

Socialist Challenge



EYEWITNESSES said it was like an American military exercise — the arrival of US C141 transports.

There were American air crews lounging around, uniforms emblazoned with a bull's head and the words 'Bully Beef Brigade'.

At the same time, several thousand miles away in Paris, representatives of five NATO powers were debating the future of Africa.

Particularly they were considering the formation of a NATO intervention force.

This is something of a formality: the Bully Beef Brigade had beaten them to it.

The French, often with British and American back-up, have played the same game over and over again: in Sahara, Chad, Djibouti and now Zaire.

The ostensible reason for the intervention force is the need to defend human life and the integrity of African states.

So why do France and the US send guns to UNITA, the anti-government guerillas in Angola?

Why don't the paras go into Namibia to liberate it from South African occupation?

Where was the Foreign Legion when the South African army massacred hundreds in Kassinga, in southern Angola?

Simply because life is only

important when it's European life.

Territorial integrity only matters when the state is pro-Western.

And property...well, property is always important!

The British Labour Government has fallen meekly in line behind its imperialist big brother, the United States. Callaghan's pathetic 'Christopher Columbus' speech was for public consumption only.

It was a meek warning that there are a lot of profitable pro-Western states who might be less than happy to see the Foreign Legion or Green Berets tramping through their back garden.

Concern for the lives and rights of the African masses couldn't have been further from Callaghan's mind.

If this Government were serious in its concern it would not be sitting talking about military aid to Mobutu. It would be sending money to the liberation movements, withdrawing British investment from racist South Africa and Rhodesia, and breaking diplomatic links with those states.

It isn't and it won't.

It will be up to the labour movement to raise the cry: Imperialist Hands Off Africa.

The first opportunity to do that will be on 16 June, the Soweto Commemoration march. That must be just the beginning of a massive solidarity campaign.

NATO OUT OF AFRICA



INSIDE

Exclusive!
Soviet Dissidents'
Document
Page 12



Amnesty
Indicts
Britain
Page 7

NATO
in
Africa
Page 10

womens
VOICE
Rally
Page 8

EDITORIAL

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After Hamilton

HAS THE Scottish Nationalist bubble burst? The SNP has now suffered two by-election reversals in a row, with the Labour Government retaining both Garscadden and Hamilton. On current trends, the party stands to lose four or five of its MPs at the next General Election.

Although it would be rash and premature to start writing political obituaries, the party clearly faces a political impasse. Ten years ago in that same Hamilton constituency it was a different story, with the spectacular victory of Winnie Ewing. Since then the party has grown and developed, but in a distinct political direction: a party of middle-class radicalism.

The point was neatly demonstrated during the debate on economic policy at the recent SNP conference. Present were the two authors of the economic resolution: Gavin Kennedy and David Simpson. Kennedy is prospective parliamentary candidate for Edinburgh Central, and is best known in England for collaborating with Nora Beloff of The Observer to witch-hunt the Militant grouping inside the Labour Party.

He is defence spokesperson for the SNP and a strong supporter of NATO. Yet he also made one of the most controversial speeches of the conference this year. During the debate on law and order he provoked the anger of delegates by drawing attention to the plight of Irish Republican prisoners on the blanket in H Block. For Kennedy there is no contradiction in this stance. He is deeply contemptuous of British liberalism and consistently argues for a populism which vacillates between the right and left of the hazy spectrum of Scottish nationalist ideology.

David Simpson, an economist at Strathclyde University, shows a very different face of the SNP. A reticent individual, Simpson is neither a candidate for the SNP, nor is he on its leading bodies. A totally unknown public figure, he is one of Scotland's most influential economists, whose writings on post-independence monetary policy earned a fulsome review in the pages of The Times.

Kennedy and Simpson, the aggressive radical and the conservative middle class academic, sum up the dynamism of the SNP, but also indicate the very real limits of its development. The specific compromise arrived at to blend both strands was seen in the colourless arguments of the party's economic resolution. It contained much of everything inside capitalist economics.

More interesting was the debate which didn't take place. The annual conference is preceded by party delegate meetings held regularly during the year at Stirling. Much of the real debate takes place here — far from the TV cameras and the press. At Stirling this spring there was an attempt to amend the economic resolution by delegates from the West of Scotland. They wanted two inserts: the first insisting on workers' participation, and the second arguing for import controls.

Although these were defeated and are only pale shadows of Tribune rhetoric, the fact that they emerged is interesting. The last few by-elections are indicative of the SNP's limitations. Neither result was the disaster portrayed by the Scottish press. The SNP still managed to pick up over 30 per cent of the vote. But the failure to win either seat is the failure to win decisive support among the working population in the West of Scotland.

Instead the SNP looks set to stabilise itself with around 25-30 per cent of the national vote. Its support will continue to come from the new towns, the rural areas and from younger voters dissatisfied with the political traditions of their parents.

In the immediate future the SNP will see a shift away from Margo MacDonald and others interested in working class 'radicalism' towards more staid and traditional figures. For the Labour Party in Scotland, this appears an almost unbelievable situation. But despite their successes they should not get over complacent. For the war is far from over.

China in Africa

THE RECENT meeting between the Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua and the Zairean dictator Mobutu is an indication of the utterly shameless pro-imperialist stance taken by the Foreign Office in Peking. It is a far cry from Chou En-lai's first visit to the African continent in the late '50s, when his pronouncement that 'Africa was ripe for revolution' scandalised the imperialist powers.

China has consistently allowed its ideological dispute with the Soviet Union to determine the character of its foreign policy. Its support for Mobutu is merely the continuation of its friendship with the Chilean butcher Pinochet and its sympathy for all dictators who are hostile to the Soviet Union.

The Chinese have taken their characterisation of the Soviet Union as 'imperialist' to its ultimate conclusion; though instead of abstaining between the 'two imperialisms', they aid the United States. This is now an undeniable fact, even though the dwindling band of Maoist apologists prefer to overlook these embassments.

HOME NEWS

Students say: 'Hands off our unions'

AT THE Easter conference of National Union of Students, militants in Socialist Students' Alliance revealed to surprised delegates the details of an unpublished discussion paper put out by the Department of Education and Science.

COLIN TALBOT, NUS executive member and Socialist Students' Alliance activist, explains what is behind this subtle attempt by the Government to erode student union autonomy, and to place their finances under stricter control by college authorities. And he outlines steps students should be considering if the attack is to be fought.

The proposals in the DES document — The Financing of Student Unions in Universities and other Institutions of Higher and Further Education — boil down to three practical consequences. First they entail a virtual freeze on student union income at current real levels. Second, there is a proposal to draw up a 'concordat' between the various education powers and the NUS on what unions can and cannot do with their money. Third, and most importantly, a whole new system of financing is put forward so that some larger unions will lose control over up to 60 per cent of their income.

In addition the DES is proposing a 'recommended' minimum union fee of £1.25 — not binding on local authorities. While the headlines sported by the Fleet Street press made clear that the Government is out to clamp down on student unions, the articles showed a remarkable misunderstanding about the details of the proposals. This wasn't due to the incompetence of the Fleet Street hacks. It's because the DES has deliberately been as complex and ambiguous as possible.

MYSTIFIED

Even student militants are completely mystified as to what the 'powers that be' are up to.

This confusion has been made far worse by the antics of the NUS leadership. Sue Slipman at first welcomed the DES proposals almost uncritically. In The Guardian she was 'delighted that students would remain in control of their unions'.

The Times said she thought the 'proposals gave the Government a mechanism through which it could... prevent abuses, while in no way limiting the power of unions to spend their money.'

In a burst of honesty and clarity Slipman went on to say that 'whether our wings are clipped depends on how politically stupid we are. If we are stupid we shall invite problems. If we operate

logically and rationally we are stronger than ever before.'

This sums up the DES proposals in a nutshell — they establish a mechanism for controlling student unions, but don't activate it — yet.

Over the seven years between 1970 and 1977 student union fees from local authorities increased from £3m to £13m. Students launched a virtually uninterrupted wave of campaigns around cuts, grants, unemployment and in solidarity with struggles of workers and the oppressed.

CURBS

The state wants to control this militancy and curb this level of finance. But it does not want to do so at the expense of sparking another wave of student radicalism.

As far back as last summer it became clear that the Government was considering ways to control the level and use of student union finances. The NUS launched a 'Union Development' Campaign (sic) aimed at boosting finances for small unions. It also moved to drop previous NUS policy on ultra-vires payments and union finance, rammed through the December NUS Conference.

These measures were supposed to 'head off' the DES and others who wanted more sweeping changes. At the same time NUS was involved in negotiations with the DES. The scope of these dealings remains unclear.

DETAILS

At the Easter '78 NUS Conference the Socialist Students' Alliance announced to startled delegates the details of the DES proposals — a month before they were officially released. The SSA was attacked by Sue Slipman at the conference, and in an NUS mailing after it, for trying to 'mislead' and 'stampede' conference.

Even when the proposals were published, she was still saying they were unexceptional, a view which was endorsed by the Broad Left majority on the executive.

Despite the 'unexceptional'



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

nature of the proposals the national executive has already: *issued two emergency mailings *called an emergency briefing conference *agreed in principle to an emergency NUS conference in October.

That's an awful lot of emergency measures for something which supposedly represents no major threat!

The alternative to the NUS' collaboration with the DES is to fight to make the NUS a mass campaigning union, democratically controlled by its members and fighting for their interests.

Such a fight should be based around the idea of an 'Autonomy Charter' — passed at the last NUS conference. This kind of Charter must have policies for complete financial, constitutional and political autonomy; a minimum level of finances for small unions (of at least £15-20 per student); and the right of students' unions to give resources, as unions, to workers and others in struggle.

BRIEFING

Student unions should be mandated now to request an emergency NUS conference on 1 September. This could constitutionally bind the executive to have such a conference by mid-October.

The SSA will fight for the briefing conference to discuss the Autonomy Charter and

reject the DES proposals. It will also call for the NUS to start a campaign now around a Charter.

DEBATES

Militants should also be organising debates between the SSA, Broad Left, Labour students and the SWP on what response should be made to these proposals.

Dissenting students in the Broad Left, who substantially amended the position of the Executive at the Easter conference, have not yet come out clearly against the DES proposals. Are they prepared to join with the far left in a campaign to defeat these proposals and establish once and for all the principle of student union autonomy?

Similarly, the comrades of NOISS have an important role to play in explaining this attack to the mass of students and in helping to launch a mass campaign against them. Are they now ready to join with the SSA in a united, non-sectarian, campaign to defeat this attack?

The student movement is facing its most crucial test in many years. There is a danger that the defeats over fees and other issues will be transformed into a permanent crippling of student unions. That test demands the broadest, most active and committed response from the entire left to say quite clearly: Hands Off Our Unions!

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, 328/9 Upper St, London N1.

OUR POLICIES 2

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 socialism are:

- 1 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.
- 2 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 far more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of the 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 be the long run basis for 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.

HOME NEWS

Anti-racist conference Never mind the wrangles, feel the support

OVER 350 activists attended the first national anti-racist and anti-fascist conference in London last weekend. The results were mixed, reports DAVY JONES.

The conference attracted wide-ranging support — a hundred delegates from anti-racist committees, 50 from labour movement bodies, 30 from women's and gay groups, and 16 from ethnic organisations.

A number of important decisions were taken.

*The anti-racist newspaper CARF was adopted as the national paper for the movement.

*The conference voted overwhelmingly to support and work closely with the Anti Nazi League and decisively rejected a sectarian attitude to the ANL.

*The conference adopted a broad, non-exclusive statement of aims, which centred on mass mobilisations against racism and fascism. It rejected a move to restrict the basis of the national movement to those supporting a full revolutionary analysis of racism and fascism.

But all these positive steps cannot hide the failure of the conference to adequately map out a strategy and programme to fight racism and fascism.

There was virtually no discussion on immigration controls, those from the labour movement — to leave early.

In a hurried debate at the end of conference, the proposal to elect a more authoritative national committee and secretary of the movement was defeated. An alternative motion from Big Flame was carried, calling for the national committee to be made up of delegates elected from the regions at some future date.

It supported a strategy of mass mobilisation in the discussion on the movement's aims. But neither motion was discussed in the context of an overall strategy and programme for the movement.

The failure to adequately discuss the experience of activists on these vital questions inevitably led to frustration, and exacerbated the tensions between the widely different traditions and experiences of the forces participating.

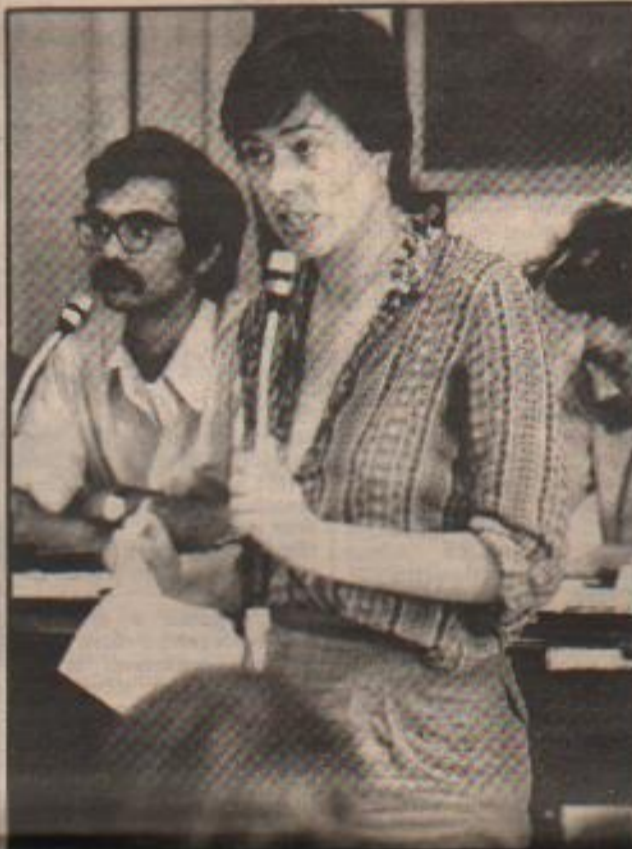
AWARENESS

Some delegates from the women's, gay, and black movements tended to expect from other delegates too great an awareness of the relation between the struggle against racism and fascism, and the roots of sexual and racial oppression. Other delegates wrongly felt that these questions were not particularly important.

These differences were not taken up politically by some delegates, who responded with moral ultimatums. The ensuing accusations caused a number of delegates, particularly

those from the labour movement — to leave early.

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VALERIE COULTAS (IMG) speaking

This will make more difficult the task of building a strong national body capable of responding to events and giving a lead to the movement as a whole.

Many delegates were disappointed by the conference. It is true that a number of important opportunities were missed. But anti-racists can take heart

at the breadth of support for the conference and its decisions on CARF and the ANL.

All activists must now help to build the ANL conference in July; step up the campaign against immigration controls, and strengthen the newspaper CARF to forge a strong national anti-racist movement.



Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

News from nowhere

Statesmanship

SEXIST English journalists (that is 99 per cent of them), whenever they mention the writer Jan Morris, cannot resist mentioning that she used to be James Morris (titter, titter). But this gratuitous nudge-nudge style of humour reaches an all-time low in, of all places, a crusading 'socialist' journal.

It is an index of the rapid decline of the *New Statesman* (sic) under its new editor Bruce Page that it could publish a review of the *Oxford Book of Oxford*, edited by Morris, under the title 'Jan Morris's Emasculated Oxford' (god-dit?). But that is only the beginning.

Reviewer Peter Conrad obviously imagines he has hit upon a clever theme. 'Jan nee James Morris and Oxford are both national monuments (or rather embodiments of the national problem), and there is an implicit analogy between them', he explains.

He can hardly contain his disgust at Morris: 'Love is no longer the enjoyment of an existence other than one's own, but the surgical excavation of that complementary sexual identity inside oneself. Love has retreated into hermaphroditic self-love.'

In other words Conrad has made the terrible discovery that women don't need men for sexual pleasure.

'Jan Morris's Oxford is umbilical; she calls it the navel of England. The purpose of her operation was to refine a tiresomely extruding and extroverted phallus into the likeness of a navel...' Conrad's knowledge of human anatomy clearly leaves something to be desired!

And so it goes on in the same vein. For example: '...her new Oxford is intricately feminine, a place physically ventilated "with hidden entries and back gates and annexes and enclaves", secret as maiden-head.'

To get the full flavour of its nastiness you would have to read the whole article. But we would advise against it.

Youth Work

THE METROPOLITAN Police force has not been slow to recognise that the new wave in music is gathering numerous youthful enthusiasts. Both *Sounds* magazine and the *New Musical Express* last week carried a full-page recruiting ad from the licensed to carry a cash in their pocket brigade.

The advert in *Sounds* was tastefully positioned opposite an interview with Tom Robinson. The police forgot to mention their policy on gays or their attitude to racists and fascists.

Should J. Nichol be dope tested?

THE far-seeing and perceptive ability of *Socialist Challenge* to analyse the present conjunctural world situation according to the norms of scientific Marxism / Leninism / Trotskyism has never been more apparent.

Compare the following two quotations and ask yourself just who has the correct anti-revisionist position on the issues under discussion:

'So anyone who thinks the World Cup and politics are

separate and should be kept so is living in as big a dream world as is Ally McLeod with his vision of Scotland lifting the championship'. (*Socialist Challenge*, 1 June).

'In both cases it is clear who will go through. In Group Four the two will be Holland and Scotland. Neither Peru nor Iran will have the strength or skill to mount a serious challenge on the two favourites'. (*Socialist Worker*, 3 June).

We now have every right to demand, nay it is our proletarian duty to demand a full workers, rank-and-file enquiry into the fraudulent anti-people position of so-called *Socialist* so-called *Worker* whose historic bankruptcy is now proven for all the world to see

P. S. This augurs well for the SC-v-SW cricket match in July.

Foreign Legum

SINCE we published our little life history of the Observer's Colin Legum a couple of weeks ago the latter day cold warrior has been at it again, with 'exclusive' revelations of East German involvement in the rebel 'invasion' of Zaire.

One reader has written in saying that we were a bit soft on Legum. S/he encloses a transcript of a South African Assembly debate on 25 February 1986 to prove the point. This was the time of the eviction of Johannesburg squatters, when Legum was chairperson of the city's special housing committee.

According to MP Ballinger, the Labour Party 'demanded that emergency regulations should be applied against them [the squatters], that the police should be brought out in force to move them and they demanded further the application of what I regard as the iniquitous arbitrary provisions of the 1927 Native Administration Act, which is a blot on any democratic society.'

'They demanded that those provisions should be applied to the people who were accused of fostering this agitation, and that those people, three of them all members of the advisory board, should be removed from Johannesburg without any trial just because the Johannesburg City Council did not like the things they did.'

Ballinger quotes from a memo by Legum and another councillor: 'The Committees most strongly urge that the necessity for provision of alternative accommodation does not arise. The Committees are emphatically of the opinion that if these natives are ejected [without the necessity of being removed elsewhere] and prevented for three or four days from reoccupying the houses in question, the whole movement will collapse on its own accord, and the individuals concerned will return themselves to the accommodation from which they came...'



HOME NEWS

Health workers victimised

Suspended - for backing the EGA

WORKERS at the Emergency Bed Service in London have been disciplined for fighting cuts in the NHS. Last week six of them were suspended for referring patients to the Elisabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, which the Labour Government insists must close.

SANDRA MEAD, branch secretary of COHSE at the Emergency Bed Service traces the background to the dispute.

Cuts in the NHS are 'newsworthy', a cause for concern for most people in and out of the labour movement. But one group of NHS workers outside the actual hospitals who have watched the minute detail of cuts in London are those at Emergency Bed Service.

EMERGENCIES

The EBS is a centralised bureau arranging hospital admissions for acute medical and surgical emergencies throughout the greater London area. Finding the appropriate bed for a patient can be a time-consuming business, and if this task falls solely on GPs then time is lost for the treatment of patients.

But the range of admissions has become more difficult as the number of beds available has been reduced.

It was this experience which

led staff at EBS, organised in the health union COHSE to lend active support to campaigns defending the NHS. Since 8 June last year it has been the policy of COHSE at EBS to continue to refer patients to hospitals ordered to be closed by district, area or regional health authorities, but which remain open with full consultancy cover.

This policy has now been implemented in support of workers at the EGA. On 16 May, Camden and Islington Health Authority, in the person of one Mr Baron, ordered EBS to cease admissions to the EGA.

Officers of the union branch then secured written assurances from the medical consultants that they were willing and able to continue to treat patients at the EGA. The policy of referring patients to the hospital was accordingly continued.

As soon as management realised what was happening threats of suspension and disciplinary action were issued. This, despite the fact that, for the most part management are also members of COHSE and COHSE national policy calls upon its members to support local action opposing cuts.

Following these threats the union steward on night duty was suspended and has since been issued with a warning under disciplinary procedure. The suspension of six other members, including the branch chairperson, followed.

At a special branch meeting the original policy was reaffirmed with the branch preparing itself for a campaign to defend London hospitals from a lock out of patients.

Following representation from the branch Albert Spanswick, general secretary of COHSE, made the dispute official and EBS workers are seeking the widest support for their action. Given the national focus which the EGA constitutes for hospital workers, given the burden of health cuts in London, and given the obligation of health authorities to maintain pay and supplies to hospitals, unionists at EBS feel that their solidarity can be of

value in the struggle to defend the NHS.

Support the EGA, support us.

Messages of support: Sandra Mead, COHSE Branch Secretary, EBS, Fielden House, 28 London Bridge Street, London SE1.

LAST WEEK'S issue of Socialist Challenge misrepresented the motion passed by the No 8 Divisional Council of ASTMS on 20 May. The exact wording of the motion was:

(a) This divisional council reaffirms its support for the EGA hospital, in the fight to keep open the EGA and upgrade it on its present site.

(b) Calls upon its constituent branches to participate in the 24 hour picket rota, by taking responsibility for a particular time in the week to protect the hospital.

(c) Organise a divisional conference (with division 15) of all their constituent branch officers and shop stewards to discuss supportive action.

(d) We urge the NEC to support the call of the EGA stewards for a one day national stoppage of all ASTMS health workers on 21 July the proposed date of closure.



Socialist Unity stand in Hull

SOCIALIST UNITY will be standing in a local by-election in Hull that has been called following the resignation of a Labour Councillor. DARRYL JONES reports.

An open meeting was held in Greatfield ward, a dockland area in Hull and Pat Cross, who is active in the women's movement, was elected as the candidate. She is also involved in the campaign to save Townsend Maternity and Hull Hospital for Women.

The National Front are also standing in the election. Their candidate is Tony Braithwaite,

the NF Yorkshire organiser. Their campaign has begun already. The first taste of it came when twenty NF members from Leeds and Bradford came to Hull and intimidated left paper sellers.

The broadest possible mobilisation through the local Anti Nazi League and Anti Racist Committee will be needed to ensure that the Front don't have things all their own way.

As Pat Cross says in her manifesto, 'There are 17,700 unemployed in this region, and there are no immigrants! What causes unemployment in Derry, Glasgow, Birmingham and Milan? It's the system itself — based as it is on the greed and self interest of the bosses.'

Hemel to strike against health cuts

A HALF-day general strike has been called in Hemel Hempstead for 5 July to protest against cuts in the health service in the area.

This was the decision of a special meeting on the cuts convened by Hemel trades council on 24 May. FRED CARPENTER reports.

The decision follows two years of campaigning against the cuts in the town. Earlier this year, a 5,000 strong demonstration picketed David Ennals when he went to speak in Hemel.

It was the close involvement of the trades council, together with support from non-unionised workers, school students, and the housing estates, which laid the basis for this successful

action. Hopefully similar support will be rallied for the half-day stoppage on 5 July. During the strike there will be marches to a rally at the railway station before boarding chartered trains to London for a lobby of Westminster.

The campaign is now firmly directed at the Government, demanding that money is made available to meet the health needs of ordinary people and that the programme of cuts be reversed.

To this end, both the Hospital Action Group and the trades council are affiliated to the Fightback Steering Committee, whose bulletin Fightback carries extensive coverage of many local campaigns.

Housing row Tenants in, councillors out - of the council

BASINGSTOKE Tory Council is still smarting from the hammering handed out to them by council tenants and supporters from Socialist Unity, reports DAVE BENLOW.

The local paper gave front page treatment to what it described as the 'battle zone' confrontation in the council chamber on 22 May.

In their words: 'Militant Socialist Unity workers and angry council house tenants forced a public confrontation with the Basingstoke council housing committee members in the Civic Offices — and won'.

The trouble began when councillors tried to stop the tenants and other socialists from entering a meeting of the housing committee. This attempt at Tory democracy didn't get very far but when discussion in the committee came round to the controversial item of housing repairs Tory councillor and committee chairperson Dudley Keep moved that the meeting should go into private session.

The council agreed and the public were instructed to leave the meeting. Despite the arrival of police to evict the public, the tenants and Socialist Unity supporters refused to budge and eventually it was the

councillors who left — to hold their meeting behind closed doors in another room.

The tenants then used this opportunity to hold a meeting on their own in the luxurious council room. They were joined by four Labour councillors who heard the tenants outline the shocking conditions of their council houses in Basingstoke's Normanton Road.

At the end of this unique 'council' meeting a further meeting was arranged for 31 May at which 30 tenants in the name of the Basingstoke Housing Action Group drew up a series of demands for better housing and quicker repairs. Among the proposals adopted was one proposing a tenants' enquiry into the planning and running of the estate.

The tenants are now looking forward to the next housing committee meeting of the council due to take place in a couple of weeks time. Whether the Tory councillors are doing the same is rather a different matter.



Angry tenants outside the council chambers

HOME NEWS

Massey Ferguson, Coventry 900 workers face dole

'NINE HUNDRED redundancies and short time working for everyone else.' That is the holiday message from management at Massey Ferguson's Banner Lane factory in Coventry. **WILLIAM THOMPSON reports.**

The Banner Lane factory has been the scene of a number of strikes over the past years, and although management is not keen on a head-on confrontation, it is looking for ways to weaken shop-floor organisation.

It is prepared to put up a lot of cash to achieve this end. Terms for voluntary redundancy have been designed to appeal to the large number of workers who have been in the factory for a long time, often over 25 years. Many would receive £10,000 or more.

With such terms on offer, the

absence of a decisive lead from the shop stewards' committee has been disastrous. Over 1,200 workers have applied for voluntary redundancy, including two of the convenors and several shop stewards.

This reflects a situation where increasingly management has been able to 'buy' jobs. At Massey's, as at other factories, this financial inducement has been very hard to combat.

The fact remains that every job bought is one job less. In Coventry, with a very high level of unemployment and no

prospects of revival, this is extremely serious.

A fight against the imposition of short-time working is therefore doubly important, otherwise a damaging defeat will have been inflicted on the workforce of one of the most important factories in the town.

The stewards' committee unanimously accepted a proposal to counterpose a 'block lay-off' to short-time working. Under this scheme, groups of workers would be laid off with 80 per cent pay guaranteed when work is not available.

Obviously this scheme is not perfect, but it is a better deal than that in operation at many plants.

However, the stewards'

committee rejected a proposal to prevent any tractors leaving the plant. By refusing to put forward any fighting proposals it runs the risk of demoralisation and despair among the workforce.

RESPONSE

A works conference was held on Wednesday to discuss a response to the threat of short-time working. A minority of stewards were determined to see that there is a clear response to the management's threats.

As Roger Kline, the mover of the proposal to prevent tractors leaving the plant, put it: 'I'm convinced that if there is a unanimous and determined response from the workers, then the company will back off.'

UPW accepts Phase Four

TWO ISSUES dominated the Union of Post Office Workers conference in Blackpool — wages policy and the executive council victimisation of the Cricklewood sorters who boycotted mail to Grunwick.

The debate around both issues revealed the extreme weakness of the left in the UPW, writes **DENNIS BYRNE** who was at the conference.

On wages, the executive's motion had the following objectives: 'No loss of living standards during Phase Three' and 'An escalator clause to prevent loss of living standards.'

GRUNWICK

These objectives have not been even remotely achieved under Phase Three, yet the executive felt no embarrassment in putting forward a motion which in effect recommended acceptance of Phase Four before it is even negotiated! It was carried by the conference.

On Grunwick, we heard some double-talk which would have impressed even a British army press officer in Northern Ireland! No mention from the executive of how the action by Cricklewood sorters had nearly brought George Ward to his knees; of the inspiration this provided the Grunwick strikers; or of how trade union action of this kind could have won the strike in a few days.

INFILTRATION

The executive congratulated itself on how it had prevented a national confrontation with the Post Office, and on how it had made up the super-annuation contributions of the Cricklewood workers.

But there is a silver lining to the cloud: the executive is continuing its campaign to

defend the right of postal workers to strike. Action around Grunwick would only jeopardise this campaign!

An amendment bitterly condemning the leadership's handling of Grunwick was only just defeated 9694-9033. And this was only achieved after CP member Norman Stagg, who handled the affair,

was withdrawn from the firing line, and Tom Jackson made an impassioned appeal.

Two motions requiring the executive to investigate the extent of the National Front infiltration of the union were ruled out of order, although the Anti-Nazi League held a successful fringe meeting with over 100 delegates present.

The conference showed that it will be hard going for a good while yet, but the time is over-ripe for an organisation of the left in the UPW which will unite the small forces which exist at the moment.

Dennis Byrne is a member of the UPW in Coventry, writing in a personal capacity.



EL VINO's wine bar in Fleet Street, an old favourite haunt of the most reactionary gentlemen of the press, refuses to serve women at the bar, writes **JUDE WOODWARD**. When a woman journalist complained on the basis of the Sex Discrimination Act, El VINO's won its case in the name of 'chivalry'.

The clientele were also fearful of the consequences of allowing women to 'jostle their handbags' at the bar.

Last Friday, fifty fearless persons decided to have a lunchtime drink in the bar. It would have been a pleasant occasion if it hadn't been for the jostling of brief cases, rudeness, and jibing of the regulars.

And, of course, the fact that the manager swore blind we were women, refused to serve us, and eventually called the police. The boys in blue told us we weren't welcome, and closed the bar.

THE ATTEMPT by 58 branches of the National and Local Government Officers' Association to reverse the union's stand on support for pay restraint, failed at a special conference last Friday.

DAVE BURN, from Islington NALGO, reports.

By a card vote of 350,000 to 190,000 the union decided to support the status quo, by accepting a 'holding resolution', in the words of one member of the national executive.

This attempt to reverse NALGO's pro-incomes policy

NALGO backs pay policy

position followed an unsuccessful effort earlier in the year when the divisions in the left within the union wrecked any attempt to get a conference off the ground.

This time, the left at least agreed on tactics to fight the executive, and on the resolution it supported. Unfortunately, the earlier divisions contributed to the defeat at the pay conference.

The timing of the meeting

was bad, since the conference itself was called one week before the union's annual conference, and after most of the union's pay claims have either been settled or at least submitted. The administrative and clerical claim of the Health Service was settled two weeks ago for 9.5 per cent, for example. The left's arguments on breaking the 10 per cent guideline were thus weakened considerably.

What this conference shows is that the broad opposition within NALGO still needs to be organised nationally and its tactics decided democratically by all its supporters. To achieve this would start to solve two problems that have plagued the left since the start of Labour's attacks.

First, it would help ensure that the left's divisions do not benefit the right in the union as they have continued to do so in



Alan Fisher, public employee's union general secretary, has said that the 700,000 NUPE members were in no mood to accept another round of pay restraint. He also said that they want a clear commitment in Labour's next manifesto for a £80 national minimum wage and a 35 hour week. He made this announcement at a festival in the Alexandra Palace in London celebrating the union's fiftieth birthday. **Michael Foot**, Labour's deputy leader, replied by pointing to the large number of businesses that Labour had saved from closing down!

NATFHE Conference 'The paper policies need to be fought for'

AN EXPANSION of further education opportunities was one of the main policies adopted by teachers in this sector at their annual conference.

TESSA VAN GELDEREN, a delegate to the NATFHE conference, reports.

Despite opposition from the executive, delegates at the National Association of Teachers in Further Education conference last week called for the merger of the lecturer grade I and grade II pay scales.

This demand is important, not only for those teachers stuck on the bottom scale, but as a crucial first step in abolishing all grades.

The Government's proposals for 16-19 year olds were also attacked by the conference, which called for mandatory grants for all students over 16 in full-time education.

It declared that full-time education should be available to all 16-19 year olds who want it.

AFFILIATION

One of the major discussions was on racism in education and society. However, the original motion was watered down, particularly in relation to immigration controls. There was no real understanding of the relationships between immigration controls, institutionalised racism, and the growing activities of racist organisations.

But there was strong opposition when the union president made a ruling that affiliation to the Anti Nazi League was out of order. Although the constitutional position still has to be cleared up, the motion for affiliation was overwhelmingly passed.

the elections to the executive this year.

Second, it would start to involve members at all levels to fight against both Labour's austerity policies and the support trade union leaders have given to them.

So far, neither the NALGO Action Group nor the broad left formations like the NALGO Progressive Alliance in London have been able to grapple successfully with these problems. The NALGO annual conference starting on 12 June in Brighton will be the place where these tasks are confronted.

The affiliation of the union to the National Abortion Campaign was also discussed. But while the union's policy is for 'A woman's right to choose', the same constitutional objection was raised. The ability of the union and branches to affiliate to such bodies is a matter of the interpretation of union rules, rather than anything that is spelt out specifically.

CONFUSION

A motion on the offending paragraph in the annual report was defeated, so the confusion will continue unless a campaign is waged in the union for affiliation to the ANL and NAC.

In fact, all the motions passed at the conference will remain paper policies unless a fight is taken up among the membership to stop the erosion of teachers' pay, cuts in education, and against racism and sex discrimination.

CONFERENCE

*The Committee of All-London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism — the group which organised the 2500 strong rally at Central Hall in March — has decided to contact other education bodies to take steps towards a national conference in the autumn.

To be approached are union branches, teachers in the Labour and Communist Parties, groups like the West Midlands Campaign Against Racism and Fascism in Education, as well as similar bodies in Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Nottingham.

ALTARAF will also be approaching the Teachers Against the Nazis with a view to organising an open, representative and democratic steering committee to unite all the forces active on this issue.

With TAN involved it could prevent the wasted efforts of two conferences which threaten to be the case since TAN's recent announcement that it is planning its own conference on 23 September.

HOME NEWS

Socialist Challenge TU Conference Paving the way to union democracy

The Socialist Challenge trade union conference on 1 July is less than a month away. Such initiatives have a particular relevance in times like today when more and more attempts are being made to stifle union democracy.

ELAINE JONES explains just what policies are necessary to return the unions to where they belong — the membership.

***Fight for the right of all currents and organisations to freely and democratically fight for their policies. No bans on members of such organisations from holding union posts.**

Trade union leaders are showing an increasing appetite for banning left-wing organisations in their ranks. Only two weeks ago at its annual conference the executive of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation said it would suspend any member selling the left wing Revenue Rank and File.

With this, the leadership of the IRSF were joining a growing number of unions — such as the electricians — who prohibit the left organising.

This right to organise should also apply to all oppressed groups — such as blacks and women — who suffer specific forms of oppression and accordingly need to organise to

fight this oppression.

***For the election and right of recall of all officials. Elections to be carried out by workplace ballot, every year.**

Terry Duffy, the new president of the Engineering Union and the darling of the right wing press, has already made it clear that he intends to cut down elections in the AUEW. The right of union members to choose, and if necessary to sack union officials ensures that the official leadership are answerable to their own members.

Bureaucrats argue that this would make officials 'insecure' and threaten their livelihood. The point is that any official who sees their post in the union as a 'career' (with a seat in the House of Lords at the end?) is by that very outlook, putting their 'security' first, and the interests and democratic will of

their membership second. ***For control of the struggle by those who wage it through democratically elected strike committees responsible to mass meetings.**

When the leadership of APEX suspended members of the Grunwick strike committee for carrying out decisions of that strike committee — the hunger strike outside the TUC — they offered a blatant example of the way union leaderships overturn and ignore decisions of those in struggle.

When workers go on strike it is their livelihood, their wages, their right to organise which is at stake, not that of trade union bureaucrats. Therefore they should have the right to decide how that struggle is conducted. Officials should be servants of the membership, not their bosses.

***Union backing for all workers taking action in pursuance of their interests**

Last year's Leyland tool-makers' strike was a classic example of the priorities union leaderships often show. The AUEW strikers were attempting to win a legitimate increase in their living standards.

But the AUEW leadership came down on them like a ton of bricks to the extent that the toolmakers were threatened with the sack from their union. The reason the union leadership offered for this action was that it wanted to defend the Social Contract.

But even if the Social Contract actually benefited trade unionists — and the dramatic fall in living standards in the life of the Social Contract proved it did not — unions were not established to support this or that government policy. Rather they were established to back up their members fighting for better wages and conditions.

***For the right of all members to vote on any settlement or contract concerning their pay, conditions or recognition.**

The whole period of the Social Contract has seen blatant ignoring of rank and file decisions. At the 1977 conference of the TUC, Scanlon cast the engineers' vote in favour of the 12 month rule. But this was against both the democratically arrived at decision of the AUEW, and against the wishes of the rest of the AUEW TUC delegation.

In the National Union of Miners a productivity deal was rejected by the membership both in a ballot and at the union's conference. But the leaders of the NUM overturned and ignored these decisions and introduced local productivity schemes against the nationally arrived at decisions of the union membership.

No individual or group of individuals has the right to make such momentous decisions, which can have dramatic effects on the lives and pay of the membership. Only the

membership as a whole should have that right.

***Full-time officials to receive the average wage of those they represent.**

Many union leaders such as Moss Evans of the TGWU receive a wage totalling five or six times that of their own members. Thus a wage cut, or a rise in the price of basic foodstuffs is, for them, of little consequence compared to that for their rank and file members.

Highly paid officials soon develop an interest in keeping their job, for the job's sake.

The industry of union officialdom is an industry where the 'servants' — the officials themselves — should get no more than their 'masters' — the union rank and file.

***No interference into union affairs by the courts.**

Again the whole Grunwick struggle shows the danger of relying on courts run by upper class judges.

The courts have increasingly become a weapon used by employers not just to take away

union rights, but to defuse existing struggles. Any decision to take away the rights of those involved in struggle to decide when to carry on, or to call it off, is dangerous; but leaving that decision to whims of courts is the most dangerous of all.

***The establishment of creches to allow women workers to attend meetings.**

Democracy in the unions means the full participation of all workers. But women workers often find it practically impossible to fully participate.

One of the reasons is that they are usually saddled with the child rearing responsibility. One way greater participation of women can be assured is to provide creches at union meetings to which women — and men — members can bring their children.

***For a code of conduct within the unions so members can deal with activities organised through the union — such as actions taken by the fascists — which are fundamentally opposed to the very principles of trade unionism.**

If you are interested in attending the conference, fill in this form and mail it to: SC Trade Union Conference, PO Box 50, London N1.

NAME.....
ADDRESS.....
TRADE UNION.....



AUEW leaders cast their votes for pay policy at 1977 TUC, to the horror of delegates.

Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

International Socialist Alliance In search of an early grave

WHAT UNITED the 170 people who came to the founding conference of the International Socialist Alliance in February was that they had all been politically active in the International Socialists/Socialist Workers Party and felt unable to remain in the SWP.

That conference elected a steering committee to prepare for a further conference which will take place on the 17 and 18 June. RICHARD KUPER explains its aims.

The conference later this month aims to do three things. First, to draw together those who share a common orientation towards the building of a united, democratic revolutionary workers' party to which the experience of being in IS can contribute.

Secondly, to clarify ways of working with other revolutionary organisations, in particular Big Flame and the International Marxist Group —

but also — hopefully — the SWP, and with independent revolutionaries who share this aim.

And thirdly, to set up the International Socialists' Alliance as a transitional organisation to co-ordinate the activities of this group in the process of revolutionary unification.

Thus the first task of the conference will be to clarify how revolutionaries should best work in the current

situation and what insights can be drawn from the IS tradition:

What we mean by a 'working class orientation', what kind of agitational paper would be most appropriate to enable militants to get socialist politics across to those they work with (see our contribution to the Socialist Challenge conference), how best to pursue the anti-racist, anti-fascist struggle, to lend support to the socialist feminist current of the women's movement.

DIALOGUE

All these and other questions will be taken up on the first day of the conference.

We will also discuss our experience of working with Socialist Unity, of having an observer on the editorial board of Socialist Challenge, of our

dialogue with Big Flame and the IMG, of recent developments in the SWP.

Proposals will be put forward about a national campaign for a unified revolutionary organisation which, if carried, will commit us to joint work with a variety of forces on the left:

- *building independent rank-and-file opposition groups in the unions.
- *against racism, fascism and all immigration controls.
- *against all forms of sexism
- *for a genuine and thorough-going internationalism and in particular for the withdrawal of troops from Ireland.
- *for socialist democracy, both in the future society and in the organisational forms we adopt in the struggle now.
- After a period of joint work, and of course a united electoral

intervention in the General Election (again, if possible, with comrades from the SWP) we would hope to be in a position to assess the possibilities of founding a new organisation, and setting a timetable for moving towards it.

DEATH

Finally, organisation proposals for the ISA will be based on the perspective that it has only a short existence. We will be about the only revolutionary socialist group founding itself with a death-wish as its central organisational principle!

But it is our belief — based on our analysis of events since 1974 and of the experience of comrades in joint work in labour movement struggles — that the old barriers to revolutionary unity are no

longer a reflection of irreconcilable differences of perspective on the class struggle today.

We are convinced that a unified revolutionary organisation, speaking for the bulk of the left in Britain, will be able to draw into active revolutionary commitment many thousands and thousands of political militants, in industry and elsewhere, who at present view the organised left with aloofness at best and a rooted and often justified cynicism.

For further details of the conference, to be held at the Africa Centre, London, write to: Richard Kuper, 45 Falkland Road London NW5, tel 01-267 6109, enclosing £1.50 for conference registration including documents, or 60p for documents only.

IRELAND

Now Amnesty say it TORTURERS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL in a report to be published next week have accused the British Government of systematic 'maltreatment' of political suspects in the North of Ireland, reports GEOFF BELL.

This is one of the conclusions of the report which Amnesty have been trying to keep secret since it was first completed over three months ago. But last weekend the report was leaked and extracts from it have appeared in a number of newspapers.

GUILTY

According to these sources the Royal Ulster Constabulary has been found guilty of 'psychologically exhausting procedures' in the questioning of prisoners. These are said to include techniques to humiliate and ridicule suspects as well as beatings and kickings.

Instances of 'organic brain

damage' have also been found. In one instance, says Amnesty, a woman suspect was threatened with rape, and there is independent evidence to back up this claim.

The report has been kept secret to allow the British Government to reply to the findings. But Socialist Challenge has information which makes it clear that fragmentary details of the report have in fact been leaked from Government sources.

The aim of this manoeuvre would be to leak the information bit by bit so that when the entire report is published the impact will be lessened.

As well as criticising the

methods of interrogation the report is also believed to contain substantial criticism of the whole operation of British 'justice' in the North of Ireland.

POLICY

At one point the report is said to comment: 'Access to solicitors is denied as an apparent matter of policy, giving rise to an inference, whether or not justified, that not all statements are made voluntarily.'

In another section the report attacks the whitewashing of complaints against the police: 'Complaints alleging maltreatment in police custody may be classified as "unsubstantiated"; although the treatment alleged may have actually taken place'.

So it appears that once more the British Government has been indicted of torture type

practices in the North of Ireland. All along the Government has said that allegations of brutality and torture were 'terrorist propaganda' and that injuries were 'self-inflicted'.

PARDON

In fact, says Amnesty, the few injuries that were self-inflicted were done so because the suspect wanted to find some way of ending the 'questioning'. In other words, suspects were so frightened that a small number of them tried to injure themselves to avoid more treatment at the hands of the RUC.

The Amnesty report should only have one conclusion. Since many suspected were beaten up, since many 'voluntary' confessions were in fact extracted under torture, there must be a complete pardon for all those convicted.

In the meantime the Amnesty findings should stimulate all those in this country who are building the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland.

At the moment the main problem for the Tribunal is just how it will find time to deal with the mounting evidence which can lead to only one verdict: Britain out now!



Socialist feminists discuss Ireland

The North-west regional Socialist Feminist workshop held in Bolton last weekend was concerned entirely with Ireland.

The agenda contained all the main issues which have come to the fore since socialist feminists in this country first began to seriously discuss Ireland. Whether the women's movement in Ireland should take a position on the national question, whether the oppression of Irish women is connected with Britain's presence, and how the fight for women's liberation in Ireland fits in with the general fight back against repression, were all discussed.

So, too, was the influence of the Catholic Church and the attitude of the Republican movement towards women's

liberation. Discussion also covered the whole range of activities in this country connected with the Irish struggle and a number of positive proposals were agreed.

These included:
*Exchange of feminist literature with women in Ireland.
*Distribution of progressive Irish literature in Britain.
*Positive support to Irish women coming to this country for an abortion — trying to arrange to meet them off the boat, etc.
*Initiate discussion about Irish women in women's groups with a view to preparing a statement to be endorsed by the women's liberation movement.

Such proposals could be usefully followed by other socialist feminists in Britain.

Irish prisoners' demo, 9 July A key mobilisation'



Members of West London United Troops Out Movement staged a protest in Hammersmith on Saturday against conditions in H Block, Long Kesh. A number of the protesters were clad only in blankets, as are over 300 prisoners in Long Kesh.

WRITING IN 1867 Karl Marx made an observation about Irish political prisoners which retains all of its relevance today.

The brutal treatment of these prisoners, he said, was an expression of the idea that the English have a divine right to fight the Irish on their native soil but that any Irish people who fight back against the British Government are outlaws by definition.

In this light, AILEAN O'CALLAGHAN, Irish organiser of the International Marxist Group, argues the importance of the Irish prisoners' demonstration on 9 July.

Not since the marches supporting the hunger strike of the Price sisters has the British left mounted national initiatives to put this key point of programme into practice. The Prisoners Aid Committee (PAC) demonstration on 9 July offers the possibility of changing that situation.

The Central Committee of the International Marxist Group has already marked it a top priority and there are indications that the turn-out from other forces on the far left will be significant.

It would be a silly mistake however to believe that it is either general theoretical considerations or pangs of conscience from the British left which gives the 9 July march its importance. While it is true that the old Troops Out

Movement did no prisoners' defence work during its lifetime between 1974 and 1977, this was because the TOM was launched when almost everyone who supported the Irish struggle believed that British society was about to be polarised in an unprecedented way around the question of the soldiers' presence in Ireland.

No better defence of Irish prisoners would have been possible than the creation of a mass 'troops out' movement. It has only been with the emergence of the new, United Troops Out Movement that the basic conceptions underlying the perspectives for solidarity work in those three years has been challenged by the majority of activists.

Above all it is what is happening in Ireland which

demands full support on 9 July. It is not because of psychological or moral defects that Britain jails 1600 Irish political activists, 350 of them 'on the blanket' in Ireland, and a further 85 in this country, in some of the worst prison conditions in Europe.

BAN

It is because the attempt to portray the Irish fighters as criminals is essential to the defeat of the Irish people. Recent examples in the struggle illustrate this clearly: the arrest of the Belfast executive of Sinn Fein is de facto the proscription of a legal political party and a reversal of the gain won by struggle when Sinn Fein was legalised in 1973.

The circulation of a so-called confession by the murdered Brian Maguire was an attempt to justify his death at the hands of the RUC in Castlereagh. And the charging of an SDLP member with membership of the IRA because he is the printer of *Republican News* gave one message from the British State to the Irish masses: they are 'criminals' by association if they are in any way connected with resistance to the British occupation.

The central demand in the renewed street activity has been for the return of political status. Again this was a gain won in struggle from the Tory Government in 1972. It followed a hunger strike by Billy McKee and his comrades in Crumlin Road jail.

These rights were stolen back by the Labour Government in 1976. Now the prisoners 'on the blanket' in the H-block and elsewhere have waged hunger strikes and other protests. There is no question that the Irish masses will be measuring their own strength by the success or failure of the fight for political status.

DEFENCE

The next steps in our solidarity work must therefore be directed towards aiding the Irish people in their defence of the imprisoned victims of the British occupation.

Those are the very reasons which make the International Tribunal such an important initiative. But its success will itself depend on the outcome of 9 July and similar occasions. For the sake of the Irish people today (and ourselves tomorrow) more than a token effort must be made to get real forces on the streets on 9 July.

Conference on the Role of the British Army

10 June, 9.45am-5.30pm

Acklam Hall, Acklam Road, London W11
Films, sessions on past colonial wars, the present war in Ireland, former soldiers speaking-out.

Called by United Troops Out Movement, c/o 182 Upper Street, London N1. Entrance £1.

Defend Republican News
A poster parade of Fleet Street
Wednesday 14 June, 6pm.

Assemble at the Law Courts
Called by the 'Defend RN Ad Hoc Committee'

Work hazards

Safety first on the shop-floor

HOW SERIOUSLY the Government views its legislation on health and safety at work can be determined from the fact that it has just refused to make any financial allocation for setting up safety committees for the workers in the National Health Service.

In industry, employers are busily attempting to make the law as ineffectual as possible. The British Society for Social Responsibility in Science describes here the pitfalls that workers need to avoid.

'Conflicting priorities' occur when 'production is below target and profit below budget' admits the official report on the Flixborough disaster. What is the share of the profits for the families of the 28 Nypro workers killed because safety conflicted with profit?

Incidents like Flixborough are only the tip of the iceberg of industrial deaths, disease and injury — the wrecked lives that are part of the workers' heritage in a capitalist society. Until recently this has been an area of struggle heavily overshadowed by wages, and with compensation a greater prize than prevention.

The Robens Report in 1972 sought to revise the increasingly unworkable legislation. Needless to say, it viewed the cause of accidents as workers' 'apathy', not the conflict between safety and profit.

CONCESSION

In transforming the Robens Report into legislation, the newly elected Labour Government made one major concession to the unions — the safety representatives regulations; one of the positive crumbs of the Social Contract. Four years later, this October, these regulations will come into force.

Theoretically they will provide certain minimums: the right to inspect work areas and machinery (the miners have had this right since 1887!); to time off for health and safety work, such as attending courses and inspecting accidents; to information and outside advisors; for trade unions to appoint safety reps, who should not lose pay for work done.

However, like all 'progressive' industrial legislation, the regulations

ignore the basic conflict between the interests and aspirations of workers and those of the ruling class.

Thus the regulations can be effectively used by union militants to improve working conditions, but only if certain 'hazards' are avoided.

A fundamental tactic must be to prevent health and safety being split off from the shop-stewards organisation — health and safety will have to be negotiated and fought for somewhere along the line. Lack of communication between safety reps and the stewards could also lead to splits on the shop floor — a welcome sight for management.

There are ways to overcome this problem. For instance, at David Loewy Ltd. in Sheffield, all stewards are concerned with safety. Health and

'How could the essential character of the capitalist method of production be better shown than by the need for forcing upon it by Acts of Parliament, the simplest appliances for maintaining cleanliness and health?'

Karl Marx, Capital.

safety are discussed at the joint shop stewards committee and negotiated through the normal grievance procedure.

Another potential hazard is the safety committee. Many managements are setting up committees and spewing out safety agreements before 1 October, hoping to get everything signed and sealed before the unions realise what is happening.

Most of the committees are for consultation and like all such 'consultative' committees, no decisions are taken and workers are co-opted into accepting policy decisions. Safety reps do not have to participate in a management-instituted safety committee.

The other major hazard often engineered by management is the safety agreement. If the union decides it wants an agreement, it should contain as a minimum the rights given in legislation. However, in some cases agreements have already been signed between union officials and management which fail to give even the rights specified in the regulations.

EFFECTIVE

To be an effective tool in encouraging workers to start taking control of their working environments, an agreement should extend the powers of the reps, and allow them to move around the whole plant; lay down the structure and function of any safety committee and include provisions for monitoring procedures and safety standards.

Some American unions have obtained the right of medical inspections at the employers' expense.

By themselves, of course, agreements are insufficient. Direct action may be needed to stop a process or ban substances. London dockworkers refused to handle blue asbestos long before the hazards were officially admitted.

In the long run, the only effective safeguard for the health of the workforce is its total control over the production procedure.

CRUCIAL

Two crucial rights — the right to information and the right to advice — will be pretty useless to many safety reps; they will not have access to them because of the technical problems involved.

Safety is no different from other union matters. Just because 'science' is involved, this does not mean that management advice and information is 'objectively correct'.

For example, the threshold limit value — the supposedly safe exposure period to chemicals for a 40-hour working week — for vinyl chloride has come down to a fiftieth of its



"It's MY machine, MY factory MY workforce, MY product, MY profit, and YOUR fault."

previous value in the last ten years. Workers need their own sources. To a limited extent some unions provide it. BSSRS Work Hazard Groups and related union committees are, however, very willing to provide both information and advice to stewards and safety reps on many technical issues.

We produce a regular Hazards Bulletin and have produced pamphlets on Oil, Noise and Vibration, with Asbestos and Hospital Hazards to follow. We can be contacted c/o BSSRS Work Hazards Group, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

'Women's Voice' How it can help to build the WLM

LAST WEEK in 'Socialist Challenge' we pointed out that 'Women's Voice' is holding a rally in Sheffield this weekend. Women from the International Marxist Group support the rally and will be there.

They have written an 'Open Letter' addressed to women at the rally, outlining what they see as the most productive future for 'Women's Voice'. We publish extracts from that letter.

In a popular and imaginative way, Women's Voice in its new magazine format has taken feminist debate and activity to women in the workplace and the community who aren't directly active in the women's liberation movement.

This contribution is to be welcomed. And it needs to be developed by the revolutionary left and the women's movement.

Important decisions lie ahead about the direction of Women's Voice. A guiding principle for any decisions must be a firm commitment to an autonomous women's liberation movement. But if Women's Voice is to help build such a movement, it needs to clear up its relationship to the Socialist Workers' Party, and the existing women's liberation movement.

Of course no-one could be against the SWP having its

own magazine. Indeed, the IMG has its own: Socialist Woman. But such a party journal can't pretend to be what it isn't — a journal of a broad based women's movement.

POTENTIAL

Women's Voice has the potential to become part of that movement, and therefore more than simply the journal of one party.

The magazine is committed to a fight to advance the struggles of working class women. Both revolutionaries — and many activists in the women's movement — agree with the need to take feminist politics beyond their present audience.

And Women's Voice provides an important means to do just that. What a pity to waste this potential by constructing



sectarian, party barriers to the participation of all women who see the need to unite to achieve this aim.

Many talk about Women's Voice as if it is an alternative to the women's liberation movement. This is a grave error.

The activities and debates of the WLM have had a real historical impact. They can't be dismissed or ignored just because those involved are largely 'middle class' or 'privileged'.

The movement has sparked off important campaigns and discussions that have given thousands of women the confidence to stand up against

their oppression. It is today beginning to explore its own strategy and politics in an open-minded and critical way.

Of course differences exist. In fact, the movement is becoming polarised between revolutionary/radical feminists and socialist feminists. It's vital that revolutionary socialists are part of this process.

Women's Voice Rally
Saturday, 10 June
11.30am to 5.30pm at
the Top Rank Suite,
Sheffield.

This can help develop the movement in a socialist direction, and furthermore will only strengthen our own ideas and practice as revolutionaries.

Of course, to be effective in our struggle for women's liberation, we must side with others fighting against this rotten capitalist system. We can only do this if we are linked firmly to the working class movement — confronting its sexism, but relying on its strengths.

SIGNIFICANT

And above all, it's the power and fighting will of working class women that we must win to the feminist struggle. Already significant sections of the women's movement see this need.

Women's Voice can't afford to posture as an alternative to a movement with such roots, influence and potential. It must build close working relations with the local groups and campaigns of the movement. In this way, by participating within it, the magazine can play a role in strengthening the activities of the WLM.

We think that Women's Voice can play an even more

positive role if it adopts policies which aim to build an autonomous women's movement. This involves:

- ★ Unity with other feminists and socialists to build the WLM and its campaigns.

- ★ Contributing to build a strong socialist current in the movement.

- ★ Joining with activists in the unions to organise campaigns and debate around feminist issues. This entails building existing broad based women's groups, campaigning bodies, and women's caucuses within the unions.

- ★ Establishing open, democratic structures for deciding the policy of Women's Voice. These should be open to all supporters of the magazine, whatever their political affiliations. This means the journal must be organisationally independent from the SWP. Of course, SWP members — alongside any other political tendencies supporting such a magazine — should have full democratic rights to argue for their policies.

The rally is a good beginning. Let's make sure we use it!

Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (JFL)

Interview with Chilean hunger strikers 'It's the brutality that moves women to mobilise'

IN A small room at the back of a North London church six Chileans are entering their third week of hunger strike. Along with 800 others — 250 in Chile and 70 in Britain — they are demanding to know the whereabouts of relatives who have 'disappeared': snatched away by the dictatorship's police and never seen again.

Two of the strikers, GRETE ENRIQUEZ and DIANA BEAUSIRE, were interviewed by two members of the Latin American Women's Group for Socialist Challenge.

They talk about why they are on hunger strike, the new wave of resistance in Chile, and what it's like to be a woman under the Chilean dictatorship.

Why is the hunger strike taking place and how is it being organised internationally?

The strike began in four places in Santiago on 27 May with 77 people taking part, mainly women. By 28 May the number of strikes had grown to 10 with 127 people, including five nuns and two priests.

This is a demonstration of the ever-growing feeling against the dictatorship. Many trade union organisations, unemployed mutual aid societies, and community and student organisations have shown their solidarity with the strikers.

16 trade union federations have published a declaration supporting the hunger strike which says that 'if there is not a definitive answer soon, we will move to more active forms of support.'

This support has been shown in solidarity demonstrations near where the strikes are taking place, where some 120 people have been arrested.

Internationally a series of similar actions have begun on three continents with the relatives of political prisoners who have disappeared and also people from those countries.

These are: Canada, Austria, France, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Mexico, Germany, Costa Rica, Argentina, Venezuela, United States, Norway, Panama, Australia, Ireland and England — 260 people in all.

They are asking the Chilean authorities to comply with their promise to give a reply concerning the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives. Despite further releases of prisoners, the Government has continued to avoid giving a final answer regarding the plight of more than 2,500 persons detained and 'disappeared' since the military coup of September 1973.

The hunger strikers are also denouncing the fact that the amnesty of 19 April 1978 benefited government security agents.

What is happening in Britain and what sort of support have you got?

In England there is an indefinite strike in London (St Aloysius Catholic Church) and various strikes in Oxford, Newcastle, Bristol, Sheffield, Aberdeen, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Swansea and Exeter.

These strikes have been supported by bodies like Amnesty International, the Chile Committee for Human Rights, and the Chile Solidarity Campaign. The Catholic Church has shown its support for the strike through the visit of Cardinal Hume.

There have been telegrams of support from various unions (IUC, miners, NALGO in

Liverpool, NUT) and various student organisations, like NUS and colleges. We have also received solidarity from various figures in the English political parties.

What is the present political and economic situation in Chile?

Pinochet has made a number of declarations and there have been publicity measures taken under pressure from the US and international solidarity: the supposed end of the state of siege, which is replaced by a state of emergency, which means exactly the same thing; an amnesty decree in April, which particularly favours members of the secret police, at the same time as leaving thousands of prisoners in jails or in secret places; the inclusion of civilians in the cabinet, representing Chilean monopoly economic interests.

Despite all this, the situation for the people as a whole has not changed. The high level of unemployment (20 per cent average, and 60 per cent in the manual sectors), malnutrition, the total absence of the most basic human rights (to life, to work, to opinions, to association etc) are still the normal condition of life and repression is unavoidable as a form of government to crush the legitimate opposition to the dictatorship.

This situation didn't come about by chance or because of 'bad intentions' on the part of those who formulate economic policy, but follows a calculated plan to transform Chile into a monopolistic economy, oriented to the export of raw materials, agricultural produce and so on.

This means doing away with national industry oriented to the internal market, which implies unemployment and hunger.

As a corollary the level of consumption of the majority of the population has been reduced to incredible proportions, lower than subsistence.

For example: a PEM worker earns about £30 a month, with a cost of living similar to here.

Slowly the people have reorganised. In its clandestine political organisations. In the popular resistance, in the Resistance Committees and factory committees.

In the limited but useful legal space allowed to the unions and federations — leaflets, letters, pressure on the dictatorship to restore trade union rights and raise the level of income and solve unemployment.

In the creation of semi-legal bodies like the Association of Relatives of Political Prisoners, the Association of ex-Political Prisoners, the unemployment mutual aid societies, the children's dining rooms, the

popular dining rooms, Christians' and women's organisations allowed by the junta, like neighbourhood committees, mothers' centres and so on.

This year there have been very important mobilisations which have broken the repressive circle of the dictatorship; the event on 8 March to celebrate International Women's Day, with 10,000 women in a theatre, a political event against the junta, where they chanted in chorus, 'Freedom, Freedom'.

The 1 May demonstration, which attracted more than 3000 demonstrators, even though it was banned. This event had been preceded by two weeks of intensive agitation in the factories, schools, and neighbourhoods.

Could you say a little about the position of women in Chile today and in the resistance.

Women in Chile today confront the repression imposed on all the people. It is this brutality which moves women to mobilise and organise themselves. Because they themselves suffer unemployment (worse for women), persecution, jail, torture (made worse by sexual torture), murder and disappearance.

Left-wing women are integrated into the resistance in all its aspects. They are the dominant factor in the semi-legal organisations of relatives of political prisoners and disappeared, in the people's dining rooms and so on.

This fact, plus the massive political involvement of women during the Popular Unity period, have slowly created a new consciousness of women as a social group, of their potential and their specific oppression. Because as women we have a clear goal: the overthrow of the dictatorship and the establishment of socialism.

But we also have to go forward immediately to the elimination of every sort of oppression, including that of women as a social group, that of the indigenous minorities and so on.

The need to take up this ideological battle is obvious to us with the use the right wing made of women during the Popular Unity Government. The right used the mass media to mobilise women who responded to the role they were given in capitalist society — good housewives, mothers and wives.

Although left-wing women responded well there was obviously a political weakness towards women in general, a failure to attack the ideological roots of women's oppression. This is what we have to do from now on.

If we can demonstrate that specific oppression of women is a necessity of the capitalist system it will be possible to develop a revolutionary consciousness.

But we believe that this must not be separated from the struggle for socialism.

The social and economic conditions of the Latin American people are so terrible that they will not allow this if the feminist movements are only taken up with the problems of women.

What do you think of setting up a group in exile like the Latin



GRETE ENRIQUEZ

American Women's Group?

In this context we think it is good that groups of Latin American women organise in exile. It allows you to get to know the political situation in

each country and particularly of women. We can learn more, systematise more.

And very importantly it allows to publicise the Latin American situation — in both its aspects — in the national

context of where we are, as well as developing consciousness among Latin Americans in general and Latin American women in particular on the specific situation of women.



SOME of the 50 people who picketed the Peruvian embassy last Saturday to demand an end to the state of emergency in Peru and the release of political prisoners. The picket was the day of the World Cup match between Scotland and Peru in Argentina.

Of particular concern is the fate of peasant leader Hugo Blanco and 12 others currently held in Jujuy in northern Argentina, where they were deported by the Peruvian Government. The pickets demanded a safe conduct for the 13, and demanded that the British Government give them the right of asylum here.

Latest signatories to an appeal against the repression in Peru include Alan Fisher, NUPE general secretary, Ernie Roberts, former AUEW assistant general secretary and now prospective Labour candidate, Syd Bidwell MP, Tom Litterick MP and Ron Thomas MP. Copies of the appeal are available from Socialist Challenge.

Photo: LAURENCE SPANHAM (IFL)

Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Another Portugal - on the Shah's doorstep!



Sultan Ali Keshmand (Planning)



Abdul Karim Meesaq (Finance)



Mohammad Hassan Barez Shafiee (Information)



Suleiman Laeq (Radio-TV)



Dr Anahita Ratebzad (Social Affairs)

THE upheaval in Afghanistan is an event of enormous political importance. It could have serious repercussions in Pakistan and Iran and destabilise South Asian politics. TARIQ ALI discusses the recent changes.

For centuries Afghanistan was ruled by monarchs and religious divines. During British rule in India, the Afghan King Amanullah, who resisted British political and military incursions, was replaced by the Yusufzai dynasty. This family ruled Afghanistan till the 27 April upheaval.

The last ruling monarch Zahir Shah was removed from office in 1973 by his brother-in-law Sardar Daud. Daud pledged democratic reforms. He stated that the preceding regime had been 'a corrupt and effete government, with its pseudo-democracy based on personal and class interests which had taken Afghanistan to the edge of the abyss.'

ONE-PERSON

Daud promised to convoke an elected Loi Jirga (Grand National Assembly), but nothing happened. The Jirga was the same old combination of divines and feudal notables (most of them provincial governors).

Daud imposed a one-person rule and ruled, in everything but name, like a monarch. He imposed an equally repressive regime and resisted three attempts to topple him.

Then in early April this year a popular trade union leader was assassinated. His murder provoked a wave of angry

protest demonstrations and meetings, in open defiance of Daud's ban on all political assemblies. The funeral procession turned into the largest anti-government demo seen in Afghanistan since the 60s.

PURGE

Daud ordered large-scale arrests and was preparing a bloody purge of all leftists in the country.

The response was sharp and well-prepared. The tank corps (a leftist stronghold) and the air force overthrew the Daud regime.

The scenes which followed were reminiscent of Portugal in 1974. The masses celebrated without inhibitions. Soldiers were garlanded with flowers.

Radio Kabul announced that this was not a traditional military coup, but a 'national democratic revolution'.

A revolutionary Council was created consisting of 18 civilians and three army officers.

Prime Minister and Chairperson of the Council is Noor Mohammad Taraki. Vice chairperson and deputy Prime Minister is Babrak Karmal.

The significance lies in the fact that both men were leaders of two different factions of the People's Democratic Party (the public factions were called Parcham and Khalq). The April incidents saw a reunifi-

cation. The PDP is a political party which contains all Afghanistan's pro-Moscow Communists as well as a layer of independent intellectuals.

Every member of the new Revolutionary Council is a member of the PDP. This is different from other countries where Communists have participated in governments: Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Indonesia, Bangladesh are the most obvious examples.

The programme of the new regime is democratic. It calls for the end of landed estates through a sweeping land reform, and the abolition of feudal and pre-feudal relations.

If implemented this would mark a radical shift in Afghanistan's agrarian structure. At the moment the landowners (comprising 2 per cent of the population) have more land than owned by 81 per cent of the peasants.

40 thousand families own 73 per cent of the cultivable land. 1.5 million peasant households are landless. Any real change would unleash new struggles and pose the question of a total abolition of existing social relationships.

EQUALITY

The new programme states that it will ensure 'equality of rights of women with men in all social, economic, political and cultural and civil aspects'. This coupled with the promise of a 'democratic solution of the nomads' issue' reflects real revolutionary democratic positions.

The decrees on equal rights for women would make Afghanistan the most advanced Muslim state, a striking contrast to its barbaric neighbour, Pakistan.

The events in Afghanistan have created consternation in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. The Pakistani dictator Zia is worried about the impact it will have within the army. Furthermore in the event of former Prime Minister Bhutto being hung, the ensuing instability could further complicate matters.

IRAN

For the Iranian butcher, matters are even worse. The new Afghan regime will become a rallying point for Iranian dissidents. Radio Kabul can be heard and understood in Iran. The language in both countries is similar and radical measures in Afghanistan will have their impact in Iran.

It is reported that the Shah considered a military intervention against Kabul, but was overruled by his superiors in the US State Department. They saw more clearly than their short-sighted client that a military intervention might well be the final blow to bring the Shah down.

Socialists must follow the events in Afghanistan carefully in the coming months. If the new regime carries out the measures it has promised, class struggles will intensify in the medieval, tribal state. The result could well prove yet again the originality of the historical process.



Noor Mohammad Taraki (Prime Minister)



Babrak Karmal (Deputy Prime Minister)



Dr Saleh Mohammad Zetri (Agriculture)



Dr Shah Wali (Health)



Col. Abdul Qadir (Defense)

Members of the Afghan Revolutionary Council



Abdul Hakim Shararee (Justice)



Danish (mines and Industries)



Hafizullah Amin (Foreign)



Maj. Mohammad Aslam Watanjar (Communications)

WHAT'S LEFT

Rates: 5p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication. Payment in advance.

FOUR SOCIALISTS looking for 4 roomed flat/house in North or East London. Phone Miss 01-359 8301.

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER Campaign national conference, Manchester Poly, 17 and 18 June. Further info from: Pat Cross, Flat 2, 49 Spring Bank, Hull. Tel: Hull 443 243.

GARNERS STRIKE. Conference to discuss how to win it, Thursday 22 June, at 7.30pm, Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1. Supported by the SE Region TUC, Region 1 TEGWU, Greater London Trades Council, and the strike committee.

SOCIALIST FEMINIST seeks own room in shared flat/house in Camden/Islington area. Ring Marge 01-402 9273 (day).

ORGANISING against racism in education. A day conference to be held at Abraham Moss Centre, Crescent Rd, Manchester B on Sat 24 June, 10am to 5pm. Sponsored by ANL and NUSS. Details CARE, c/o 35 Harold St, Prestwich, Manchester 25.

THE OTHER BOOKSHOP needs a full-time ledger clerk to take over responsibility for its accounting. Wages are £40 per week plus travel. Applicants must be prepared to work their share of Saturdays. Positive discrimination applied. Further details from Sarah, Sheila or Alan on 01-228 0571.

SOCIALIST couple with 12 year old daughter wish to buy into, or share rental on, communal house in London. Ring 0902 56815 weekends only.

BROADSIDE Mobile Workers Theatre require a versatile actor and actress. Both full time. Long term commitment. Write 58 Holbein House, Holbein P., London WC1. Phone 01-450 8992/101-730 6396.

SCENES FROM SOWETO, a play by Steve Wimer, Turner Newall Theatre, Chapman Building, University of Salford, from Thurs 15 June. Tickets from Grass Roots £1 (75p students and unemployed).

MIDDLESBROUGH Revolutionary Communist Group public meeting. Defend Irish Prisoners of War —

Hands off Tular. Tues 13 June, 7pm. Teasdale Poly, Clarendon Building Room A127.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION badges, red on white available from J Wilson, 50 Badges, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cost: 15p each plus 7p p&p, or 11p each for orders of 10 or more.

LIBRARIANS for Social Change! Aubrey Berry Campbell Defence Committee are holding an open meeting on the Right to Know at the Library Association, Ridgmount St, London WC1 on 13 June at 6pm. All those interested in the state's attempts to limit our knowledge of their activities are invited to attend. Speakers include Duncan Campbell and Steve Pinder.

IRELAND — the tasks of revolutionaries. Debate between the

Spartacist League and Workers Power. Fri 18 June 7.30pm. The Australia Bar, (corner of Hurst and Bramsgrove St) Birmingham.



'FIGHT RACISM' badges and T-shirts (badges black on white, shirts black on red) available for all anti-racists. Show where you stand during the long hot summer. Order yours now. Badges, 15p each plus 7p p&p, or 11p each for orders of ten or more. T-shirts £2 each plus 15p p&p. From J.Wilson, 50 Badges, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

ROCK AGAINST RACISM benefits for Leughborough School Defence. Adam and the Ants, Girls the Enchanters. Carnival video: 17 June 8pm, South Bank Poly, Fostery St, Elephant and Castle, London. £1.25.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST Alliance Conference, 17/18 June, Africa Centre, King St., London WC2. All ex-18 members welcome and others sympathising with the aim of setting

up a new unified revolutionary organisation. Creche facilities. Credentials and documents (£1.50, or documents only at 60p) from R Kuper, 45 Falkland Road, London NW5.

PORTSMOUTH Anti Nazi League demonstration. March leaves Victoria Park in city centre at 10.30am to Landport area for a mass leafleting of the estate. 24 June. All anti-racist, anti-fascist groups in South should come.

NEWHAM Anti Nazi League together with Redbridge Campaign against Fascism and Racism are organising a demonstration for 24 June. Punk, reggae and an Asian rock group. Social in the evening in East Ham Town Hall. March from Valentine's Park in Ilford to Plishet Park in East Ham.

Out next week! 'Students Unions Under Attack' An SSA pamphlet

Socialist Student Alliance National Caucus Friday, 16 June, 2pm.

For venue and orders for pamphlet ring: Nick Mullen 01-882 3950 or Colin Talbot 01-359 8371

10th COMMUNIST UNIVERSITY of LONDON July 15-23 Polytechnic of Central London

Wide range of specialist and general courses, including British Labour Movement, Contemporary Marxist Theory, British State and British Road to Socialism, as well as City Politics, Popular Music, Sex and Class, Women's Liberation, Student Politics etc. Special one-day Symposium on the Future of Post-School Education.

Further details from The Organiser, CUL 10, 16 King St, London WC2E 8HY.

Socialist Challenge needs Designer

A comrade is needed immediately to work full-time on 'Socialist Challenge' and to do additional design work for FI Litho. Previous experience in any design or printing processes is desirable, but training will be given. Full details of conditions will be given on application. Apply with full curriculum vitae to the Manager, FI Litho Ltd., 328/9 Upper Street, London N1. [Positive discrimination will be applied].

INTERNATIONAL

Imperialists out of Africa

The Cold War gets hotter

900 Moroccan troops arrived in Zaire's Shaba province in US planes last Monday — just about the same time as representatives of five NATO Governments met in Paris to discuss the formation of an African intervention force.

When the Moroccans were sent to Shaba last year they were part of a French-backed expedition which even the other imperialist powers regarded as a little too adventurous. This time they are there with the blessing of all the Western Governments.

RICHARD CARVER looks at the changes over that past year.

At one level the Western military build-up in Africa reflects a change within the US Administration. The 'Africanist' trend championed by UN Ambassador Andrew Young has been overridden by the 'global strategists', led by national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Broadly, the difference is between those who favour the minimum intervention and the maximum reliance on neo-colonial governments, and those who argue that African affairs must be seen in terms of 'global' East-West relations.

For all its fine academic-sounding phrases, the Brzezinski position has little to do with relations with the Soviet Union.

The red scare is a useful cosmetic for a policy of increased aggression and it has been carefully prepared by Jimmy Carter's highly selective

human rights campaign.

There is not a scrap of evidence of Cuban involvement in Shaba and if there had been the West would probably have been a bit more wary about its intervention!

But uppermost in the imperialist mind is a far more important consideration; how to crush the liberation movements of southern Africa.

STRATEGY

Recent strategy has been determined by a cautious desire to cut imperialist losses. For example, instead of holding out for continued white rule in Zimbabwe they have been more concerned to stabilise capitalist power through a black neo-colonial government.

This means involving the broadest range of nationalist organisations, which is why the



FRENCH President Giscard d'Estaing (centre right) flanked by heads of state at the recent Franco-African summit.

imperialists are unhappy about Ian Smith's 'internal settlement'.

But pro-Western settlements in Zimbabwe and Namibia and the maintenance of Angola and Mozambique in the capitalist orbit are premised upon continued white rule in South Africa, and just as importantly, a solid buffer in the centre of the continent. That is why Mobutu's Zaire is so important.

Britain and the US, the countries with the largest economic interests in southern Africa, faithfully followed this path until it threatened to

prove unworkable.

Lesser powers, like France and West Germany, have tried to cash in through a more adventurous military policy, in an attempt to mark out chunks of Africa, such as the Sahara, as their own back garden.

This has led to sharp rivalry between the two strategies and the powers who back them.

But imperialism is nothing if not class conscious. Recognising the common threat they are pooling resources.

Britain alone is a little recalcitrant. Callaghan is not sold on the intervention force, but less out of concern for the

African masses than fear that many neo-colonial African states may react badly.

The Americans too are distinctly edgy. They have still not fully recovered from Vietnam and the fear that a military adventure could provoke widespread opposition at home and ultimately a serious defeat.

But their options are closing. In the Angolan civil war, with Vietnam only yesterday, they were obliged to rely on a South African and Zairean invasion and extensive CIA activity. And still they lost.

They cannot afford another defeat on that scale. As always

the British Labour Government can be made to see reason and will doubtless fall into line behind US policy.

The careful post-Vietnam strategy may be completely overhauled. Even the massacres which made yesterday's headlines have been quietly forgotten as the serious business of 'pacifying' the region gets underway.

It is a dangerous turn of events which must be resisted at all costs.

'Imperialist hands off Zaire! Picket French Embassy, London, 12.30pm, Friday, 9 June.'

History of the Congo

The crisis of the 1960s

LAST week we revealed the sort of brutal regime in what is today Zaire after the 19th century partition of Africa by the European powers, writes **ROY ALEXANDER**.

The horrors of the arbitrary rule of the Belgian crown provoked indignation around the world, and in 1908 the Congo was transformed into a colonial possession of the Belgian state, rather than of its king.

This was not just a reaction to international pressure, however, but coincided with changing economic interests in Africa. Belgian capital was now primarily concerned with the development of the immense mineral wealth of the Congo — in particular, iron, tin, and copper.

PARTNERS

In 1906 the famous company of Union Minière de Haut Katanga was launched to open up the rich south east corner of the Congo, and a new era of colonialism had begun.

Union Minière was only half Belgian — the other partner was the British Tanganyika Concessions Company.

The new type of exploitation of Congolese resources and labour could not be carried out by the old get-rich-quick methods of the Belgian crown. It needed expensive economic back-ups: mines, railways, port facilities; a stable labour force was needed to run them, and an administration capable of ensuring the safety of the capital.

But the supposed 'benefits' brought by this new imperialism were both superficial and carefully restricted. The harshest forms of exploitation of the native population were eased, and some improvement in economic conditions took

place, but only by virtue of the Congolese people becoming the wage slaves of the great trusts.

On the political and social terrain things continued much as before. The Congolese were a people without rights in their own land.

SERVILE

Only a tiny black elite was allowed to share even minimally the benefits of imperialist society, and that they could do only by a servile acceptance of imperialist and racist ideas, implanted by the mission schools and other institutions.

To be accepted even in a token way in European circles a 'native' had to hold a special card certifying that they had broken with their traditional way of life and accepted European standards.

This was only granted after a lengthy, and often humiliating, public inquiry. In the decade before independence only 30 Congolese held this precious document.

RESTLESS

Little wonder, then, that when the tide of freedom began to sweep across Africa in the 1950's, the Congolese people should have become very restless.

Following the examples of other imperialist powers in Western Africa, they decided to grant independence quickly, before a radical national liberation struggle developed.

They counted on the absence of political traditions and the lack of established political

parties (banned by the colonial regime) preventing the emergence of a unified government that could stand up to imperialist domination.

But just to make sure they threw a few spokes into the wheel. They rejected nationalist calls for the establishment of a provisional Government to ensure a smooth passage from the colonial to an independent administration.

Instead the colonial administration was simply allowed to collapse. When the new Government took office it found itself at the head of a country falling to pieces.

LUMUMBA

The elections went much as the Belgians expected, with the largest party, the Congolese National Movement of Patrice Lumumba, winning little more than a quarter of the 137 Parliamentary seats.

However Lumumba was able to assemble a workable — if shaky — coalition with a number of other movements that opposed localist and tribalist politics and favoured a strong, independent Congo.

Even this was too much for the Belgians, who became the fervent advocates of tribalism. At the first sign of popular unrest they sent in Belgian troops, causing a violent political crisis.

Meanwhile, Union Minière in Katanga was actively supporting the separatist group headed by Moïse Tshombe. Tribalist politics now embraced the most powerful Congolese tribe of all — the members of the Belgian stock exchange.

In the deliberately provoked bloody conflict which followed, the Lumumba Government was overturned and



EUROPEANS observing primitive gold mining in the Belgian Congo in the 1920s.

Lumumba himself killed. With him died the possibility of a unified and democratic government.

At the urging of the radical African states, a United Nations military and political intervention was organised. But all that could have saved the Congo was a revolutionary mobilisation of the turbulent Congolese masses.

Some people in the UN operation — UN officials and representatives of the more radical 'third world' countries like Ghana — genuinely sought a strong, democratic Government and advocated a real fight against the Katangese secessionist forces.

But imperialist diplomacy in the UN, mixed up with the contradictions in these countries' own systems (the Commander of the Ghanaian contingent in the Congo was a British General, and his Ghanaian second-in-command

was later to overthrow President Nkrumah in a coup), made the UN's activity worse than useless.

The chaotic situation was only sorted out when a new 'strong man' took charge of the Congolese army, to put an end to all the politicians' wrangling

— Joseph Mobutu.

Basing himself on arbitrary and capricious personal power and repressive administration, he won the confidence of the imperialists, who once again became advocates of a centralised Congo state, as they are today.

SOWETO COMMEMORATION MARCH

Friday, 16 July, 5.30

Malet Street, London WC1

March to rally at Central Hall, Westminster

Called by African Students' Union

Backed by Anti Apartheid Movement

Defend Soviet trade unionists

DEFEND the rights of Soviet workers — that is the message of the recently formed Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign to the British trade union and labour movement.

The EESC is calling for labour movement protests against the attempt by the Soviet government to suppress a group of some 200 workers and employees who formed a Trade Union Association to defend workers rights in the USSR last February.

A number of members of the Trade Union Association have been arrested and thrown into prison or psychiatric hospitals. The EESC briefing leaflet on the issue gives the names of those known to have been arrested in this way.

EESC convenor Vladimir Derer explained to Socialist Challenge that the TUC leadership seems reluctant to protest at the crushing of the Trade Union Association. The EESC is hoping for resolutions from Labour Party and trade union branches to the NEC and union executives to force them to take up the Trade Union Association's case at the International Labour Organisation.

The document we publish on

this page reveals the repression that Soviet workers face when they try to defend their interests through strikes or other forms of mass action.

Published in English for the first time, it tells of the savage response of the bureaucracy to the mass strike in Novochoerkassk 16 years ago this week.

The Soviet Trade Union Association has appealed to trade unionists in the West for support. Their appeal has been printed in full in the latest issue of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, which also contains an interview with the Russian socialist Vadim Belotserkovsky on the real role of the official 'Trade Unions' in the USSR.

The Soviet Trade Union Association is a small body quite unlike a normal trade union in the West. But this is a result of the massive repression that exists today in the USSR.

If Western socialist and labour movement protests are strong enough the Soviet bureaucracy may be forced to allow the Trade Union Association to function and voice the grievances and demands of Soviet workers.

Copies of the Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign briefing on the Soviet Trade Union Association can be obtained from: EESC, c/o Vladimir Derer, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.

Bahro: imprisonment or deportation?

THE SECRET trial of East Germany's most famous political prisoner is due to take place any minute. Rudolf Bahro has been imprisoned because he has written a book (The Alternative) which is a devastating critique of the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe.

Reports circulating in West Germany indicate that the East German authorities are desperate to organise a quick trial in secret to 'settle the issue'.

The option of keeping Bahro in jail permanently has been considered, but rejected. What is now being planned is Bahro's deportation to West Germany in the near future.

The Berlin Wall — that monument to bureaucratic repression — was built to stop

workers leaving the 'workers' paradise'.

But dissidents like the exiled singer Wolf Biermann and Rudolf Bahro do not wish to leave East Germany. They want to fight for their political views inside the country.

It is people like them that the bureaucrats cannot tolerate. So they deprive them of their citizenship and expel them.

Socialist Challenge has been in the forefront of building the Bahro Defence in this country. We shall continue to do so till the matter is resolved one way or the other.

We would urge readers to add their signature to our 'Open Letter to Honecker' and join the campaign for Bahro's unconditional release.

BAHRO APPEAL

I agree that my name should be appended to the OPEN LETTER TO HONECKER.

NAME

Address

Position

Signature

Please return to: Bahro Defence c/o Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Exclusive! Soviet opposition document



'Never to be forgotten'

ON 3 May 1977 Pravda published an article entitled 'Shooting in Liberty Square'. It stated: '...About 200 policemen suddenly appeared in Haymarket Square. They shot at the strikers. Struck down by volleys, people fell and died on the road. This happened 91 years ago in Chicago in the USA. This happened on 1 May.'

'...Soldiers and policemen rushed into Liberty Square. They began to shoot at demonstrators: the participating workers, peasants. Struck down by volleys, people fell and died on the road. This happened the day before yesterday in San Salvador, one of America's states — the state of El Salvador. This happened on 1 May.'

CLOSER

Now let us tear ourselves away from this Pravda article, and focus on a city which is much closer to us.

Through the streets of Novochoerkassk flowed a large peaceful demonstration. Above the columns of people there were red flags, portraits of Lenin and banners with peaceful slogans.

Outwardly it looked like a 1 May demonstration. But it was not. It was a popular protest.

The day before, the Soviet government had doubled the prices of meat and dairy products. At the same time at the largest factory of the city (the electric locomotive construction plant) the prices of the products were lowered by 30 per cent.(1)

STRIKE

The workers could not tolerate this. A strike was called, and they came out into the streets with their families.

When the demonstrators reached the central city square their path was blocked by infantry and tanks. There was a prolonged period of uncertainty.

Then the machine-guns rattled — directed at the demonstrators: children, women and men. Struck down by the explosive bullets, people fell and died on the road — at the

feet of the Lenin monument and all around it in the huge square and in the adjacent streets.

This happened 15 years ago — on 2 June 1962 in a country which calls itself socialist.

MASSACRE

The crushing of this workers' protest was directed by members of the Central Committee of the CPSU led by two members of the Politburo — Frol Kozlov and Anastas Mikoyan.

The direct leadership of the massacre was assigned to General Pliev, commander of the North-Caucasian military district and Basov, the First Secretary of the Rostov regional committee of the CPSU. And they performed this task 'brilliantly'.

But when a problem occurred on the square — caused by the fact that the soldiers from the local garrison refused to shoot at the unarmed people — General Pliev quickly exchanged them for soldiers of non-Russian nationality from other parts of the district. And these carried out the task.

TRIALS

After they performed this evil deed, they were once again exchanged for other soldiers. Why look at unarmed peaceful people who have been killed and maimed by your hand?

Since the new forces who arrived were not given cartridges with explosive bullets, this allowed the authorities to claim later that the murders on the streets of the city had been carried out by enemy agents, since the Soviet Army itself did not have guns containing cartridges of explosive bullets.

Neither Pravda nor any other Soviet newspaper printed a single word about the Novochoerkassk events. And the authorities took measures in order to prevent any information from becoming known outside the city and to extinguish any local rumours.

Novochoerkassk was surrounded by the army. No-one was allowed in or out of the city. Indiscriminate searches and

arrests were carried out, according to a secret list of names.

The bodies of the dead and wounded were taken away. To this date nothing is known about either. The families of the dead and wounded were moved to distant towns.

A series of trials took place. Two of them were 'open' (entrance gained only by a pass). At one of the trials nine men were charged (all sentenced to death) and two women (given 15 years imprisonment each).

CORPSES

People were so terrorised and intimidated, that if it had not been for the persistent, courageous work of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who sought out and accumulated information about the Novochoerkassk events, the world even today would not have known about them(2).

The exact number of people who died is still unknown. But 70-80 corpses had remained on the square itself. It continues to be a secret as to how many died, or were killed after being wounded and how many were executed after a trial.

These deaths must not be

forgotten, nor forgiven!

We appeal that 2 June be commemorated as a day in memory of these sacrifices of arbitrary rule and as a day of struggle against the bloody terror of the authorities.

Date: May 1977.
Place: Moscow

Signatures: V. Bakhmin, E. Booner, T. Velikanova, T. Ventslova, Z. Grigorenko, P. Grigorenko, K. Garuskas, A. Lavut, M. Landa, O. Lukauskaite, N. Meiman, O. Meshko, Y. Mniukh, A. Polishchuk, V. Piatkus, A. Sakharov, F. Serebrov, V. Stepuk, V. Turchin, E. Finkelstein, T. Khodorovich.

Members of the Moscow, Ukrainian and Lithuanian Helsinki Monitoring Groups.

Translation by Helen Jamieson.

1. Workers are paid according to the price of the products they make. If the state reduces the price they have to work harder to earn the same wage.

2. Solzhenitsyn, Gulag Archipelago, Volume 3

Intercontinental Press combined with imprecor

'THE Imperialist Offensive in Africa' is the subject of a major feature by Ernest Harsch in the latest issue of Intercontinental Press/Imprecor.

Other features in this issue [Vol.16, No.22] cover the workers' upsurge in Peru and the deportation of Hugo Blanco; the debate over 'Leninism' in the Spanish CP; the prospects for a political shake-up in the next elections in Mauritius; and the disastrous performance of the Italian CP in the recent local elections.

Of particular interest to British readers will be an article on 'How to Defeat the Nazi

Threat in the US', outlining the campaign against the proposed Nazi march through the Chicago suburb of Skokie on 25 June.

Single copies are 30p plus 10p p&p, but why not take advantage of the favourable subscription rates: £9 for one year [48 issues], £5 for six months [24 issues], or £2.50 for an introductory offer of 10 issues.

Write now to Intercontinental Press/Imprecor, PO Box 50, London N12XP. All cheques/POs should be made out to Intercontinental Press.

SURPLUS VALUE

WHAT'S IN AN ADVERT

JUDITH WILLIAMSON'S book *Decoding Advertisements*, is the first full-length account of advertising from a Marxist point of view, writes Chris Hale.

Advertising intervenes in the circulation of commodities — one of its effects is that people buy more goods and services — and adds value to the products advertised.

As well as this, advertisements are themselves commodities, making profits for advertisers. But it is not enough to say this, because advertising also produces ideological value. With television speaking almost continually in the home during our leisure time, our experience of advertising is constant in everyday life.

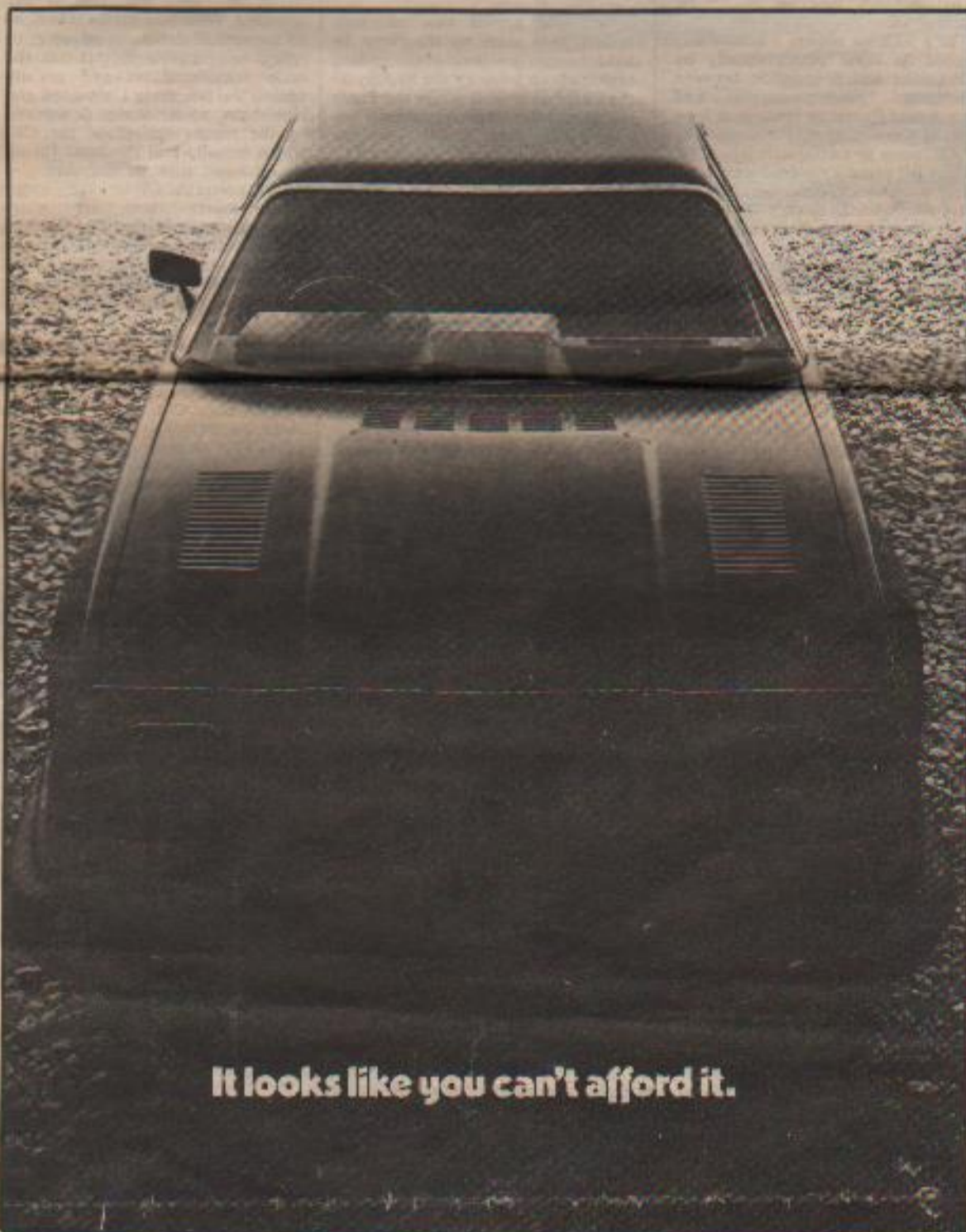
And this massive and powerful onslaught not only creates needs that the manufacturers of commodities can

exploit and profit from — it reinforces the ideological cement of a society where social relations appear as relations between things.

JUDITH WILLIAMSON has selected the three examples on this page, and written a brief analysis of each of them for *Socialist Challenge*.

They show how advertising uses things, or people reduced to the status of things, to add values to the commodities advertised. Ads are the strongest cement of capitalist society — there can be no such thing as 'socialist advertising' — reinforcing class relations precisely by obscuring them.

For this reason, it is central to a political practice to understand how they work.



THIS advert for a Triumph car shows particularly explicitly the way in which commodities are attributed with value in all advertisements.

In the big photograph, the car is initially set up as something desirable but out of reach. The angle and composition reinforce the caption — 'It looks like you can't afford it' — because so much of the car is glossily visible, and because the effect of the rocky, yet unrealistic terrain in which the car is placed (with the foreshortened horizon) is to remove the car from a real viewpoint.

The caption is expanded on — it 'looks' and 'feels' like a £10,000 car

— but the punchline (where we reverse our 'view' of the car in both senses) is — 'It costs £3,146'. In the photograph, we are both looking down on the car and up at the horizon. This is similar to a Peugeot advertisement where the caption is: 'Way up in style, way down in costs'.

In other words, the car somehow has a value which is neither its use value nor its price: between this £3,146 price and its £10,000 'feel' and 'look' it has miraculously gained another (surplus) value, an 'image' with a social currency which is still seen in terms of money and exchangeability.

This image is buyable along with the car and clearly doesn't exist on a separate level from economic value; but what it can do is misrepresent its and its owner's economic position. The effect in this case is actually to reinforce the image of wealth while cutting costs.

It can do this because despite the real price having been revealed the image still has a primacy over the written part of the ad, making the 'looked-up-to' £10,000 image seem natural: we can see how it looks. It is because the product seems to contain the quality of not being affordable that you can 'buy the unbuyable'.



THE SOUTHERN COMFORT series, which is discussed at greater length in *Decoding Advertisements*, shows how a product can appear to occupy a false place in history, just as the car took on a false place in terms of economic exchange.

In both cases the produce appropriates meaning from something real (economic/historical) in a way which functions to misrepresent that reality.

'When prohibition hit Southern Comfort, New Orleans discovered the Blues. A structure of real events is referred to, starting with 'facts' — 'In 1920 the US Government...' etc. But these simply form a shell of authenticity into which the product can be inserted.

While we are not seriously supposed to believe that the Blues originated from a lack of Southern Comfort, for the ad to work even as a joke history must be reduced to an aura of 'History', an image that has nothing to do with the real history of the South, black oppression, and black music.

The product apparently becomes the content of a system whose actual material content is therefore denied, and at the same time the product appears to 'contain' history, with its image of 'the South'.



IN THIS FREEZOMINT advert, with the pun 'She must be worth a mint', the relation of women's images to the value of commodities is made unusually explicit. Apparently it is the product that shows what the woman is worth. What gives value to the product, however, is the 'joke' side of the caption 'worth a mint'.

If she is worth a mint (of money) she is also worth a mint (Freesomint): this creates a circuit where a monetary exchange value is given to the woman who then passes it to the product. The 'mint of money' meaning is made secure by the certainty that she must be worth a mint (a drink).

So the pun, apparently about the woman, works back to the product which must then be 'worth a mint' although its own availability is what ensures she is worth a mint, and so on. This is similar to the car you can afford that looks like you can't.

What is different here is that a woman's image is used, purely as an intermediate carrier of value. As history and class are denied reality when they are used as images, so this perpetuates the idea of women as merely symbols of some value outside themselves.

Decoding Advertisements is published in the Calder and Boyars series 'Ideas in Progress' at £7.95 hardback and £3.95 paperback.

UNDER REVIEW

Harlan County USA

Miners who are paid with gun-fire

I HAVE never met anyone who loves a coal-owner. They are a breed the world over who have always had one thing in common — their hatred for those whose blood and sweat keep them in luxury, writes JACK COLLINS, an executive member of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Coupled with this is their hatred for those who dare to organise the miners. This applies to the American coal-owners of the past, just as it does to the present owners in the US — large oil companies.

The miners and their families have traditionally reacted in common in a manner that has never been equalled by any other section of the working class.

In illustrating these attitudes, the feature-length documentary film *Harlan County USA* relates the heroic fight of a Kentucky mining community in its struggle to leave a company union, join the United Mine-workers of America, and negotiate a new contract with their employers.

The strike, which took place in 1973-74, involved a challenge by rank and file miners to the gangster-type union leadership.

We see the age-old tactics of the coal-owners, from the propaganda lie that 'the unions are all controlled by communists', to the unbridled use of strike-breaking fascist thugs who had no scruples about whom they knocked about, shot or killed.

'Let's go and play with them a little,' says the leader of the thugs as they set out in cars armed with guns and sticks to do the bosses' dirty work. 'To play' means beating up and shooting miners.

It is legal for the thugs to carry guns; illegal for the miners... To call a scab a scab is not allowed and, according to the film, to do so could mean winding up behind bars.

I wonder if these attitudes have since been challenged and to what effect.

There is much that one could say about this truly magnificent documentary, directed by Barbara Kopple. It has the power to make you feel at one with the miners — to despise the bosses and hate their hirelings.

Laughter comes and so do the tears, especially when we learn in a very moving scene of the murder on the picket line of a young miner whose death made a widow of his 16-year-

old wife and an orphan of their 5-month-old child.

But long before *Harlan County USA* had reached this point I knew not to expect any justice for the strikers. I was not to be disappointed. The murderer was never brought to book. As one miner said, in so many words, 'It's still a company county with company laws.'

The leading role played by the women in the mining community and captured so well by the film will, no doubt, remind the British miners of the role women have always played in our struggles.

At the end of this particular struggle, many miners were dissatisfied. 'It did not go far enough. We should have marched on the machine guns instead of marching around the town holding meetings,' commented one miner on the settlement. Personally, I thought much more was needed.

Although everyone involved knew the answer posed in one of the film's many good mining songs, 'Which side are you on?' no one raised the real cause of the problem — the capitalist system and what's to be done in order to end it.

The film destroys the American myth of their wonderful free society and how, when dealing with the working class, that freedom is upheld in law and applied by boot, stick, and gun.

It also contrasts as clearly as a film can the beauty of the workers in unity and the ugliness of the capitalist system.

It reminded me of the words of a young South African revolutionary, quoted in *Artery* 14:

'How can I love a man
Who hires
The miner and pays him with
gun-fire?
See the film, and you'll agree.'

Harlan County USA is showing at the newly-opened Scala cinema, 25 Tottenham Street, London W1 (where formerly lived *The Other Cinema*). The film is available for hire, from *The Other Cinema Distribution*, tel. 01-734 8508.



Criticism of the constructive kind from paper's supporters

THE CONFERENCE of Socialist Challenge supporters a fortnight ago was a modest but important step forward. One hundred and fifty delegates from Supporters Groups, IMG branches, the International Socialist Alliance and Big Flame braved the summer sunshine and spent a day in intense discussion.

There were, in addition, two observers present from *Socialist Review* the theoretical journal recently launched by the Socialist Workers' Party.



The overall reaction to the paper was positive. Even its harshest critics such as Richard Kirkwood and Richard Kuper from the ISA admitted that its role had been positive. The debate about the paper's audience, the level of consciousness of advanced workers, how we should write, was continued at the conference.

In the afternoon session, the conference broke into workshops to discuss the different sections of the paper. Within these workshops members of the Editorial Board got the first ever feedback from the paper's most committed readers and supporters. Similar problems emerged. Comrades from outside wanted more regional meetings with members of the Editorial Board present so that there could be a regular dialogue.

The exchanges on racism, on sexual politics, on Ireland and on trade union and international coverage saw a whole

number of new ideas being raised and discussed. For the Editorial Board members it was a refreshing experience, for the criticism was constructive, even at its sharpest. Many comrades felt the need for more reports in the paper on the activities of Socialist Challenge supporters groups.

By far the most important development was the election of a National Policy Committee for the paper. Conference unanimously elected 21 comrades to meet regularly and determine the overall orientation of the paper. Resolutions on the future direction of the paper and its aims were passed by large majorities. Our *Common Ground* was unanimously agreed to be the political basis of the paper.

In addition the ISA Steering Committee nominated three of its leading comrades to be represented on the NPC in the 10 places set aside for political

tendencies; other ISA comrades were nominated to represent local supporters. Big Flame representatives asked that an observer's place be kept vacant for them.

The overall balance-sheet of the conference is therefore a positive one. The new NPC will be meeting in London on 10 June. Its agenda will include the forthcoming Socialist Challenge Trades Unionists Conference in Birmingham on 1 July, and a discussion on how to take the paper's avowed aim of building a new revolutionary organisation forward in the present period.

What also emerged from the conference was a clear feeling that the creation of the paper's Supporters Groups must be prioritised so that the paper's readers can play some part in the campaigns and projects defended in the pages of *Socialist Challenge*.

BLANCO

Conference passed unanimously two resolutions from the Editorial Board beyond those already reported in *Socialist Challenge*. The first was to send a telegram to the Peruvian Government against the state of emergency in that country, and against the deportation to Argentina of Hugo Blanco and others.

Supporters also condemned attacks by the state on the left and alternative press, including *Republican News*, *Peace News*, *The Leveller*, and *Gay News*. It committed the paper to support

the campaign to get *Gay News* back in WH Smith.

Leni Solinger — a Sheffield supporter of the paper from the ISA — also moved amendments to the Editorial Board resolution. She argued the campaigns and activity prioritised by the paper should include the fight against cuts in social services, support for the women's movement, and support for independent rank and file groupings in the unions.

These were all accepted by the Editorial Board and by conference, and will be more fully discussed at the National Policy Committee.

Members of the National Policy Committee include — [Ten places reserved for political tendencies] From the IMG: Tariq Ali, Richard Carver, Geoff Bell, Brian Crogan, Celia Pugh, Steven Potter, Dodie Wepler; from the ISA: Richard Kirkwood, Steven Marks, Martin Shaw.

Other members: George Kerevan (Edinburgh, IMG); Pat Ward (Crawley, IMG); Francis Mulhern (Camden, independent); Alan Soskin (S London, ISA); Pat Hickey (Birmingham, IMG); Theresa Conway (Manchester, IMG); Ros Oliver (Cardiff, IMG); Leni Solinger (Sheffield, ISA); Jude Woodward (W London, IMG); Martin O'Leary (Glasgow, IMG).

All members of the journalistic staff will attend the meetings, as well as those comrades listed above.



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Socialist Challenge

Garners conference 22 June BEEF UP THE PICKETS!

CYRIL MARGOLIS, the boss of the Garners Steak House chain, fancies himself as the George Ward of catering.

There's just one small problem. Undeveloped rolls of film don't have to walk through a picket line. Margolis's customers do — and they are increasingly disinclined to. GEOFFREY SHERIDAN reports.

A terrible thing happened at one of the Garners restaurants in London's West End last week.

Half a dozen people sat down and ordered the largest steaks on the menu. Just as the meal was being served, one of the group took out a leaflet from her pocket.

She proceeded to read it aloud, laying particular emphasis on the atrocious wages and conditions which led almost five months ago to the strike at Garners 'Slave' House.

EMPTY

Customers at other tables were perceptibly embarrassed. The faces of the scab waiters resembled in colour (and use) the red velvet seats — mostly empty — adorning the establishment.

The six would-be steak eaters

didn't bother to make an excuse, and left — their meals uneaten and unpaid for. Socialist Challenge insists that its supporters do not repeat this utterly unethical exercise.

TAKINGS

On Margolis's own (no doubt over-generous) estimate, the five Garners restaurants in Central London are presently taking only £12,000 a week. It is now the tourist season, yet even in quiet periods the restaurants would expect to gross five times this sum.

The pickets are beginning to bite (in a manner of speaking), and the strikers are optimistic that their battle for recognition of their union, the Transport and General, can be won. But they are fully aware that this will depend on more support on the daily picket lines, and financial assistance.

A number of trades councils, including Brent, Barnet, Wandsworth, and Westminster, are helping out on the picket rota.

The TGWU has begun to flex its muscles on the boycott front, with Pike butchers in Smithfield, and Pavitt & Steward vegetable suppliers in Covent Garden both persuaded to terminate their deliveries to Garners.

Yet it is more difficult to deal with the unmarked vehicles that now arrive in the markets for supplies, and Margolis has certainly learned a few lessons from his hero, George Ward, about holding the workers' movement at bay.

Pickets at his headquarters in Gerrard Street, Soho, have been photographed by Garners' accountant, a Mr Carlos, who has also revealed the NF badge that he wears under his lapel.

HARASSMENT

Police harassment has been a regular feature on the picket line, and last Thursday a gentleman 'lunching' with Geoffrey Margolis, the boss's son, at the Garners restaurant in the Haymarket, came to the

door to tell the pickets that if they didn't stop staring he would have them all arrested.

He produced a Metropolitan Police card to back up his threat, and fled out the back door five minutes later when a photographer arrived.

ACTIVE

Much more active support is needed before the Garners strikers — almost all immigrant workers — can be confident of victory.

Attending the Garners conference — to be held on Thursday, 22 June, at 7.30pm, Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1 — will aid the task of building solidarity and plotting a course to victory.

Meanwhile, join the pickets.

MAIN PICKETS everyday, noon to 3pm and 5.30pm to 11pm at 389 Oxford St, London W1 (opp Selfridges); 243 Oxford St (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Wincoburne St (Lancaster Square).

MASS PICKET every Saturday at noon, 328 Oxford St. Donations are urgently needed as strike pay is only £8. All donations to Garners Slave Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC2, 01-240-1055.



Photo: MARI RUSHER (JPL)

OUR FUND DRIVE

'I HOPE to God your Supporters' Conference doesn't prevent Socialist Challenge from steering its excellently chosen course. It seems too good to be true that we should have a weekly paper which is both literate and revolutionary, informative and propagandist, non-sectarian and yet politically thrusting.

'I'm sorry not to be able to come to the conference, and enclose £5 by way of a donation.'

This letter was handed to our editor just before the Socialist Challenge Conference by Raphael Samuel, an editor of History Workshop and a lecturer at Ruskin College.

Another person — when renewing their subscription and sending a donation commented — 'the accolade from Dennis MacShane was well deserved — Socialist Challenge remains far and away the best paper on the Left.'

Along with the compliments and these donations more monies came in. Local Socialist Challenge groups showed the way. A sale of books in Manchester brought in £27.50; a social in Harrow a further £50; a North London event after the Socialist Challenge Conference, at which the Charge played, another £27 and our Cardiff supporters chipping in with £20.

It is vital that all other local groups follow the examples set here. One event per month from every group could really boost the finances of the paper. So what is your group going to do?

Other supporters were equally generous. The week's total came to £237. The cumulative total has reached £1,179.96. An excellent week but we are still under half way to our final target of £2,500.

That has to be made by the end of the month.

This week our thanks to:

Manchester booksale	27.80
French visitor	1.00
Anon	0.20
North London social	27.00
T. Thompson	5.00
The Berserkers	13.00
M. B.	15.00
S. Alwali	1.00
Cardiff supporters	20.00
Harrow social	50.00
P. Macrae	2.00
A. Clarke	5.00
D. Hacker	10.00
T. A.	28.00
Anon	25.00
J. Masters	2.00
R. Samuel	5.00

HERE are some new ways to keep the paper going, and to give your local group some cash as well. All these fund raising aids come with no risk, they are guaranteed to make money.

Football cards: We will sell

you a card for 50p, you give a prize of £1 and make 50p for the local group. Each person pays 5p a go and guesses the name of the winning team. When 40 people have had a go you reveal the winning name.

We can also order all sorts of Pontoon Cards to sell for 5p or 10p each. The profit margin is at least £20 per 1,000 tickets bought. Of this, we keep half for the paper and the local group can keep the rest to finance its work.

Don't waste time, with the summer fast upon us Socialist Challenge needs the money. Summer is an ideal opportunity to spend more time on fundraising. You can sell the pontoon tickets and football cards in pubs, clubs, meetings, discos, and so on.

Socialist Challenge also has badges for local groups. Any of

the following are 11p each (if over 10 are ordered): 'Fight Racism', 'Repeal All Immigration Laws', 'Free Abortion on

Demand', 'Equal Pay Now', 'For a Socialist Africa', 'Socialist Unity', 'Women's Liberation' and others.

Win a Dylan ticket!

THREE tickets have been sent to our offices for Bob Dylan's concert in London next month. The supporter who sent them in said he thought a raffle for the tickets would help fill our depleted coffers!

Would you and a friend like to go to the Bob Dylan concert?



Friday, 16th June at 8.00 p.m. Doors open 8.30 p.m.

Two tickets are to be won for the performance on Sunday, 18 June — the first prize. The third ticket is for Friday, 16 June.

If so, send in today for Socialist Challenge lottery tickets! Price: 25p each or five for £1. Just send a postal order or cheque plus a stamped envelope to Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Also on sale at The Other Bookshop.

The draw will take place on Monday 12 June in The Other Bookshop. Organised by D Weppler of 328 Upper Street, London N1 on behalf of Socialist Challenge.

SPECIAL OFFER

A special summer subscription offer for readers — especially students — in Britain and Ireland. For just £2, you can receive Socialist Challenge through your letter box each week throughout the months of July, August, and September.

Domestic special offer: July-September, £2.

Name _____

Address _____

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'. Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.

