity in the Nov 1, issue the staff had a visit from an Inspector Firth and a Sergeant Wrigley.

The Bradford detectives asked Special Branch several questions about technical aspects of publication such as the print run and the name of the printers. However the poem had been printed as an insert and not by the printers. The staff refused to answer questions, despite assurances of friendship. The reason behind this seems to be a series of misquotes in the Daily Telegraph and Daily Express, and

also the attitude of the Christian Union which destroyed as many copies as they could.

In answer to one of the questions we can confirm that Roland is still the editor in spite of a motion of censure.

For further info, ring 0274 23422 and ask for Inspector Firth.

THE FASCIST LECTURER

A college lecturer at Teeside Polytechnic who is standing for the National Front at a Council by-election in South Middlesborough avoided being expelled from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education.

In the rest of Cleveland, the Anti-fascist committee is leafletting the shopping centre in Middlesborough and also the marten Nunthorpe ward where Evans is standing. The committee is also providing support for street sellers of papers following an attack on SWP street sellers. Despite their claims of over a hundred members, the NF appear to be reticent to show its face in public.

14 Dec. Conference on Grunwick

One solution: Nationalisation

The South-East Region of the TUC is holding an emergency delegate conference on the Grunwick strike on Wednesday 14 December at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1, 7.15pm.

The Conference will mark the 70th week of the strike, but it takes place when there are widespread reports of low moral among the strikers. Yet, argues GEOFF BELL, the strike can still be won.

It seems a long time since over ten thousand pickets demonstrated their sense of solidarity and triumph outside Grunwick on 11 July. Victory then seemed only a matter of days away, and had it not been for the TUC organising a march away from the factory, the scab bus would have been prevented from entering Grunwick for the first time.

Last week's conference of the Civil and Public Service Association, where delegates

voted by 497 to 419 to send a telegram of support to the Grunwick hunger strikers indicates the reservoir of support that still exists.

What the SE Regional TUC Conference needs to ask itself on 14 December is how to organise such support and on what policies to organise it. In some ways it is the question of politics which is the most important, for there is the general impression that while thousands are still prepared to

turn up for mass pickets, such action is more a gesture than a concrete way of winning the strike.

PROSPER

Such assessments are correct. Even if the scab bus were to be halted for a week and the factory forced to close for the same period, Grunwick would still remain viable and George Ward would continue to prosper. Even if the major strategy the strike committee is putting forward — the cutting off of all supplies and services — were successful, the signs are that this would only be a limited victory; that Ward would prefer to close the factory altogether than to take back the strikers.

It is because *Socialist*

Challenge has attempted to grapple with these problems that we have consistently put forward the demand for the nationalisation of Grunwick, without compensation to Ward, and for putting the factory under worker's control.

Such a demand would give a concrete policy for the mass pickets to adopt and it would provide the ultimate answer to George Ward's threats to close the factory. It is a demand that Yorkshire miners' president Arthur Scargill has also raised.

DIRECTION

It is obviously true that the Labour Government will not nationalise Grunwick simply because members of the strike

committee ask them to. They will have to be forced to do so. And the mass support which exists for Grunwick contains the ingredients of such pressure. What is lacking is giving that pressure a direction. The nationalisation demand provides that direction.

CONFERENCE

There remains the question of how to organise the tens of thousands who support the Grunwick strike. The most obvious need is for a national solidarity conference. The 14 December meeting is restricted to the South-East of England, yet some of the most important support the mass pickets attracted came from elsewhere, from Yorkshire, Birmingham

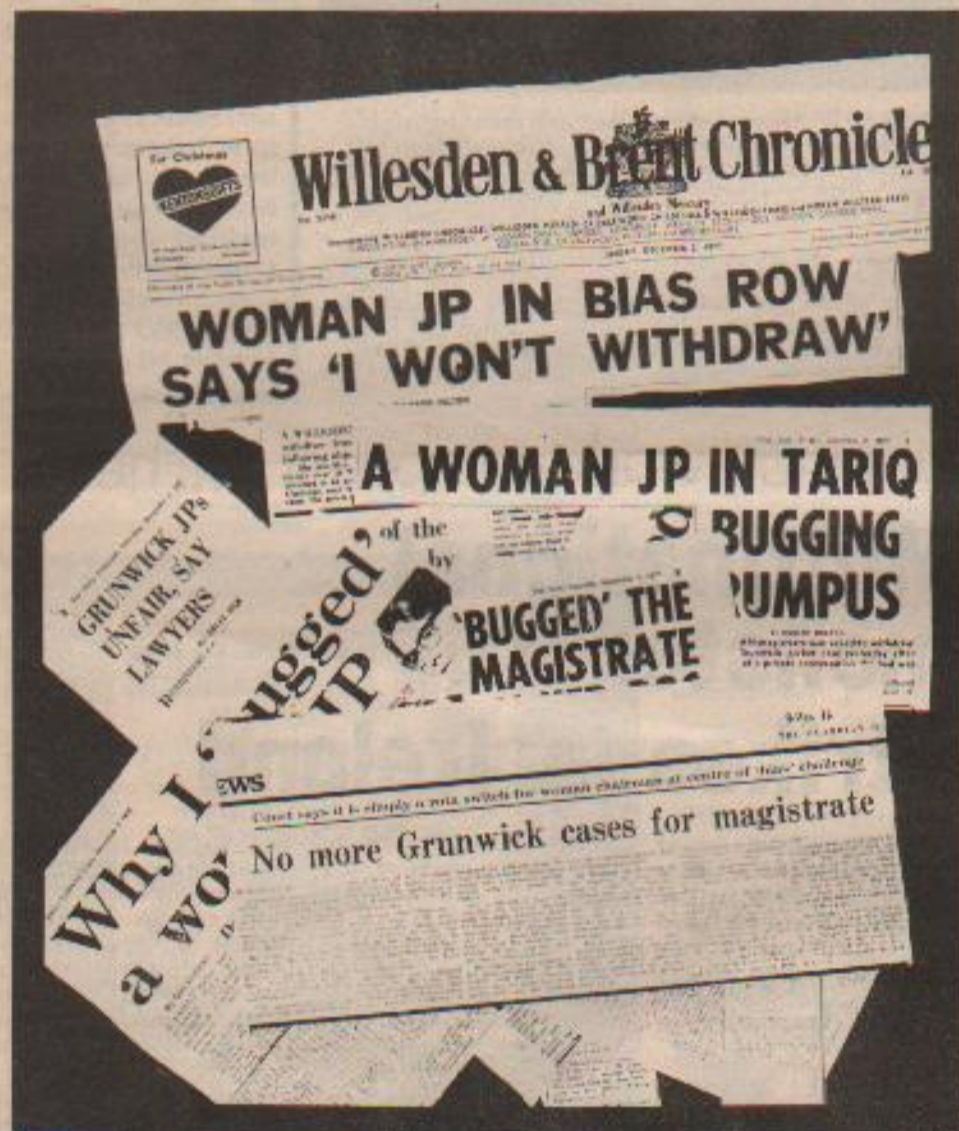
and South Wales in particular.

All these supporters need to discuss how they can force the TUC and the Labour Government to directly intervene on behalf of the Grunwick strikers. How the rank and file can organise the cutting off of supplies and services aimed at ensuring Ward's closure and the nationalisation of Grunwick.

When the mass pickets should be called, whether or not big demonstrations should be scheduled for outside Congress House, or even Parliament.

ISSUES

These are the kind of issues which need to be thrashed out in a way that involves the widest possible forces.



Grunwick picket PAT CLEWER on The day justice blew up in magistrate Oakley's face

WILLESDEN Magistrates court was looking more like the Grunwick picket line than a courthouse first thing last Thursday morning. Lined up in the narrow corridor were the Grunwick pickets, including me, waiting with our witnesses. The cops were there in force, trying to maintain a semblance of order.

I watched as Willesden police court (sic) got ready to hand out injustice. In number two court, on her wooden throne, Dorothy 'Stiffer Sentences' Oakley. I was to be her first Grunwick victim that morning. But now — armed with our copies of *Socialist Challenge* — all that was about to change. Her almost unbroken record of guilty convictions was about to be terminated.

ISSUES

I'd handed my defence counsel a copy of the paper, and he'd gone off in a huddle with the other lawyers because it seemed there weren't many precedents for that kind of thing. He started in court by reading out the charges of pre-

meditated bias against Oakley. In the diplomatic language of lawyers he said some fairly offensive things, and asked for Oakley's removal from the bench.

AMAZED

Everyone in the courtroom was riveted. In the background there was the tinkling of coins as lawyers, worried court officials, militants and police officers queued up to buy copies of *Socialist Challenge*.

But the defendant, Oakley, being also the presiding magistrate, heard the case against her, smiled a little, and pronounced herself innocent. She announced: 'I am not biased and I have no political feelings. I have no intention of withdrawing.'

Which wasn't quite what happened. My case was immediately rushed up to court four, which amazed everyone in there because the hearing was already half way through and they had to transfer to court two.

By now news of the affidavit had spread like wildfire. One

prosecuting counsel had brought a copy of the paper and thrown a fit in the waiting room. The defence counsel from the Grunwick case we'd interrupted was about to do a repeat performance of my barrister's plea when the magistrates in court two, including Oakley, marched out, held a meeting, and returned after lunch — without Oakley.

DISRUPTION

That was it. Executed one reactionary justice dispenser. Meanwhile, back in court four, where I was charged with threatening behaviour and obstruction, 'justice' was back at work. I was fined £20 plus £20 costs on the second charge, in spite of having three witnesses to counter the ridiculous accusation that I'd kamikazed my way through the police lines, fists flying.

The lawyers said I'd got off lightly. It was a big day for them. The Willesden treatment, which they'd experienced for years, had at last met its first disruption. 'Magnificent' was the kind of word they used about the doctor's disclosures.

Oakley withdraws But fight must go on

by GEOFFREY SHERIDAN

Magistrate Dorothy Oakley will be hearing no more Grunwick picket cases. This is in spite of her protestations in Willesden court last Thursday morning when she was first confronted with *Socialist Challenge's* disclosures. 'I have no intention of withdrawing,' Oakley declared from the bench.

Within hours the court officials had 'discovered' that there were no more Grunwick cases on Oakley's rostrum. So the reactionary magistrate who had told Dr. Paul Stern, in relation to Barnet court's sentencing of Grunwick pickets — 'About 40 per cent have got off. We shall have to change all that, and they will get much stiffer sentences' — will no longer be sitting in judgement on George Ward's enemies

On this page, Birmingham building worker Pat Clewer describes the scene in Willesden court when he came up before Oakley on Thursday morning. Paul Stern, who provided the affidavit we published last week, decided that he would no longer maintain his anonymity once the lawyers acting for Grunwick defendants requested permission to use the full affidavit. Paul, an activist against

health cuts, and a *Socialist Challenge* reader, is a partner in a GP surgery close to the Grunwick factory in Willesden. He has provided medical evidence on behalf of a number of pickets who had been assaulted by the police.

'I was absolutely aghast at what Ms Oakley said in the conversation held outside my surgery,' Paul says. 'It seemed to me quite startling that a person in her position

who was expected to hear the charges against these Grunwick pickets should hold such views about them.

PARDON

When the national and local press picked up the story at the end of last week, further evidence came forward of Oakley's views. Martin Wyatt, secretary of Brent Voluntary Services Council says that Oakley and her husband, George, the former Rural Dean of Brent, had dropped in for tea at the end of September. In the presence of three witnesses, she made similar remarks to

those that Paul Stern had noted.

Dorothy Oakley's removal from Grunwick cases is a small step forward. *Socialist Challenge* has already called for a pardon and compensation for all the pickets convicted by the Willesden magistrates.

Two days before Oakley's removal, pacifist militant Pat Arrowsmith was up before the bench on an obstruction charge for sitting in the path of the scab bus. Before sentencing her, the magistrates absent-mindedly forgot to ask Pat if she had any plea to make in mitigation. Willesden, in short, was up to its usual tricks.

REMOVAL

Thompson, the trade union solicitors engaged by Apex to act for the majority of arrested pickets, is now seeking to secure the removal

of all Grunwick cases from the Willesden court. A letter protesting at the failure of Willesden justice to appear to be impartial has been signed by barristers involved in the Grunwick cases, endorsed by the Bar Council, and is presently in the hands of the Lord Chancellor.

DEFEND

But this should not be left to lawyers. Above all, it is for the defendants themselves to decide the response that they consider appropriate, and as soon as possible they should meet together with their lawyers to determine this.

The Oakley affair reveals very plainly why George Ward and the NAFU champion the rule of law as the way of resolving the strike. Instead of immediately nationalising Grunwick, the Labour Government has sanctioned the use of thousands of police

to confront and beat up the mass pickets.

ELECTION

Of course, any government representing the interests of workers would immediately lift all the charges against the pickets. However, socialists must also challenge the existing system of justice and campaign for full democratic rights. Such demands in relation to the judiciary should include:

...Abolition of the magistrate system and for all cases to be tried by a full jury.

...Abolition of 'majority verdicts'. Only a unanimous jury verdict should be permitted.

...Election of all judges by the local community.

Anne Speed interviewed Ireland and Women's Liberation

ANNE SPEED, a leading Irish feminist and a member of Irish Women United, has just spent three weeks touring British colleges at the invitation of the Student Movement Campaign on Ireland. The tour was a spectacular success and even speaking twice a day Anne was unable to cover all the requested meetings — some 36 in all. *Socialist Challenge* interviewed Anne Speed, and began by asking her what she saw as the connection between the fight for the national rights of the Irish people and the liberation of Irish women.

At every meeting there was lively discussion about the political situation in the North. This followed inevitably once I explained the illiberal atmosphere in the Six Counties which exists on all questions.

British women seemed shocked to find that abortion is unavailable in the North and that because of the underdevelopment of the Health Service, contraception is not freely available. Nor is there a single state nursery in the Six Counties.

The audiences I spoke to seemed to understand that despite all this, while troops are on the streets it is those troops and what they represent which is the central question. Consequently the possibilities of building a women's liberation movement are limited.

Therefore, at almost every meeting, we debated the 'bloodbath' theory. I pointed out we already have a bloodbath because the troops are there.

I came away with the impression that there was great potential for British women contributing as feminists to the building of a solidarity movement in Britain.

Initially, many in the women's movement here supported the Peace People. What was the view of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement?

The majority of the Irish WLM refute the idea that the Peace People could in any way advance feminist politics. They have never taken any position on abortion. They were silent about the democratic rights of gays when the Royal Ulster Constabulary were brutalising homosexuals into becoming police informers.

We were very angry about the cynical manipulation by the press of the fact that the Peace People's leaders were women. There was a sort of psychological stereotyping of all women as home-loving and kitchen-loving, forced by the political situation to defend those values against any odds.

Of course, we all want peace, but anti-imperialist women project a peace which is fair and just, not one that asks us to give up our democratic rights.

Today, very few women in the Catholic ghettos have any time for the Peace People. They offer no perspective. The only base they have is amongst church people and business-

men.
What are the priorities of the Irish WLM?

As I mentioned, Northern Irish women suffer tremendously from the total absence of basic women's rights — easy divorce, abortion, freely available contraception and so on. Male unemployment in Catholic areas is fantastically high — 50 per cent in some areas — because of systematic discrimination against them in jobs. Often therefore it is the women who are the family breadwinners.

In addition, with so many of the men in jails, the political organisation of the community relies heavily on women: they have led the political prisoners' status campaign, for instance.

The Six County state has given recognition to the leading role of women in the mass movement when it uses interrogation techniques of sexual intimidation — such as strip searching. The rising incidence of British soldiers raping Catholic women is also connected with this.

Quite naturally, it is this repression which is the main preoccupation of the women just now. It will more or less stay that way as long as the British Government is allowed to trample over the democratic rights of the nationalist population.

None of the progressive legislation on women's rights passed in Britain in the last 20 years applies in Northern Ireland. This includes the 1967 Abortion Act, the 1967 Matrimonial Homes Act, the 1969 Divorce Reform and the 1976 Domestic Violence Act. Should British feminists be fighting for the extension of these laws to Northern Ireland?

There are several problems with the approach of extending such legislation, particu-



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

larly if it is British women who are raising the campaign. For a start, it means accepting Britain's right to legislate for Northern Ireland.

Of course, any reform which 'liberalises' the position of women in the Six Counties would be a step forward, but the reality is that any gains can only be won by Irish women themselves, through

their own mass campaigns.

The main obstacle to that is British rule in the North. Far from Westminster being likely to alleviate the condition of women in Ireland, it has a vested interest in maintaining the present position. That is why the best solidarity that British feminists can offer is by calling for Britain's immediate withdrawal from Ireland.

Long Kesh appeal

'The price of a card would be a luxury to some people in here.' This is what our Long Kesh correspondent told us when we offered to send him Christmas cards. So we will not be sending him any. Instead we are asking our readers to send us money for the prisoners in Long Kesh this Christmas.

No doubt the large majority of readers will be drunk over this period, feasting, going to the movies, or otherwise enjoying themselves. Our readers in Long Kesh will not. Show your solidarity with them, and your thanks to our Long Kesh correspondent by rushing money to: Long Kesh Appeal, c/o Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

Limerick workers appeal for help Multinational monster strikes in Ireland

The multi-national owned Ferenka steel-cord factory in Limerick, Southern Ireland was closed down for good last week. 400 workers were thrown on the dole, the day after they had returned to work after an eight week strike.

The factory was shut by an arbitrary decision of a management who had conned the workers and the Irish Government alike.

In their six years of operation in Limerick, Ferenka had received various grants from the government totalling over £7.5 million. They also had the benefit of paying wages whose rates were less than half those paid to Ferenka workers on the continent. It was such conditions which directly led to the eight week strike which Ferenka has used as the pretext for closing the factory.

The production line workers were fed-up at the class-collaborationist role their union, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union had played at Ferenka. The union had refused to make official any of the 14 strikes which had taken place at the plant in the last six years. Such inaction

persuaded the workers to seek another union so they joined the Marine Port General Workers Union.

Seeing the recruitment to the MPGWU as a sign of militancy the management sacked those leading the recruitment and the strike began. It was finally settled last week when the unions concerned agreed to a ballot of the workers to determine their wishes on union membership.

TWOFINGERED

But this settlement clearly annoyed Ferenka management. It opened the prospect of a real fight in the workplace for better jobs and conditions. So they closed the factory.

The whole affair is a striking illustration of the role of multi-national companies. Ferenka moved into Limerick with the promise of government aid and low wages. The unofficial strikes had meant the plant was not the goldmine the company had hoped. The latest strike had shown the determination of the workers to secure better treatment. Ferenka was having none of that. The

final cynical two-fingered gesture of the company was the announcement of the closures, which was in breach of government legislation stipulating that any company planning redundancies had to give 30 days notice prior to the dismissals.

The Ferenka workers have not taken the closure lying down. The plant is now occupied and suggestions are being made to turn the factory into a co-operative. But the workers need as much support as they can get. They are asking for workers at plants owned by Ferenka in Britain to pass messages of sympathy, send money and to boycott any Limerick work which is transferred to their factories. These include the following factories: British Enkalon at Thornaby Stockton on Tees, Leicester and Oadby-Leicester; Novadel, London; Interstab, Liverpool and Armour Hess Chemicals, Harrogate. Readers of *Socialist Challenge* are urged to get in touch with shop stewards at these factories and explain the Limerick situation. More information can be obtained, c/o Bottom Dog, 109 Malley Park, Limerick, Ireland.

For a united demonstration on Bloody Sunday!

THE MURDER of 14 civilians in Derry, on Bloody Sunday 1972 is the event which, above all others, symbolises British presence in Ireland. Ever since 1972 tens of thousands have marched in the streets of Ireland and Britain, not just to commemorate the deaths but to display a determination to resist British rule in Ireland.

In London the numbers marching on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday have declined steadily in the last couple of years. Last year's 1,500 was the lowest so far. The greatest single reason for this decline is the propaganda victories the British Government have achieved on Ireland in this country, persuading many that their role in Ireland is one of 'peace-keeping'.

There have been other reasons for the lack of

enthusiasm in turning out for Bloody Sunday. Each organisation or group which participates in Irish solidarity in this country has been guilty of sectarian mistakes.

One such mistake was this January's Bloody Sunday commemoration, which was closely associated with the Socialist Workers Party, being followed afterwards by a rally in the name of the SWP and the TOM.

Since then the TOM itself has split, and the new United Troops Our Movement has emerged as the major Irish solidarity movement in this country. But the scars of January's divisions remain and now Sinn Féin have declared their intention of organising next year's Bloody Sunday demonstration in opposition to last year's organisers. The Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee.

Sinn Féin is wary that the BSCC commemoration could be a repeat of this January and too closely associated with one particular organisation, the

SWP. So there is now the situation in which two demonstrations are being planned for next January.

The obvious need's stating: the only people who benefit from such divisions are those in the British war machine. To have one march led by an organisation dominated by the SWP and one led by Sinn Féin would be a sickening symbol of what Britain relies on to maintain its oppression in Ireland — the division and mistrust that exists between the British left and Irish Republicans.

Which explains why the IMG has issued an appeal for a united demonstration. Undoubtedly problems exist. There is always argument over who marches first, who the speakers will be, what the demands of the march should be. But given a desire on both sides to put the interests of the Irish solidarity movement above all else, there is no reason why a united demonstration cannot be agreed for next January.

Revolutionary unification in many countries Getting it back together

In the New Year a new weekly journal reflecting the views of the Fourth International will appear, combining the resources of the present Inprecor and Intercontinental Press. This important development symbolises the growth and consolidation of the Fourth International. BRIAN GROGAN reports.

In 1969 the Fourth International made a decisive turn to link up with the new rise of the world revolution. This turn and its consequences created internal divisions inside the International for eight years. Not only was the world movement divided between two international groupings — the International Majority Tendency and the Leninist Trotskyist Faction — but this division was reflected in splits in FI groups in a number of countries or the emergence of new currents coming towards the FI which declared for one side or the other. Recently this process has been reversed. Fusions have been

completed in Spain, Canada, Quebec, Mexico and Greece and there are others being prepared in Australia, Colombia and elsewhere. Both the IMT and LTF have dissolved, with convergences on many important questions. For instance, the seminal resolution on socialist democracy was recently adopted unanimously by the international leadership, even though it touched on a number of questions that had been disputed in the tendency fight. There is now agreement on perspectives in Spain and Portugal and on women's liberation and Eurocommunism. This is testimony to the

organisational principles of the FI. The right to form tendencies and factions, far from precipitating splits — as everyone expected — has guaranteed the integrity of the International and laid the basis for superceding political differences. This outcome has increased the attraction of the FI among the vanguard as it moves into discussion for the 11th World Congress to be held in late 1978.

The FI has increased tenfold since 1969. The various splinters which once claimed to be the Fourth International have either all but disappeared — as with the International Committee led by Gerry Healy, or the Latin American Bureau of Juan Posadas — or are in the process of opening talks with the FI — like the Organisation Communiste International of Pierre Lambert or the Alliance Marxiste Revolutionnaire led by Michel Pablo. The national fusions detailed on this page



confirm the trend. In Britain, where the FI group has remained intact, but other revolutionary groupings have multiplied, regroupment is only in its initial stages. We have much to learn from these international examples. The SWP-RMC fusion in the United States shows how groups with widely differing theoretical heritages can co-exist in a single organisation.

The RMC certainly drew this conclusion when it wrote to all the former International Socialist tendencies in Britain urging them to fuse with the FI. Colombia shows how a revolutionary newspaper can be used as the instrument of unification, while Greece, where we hope to see further developments towards Trotskyist unity in coming months, is a further example not just of the

desirability but of the practicality of regroupment. It would be foolish to take any of these instances as a blue-print for Britain — indeed the obstacles in Britain are far greater. But the spirit in which these fusions have been carried out, and the principles behind them, must serve as an example for the fragmented and insular British Trotskyist movement.

SPAIN

IN SPAIN the two FI sympathising organisations, the Communist League (LC) and Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), have ended five years of division by voting to form a common organisation. Opposition from three minority groups within the LC was voted down at its recent congress, but a large chunk of the minority has refused to unify. The LCR Central Committee unanimously approved the fusion. The new organisation will have a membership approaching

10,000, with a united youth organisation, also of several thousand. The LCR's weekly paper *Combate*, with a 30,000 circulation, will immediately become the joint paper of the LC and LCR.

ions of the FI in Australia, the Communist League and Socialist Workers' Party, have begun discussions on fusion and a thorough programme of joint work. The latest move has been the production of a joint paper, though with separately edited sections.

USA

A joint statement of the two organisations explains that: 'While political differences still exist... we recognise that these differences, largely of a tactical nature, can be encompassed within a single Leninist organisation. In fact, such political differences can lead to a healthy internal life of political

Marxist and Leninist principles which will unite the cadres of several existing groups and will form the basis of a genuine revolutionary party.'

AT THE convention of the Socialist Workers' Party (US supporters of the FI) in August, the Revolutionary Marxist Committee, formerly part of the International Socialists, fused with the SWP. The significance is not the numerical gain [which is small], but the fact that the RMC continues to maintain its analysis of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as state capitalist — a demonstration that it is possible to contain these fundamental differences of analysis within a single organisation.

CANADA

QUEBEC

THREE revolutionary Marxist groups in Canada and Quebec held congresses in Toronto and Montreal in July-August — the Revolutionary Marxist Group, Groupe Marxiste Revolution-

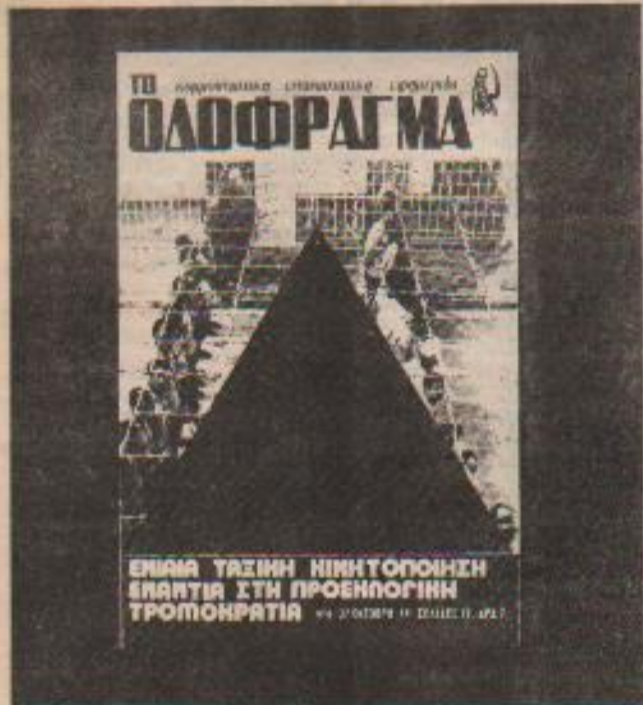


naire, and the League for Socialist Action / Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere. They decided to unify their forces in a new pan-Canadian section of the FI. This brought to an end the split which had existed in Canada since 1972-3. The new organisation, Revolutionary Workers' Lea-

gue / Ligue Ouvriere Revolutionnaire, reckons that it was the class struggle itself which pushed the groups towards fusion — in particular last year's general strike and the victory of the nationalists in the Quebec elections. Fourth International of a powerful centrist grouping, the Socialist Bloc. The latter formed the Socialist Workers' Party (PST) just a month before three other organisations came together to form the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the official supporters of the FI. Both organisations participated in a joint election campaign and adopted a common resolution on the recent general strike and its consequences.

COLOMBIA

IN COLOMBIA there has been both a fusion of Trotskyist groups and the move towards the



discussion and elaboration, disciplined by a single organisation's unity in action.'

THE IRISH section of the Fourth International, the Movement for a Socialist Republic, is working towards a fusion with People's Democracy, probably the best known revolutionary Marxist organisation in the North of Ireland. Already comrades from the two organisations have worked together in the Relatives' Action Committee in Belfast and the defence campaign for John McAuliffe, the secretary of PD held in jail on remand on a trumped-up charge.

IRELAND

Neither the MSR nor PD see the fusion as the final act, but as a step towards the regroupment of the whole Irish revolutionary left. A PD statement described the eventual aim as 'to create a new organisation based on

MEXICO

THE extraordinary congress of the Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP) in August saw the final stage of the unification of all Mexican Trotskyists. The RWP had been founded last year through the fusion of two



Fourth International. This congress created an organisation of more than 1,000 militants, through its fusions with the Socialist League, and a minority tendency of the Lambertist group, the Marxist Workers League. The RWP is now in a position to challenge the other major left tendency in

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GREECE

THE Organisation of Internationalist Communists (OKDE), the Greek section of the Fourth International, recently fused with the Communist Revolutionary Front (KEM), another Trotskyist organisation. The united organisation now publishes a new paper, *To Odofragma* (The Barricade), which replaces the OKDE's *Ergatike Pole* (Workers' Fight).

AUSTRALIA

TWO sympathising organisat-

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In Brief

WEST GERMANY: A number of army officers dressed in a parody of the SS uniform have beaten up a Jewish colleague. Witnesses say that they demanded 'the execution of the Jew'.

AUSTRALIA: Dockers and Labour Party representatives have condemned the arrival of Vietnamese refugees as a propaganda move. They point out that many Australian immigrants are still separated from their families under the immigration laws.

AUSTRALIA: A Royal Commission report has recommended the legalisation of incest for adults, lowered the age of consent, the introduction of homosexuality into sex education and the liberalisation of the abortion laws. The Government is thought to have leaked the report just before the general election to 'discredit' the Labour Party, which set up the commission when it was in government.

FRANCE: Régis Debray, who won the literary Femina prize, has given the 5,000 franc prize to the LCR, French section of the Fourth International.

RUMANIA: 2,000 troops are still stationed in the Jiu valley after the coal miners' strike there in August. Official promises over living conditions have not been met and many miners have been sacked and forcibly removed from the area.

N.KOREA: An extensive purge is in progress after the discovery of an alleged plot to overthrow party leader Kim Il-sung. Japanese business people report that 'scores of military officers have already been arrested.'

SAHARA: Polisario troops have launched attacks in the Moroccan-occupied sector of the Western Sahara around El-Aioun. 58 Moroccan troops were killed. The French have been flying much-publicised missions of Jaguar fighters over Mauritanian-occupied territory.

BOLIVIA: Dictator Hugo Banzer has announced that he will not be a candidate in the general election scheduled for July 1978. He says that the elections will proceed 'freely and peacefully' under the protection of himself and the armed forces!

YUGOSLAVIA: President Tito received an unexpected greeting on Yugoslavia's national day — from China's Chairman Hua Kuo-feng. Despite Mao's denunciation of Tito as a revisionist there has been a rapprochement between the two countries in recent months, particularly since Tito's visit Peking in August.

CHINA: A man in China has written to the People's Daily protesting at a noisy ventilator fan in the hotel next door. The hotel blames the noise on 'interference and sabotage' by the 'gang of four'. We would point out that a noisy fan is usually caused by something hitting it.

Racists rampage in Mozambique

Will the nationalists split?

The recent two-pronged moves by the racist regime in Rhodesia — the initiative for an 'internal settlement' with a wing of the nationalist movement coupled with a military offensive against the guerillas — threaten to create a highly dangerous situation in the country, writes ROY ALEXANDER:

It holds forth the prospect of the present political division in the nationalist movement being turned into a real physical split in the ranks of the Zimbabwean masses, with one wing becoming allied to white racist forces seeking to hold on to the basic content of their material privileges, while another remains committed to the overthrow of this regime.

SPLIT

The political split between Muzorewa, Sithole and Co. on the one hand, and the Patriotic Front on the other, have already weakened the struggle for national liberation. But at least they have left the fighting between nationalist guerillas and the white racists. If Smith's manoeuvres succeed, we will see instead black fighting black, while the racists take it easy on the sidelines.

There can be no doubt that if Muzorewa and Sithole agree to take part in such a venture it will be an act of first-rate treachery to the cause of Zimbabwe freedom. In the absence of any military forces of their own, a civil war will make them dependents of the racist state.

The purpose of the major military assault against the guerilla camps in Mozambique was to try and speed up the process, simultaneously showing Muzorewa and Sithole that the white

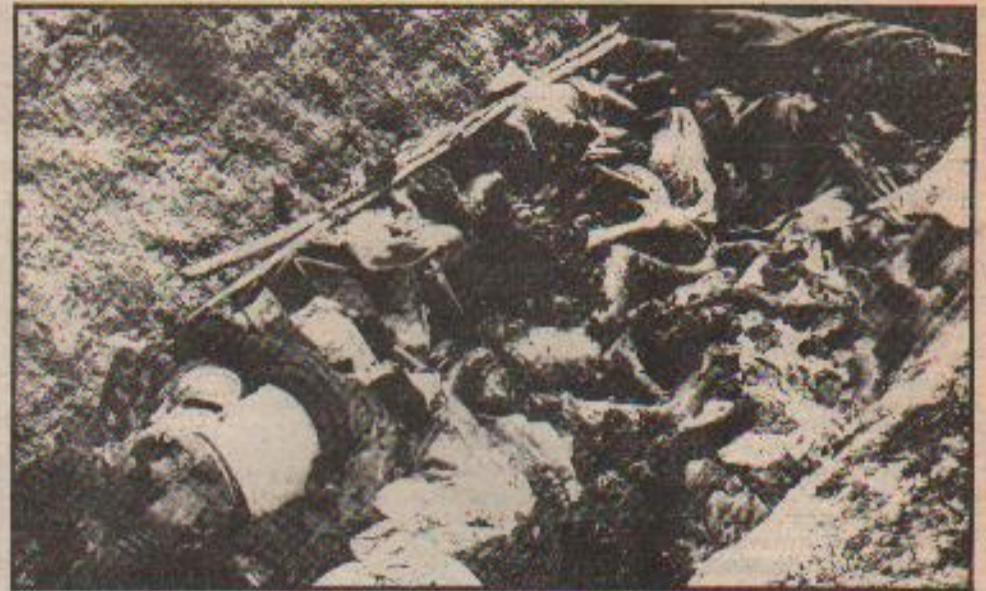
military forces were capable of dealing with the Patriotic Front and warning their supporters that collaboration was the only solution.

But the regime may have misjudged the situation, and taken this military action prematurely. The guerillas have great prestige inside the country, even among the militants of opposing organisations. That is why Muzorewa has always been careful to identify with the guerilla armies, even while denouncing their leaders.

This has forced Muzorewa to pull back, insisting on an explanation of the raid as a precondition to further negotiation. Similarly, Sithole has stated that his group must discuss matters further before entering into any talks with the regime.

TRAP

The crucial question is whether Muzorewa and Sithole can retain the allegiance of their present supporters while taking them into the trap of an alliance with the racists. Without their mass bases Muzorewa and Sithole would be useless to the racists — for puppets have long ago proved insufficient to stem the tide of struggle. That is why the Smith regime is prepared to



make real political concessions to sow up an effective deal with the 'internal' nationalists. But this will mean black organisations associating themselves with bloody actions like the Mozambique raids, and could well prove a very difficult deception to perpetrate.

In the past we have warned that the treachery and opportunism of people like Muzorewa cannot be fought by ignoring his mass influence or treating the ranks of his organisation in the sectarian fashion that the Patriotic Front has. Our words may prove prophetic: the sectarianism of the Patriotic Front, and the lack of any effort to unite with the base of

the ANC around a clear programme of struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe, is the greatest advantage that Muzorewa has today in seeking to hoodwink and confuse his followers.

But civil war cuts both ways. If the racists and their allies win, they may rest secure for at least another generation; but if they lose the gamble, then the anger of the victory is likely to sweep away every last vestige of white privilege. Smith is thus unlikely to commit himself too deeply to this course without first procuring support from imperialism, and through them the front-line states. This brings us to the final and

most important point. There can be no doubt where the main blame for the present dangers in Zimbabwe must lie: with imperialism, and the British Government in particular. The manoeuvres of Owen and Young have given the Smith regime the breathing space it needed to prepare the present plan; have encouraged the divisions in the nationalist ranks on which it is based; and, indeed, first suggested the whole insidious scheme. Owen's plan equally bases itself upon the aim of splitting the nationalists, the only difference being that he hopes to include a part of the Patriotic Front in the line-up. Smith and Owen disagree only over method — not over aims.

'Liberals' win 17 seats

Whites vote for apartheid

ELECTIONS for South Africa's parliament, like most things in that country, are for whites only. So it was no surprise that last week's general election produced a landslide in favour of Johannes Balthazar Vorster's ruling National Party, writes

JOHN HUNT. Over the past year Vorster had shown his determination to preserve the privileges of the white minority. Since the Soweto rising of June 1976 his police have murdered hundreds of black militants and imprisoned thousands more. South African whites rewarded him with 80 per cent of the parliamentary seats, thus committing themselves to the certainty of long and bloody confrontation with the struggle of the black masses.

OPPOSITION

But why did Vorster face any opposition at all? There was no opposition candidate who stood for anything as radical as the universal franchise. So what were the whites fighting among themselves about?

Vorster presents a slight problem for imperialist inter-

ests in South Africa. The National Party has worked to build up locally-based Afrikaner industries at the expense of the British, US, French and German multinationals operating in the country. State subsidies and state intervention in the economy have created a powerful Afrikaner capitalism. The support of the white workers for the Afrikaner capitalists' party has been secured by its demonstration that it is more intransigently committed to the defence of white supremacy than any other political force.

RACIST BLOC

Vorster's reliance on this racist bloc means that he is not attuned to the views of the multinationals. So the latter have found their political expression in the Progressive Reform Party, which won 17

seats. The PRP is prepared to make some concessions on democratic rights — giving blacks a qualified franchise based on property and education — so as to produce a political solution which, they think will secure the economic order.

IMPOSSIBLE

But it is impossible to win the mass of whites to such a view. That is why the PRP only won seats in urban upper middle class areas. The nature of the PRP is eloquently testified to by the backing it gets from the South African based multinational Anglo-American, many of whose executives hold leading positions in the party. For imperialism, Afrikaner nationalism, like Orange loyalism, is a Frankenstein's monster it cannot control, but is afraid to destroy.



VORSTER leaves a Pretoria polling station

AFTERSADAT WHAT?
IMG Public Meeting
Speaker: Jon Rothschild
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IS THERE a *third* road to socialism? According to Geoff Hodgson, neither the 'parliamentary' nor the 'insurrectionary' road to socialism has yet succeeded in any advanced capitalist country. Therefore we need what he calls a new 'strategic synthesis' of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action. This is what Hodgson has set out to chart in his new book *Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy*.

He argues that revolutionaries, especially in Europe, must take account of what he calls the 'legitimising' role of Parliament. Precisely because Parliament has 'legitimacy' in the eyes of the masses, measures passed in Parliament will stimulate struggle. As Hodgson writes: 'the flight of an idea is guided by the type of institution that is expounding that idea' (p.63). Thus, if Tony Benn MP argues for workers occupations, the idea will be taken up more readily than when revolutionaries do so. The equal pay legislation has stimulated strikes for the enforcement of the principle and spirit of those Acts (p.57).

And in his essay on Perry Anderson, Hodgson quotes the remark of Ken Coates: 'if soviets were ever to emerge in Britain then it would be, in all likelihood, in defence of the rights and prerogatives of Parliament to implement key reforms, against the actions of, for example, the House of Lords, the Civil Service, or the armed forces.' (p.127)

POPULAR POWER

However, there is a *dividing line* between insisting that socialists recognise that bourgeois parliaments do have a certain legitimacy in the eyes of the masses, and demanding that the working class and socialist movement *accept* this legitimacy. Yet Hodgson's case is that, whatever may be the exact role of soviets in the 'dialectic' of the revolutionary process, not only is a socialist majority in the bourgeois *parliament* essential, but the soviets themselves *must not hold the power*. (Theses 11 & 12)

Geoff Hodgson seeks to re-assure us on every other question. Yes, the socialist regime will have to protect itself by force, disarm counter revolution, nationalise key sectors of the economy, set up workers control, and build soviets to harness the energy of the masses. However the state instrument necessary for building socialism will have to *combine* the soviets and the Parliament, with the soviets acting as a 'supplement' or 'complement' to a supreme Parliament. Oh, and one last thing...we should drop the phrase 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' as it sounds undemocratic.

This idea of combining soviets with parliament is also found among the views of Nicos Poulantzas, as expressed in a recent discussion with Henri Weber (*International*, Vol 4, No. 1, Autumn 1977). It is, in fact, the hallmark of those who are at present seeking to find a third way between Eurocommunism on the one hand and traditional revolutionary Marxism on the other. The basic idea is that only a parliament can act as a check on the threat to democratic rights which the soviets are alleged to contain.

LIMITATIONS

For Poulantzas, the sin of the soviets is that they would seek to *mandate* delegates to the national soviet congress. But this is a red herring, since mandating of delegates is typical only of *federal* structures, like the British TUC, not of soviet-type bodies. For Hodgson, the danger appears to lie in the *width of the franchise* of the soviets: 'the soviet, while being an excellent body for mass action and agitation, has limitations as a universal representative body. We refer to the capacity of the soviet to claim the allegiance of all sectors of the working population' (p.76). According to him, housewives and the self-employed in particular would be under-represented in such a state.

CONFUSION

But Hodgson's claim lacks a serious foundation. He confuses *factory* soviets with soviets in general. In Russia, following the October revolution, *all*

A 'third' road to socialism?

Ruling class ideologists have for decades sought to reinforce the illusion that the masses exercise complete self-determination through a bourgeois parliament. In his new book Geoff Hodgson tends to accept that this illusion is a reality. DAVE BAILEY explains why he is profoundly mistaken.

sections of the working population (excluding exploiters, monks, and former officials of the Czarist police) were represented in soviets. Not only housewives and self-employed persons, but peasants too — not a stable ally of the factory proletariat — had soviets. Geographically based soviets (neighbourhood, city, district) and work-place soviets (factory, office, village) were interlinked so as to cover all these layers. Nor was it a matter of principle to deprive the bourgeoisie itself of representation in the soviets, as Lenin pointed out. Naturally, the *material* weight of factory workers is always, by the very nature of economic development, greater than that of other sections of the working population such as peasants or housewives. But this need not imply that the various electoral colleges would be differentially weighted in the soviet system (in Russia, for specific reasons, the urban soviets were disproportionately represented over the rural soviets in elections to national bodies).

The source of all these errors lie in a failure to understand the essential difference between the soviet system and the parliamentary system. It does not lie, as Hodgson and Poulantzas believe, on the terrain of *representation*. It lies in the fact that the soviets are not exclusively *electoral* bodies. This, by contrast, is *precisely* the limitation of a parliamentary constituency. In the soviet system, in addition to forming the primary electoral unit in the state, the mass assemblies which elected council members (some of whom would then be elected in turn to the national congress) also possess *executive power*. This is why Marx and Lenin called this type of state 'the self-government of the producers'.

And that is why it is not simply different from, but *superior* to, a parliamentary system. In the parliamentary system, for the very reason that workers' parties may from time to time win a majority, the bourgeoisie ensures the existence of a *permanent professional bureaucracy* capable of acting *independently* of parliament, accountable not to the masses or the electorate but to the banks. Thus a parliament is designed to *exclude* the masses from the work of administering the state. The soviet system does exactly the reverse — it draws the masses into the work of administration. In fact it is premised on the break-up of the power of the professional bureaucracy and rests instead on the administrative initiative of the masses.

It is this aspect of the matter that is totally absent from Hodgson's book. He even brushes it aside. Speaking of Marx's comments on the Paris Commune, Hodgson states: 'We cannot agree, however, (with Marx), that, in general, all bureaucracies have to be smashed. But, we can certainly agree that, in general, the means of reactionary military repression have to be smashed'. (p.28). In other words, the revolution is allowed to defend itself by force. That is 'legitimate'. But it must not turn over the administration of society to the producers themselves. But for Marxists, this is the nub of the whole question. For that is what is meant by the seizure of power.

The soviet system has the advantage, that as well as functioning as a broad system of representation, it places actual power in the hands of the masses. We can understand therefore, why Lenin and Trotsky never set themselves the aim of 'smashing parliament'. As the proletarian revolution extended and deepened the soviet system, the superiority of this

system would become so widely self-evident, that a purely representative body like parliament would simply fall into dis-use. It is therefore quite utopian to suggest that the masses will voluntarily limit the soviets to being 'grass-roots' bodies alongside a sovereign parliament, as Hodgson seems to imagine.

The *forcible suppression* of the Constituent Assembly (parliament) in Russia after the October revolution arose out of the more or less accidental circumstance that the lists presented to the electorate at the time of the election did not reflect the true state of the political parties. For in the meantime, the October rising had split the Social-Revolutionary Party into two. If the Assembly had been truly representative, however, it would have yielded the same result as the elections in the soviets; a Bolshevik-Left SR majority. In the event, the reactionaries seized on this artificial discrepancy and launched a civil war in the name of the 'democratic' Assembly. In the West, writers like Karl Kautsky (whose polemic with Lenin, Hodgson believes should be re-assessed), denounced the Bolsheviks as a 'minority dictatorship' and helped spread the myth that the essence of Leninism was the forcible suppression of Parliament. In reality, a properly representative Constituent Assembly in Russia would of itself have yielded sovereignty to the soviets, for that was the wish of a majority of the Russian people. As with the bourgeois family, you cannot *destroy* a bourgeois parliament, you have to *replace* it with something better.

The view that parliament and not the soviets should be sovereign (not that parliament might continue for a brief time under a workers state) leads logically to a denial of the socialist revolution. For it denies sovereignty to those bodies which alone are suited to realising the self-government of the producers. It leads to a denial of the need to seize state power. Nor do we have to await Hodgson's next book to prove this. It is already amply demonstrated in *Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy*.

In his book, Hodgson offers us an account of the German revolution of 1918-19, which is supposed to illustrate his views. He writes: 'Once the Kaiser had been overthrown they (the workers) naturally saw the next step as the creation of a liberal and egalitarian parliamentary republic. Due to social and political traditions in stark contrast to Russia, the German working class inclined towards parliamentarianism and rejected insurrection.' (p.41-2) This is a complete falsification of history.

What are the facts? In November 1918, a series of risings and mutinies against the Kaiser broke out all over Germany. In the course of these, councils of workers, sailors and soldiers were set up all over the country. In many places, these armed councils became, for a brief while, the *de facto* public power. The Kaiser abdicated, and the Social-Democratic Government of Scheidemann was formed in Berlin, formally based on the councils, and committed to ending the war.

In December 1918, a National Congress of these workers and soldiers councils met in Berlin. The delegates were overwhelmingly right wing social democrats who voted for the Government proposal that the councils give way to a National Assembly: what became the Weimar parliament. The elections to the Assembly were to be held in January 1919.

For Hodgson, this proves that the main line of advance for the Spartacists should

have been to have 'campaigns (in the Assembly) for *parliamentary legitimisation* and support for armed workers' councils', (p.43, emphasis in original) The isolation of the Spartacist rising, it is suggested, illustrates that the German workers at the time saw only a 'liberal and egalitarian parliamentary republic' as the 'next step', not rule by the councils.

However, Hodgson only shows his ignorance of the German revolution. His account ends where in reality the rising of the Germany proletariat only begins. *For between January and March 1919 every major proletarian centre in Germany launched an armed insurrection aimed at re-asserting the sovereignty of the workers councils!* The North Sea ports, the Ruhr, Saxony, all rose. The second great rising in Berlin itself in March was only put down with the aid of aircraft and artillery. Over 2,000 revolutionaries were killed in Berlin alone. Finally, in April there was the famous Munich rising.

ARMED STRUGGLE

In Hodgson's account, this struggle, nothing short of a civil war, is not even mentioned! In other words, at precisely the time that the National Assembly was opening at Weimar, when, on Hodgson's account, you would expect all working eyes to be looking to the Assembly in hopeful anticipation that their cause would be 'legitimised', what were the workers actually doing? Launching armed bids for power all over Germany, despite and against this very same National Assembly, against the Government that had betrayed their councils, and against the Freikorps who were defending both!

The failure of the German revolution did not result from the refusal of the Spartacists to confront the alleged illusions of the German workers through the National Assembly. As Trotsky justly remarked at the time: 'No one takes note of the creative labours of the Scheidemannist Constituent Assembly, no one in the world is interested in it.' No, the German revolution was crushed by the Freikorps, and failed because there was no party able to co-ordinate the risings. (All of which is not to say that the Spartacists should not have been present in the Assembly, as Luxemburg argued.)

Germany illustrates the inevitable fate of bourgeois parliaments in a revolution. In Germany, the workers found no attractions in a Constituent Assembly because real power lay with the armed councils, a *higher* form of democracy than the parliament. In Portugal in 1975, the workers showed little interest in a future Constituent Assembly, for they could see that the actual social content of any institutional form would depend in practice on who controlled the armed forces, that is who held the power. That is why the MFA council was at the centre of everybody's concern.

ESSENTIAL FLAW

In revolution it is generally the *reaction* that raises the slogan of a bourgeois parliament — precisely in order to counterpose this inferior form of democracy to the newly emerging superior form. For Hodgson, however, because Parliament must be sovereign, even after the seizure of power, the workers must agree to confine their councils to the 'grass roots' and fight for a 'socialist majority' in the parliament which the reaction is trying to convene!

The essential flaw in Hodgson's views is to fail to see that the 'legitimacy' of parliament is *relative* and not absolute. This is true even in non-revolutionary situations, when all classes in society fight against acts of parliament which don't coincide with their immediate interests — strikes against the Industrial Relations Act by the workers, sabotage of nationalisation legislation by the bosses, spring immediately to mind. In time of crisis however — war, growth of fascism, onset of workers' revolution — the powerlessness of parliament, which flows from its very nature, becomes starkly obvious to all classes, and it is either shunted aside or used as nothing more than a *ruse de guerre* by one side or the other. The very representativeness of parliament, in which Hodgson finds its virtue, speaks against it, for in such crises everyone knows that mere *voting* settles nothing.

'Checklist' method not good enough

IRISH Republicanism is one of the oldest revolutionary national liberation movements in Europe, expressing as it does the continuity of the Irish revolutionary tradition from 1798 through to the present day and directing its attention to the still uncompleted task of unifying Ireland. In the present anti-imperialist struggle the Provisional Republican movement is the almost unchallenged leadership, being virtually hegemonic over the militants in the besieged ghettos of the North. It gained this position for essentially

two reasons: first, because it was the only organisation able to respond to the immediate needs of armed self-defence in Belfast and Derry in 1970 and afterwards.

Second, it was the only organisation of any significant social weight which understood the key significance of the events of 1969, i.e. that the mass challenge of the Civil Rights movement had been transformed into a direct challenge to the British occupation. The Provisional's programme, with all its inherited contradictions, gave

consciousness to the anti-imperialist movement that had erupted in the Six Counties. Given the debacle in Belfast in August 1969 the creation of the Provisional IRA was on balance a massive gain for the Catholic population.

These are surely the starting points of any materialist assessment of 'Irish Republicanism Today'. They are not, however, even referred to in Bill Richards' article in 'Surplus Value' (Socialist Challenge, 24 November) whose 'checklist' method of comparing formal programmes

seems mainly to have the purpose of stating the obvious, that the Provos are not Trotskyists. In as much as he points to the historic need of a mass revolutionary Marxist party and the need for a qualitative break from Republican ideology and methods of organisation in order for it to be achieved, nothing Richards says is incorrect. But this requires an explanation of the permanent nature of the Irish revolution, the material basis for the strength of Republicanism and the weakness of Irish Trotskyism. Nothing much of such analysis is present in the article.

Instead the comrade wanders from the level of historical abstraction into a discussion of the tactics needed today without examining the concrete conditions of struggle. The armed resistance remains a central and necessary component for the simple

reason that there is an occupation army tramping Irish streets, whose bullets do not discriminate between 'terrorists' and mass work activists. The problem is of the relationship of military action and mass action in a combined political offensive. The real test of the Provisional's programme (i.e. the way forward they offer the struggle) is the test of their action and not at all of Eire Nua. Similarly the real debates in the movement (for historical reasons) are hardly ever likely to be found in a Sinn Fein Ard Fheis.

There is a qualitative difference in the weight that should be attributed to the speech made by Jimmy Drumm at Bodenstown and Ruairi O'Bradaigh's Presidential address for the simple reason that the two speeches have fundamentally different functions in the Republican structures and are understood

differently by Republican militants. Given the 'diplomatic' role assigned to Sinn Fein leaders it is likely that Drumm's is a nearer expression of policy in the North. Taken with other evidence it points to a real attempt by militants in the North to come to grips with the contradictions between the immediate needs of the struggle and some of the inadequacies in 'traditionalist' Republican response. While revolutionary Marxists refuse to enter that concrete debate the vacuum is being filled by the writings of Mao, Castro, Guevara and Debray. It is these 'programmes' the Fourth International should intervene against, not the straw theories of Eire Nua which bear little relation to the living resistance in the North.

GEOFF BELL

In defence of my comrade

I WRITE in defence of my comrade (whom I have known for ten years) Chris Hale, who accepted a contract which appeared to involve compilation for welfare purposes of Iranian student statistics. It is obvious to everyone, not least to Chris, that, though a dupe of the Iranian secret police, he nonetheless acted with venial stupidity, that accepting the contract is a black mark against him and that the SWP can do none other than expel him for such a dangerous blunder.

None of Chris's many friends and comrades here in Canterbury has the tiniest doubt of his moral innocence. Stupid and greedy, yes. Treacherous and complicit in SAVAK's crimes — No! I respect Chris' unswerving socialism and would, if necessary, trust him with my lifetomorrow.

The SWP correctly sent down an investigative commission which found Chris culpable of gross political error and decided to expel him immediately for such a drastic breach of security and discipline. However, Haffas, Povey & Co., assured him that they were satisfied of his moral innocence, that they would print only a general warning not to trust official Iranians and that the paper would clarify his innocence of any intent to betray our Iranian friends and comrades or any taint of being a Shah's agent.

This week's edition of Socialist Worker carries an attack on the Shah's regime and directly accuses Chris Hale of being a SAVAK agent and of having masqueraded as a socialist. I need not emphasise to you what a terrible accusation for a socialist, blood-money and betrayal is. The stink of it will always linger.

Equally important with the appalling personal damage done to Chris by this distortion is what it reveals about the SWP. Certainly he has behaved with culpable negligence and

in that sense, has brought some of this upon himself. However, the SWP, knowing he was morally innocent of being a deliberate agent, have consciously slandered his name for a dramatic piece of political gossip. This opportunism outstrips any previous undemocratic action by the SWP.

I do hope you will print this, in whole or in part, both to expose the frightening Stalinism of the SWP and to clear the name of a genuine if foolish socialist.

LORRAINE HEWITT
(Canterbury)

*The real point at issue is why the SWP chose to label Chris Hale as a SAVAK agent. It can only be because any other explanation would leave the party with embarrassment at explaining how its membership could be at such a pitifully low political level. The other thing which emerges from the Socialist Worker piece is the cover-up of the collages' role. We learn that "The heads replied freely to a lecturer at an English university. They might have been less forthcoming if the letter had come from the Iranian embassy itself."

But, as anyone who read the Socialist Challenge article would know, Hale's letter to the collages stated that the survey is being carried out on behalf of the Iranians. And the collages have in the past been extremely forthcoming with information on similar surveys carried out by the embassy itself. The fact was made clear to the author of the Socialist Worker article by both Hale and Socialist Challenge.

The reason for the cover-up is simple. It was the SWP Control Commission which destroyed all records of the collages which gave Hale information. As we explained last week, this could have provided the basis for a student campaign against collaboration with the Iranian dictatorship.

Having undermined that possibility the SWP uses its press to launch a massive witch-hunt. Not against the collages, not against the Iranian lecturer who set up the survey — but against Hale, who was no more than a pawn in the whole operation. RICHARD CARVER and CHRIS O'BRIEN.

What attitude towards Republicanism?

BILL RICHARDS' article on 'Irish Republicanism Today' (Socialist Challenge, 24 November) deserves to be corrected, both politically and factually. One of the many points of factual inaccuracy concerns the allegation that only a 'minority' of Irish people support a United Ireland. It should be noted that Connor Cruise O'Brien (England's favourite Irishman) made precisely the same charge some weeks ago and was refuted by many Irish commentators including the TOM, the Irish Labour Party (from which O'Brien was immediately forced to resign) and even the author of the statistics who he chose to manipulate in furtherance of his charge. This is an unfortunate parallel!

On the charge of anti-communism (more parallels — this time with Stalinist Official Republicans) Richards at one and the same time admits that such conference motions were 'roundly defeated' at the Provisional's Ard Fheis, but insists that this is irrelevant because the counter-arguments were not strictly Marxist as he saw, and, incidentally, distorted them.

The allegation that the 'most worrying aspect' of the Provo's programme concerns women almost defies comment. Firstly, to say that they are 'no different from the Catholic hierarchy' is both slanderous and historically ignorant. More crucially it is simply not the function of British socialists to hector the Irish resistance movement on their positions within Irish society; our duty is to support Irish people against our own Government. If Irish socialists and feminists wish to take up the women's question within the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland we would regard it as a positive development, but our position in Britain demands that as our first priority we stop advising the Irish and start supporting them instead.

In this regard, Richard's article was a classic example

of the British left's tendency to substitute safe, and sometimes untruthful, criticism for the difficult task of building support for Ireland's right to national self-determination.

PADDY PRENDIVILLE
NAOMI BRENNAN
JANE CRAWFORD
VON MCCLAREY
MARGARET FLATMAN
CATHY DOLAN
ALISON DEWRIE
HUGH LANNING

Jewish socialists

THE following resolution was passed without dissent at the close of a joint discussion attended by eight supporters of Socialist Challenge and six members of the Jewish Socialists Group on Wednesday 2 November in north Manchester.

"This joint meeting of Socialist Challenge and the Jewish Socialists Group believes that the mutual recognition of the national rights of both the Jews of Israel and the Palestinian Arabs is a basic precondition for the united struggles of both peoples for socialism and peace in the Middle East."

The meeting took place in a cordial and comradely atmosphere and a further meeting has been arranged for 1 December to discuss the question of Soviet Jewry.

A. LEWIS (Secretary, Jewish Socialists Group)

Socialist Challenge
WE ACCUSE....
...THE LABOUR GOV'T OF ARSON AND MURDER IN DEFENCE OF THE BOSSES PAY POLICY!

This striking solidarity poster has been produced by Birmingham Socialist Challenge supporters. It is led on bright yellow. Order some now — 13 for 50 posters, plus postage. Ring the Socialist Challenge Centre: tel. 021-643-9300. For further details.

Socialist Challenge EVENTS

NORTH WEST

For details of activities in the NW write or ring the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, Third Floor, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. 021-238 2352.
Open Tuesday 8-9pm, Thursday 6-8pm, Saturday 10-1pm. Room available for meetings. Duplicating facilities available.

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-238 2352.

BURY Socialist Challenge group meets every Wednesday, 8pm, at the Wheeliepub, in Bury New Road, Whitefield (near Whitefield bus and train station).

LIVERPOOL Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at the Dolphin, Canning Place.

LIVERPOOL Socialist Challenge Banquet, Thursday, 15 December, Havana Club, Colquhoun Street, 10pm-2am.

SCOTLAND

For information on Socialist Challenge contact Scottish Socialist Socialist Challenge bookshop, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow (Tel: 041-221 7481). Open weekdays 10-4. Late closing Thursday 5.00pm. Wide range of FI publications.

DUNDEE Information about Socialist Challenge activities from 84 Queen Street, Glasgow. Join in SC sales outside Boots (corner of Reform Street) each Saturday, 11am-2pm.

SCOTLAND Speaker: Ceia Pugh. **HAMILTON**: Monday 12 December, 'The Problems of Women's Liberation'.

PAISLEY: Tuesday, 13 December, 1pm Paisley Tech, Students Union, 'The Problems of Women's Liberation'.

GLASGOW: Tuesday, 13 December, Socialist Challenge Forum, 7.30pm, 84 Queen Street, 'Socialism and Feminism'.

EDINBURGH: Wednesday, 14 December, Socialist Challenge Forum, 7.30pm, Edinburgh Trades Council Halls, 21 Adelphi, Union Street, 'Socialism and Feminism'. Further information — ring Aberdeen 43696. All members of the Women's Liberation Movement welcome. Open discussion and debate.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Keravan, 12 Marchmont Grove, Edinburgh. Tel: 031-348 0468.

SOUTH WEST

PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge readers group every Monday, 7.30pm at Wiltshire pub upstairs, Hampshire Terrace.

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge group meeting, Thursday, 15 December 8pm, 'Punk Rock' Anchor pub, East Street.

LONDON

GREENWICH/LEWISHAM Socialist Challenge group meets every two weeks. For details ring Ray on 01-659 1187.

CAMDEN Socialist Challenge group meets every second and fourth Thursday of each month in Kerfish Town. For details ring Neil on 328 8288 or write Neil c/o PO Box 50, London N1.

SOUTHALL Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details phone 01-573 5395.

BRENT Socialist Challenge group. For details of meetings write c/o London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

SOUTHWEST LONDON Socialist Challenge supporters meet every two weeks in Baltessea. Further information from 26 Latchmere Road, London SW11. Last meeting before Xmas at York Library, Wye Street, SW11, 7.30pm, Speaker: Peter Cooper, Wednesday, 14 Dec.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge readers' group meets fortnightly West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road (off West Green Road, nearest tube Turnpike Lane). Next meeting: Monday 12 December, 7.30pm. 'The fight against racism and fascism'. Speakers from the local labour movement.

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. Anyone interested please contact PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

BASINGSTOKE Socialist Challenge readers' group. Next meeting, Tuesday 13 December, 8pm, Pritchard Room, Chute House, Church Street. Speaker: Bob Pennington on 'Socialist Unity'.

HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly — next meeting Thursday 15 December. Details from: London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

EAST LONDON Socialist Challenge meeting, 'Abortion — A Woman's Right to Choose', Speaker: Judith Watson from NAC Steering Committee, 7.30pm in The Britannia, Mare Street, Hackney (next to Townhall), Monday, 12 December.

From Kropotkin's memoirs

The old peasant pushed his way through, through the line of police, through the soldiers double row, fell at the feet of the Tsar. He held in his hand the petition pleading for justice, telling of grievance and wrong.

Fell at the feet of the Tsar, crying: Father, defend us!

Serf from a far, lone village, toriorn in the depths of the land. Whence came the will, came the courage? God knows? No, the gods do not know. Only the peasants know.

Young Kropotkin, a page at the Court, there near to the Tsar, saw the shudder of fear that passed through his frame.

Father, defend us! In that cry ages of brutal oppression.

He paused not one moment to look at the paper Kropotkin in fellowship took. With a tremor at fear the Tsar passed on.

That was more than a hundred years ago, you say? My friend, it was only yesterday they seized the old peasant and threw him in jail, no one knows for how long.

Still with us — police and soldiers and prisons: the state.

Cries from the past that summon to the battle not yet won.

Hugo Dewar

'You don't have to be Black to enjoy Black Joy' say the ads. But ABA DADZIE considers

It helps if you're a racist

'Com'on Babe', declares the suave, leather-jacketed boyfriend as he arrives to take his girl out, 'We're gonna have a night out in Brixton.' 'Brixton', she gasps, with neatly manicured hand to mouth, and eyes wide with horror at the thought of spending the evening in the company of all those black muggers and rapists.

'You must have seen the ads for the Black Joy album — it's a swinging new film shot in Brixton', he assures her; and off they go to spend two hours in the secure, celluloid world of the Odeon. 'You don't have to be black to enjoy Black Joy', she croons in conclusion.

This is the racist ad which appeared in the national press to promote *Black Joy* — fair warning for what is an overtly racist film, full of insulting stereotypes and equally insulting racist jokes.

Despite its heavy promotion, the film can only be described as very poor. It is, for the most part, badly acted, and

the 'story' — such as it is — is slow moving, unconvincing and extremely boring. It revolves around the central character Country Boy, who arrives in cold unwelcoming Britain — Brixton, to be more exact — to be confronted in quick succession by 'muggers', crooks, hustlers and cheats, all of whom (incidentally) are



Country Boy (Trevor Thomas) at the beginning of his 'education' with hustler Dave (Norman Beeton)

black. Unperturbed by this nasty intimidation, he quickly finds his way to the local dole office, where (after receiving some friendly advice from one of the regulars, a Rastafarian brother, on how to procure one's dole cheque without any of the normal bureaucratic delays) he is immediately given a job as a dustman.

UNEMPLOYED

Presumably, the disproportionate number of unemployed black youth in Brixton must either consider such work to be too degrading, or cannot have seriously searched for work; for Country Boy clearly demonstrates how 'easy' it is to step off the plane and into a job, especially if you're black and unqualified.

Country Boy's more worldly-wise friend (alias Sam of *The Forsters*) — who specialises in hustling women, hanging out in the local bookies, gambling and collecting his social security cheques — is delighted at this encouraging start. He is even more delighted when he can demonstrate his innate prowess at ripping people off and procuring 'pussy'.

Having taken from Country Boy what must amount to at least his first month's wages — as rent for a mattress on his kitchen floor, reimbursement for time lost with a prostitute, miscellaneous loans to be reinvested at the local bookies, and so on — he offers to give Country Boy advice on his first sexual initiation. This begins with a peep show depicting the 'black man's fantasy' of a black stud fucking a white woman; and it culminates in an equally inevitable visit to a white prostitute.

STEREOTYPES

Throughout the film, Country Boy naively allows himself to be swindled and deceived by a succession of black men and women. All the age-old stereotypes — good for nothings, hustlers, rip off artists and prostitutes — parade across the screen, perpetuating the self same myths created by white racism.

MASOCHISTIC

With one or two exceptions, the black women in the film

are presented as masochistic sex objects whose conversation rarely revolves around anything else than the availability or otherwise of their 'pussy', while their male counterparts spend much of the time sniffing around in search of it. This is described in the ads as 'grown up fun'.

RACIST JOKES

These racist stereotypes are nicely supplemented by a number of racist jokes, such as the incident where a white dustman calls his (black) mate: 'Hey, I hear you're cutting down the trees in this street, so it looks as if you lot are going to have to walk to work like everybody else'. Only black people with a 'chip on their shoulder' could possibly object to such harmless comedy — a rationalisation which has been used by the racists to justify such insults since time immemorial on the assumption that racism ceases to be racism once an element of humour is introduced.

Despite all this, many black people have praised *Black Joy*, claiming that they found it 'typical', 'funny', 'true to life' and 'a pleasant change to see black faces on the screen'.

As the very first commercial film by and about black people in Britain, it is clear that many have watched it unanalytically, perhaps feeling that to criticise it would be disloyal. However, it is precisely because *Black Joy* is the first film of its kind that anti-racists should come out and openly denounce the debased and degenerate image of black people which this film is pushing.

At a time of increasing racist attacks on the black community and rapid mobilisation by fascist organisations, can black people afford to adopt a liberal attitude towards such racism in the mass media? With the National Front pushing the myth of 'immigrants' arriving in Britain, taking white jobs and sponging off the state, can black people afford to support such films as, which push exactly the same myths?

I believe we must denounce *Black Joy* and expose all such attempts to make black people the scapegoats for the failings of Britain's capitalist economy.

Black Joy is presently showing at some London Odeons, in the Midlands, East Anglia, and Oxford.

How to raise goons by courtesy of IPC

2,000AD, published by IPC, is the latest thing in comics, with stories set in imaginary futures. Aimed at those in their early teens, its main selling point is the graphic detailing of extraordinary violence.

The stories are distinguishable by a lack of imagination that is truly prodigious, observes our reviewer JANICE MILLS.

The comic is best known for having revived Dan Dare of *Eagle* fame. But the 1977 Dare bears little resemblance to the 1950's version. In 2,000AD he has been revived from suspended animation in the year 2177, having acquired a new hair style and personality to match — both extremely nasty. Gone are the Boy Scout morals of the earlier creation. In

their place, a trigger-happy bully whose only saving grace is a determined disrespect for authority.

In this regard he bears a remarkable resemblance to every other hero in the comic as well as an armada of film and TV leading roles. The Mekon — Dare's old arch enemy — has also been revived: he is unchanged. But in any case there's not much you can do with a murderous green midget who wants to conquer the universe.

The plot moves with all the subtlety of a steam shovel. Dare is captured, tortured, escapes, and returns to bring the Mekon to justice. All this in a setting that gives the term science fiction a whole new meaning. A plant inside a star. They would have been better advised to call it a snowball in hell.

Another recent serial was *Flesh*, involving time-travellers visiting the Jurassic period to kill dinosaurs for meat. The tale came to an end when both sides had eaten each other with the help of some giant spiders. It has been succeeded by *Shako*. This

features a polar bear eating CIA agents. Which, I must say, is the nearest 2,000AD gets to a good idea.

These and the other stories are presided over by an editorial column authorised by an alien called Tharg, thus proving that IPC employs at least one *Private Eye* reader. Here it is claimed, with some credibility, that the stories are written by robots. In an obvious reference to IPC's industrial relations policy, Tharg tells readers that when mistakes appear in the comic the robot responsible is disintegrated.

AERO BALL

Practically all the stories bear a close relation to popular books and films. *Harlem Heroes*, for instance, is about a game called aero-ball, which is just roller ball fifty feet above the ground. *Mach One* is the bionic man with the addition of a built-in computer.

There is a fair amount of explicit politics in 2,000AD. *Invasion* is about British resistance (led by the usual butch hero) after conquest by a nation called the Volgans. For

the benefit of its readers who don't get the pun, the enemy soldiers wear Russian uniforms. Needless to say, they are motivated by a bloodlust second only to the hero's. The dialogue, when it transcends grunts and groans, consists of statements about what an excellent thing it is to be British.

Similarly *Mach One*, sent in issue 25 to rescue hostages from the third world terror group, dismisses the idea of negotiating for the hostages lives with the poetic words: 'I'm not here to chat up thugs, chum! Actions more my line!' Whereupon he proceeds to effect one rescue by turning the terrorists into meat paste.

All this sounds pretty dreary. However the comic has a redeeming feature. Really. The final story each week is *Judge Dredd*. Set in Mega City One, which appears to be the New York of the future, Dredd is actually a policeman — whose job by that time also includes those of judge and jury.

This particular future, I am pleased to report, is as camp as a

row of tents. Judge Dredd is clad in form-fitting leather gear. His servant, a robot called Walter, pronounces all its R's as W's. Their relationship is constructed around such endearments as: 'Off your knees, you snivelling hunk of tin'.

Judge Dredd is also noteworthy in that it is the only story in which women appear, apart from in crowd scenes. Here the female characters are not depicted as any more stupid or unpleasant than the male and sexless ones. 2,000AD is informed throughout by the image of the 'natural', brutal, hairy-chested man.

The tongue-in-cheek style of *Judge Dredd* avoids the worst of these kind excesses. But it also brings the directly political meaning far closer to the surface. Each episode ends with a neat little homily. A typical sample: 'No way you could win — playing against the law.'

Throughout the stories there is an almost mystical worship of the law. Conduct and moral worth are measured exclusively

by legal criteria. The worst atrocities are permitted, provided you are on the side of the law. Required reading, I would have thought, for all magistrates, and especially D. Oakley!

There is a lesson here. Twenty years ago the producers of comics felt an overwhelming confidence in their ability to promote middle class morality. The *Lion*, *Eagle*, and *Boy's Own Paper* openly sought to produce clean patriotic young Britons. 2,000AD has abandoned the morals of its predecessors. Its greatest hope is to produce fear of authority. This is no testament to middle class morality. It is evidence of the turpitude produced in society by a ruling class in decline. 2,000AD is read by thousands of youngsters. IPC wants them all to grow up as goons.

2,000AD is published weekly at (according to the page one box) 9p Earth Money, South Africa 30c, Mercury 17g, Asteroid Belt 20g, etc.

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Big Red Diary 1978 for every subscriber from December's *Leveler*.

Out now with: Provisional IRA Interview, Beader-Meinhol prison writings, Italian Left, Hong Kong corruption, Advertising industry, Farm drugs, the Politics of Punk. £5 subscription. 36p single copies from good newsagents or direct from us at 155a Drummond St, London NW1.

Holidays in Argentina

They held him for hours by his thumbs
Someday I must try this method

For the sake of the country
Justice
And to satisfy my search for the Novel
If the thumbs stay where they are
And the body drops
We will know scientifically
That a man's thumbs cannot bear the weight of a body
Attached to it
And if he screams we will have discovered

The law
'every time a man loses his thumbs he screams'
Or
'whenever a man is guilty he loses his thumbs'
Or
'if he does not scream he is not really a man'
Of course we must include *ceteris paribus*
That he is not unconscious
Dead
Or faking the screams

RON PRATT, December 1977

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Doctor 'Palmerston' Owen sends in the gunboats



'Gunboat diplomacy' is a rather disparaging term. Those who use it like to pretend that dispatching British troops all over the globe was just a quaint idiosyncrasy of the Palmerston era. But gunboat diplomacy is alive and well and living in Bermuda... or Ireland, Belize, or the Green Goddesses on the streets of Britain.

Everywhere the Government has a problem it is adopting the instant remedy of military intervention. And it is a Labour Government which is responsible.

In the late 1960s it was Labour which sent the troops into Ireland and Anguilla — and no prizes for guessing the Minister responsible in each case.

It is the Labour Government which continues to supply elite SAS troops to the Sultan of Oman, and then hires out those

troops to the Dutch, the Germans or any other European Government with a 'terrorist' problem. Remember it was British troops who led the Mogadishu attack.

And now, after a test run in the Central American colony of Belize in the summer, it is Bermuda.

From the press you would think that we were back in the days of Palmerston — the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers pops off to a colony to sort out a few

uppity natives.

But the responsibility for the Bermuda events lies squarely with the British Government. The execution of two blacks — Tacklyn and Burrows — last Friday was the first since 1943. Dozens of whites on similar charges have got relatively mild treatment.

The difference in this case is that they were two black men in a colony where the police, judiciary and government are exclusively white.

Fearing reaction from the overwhelmingly black population, the Government, headed by millionaire David Gibbons, and Governor Sir Peter Ramsbotham (late of Washington) deferred to London.

Go ahead, said David Owen, Labour's debonair and humane Foreign Secretary, after all they're only blacks — and if you have any bother we'll send in the gunboats.



This is not an exclusive picture from Bermuda (unfortunately), but two squaddies getting themselves rather well on a London street.

Photo: MARTIN SLAVIN

The blacks of Bermuda have treated this sort of callous racism with the contempt it deserves. The standard bearers of world socialism responded with predictable speed in dispatching their Belfast-trained Fusiliers, replete with riot shields, batons, tear gas, rubber bullets and sten guns.

Among other things the invading Brits will be helping out with the fire service — whether the next fleet of RAF Hercules will be mercifully taking a few Green Goddesses has yet to be confirmed! We can expect more murder before the Fusiliers go back to the more familiar tasks of 'keeping the peace' in Belfast

and Derry.

This expedition — the second to the Caribbean in six months — raises the possibility of still further outings for British troops in the coming months. Most dangerous is the possibility of an intervention in southern Africa.

Already a British Field Marshal has been appointed to guarantee imperialist rule in Zimbabwe. It is unlikely that the

British will go in on their own — more probably they would form part of a multinational force — but the readiness with which Owen is prepared to bolster white rule in the Caribbean does not bode well for the black masses of Zimbabwe.

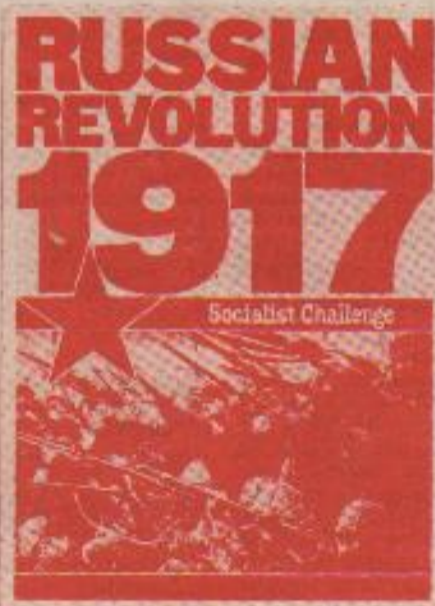
When the troops went into the Bogside in 1969 they were welcomed with cups of tea. When they arrived in Bermuda

all they got were firebombs and missiles. The world has learnt a lot about the British army in the last few years — the British labour movement should learn the same lessons and demand: **BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF BERMUDA!**

*Caribbean Labour Solidarity has organised a picket of the Foreign Office at 6.00pm, Wednesday 7 December.

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION SPECIAL Price 50p

Socialist Challenge offers you a 16 page colour special on the Russian Revolution. The design, by David King, complements a hitherto unpublished manuscript by Isaac Deutscher. This text contains contemporary accounts of Bolsheviks in 1917. The price for this splendid souvenir marking the 60th anniversary of the revolution is only 50p plus 10p p&p.



*Russian Revolution Special, 50p plus 10p p&p.
 *1978 May '68 Poster Calendar, £1 plus 30p p&p.
 *Grunwick mass picket painting by Dan Jones, £2 plus 10p p&p.
 *All three publications £3.30 post free, and no need to include p&p costs if you are ordering any two of the publications.
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Name of donor.....
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 Address of recipient.....

LABOUR SAVING CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

If you want to send any of these as a Christmas present use this form. Better still, use it to send yourself a present!

Fund drive breaks £200

£229.74. That's how much our supporters sent into the fund drive this week. For the first time since Socialist Challenge was launched, the weekly donations have topped £200. Of this week's total, £69 came from tax rebates. Our

Preston supporters discussed the idea, and then sent off £24 from Healey's hand-out. We look forward to receiving

many more of our readers' tax rebates. Another highlight of the week was the £26 from readers in the Rover car plant at Solihull.

Our Leicester supporters sent in the first installment of what they describe as Lenin's levy. They have promised us even more when their tax rebates come through. One of their ideas has been to collect British and foreign postage stamps and then sell them.

They are making an offer to all our readers and supporters groups to deal with the stamps. What you have to do is collect the stamps and then send them to Socialist Challenge. We will send them on to the Leicester comrades who will do the necessary work and then credit the proceeds to you in the fund drive.

This week's two hundred topping donations brings the cumulative total to £1,347.52. To be on target for £1,800 by the New Year we should have made £1,384. So no complacency. Keep sending the

money in, especially tax rebates! This week our thanks to:

M. Kahn	2.00
Manchester ASTMS supporters	4.00
Anon.	14.00
South London readers sponsored swim	15.00
Supporters in NAC	0.80
M. Waleczek	0.75
Oxford supporters	9.09
J. Crespin	10.00
Stoke reader	16.00
S. Walinets	0.40
C. Carter	2.50
R. Blackwell	1.00
'Blondie'	1.00
M. Ball	5.00
D. Boyle	2.00
Preston supporters	24.00
J. Strauther	10.00
V. Heid	2.00
M.B.	15.00
B. Drummond	2.00
Anon.	2.60
D. Davies	10.00
A. Mathews	10.00
Anon.	4.40
Anon.	6.00
Rover workers, Solihull	26.00
Anon.	2.50
C. Fenach	6.28
Durham readers	2.05
R.H.	1.00
Leicester supporters	5.50
Middlesbrough reader	10.00
Middlesbrough supporters	8.00
TOTAL	£229.74

