

CLASS STRUGGLE

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NEW AGE
PAPER OF COMMUNIST WORKERS' MOVEMENT

FIGHT WAGE CUTS!

While unemployment and short-time working rocket, the battle for wages still goes on.

Firemen

The firemen are at the fore front of the wages struggle. 2 years ago their militant action defeated the labour government. The final agreement was a phased increase and a pay formula that means that this year they should get 18%. In July 1978 Whitelaw speaking for the Tories stated "We have made it clear that we will guarantee the agreement made by this (Labour) Government with the firemen." The Tories have shown how much they intend to honour their promise by the speed with which they brought the army in and got them trained up - even before the firemen's conference of Nov. 21st.

The firemen struck in 1978 for a decent wage and for an agreement that would mean that they would not have to strike again. Any suffering caused by the dispute must be firmly laid at the door of the councils who employ them and the Tories who have welched on the agreement.

The firemen are in a particular situation where they have a long-term agreement which is being broken by the employer. So the employers demand that if the firemen are given more than 6% - the cash increase limit imposed by the Tory government - the other unions must recognise that this is a "special case". But the reality is the same for all public employees - inflation is going up by 15% and wages are to be limited to 6% - that is a 10% cut in real wages. The firemen must be backed, and so must all those fighting wage-cuts.

Miners

At the time of writing a majority of the miners' leaders are trying to push through a deal of less than 10% on the basic, plus another 3 to 4% on average on bonus. There is only a minority of the executive - people like Arthur Scargill and Mick McGahey - who are prepared to stand against this sell-out trend. Typical of the official union position is the statement from the Nottingham area:

"To reject (the offer) would have involved us in a suicidal strike against the government. While we oppose its policies, we feel we have little option in view of the state of our industry." Some opposition! In fact it is nothing more than a rehash of the government's view that we have a choice of jobs or wages. But the miners' experience is precisely that the only time they have won on either wages or jobs is when they have fought. Giving in on wages will only attract a further attack on jobs.

Car workers

At the same time as Talbot & Vauxhall workers have accepted around 8%, BL workers have decided not to strike over the pathetic offer of 6.8% - an offer that follows 5% deals in each of the last 2 years! BL workers have thus suffered a massive 5% cut in their standard of living over the last 3 years.

The pressure stacked up against them was immense. First, Edwardes made an offer, refused to negotiate and stated that even the threat of industrial action would lead to plant closures. But, Edwardes was confident in his arrogance as a result of AUEW president, Duffy, saying from

the beginning that a strike at Leyland would be bad for the company, the workers and the nation. Duffy stepped up his pressure on the workers saying, on the day before the Longbridge mass meeting, that there was no way the executive would give official backing to a strike, whatever the workers themselves voted for. "We want no part in it", he added. His call, like many others, was "stay at home and save your jobs." The treachery behind this was brought out on the 18th of November. While BL stewards met to accept the 6.8% offer, and therefore "save jobs" - Talbot were simultaneously announcing a further 1,600 redundancies. That's how much good the 8% pay deal did for Talbot workers. But Edwardes and Duffy didn't get their way easily. A shop floor revolt is beginning at the 2 big BL plants. Cowley workers wanted to strike, and at Longbridge the vote was so close that many shouted out against the claim from the platform that the vote was in favour of accepting the deal.

The next struggle is at Fords, where workers have demanded an increase at least in line with inflation. Support has already been offered from an international meeting of Ford workers held in Madrid, Spain. What Ford workers don't need is a repeat of Duffy's masterpiece of militancy from January this year when he really had a go at Ford's - for paying too much!

"Fords had said they could only pay 8% - but they sold us down the river. They offered 10%, then 12% & then 14% under pressure. Finally Ford management settled for 17½%. They sold us down the river, as they promised only 8%." It takes your breath away! With friends like this..

AFGHANISTAN FIGHTS ON

Public Meetings

FOR DETAILS SEE BACK PAGE

Editorial — FOR AN INDEPENDENT MASS MOVEMENT

Wage cuts, rocketing unemployment and short-time working, cuts in social security, health services and education. This is the reality of the imperialist crisis that we know so well. The Tory government, through its imposition of a 6% spending limit on the increase in local council spending this year, and through the legislation being put through Parliament to attack shop floor organisation, is supervising the offensive by capital as it attempts to overcome its built-in problem by shifting the burden of the crisis onto our backs.

The working class is facing an all-round attack, whether we are employed or unemployed, whether we work in the public or private sector. The attack is unavoidable because their system is in deep crisis. But it is their system not ours. Make them pay for it.

At the same time part of the offensive is to try and split the working class and undermine the struggle. A common claim is that we have a "choice" between jobs or wages. They hope that the unemployed will blame workers putting in for wage demands that will protect their standard of living, for the loss of jobs. It seems to make sense; but does it? The reality is that weakness in the wages struggle only leads to weakness in the struggle for jobs. And our experience is that wage-cuts are going hand-in-hand with rising unemployment, and this has been the case for several years. The capitalists are desperately trying to solve the problem of their falling rate of profit, and can only do so by both attacking wages and producing more goods with fewer workers. We are not faced with a "choice" — we are faced with a struggle on two fronts.

But is this the reaction of most union leaders? No. Duffy's antics in the BL negotiations, and the Miners' executive are but two recent examples.

What is needed?

We need unity of the employed and unemployed. We need to fight every redundancy, we need to fight every closure. We need militant shop floor organisation, and struggle. The workers of Gardners are showing the way. We need active struggle at the base level in the factories on a day-to-day basis. We need

to nail lies about the fake "choice" between "wages and jobs." We need to fight wage-cuts. What we need is a mass day-to-day struggle.

It is good that there is a demonstration against unemployment in Liverpool at this time, called by the Labour Party and the TUC. It is good that many thousands will unite to demand jobs. But that demonstration is meaningless unless demonstrations like it become part of a day-to-day struggle that actually fights for jobs.

But our experience is that the TUC leaders and the Labour Party will do exactly the opposite. They do not want a mass movement which they cannot control, they want an occasional orderly protest, and their principal aim is to get re-elected. They want to sell us the idea that unemployment, wage-cuts, and cuts in services are a result purely of "Tory Policies." Yes, the Tories are vicious and contemptible and are co-ordinating the immediate offensive against our class, and must be fought; but the Labour Party is also trying to cover up the fact that it is the system that is rotten and decaying. To put a Labour government back in office would be like changing deckchairs on the Titanic. The system will still be rotten and crisis-ridden.

We only have to remember the wage-cuts during the last Labour government. We only have to recall the 5% limit, imposed by a cabinet containing so-called left-winger Michael Foot, just before the last election. We can cut through Labour hypocrisy over the Firemen by recollecting that they had to fight Labour in the first place. And the memory of a Labour government that supervised a rise in unemployment from ½ million to 1½ million just about caps it!

The working class must fight the Tory government, we must fight every vicious attack, but we must look behind the political parties to see the system that we are fighting. To defend ourselves, and to prepare ourselves for the time when we go on the offensive against decaying imperialism, we must build a mass movement at shop-floor level, independent of all the bourgeois parties, a movement that will grow in the struggle — or our protests will be wasted.

From our postbag

WOMEN AND IMPERIALISM. From a London reader. I was very pleased to see the article in your last issue covering the Socialist Feminist conference on Women and Imperialism, but I think it failed to convey the scope of the issues discussed at the conference.

The most important resolution, in my opinion, was that socialist feminists should support the struggles of national minority women but not tell them how to conduct that struggle, that the socialist feminist current should take an anti-imperialist stand in its practice and that the Women's Liberation Movement should re-assess its demands and take an anti-racist/ anti-fascist stand.

The fact that after some 10 years of its existence, the women's movement in Britain has called a conference on the theme of imperialism shows, I think, a long-awaited development for the Women's Liberation Movement and a recognition that its supporters are largely made up of white, middle-class intellectuals

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and that national minority and working class women have organised outside it. Women's Liberation Movement conferences held in London have always attracted such a large turn-out, but the militancy of this one was in response to the excellent contributions made by the black, Asian, Latin-American and Irish sisters. There is as yet only the potential of a mass anti-imperialist women's movement. The conference was one step towards making it possible to build a mass anti-imperialist movement of all working people.

Editorial note: We plan to publish a fuller article on this important conference in our next issue.

"CLASS STRUGGLE" AND THE LABOUR PARTY. From a Liverpool reader. I am a bit disturbed by what I see as a weakening of CS's opposition to the Labour Party. An example was your article about the H-Block hunger strikers in the last issue, where you say, "If the Tory govern-

ment is allowed to, literally, get away with murder, there is no doubt that they will step up their already savage attacks on the living standards and democratic rights of the workers, oppressed nationalities and others here in Britain. The Irish prisoners are not only fighting a just struggle, they are fighting the same enemy as the British working class!"

At a time when Labour are out of office, it is important for Communists not to tail behind the "Tories Out!" lobby. Even some Trotskyites (whom we always accuse of such tailism, for instance the RCG and sections of the SWP) are taking good stands on questions of British imperialism, like Ireland, Zimbabwe, racism, and are seeing the Labour Party for what it is. We should be setting a lead and uniting with these correct ideas to show how to attack the Tories for their attacks on the working people while not giving Labour credence.

Why don't you write to Class Struggle giving your news and views!

Halewood workers UNDER ATTACK AGAIN

By a Class Struggle Correspondent - Fords Halewood.
Fords' new 'two days in ten minutes' discipline code is being imposed on all Ford workers in Britain, but the real target is the Halewood workforce on Merseyside.

After the nine-week strike in November 1978, car sales in Britain went through something of a 'boom' period. During 1979, Ford sold more vehicles than ever before. During that year, it is hard to remember even one dispute at Halewood. In fact, with daily production figures of well over 1000 cars, Halewood workers were being praised in the capitalist press! Because they wanted the cars they made sure that nothing was allowed to disrupt production. They were even known to have compromised (!) once or twice to keep the lines moving.

But now everything has completely changed. Car sales have collapsed this year. The effect has been short-time working and/or redundancies at major car plants throughout Britain. The only exceptions have been our Halewood PTA and Body plants, as the model change-over has insulated us from the car sales crisis. But this has not excluded us from the general pattern, it has merely postponed matters. The crisis will be here for at least 2 or 3 years, and Fords will be wanting, as other car manufacturers have been doing, to cut back on production here at Halewood, either by slashing the workforce or by shutting it down completely.

Besides the collapse of the market, there is the added factor of the high levels of robot equipment now operating here. Fords have spent £203 Millions on it so far and they want some return for this investment in the form of savings in the wages bill.

RESIST FORDS ATTACKS

Precisely what Fords intend to do we can only guess. At the very least there will be redundancies in the next few months. But the enormous trouble they have been going to recently to initiate disputes and stir up trouble, and the lengths they have been going to to create a public image of us 'threatening the future of Halewood', can only indicate that they have a pretty big bombshell up their sleeves.

Whatever they eventually decide to do we can be sure - as usual - they will blame us. We must prepare to fight to defend every job. With unemployment well over 2 million and still rising, for us it is a case of either we work here or we don't work at all. Fords have pulled in big fat profits year after year when times were better, so now these profits are threatened they must be made to do without. They would not let us benefit from the good times so why should we suffer from the bad times?

Finally we must not allow this latest 'big stick' discipline issue to distract us from fighting for our just demands in this year's wage claim. Through sheer intimidation the engineering workers have been forced to accept 8.2%. Both Vauxhall and Talbot have settled for 8%. BL are facing a paltry 6.8% rise after 5% increases in each of the last 2 years. We must resolve not to be similarly terror-struck.

- * FIGHT THE NEW DISCIPLINARY CODE !
- * FIGHT FOR EVERY JOB!
- * FIGHT FOR THE 1980 WAGE CLAIM!

A WORKER'S NOTEBOOK

THE RACIST BRITISH STATE is attempting to deport over 100 Filipino women workers. Their crime? When they were recruited to come and work for lousy pay in hotels and hospitals they did not declare that they had children. The women were never told that they had to declare this fact and were sometimes explicitly told they did not have to. Now Home Office Minister, Timothy Raison, has rejected trade union appeals against the deportations of chambermaid Narbetta Manzanero who failed to disclose that she had had a child after being raped. Being raped is one of the most terrible things that can happen to a woman, but it takes the racist British imperialists to add the final sadistic flourish.

RECENT REPORTS of National Front posters and slogans pasted in Edge Hill have to be taken seriously. The National Front and their youth organisations have never been able to organise well in Liverpool and while many people hold ideas that blacks are inferior or stupid or aggressive or that 'they should go back to their own country' the vicious hatred of blacks, trade unionists and communists of the National Front has never caught on. This has always been attributed to the strong working class unity of the area. After all, when you're being exploited the boss doesn't care what colour you are, only what profits he can make out of you. So what has changed? Unemployment has changed. How can our kids learn working class solidarity when they are kept isolated through lack of work? The TV and press do their best to blame the unemployment on the 'immigrants' - but Halewood workers face unemployment and they know you can't blame blacks for that! We must teach our kids where the real blame for their troubles lies, by giving them an example of fighting against every layoff.

"THE COLLIER", a rank-and-file miners' paper, recently revealed how the joint union-and-management Pension Fund committee invests the miners' pension money. Besides a large proportion invested in oil companies (the mining industry' chief competitors!), there are seven-figure sums invested in Distillers (former purveyors of Thalidomide), GKN (one of the foremost suppliers of funds to the Tory Party), Barclays (prominent backer of Apartheid) and Racal Electronics (manufacturers of missile guidance systems). Such is the corrupting power of the world of high finance, which can all-too-easily drag union representatives down to its own level on such joint union-management committees.

LUCAS INDUSTRIES were hard hit by the economic crisis last year. Higher interest rates, the engineering strike and the drop in demand for motor components, combined to produce a fall in profits of £31 million. Yet this does not affect the shareholders at all! Dividends are to be kept at their present level. Lucas workers, on the other hand, are being attacked on all fronts. The massive redundancies of last year are continuing with the closure of Lucas Girling at Bromborough on Merseyside with the loss of 900 jobs just announced and short-time working for 1400 workers in Suffolk starting from this week.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT of women at work is being investigated by NALGO following a Canadian survey which revealed that between 70 and 88% of women workers there had been the victims of lechers. NALGO fears that sexual harrassment could be equally widespread in this country. Incidents included leering, pinching, touching and even rape. Women have been dismissed or demoted if they rejected the boss's sexual advances, and besides the fear of losing jobs, have suffered depression, insomnia, headaches and stomach upsets. Victims are treated unsympathetically and are often believed to have encouraged the advances.

700 protestors demand ...

Bring Anwar's children home!

On Saturday 15 November about 700 people assembled in Rochdale in order to show their support of Anwar Ditta's fight to bring her children from Pakistan and to reunite her family.

This battle with the Home Office has been going on for the past 4 years, so far to no avail, as the Home Office refuse to admit that Anwar (a British-born citizen) had three children born to her in Pakistan. They refuse to acknowledge that she and her husband returned to Birmingham alone in order to set up a home for the children. Though why she should want to support 3 unknown extra children in the economic climate of Britain today unless they are hers is difficult to imagine!

The march around Rochdale, despite the pouring rain, was very lively. The Immigration Laws were thoroughly condemned but no truck was taken when one bloke chanted that the Tories were the only ones responsible for this discrimination.

At the end of the March a rally was held at a local school where Anwar spoke passionately about her fight to reunite her family. She spoke of Christmas and how when most families would be together this was not the case for her. Anwar also said that she was prepared to go to great length to prove that the children were hers, even submitting to a humiliating medical examination.

One of the 'Friends of Nasira Begum' also spoke, reminding people of the viciousness of the Home Office in first granting Nasira a right to stay in this country and then cruelly taking it away again, leaving her feeling more 'threatened' than before.

Unfortunately the rally was brought to a sad and early conclusion by the announcement that one of the Birmingham comrades had had a heart attack on the march and had died on the way to hospital.

A moving one minute silence ended the meeting, leaving most people with tears in their eyes and a feeling that the fight must go on to make this comrade's commitment to the march even more justified by eventual victory for Anwar's family.

Anwar's fight receives wide support because it is the same struggle as that waged by countless other victims of the British racist state.



A LIFE OF STRUGGLE

A Leeds comrade has sent us the following article on Anwar Ditta, based on an interview. It was first published in the "Leeds Other Paper":-

Six days a week, Rochdale woman, Anwar Ditta fights to be re-united with her three children, who are in Pakistan. Monday in Sheffield, Tuesday in Leeds, Wednesday and Thursday being interviewed by the press, Friday in London, Sunday in Liverpool.

On the seventh - the Saturday - she does the housework, the cleaning and the shopping. Every night she works at home

sweing up and packing pillow cases.

One penny per pillow case, under 100 pillow cases an hour that's less than £1 per hour. God must have found it easier to create the world.

The issue is simple - the Home Office refuses to accept that Anwar's three children in Pakistan - Kamran (10), Imran (8) and Saima (7) - are hers. So it won't allow them into Britain.

Yet Anwar herself was born in Birmingham and brought up in Rochdale. She only went to Pakistan because she was sent there when her parents broke up when she was 11.

She married, had her three children, and returned to Britain in 1975. In 1976, once she and her husband had managed to buy a house, she first applied to have her children brought over.

She was refused in May last year. She appealed - this was refused by a tribunal in July this year. She appealed against the appeal - that was refused last month.

Simply, Anwar is not believed. She and her defence committee are now having to raise £10,000 to send an investigator to Pakistan to make blood tests on the children, and possibly to fly the three midwives who brought them into the world over to Britain to give evidence.

Anwar says that her only courage is "the knowledge that I am telling the truth," how this is a prime example of the British immigration laws at work, and how there are many more Asian women in her position.

Comrade Arjan Das Kataria - People's hero

Comrade Arjan Das Kataria tragically died on a demonstration against racist immigration laws on Saturday, November 15th. He had marched in the demonstration through the streets of Rochdale in support of the campaign to bring the children of Anwar Ditta to join her in Britain.

At the very end of the march Comrade Arjan Das Kataria suffered a heart attack. He was taken by ambulance to the hospital, but unfortunately passed away.

Comrade Kataria was a heroic fighter for the working class and black people in Britain. He also firmly supported the struggle of the Indian people against imperialism and for a People's Democratic India.

Before he left India in 1963 he was an active member of the Republican Party of India and a supporter of the then Communist Party of India.

When he came to Britain he joined the Indian Workers' Association (GB) and formed

a proletarian organisation, the Indian Republican Group of Great Britain. He was national chairman of the Indian Republican Group. He was also a founder member of the Dalit Mukti Alliance.

Comrade Kataria was a militant shop steward in the AUEW of Birmid Qualcast and the Black Lake foundries.

Comrade Kataria was only 57 years of age. He leaves a widow and children. The IWA (GB) is to hold a memorial meeting for this fine and selfless working class fighter.

PRESS STATEMENT OF IWA (GB)

(Explanatory note: The Republican Party of India was the party founded by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to fight for independence and for the emancipation of the Dalit people, so-called "untouchables", the most oppressed of India's toiling people.)

BOOK REVIEW

On the Blanket by Tim Pat Coogan

Available from New Era Books
(£2.50 plus 21p postage)

Throughout Irish history, prison struggle has always been crucial. For the liberation fighter imprisonment merely means a new place to fight. For the colonial authorities prison is a means of grinding down opposition. In this unequal fight the prisoner's only weapons are political conviction and fortitude.

Special Category Status

In 1972, as a result of mass street protests and a powerful military campaign, the British authorities were forced to concede Special Category Status to prisoners convicted in connection with politically-motivated offences. This involved:

- * the right to wear their own clothes
- * the right to free association
- * the right to educational and recreational activities
- * the right to full remission.

However, by the mid-seventies, the British had decided to obliterate all resistance, and they set up the H-Block conveyor belt - forced confessions through torture, leading to conviction in special no-jury courts, leading to incarceration in newly-built prisons. To enforce this regime, Special Status had to go.

After a lot of double-dealing and fake peace negotiations with the IRA, the British ended special Category Status in November 1975. The conveyor belt went into full swing - in the following two years, nearly 3,000 people were pushed through. Republican prisoners responded by refusing to wear prison gear or perform prison duties - they would not accept the tag of common criminal! They were forced to spend every day naked in their cells except for a blanket and with no furniture except a chamber pot for their slops. This was the blanket campaign for the restoration of political status.

Dirty Protest

How the 'blanket protest' developed into a 'dirty protest':

"... a trolley came round with the food for the prisoners' meals, followed by another one for their slops. The routine was food in, slops out. But the prisoners claimed that what happened was that the warders started returning the blanket men's pots half full, sometimes kicking them over the floors. So this is why, say the protesters, it became necessary to throw the faeces out of the windows in the first place. Later it was daubed on

the walls to get it off the floors where the men slept." (This after the screws had boarded-up the windows).

Coogan does not in fact mention that at an earlier stage when the men were prepared, once every 24 hours, to take their slops to the lavatories,



the warders used the occasion to beat them up viciously. So the prisoners remained in their cells with their excreta - and their conditions deteriorated.

Coogan was allowed to visit both the H-Blocks and Armagh women's gaol. Here is his description of entering an H-Block cell:

"All I could catch was the admonition 'No conversation'; as if to underline this, two enormous warders, either of whom would dwarf me (and I am not a small man), entered the cell and stood behind the cell's occupants. They were aged 21 and 22, as I afterwards learned, serving ten and twelve years respectively. When the cell door opened they both looked frightened and looked anxiously at us for a moment. They were pallid and naked except for a blanket draped over their shoulders. They stood silently, fear hardening into defiance, I felt, as we looked into the cell.

"It was covered in excrement almost to the ceiling on all four walls. In one corner there was a pile of rotting blue-moulded food and excrement and the two boys had evidently been using bits of their foam rubber mattress to add to the decor as we entered. There wasn't much of

a smell, but the light was dim and the atmosphere profoundly disturbing and depressing."

The cells are inhabited by millions of tiny white maggots, and the prisoners occasionally de-loused.

"He says he was lifted by the ears, dropped into scalding water and restrained from turning on the cold tap... that he was scrubbed all over with a wire brush applied with particular vigour to his testicles..."

In February of this year, the "dirty protest" was forced on some of the Republican women prisoners in Armagh gaol. Since 1976 these women had been following a limited campaign for political status - the Republican movement outside had held them back from escalating their protest. In February this year, the prison authorities brought in male warders to wreck the girls' cells. When the women resisted they were beaten and put in 23 hour confinement. Left with full chamber pots and inadequate sanitary towelling, these women have also been forced to daub the walls of their cells with their own excreta. Thus, although they are allowed their own clothing, their conditions now approach those of the H-Blocks.

"On the Blanket" provides a wealth of powerful description and detail. Coogan effectively disposes of the myth that the prisoners took up the protest at the instigation of the movement outside. On the contrary, it originated within the prisons. For a long time the prisoners have wanted to bring the campaign for political status to a head by going on a hunger strike. Fearing for their comrades' lives, the Republican movement has consistently held them back. Now that all negotiations have failed the prisoners have themselves initiated the hunger strike. In their weakened and battered condition they are staring death in the face.

No Criminalisation!

One thing shines through this book - that is the determination and high morale of the prisoners and the support and strength of their families. Their will is absolutely unshakeable. The British government has tried to cover up this protest for years and recently the SAS has become suspect number one in the assassination of H-Block campaigners. But the prisoners' struggle has steadily edged into public focus. Their hunger strike has aroused powerful support in Ireland. The prisoners deny that it is criminal to struggle for freedom, and the Irish people will not be branded a criminal nation!

DON'T LET THEM DIE!

VICTORY TO THE HUNGER STRIKERS!

The seven patriotic political prisoners on hunger strike in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh Concentration Camp are daily becoming weaker. The years of cruel treatment and deprivation are taking their toll. Already, it is only with extreme difficulty that they can walk short distances. The hunger strikers have been moved to separate cells. The government says that this is to allow greater medical observation - what a callous and cynical lie from this murderous imperialist government! The men have in fact been moved to new cells in order to isolate them from the support of their comrades. Meanwhile reliable reports say that the hunger strike will be joined by women political prisoners from Armagh gaol.

The Solidarity Campaign

The heroic stand of the hunger strikers dominated the Ard Fheis (annual conference) of Sinn Fein during the first weekend of November. In his presidential address, Ruairi O'Bradaigh summed up the issues involved,

"Our immediate task, then, is clear. In the coming weeks we must bend every muscle, strain every nerve in support of the hunger-strikers. This is a show-down with imperialism. We must not be found wanting.

"The building of resistance, economic, social, cultural and national on all fronts is of extreme urgency as the general crisis of imperialism deepens. The possibilities become enormous, but for these weeks the priority is clear.

"We join hands with each other, with our comrades throughout the world and our slogans are: Victory to the Hunger-Strikers! Victory to the Irish People!"

Many foreign delegations brought the solidarity of their organisations and peoples to the hunger strikers and stayed on for a conference on 3/4 November to co-ordinate international solidarity with the blanket men.

Throughout Ireland mass support is building up. Local action groups are springing up throughout the south and a march to the British Embassy is planned for 6 December. Workers at the Liffey Dockyard, who are waging their own campaign against repression by the Free State, have abandoned various of their protest plans so as not to deflect attention away from the hunger strikers.

The North

Huge marches - some of the biggest for years - have taken place in the north. There have also been strikes, highly effective disruptive actions and pickets of army forts and barracks. The role of the youth has been particularly impressive. Everywhere they have formed local "Youth Against H-Block" groups. A statement issued by one of these groups after a picket of the massive Fort Jericho explains:

"We, the youth movement would like to let people know that we are here, and that we are not out for violence and vandalism but to show our support for the blanket



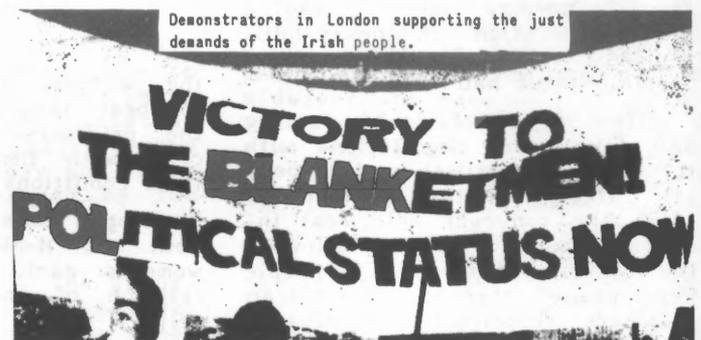
men and women in Armagh."

The H-Block campaigners are facing a murderous campaign against them by loyalist paramilitaries and the SAS. As well as the murders of John Turnly, Miriam Daly, Ronnie Bunting and Noel Lyttle, the SAS has raided meetings of the Relatives Action Committee, and street protests have been fired on. Consequently, one torchlight parade in Belfast was protected by armed and uniformed IRA volunteers, proof that the IRA protects the nationalist people and, in turn, receives their support.

The Campaign in Britain

Meetings, socials and solidarity hunger strikes have been held throughout England, Scotland and Wales to support the hunger strikers. In Norwich, Troops Out campaigners hoisted a huge banner proclaiming, "Irish prisoners must not die - Political Status now!" 200 feet up, atop the City Hall, while leaflets were given out below. A number of students' unions in London have declared their support for the prisoners' five demands. They include -

- * Middlesex Polytechnic
- * Goldsmiths College
- * City of London Polytechnic
- * London School of Economics (LSE)
- * Central London Polytechnic
- * University College
- * Kingsway Princeton



On Saturday November 15, over 3,000 people marched through London, past Downing Street, to a rally at Camden Town Hall. Called to mark the 60th anniversary of the Partition Settlement, the marchers naturally focussed their attention on the struggle of the hunger strikers who are in the forefront of the struggle to destroy that partition settlement, which has ensured that British imperialism dominates the whole of Ireland to this day. The rally was honoured by the presence of Nora Connolly O'Brien, 84 year old life long patriot and revolutionary and the daughter of James Connolly, the Marxist leader of the 1916 Easter Rising.

Speech by Nora Connolly

Nora also spoke, on Friday November 14, to a meeting organised by the London Support Group of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Calling on the youth to join the struggle against British imperialism she recalled how the Black and Tans were defeated in 1921 by the IRA Flying Columns. "For the first time we had the joy of seeing the British Army being marched out." But the British won out in the truce, "and Ireland was divided again and the battle was on."

Recalling her own stay in three Irish prisons

- Mountjoy, Kilmainham and North Dublin Internment Camp - she called on people to be clear on the question of right and wrong. "Those who are right are those who are fighting Britain in any way they can."

Paying her tribute to the blanket men, Nora said,

"The men who are suffering are so good, full of courage, full of love for their country and countrymen and women."

In conclusion she reminded the meeting of the words of her illustrious father at his court martial,

"All my life I have felt that England has no right to be in Ireland, never had a right to be in Ireland and never can have a right to be in Ireland."

She called on the youth to take up this call so that the British would be driven out and so that "the renegade Irishmen shall be deported from the country."

Build Solitary!

As Christmas approaches, the hunger strikers are getting steadily weaker. If these courageous struggling patriots are not to die, all of us must redouble our solidarity efforts, always remembering that they fight a decisive battle against our own main enemy, the British imperialist bourgeoisie. The men and women in the H-Blocks and Armagh are not criminals - they are patriots and freedom fighters. If they are branded as criminals, then all those who took up arms to fight the Nazis 40 years ago are criminals as well!

The H-Block men and Armagh women are the direct descendants and continuers of the unbroken tradition of the revolutionary republican struggle that has been carried forward from generation to generation for the last 200 years. As a smuggled letter from hunger striker John Nixon explains,

"I tell you now that a man or woman must have a great love for his people and country if he offers all he has willingly for it. That love can't be understood, can't be explained and we must illustrate to the world that we have that love. We are not criminals..."

The Communist Tradition

60 years ago the Communist International gave this rallying call

"The British Socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy - such a Socialist deserves, if not to be shot, then to be branded with infamy."

Today we need to take that call to heart. Communists, advanced workers and all progressive people must stand full square behind those whom Nora Connolly described as, "so good, full of courage, full of love for their countrymen and women." We must take this message to the British working class, oppressed minority nationalities and progressive people:

POLITICAL STATUS NOW!

VICTORY TO THE BLANKET MEN!

NEW ERA BOOKS 203, Seven Sisters rd.
London N4. 272-5894

We sell progressive books and periodicals from Britain and around the world, as well as major works from the Communist movement.

New stock: Liu Shaoqi - Three essays on party building. £1.05 plus 16p postage.

Class Struggle: £2.75 - 13 issues; £5.30 for 25.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES



ROMANIA: Romanian President, Nicolai Ceausescu, recently visited a number of Scandinavian countries, including Sweden. In a Stockholm press conference and in an interview, prior to his visit, with the daily Svenska Dagbladet, Ceausescu expounded Romania's views on a number of important world issues. He said that, "Poland should be allowed to develop without any outside interference whatsoever," and that the people and the various political forces were capable of solving their own problems. "Soviet troops should withdraw from Afghanistan." He said that in any circumstance, the presence of foreign troops jeopardises the independence of a country. Turning to Kampuchea he said that foreign forces should withdraw. He held that the Kampuchean people can realise national harmony and can democratically reorganise their own life without any foreign interference. He also called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Iran and Iraq.

CHAD: The long festering civil war in this central African state has taken a more serious turn owing to the increased intervention on the side of one faction, of its northern neighbour Libya. Some time ago, Libya arbitrarily annexed an area of Northern Chad which is believed to be rich in uranium. Now the Libyan armed forces have advanced with tanks, artillery and helicopters. Soviet built Tupolev-22 bombers have raided various targets in the country and Libyan troops have been airlifted to the capital of Ndjamena. There are eleven armed political organisations active in Chad. Many African states have helped in their attempts to solve their problems peacefully and on the basis of unity. But Libya, acting both for its own interests and as a catspaw for the Soviet superpower, has supported first one group and then another, so as to have an opportunity to fish in troubled waters. Recently Chadian finance minister, Mahamet Saleh Ahmat, who is also a leading member of the Armed Forces of the North, appealed to all groups in Chad to solve their problems peacefully, so as to prevent foreign interference and build up the country. He said that Libya aimed to set up a puppet government in Chad as a first step to a "United States of Sahel" that would dominate Niger, Mali and Senegal as well. He said, "We are fighting the Libyan occupation forces for the liberation and total independence of Chad and our struggle will continue until total victory." Ahmat showed a press conference photos of Russian made surface-to-surface missiles and other weapons that had been captured from the Libyans.

BANGLADESH: Mass protests have swept Bangladesh after 38 prisoners, including a number of political prisoners, were massacred in Khulna jail after a struggle against terrible conditions and for basic rights was brutally suppressed. Despite repression, a general strike called by 25 opposition political parties and organisations to protest at the massacre was successfully held on October 28. Patriotic and revolutionary forces in the country have demanded the punishment of the Home Minister responsible for the carnage, the release of political prisoners, and those who were wounded during the massacre, and also for the cancellation of the unequal Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty. In a joint press statement the President and General Secretary of the Committee for Civil Liberties and Legal Aid (in Bangladesh) denounced the massacre, calling it a gross violation of human rights. They also compared it to the Jalianwallahbagh massacre carried out by the British colonialists.

GARDNERS: STILL DEFIANT

By a Class Struggle correspondent

On October 3rd, workers at Gardners voted to strike and occupy their factory. After 13 weeks of short-time working the management decided to take on the unions and a full-scale offensive was launched. The company announced 700 redundancies (later reduced to 590) and restrictions on shop steward's and safety committee representatives' activities; the imposition of a new bonus scheme and a 5% wage increase to match 17% inflation.

At a mass meeting the motion to resist redundancies was passed with only six votes against. After negotiations broke down, the vote on a motion to strike was much closer but there was still a clear majority in favour. The company tried to undermine the strike by claiming that support was about 50-50, claims that were eagerly taken up by the local press. Radio Piccadilly broadcast reports that voting had been 3 to 1 against a strike.

HAWKER SIDDELY

Hawker Siddely bought Gardners for £14 million in 1977. It was a sound investment. Gardners has built up a reputation over the years as a manufacturer of exceptionally reliable, well-engineered models. A £17 million program of investment in new technology and new plant was soon drawn up. But technological advance under capitalism only serves the demand for increased profit, which means more engines being produced by fewer workers.

THE FIGHT NOW - INTIMIDATION

After waiting a month for the strike to affect the workers' pockets, management wrote to every worker asking them to vote on whether a ballot should be arranged about a return to work. This was accompanied by threats of further sackings if the strike continued. This ballot was blatantly rigged by the company who 'forgot' to number the ballot papers to there was no way of knowing whether Gardners workers had filled them in. Workers also objected that ballot forms were sent to 400 staff workers who are turning up each day ready for work and drawing wages. The union refused to have anything

to do with the ballot and ceremoniously burned 1700 ballot papers which they had printed to show how easily it could be fiddled. The stamps on the reply envelopes were sent to the brittle bone appeal being promoted by Radio Piccadilly.

The company recently contacted every worker identifying those who are due for the sack and appealing to the remainder not to support them. The 590 workers being sacked included the convenor and most of the active stewards. But in their anxiety to split the workforce, they "forgot" about the principle of 'last-in-first-out'. Workers at the factory only a few months were kept on and some who had been there 15-20 years were to be booted out. This has probably angered more than divided the workforce.

Winning official union support was a tremendous morale booster for the occupation. Traditionally it takes a couple of months for the AUEW to make a dispute official, so most AUEW disputes are made official after they've finished. To counter this Gardners started sending down delegations to the union executive before the sit-in began. At the third attempt the executive were no longer 'too busy' to meet the delegation and the strike was made official just ten days after it started. The threat by rank and file Gardners workers to have a second sit-in at the union headquarters will have helped them in this very difficult decision!

GROWING SUPPORT

There is no lack of support for the occupation. There are never less than 250 on the premises at any time, while in the daytime this number swells to between 500 and 600. As many as 1000 people come into the works at some time in the day. Nationwide the support for Gardners sit-in is growing day by day. Delegations have visited factories, mines and shipyards in London, Sheffield, Birmingham, Glasgow, Edinburgh and many smaller towns. Support has been so great that at times the delegations have been unable to cover all the workplaces they were asked to visit. A Birmingham delegation managed to visit 43 factories in 2 days. Steelworkers from Rotherham who had built up

contacts in Germany during their strike invited a delegate to travel with them to address a 3,500 strong socialist conference in Dusseldorf. At one shipyard in Greenock a lone shop steward came to the gates to say that the other shop stewards were unavailable because they were 'collecting money for that Gardners sit-in'. Everywhere they visit they receive a tremendous ovation. At factory after factory, many of them on short-time working, workers have dug deep in their pockets. As one delegate said after a visit to Huddersfield, "We've met nothing but friends. They aren't people we've ever met before, mind, not friends in the way people usually use the words. But friends who are people like us, who want to help us, and do help us although they are not immediately involved".

Forthcoming events

Friday November 28th

AFGHANISTAN FIGHTS ON

Meeting organised by the RCLB and Bangladesh Workers Association. Main speaker - Afghan patriot recently returned from the liberated areas. Iranian speaker and others. 8, p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion square.

Saturday November 29th

NATIONAL MARCH AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

Meet 11 a.m. Sefton Park, Liverpool. Special train from London. £9 return. Tickets from Labour Party Offices.

HUNGER STRIKE MARCHES

1. Assemble Clapham Common 2:30 p.m.
2. March organised by IRSP. Assemble 1:30 at the Galtymore, Cricklewood

SMASH THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT!

Picket of Labour Party HQ on anniversary of introduction of PTA by a Labour government. Assemble 144-52, Walworth rd., S.E.17. 12 till 2 p.m.

Sunday November 30th.

AFGHANISTAN FIGHTS ON

Meeting organised by Kashmiri Workers Assoc. Main speaker - An Afghan Patriot just back from liberated areas. Also Speakers from Iran, RCLB and others. Assembly Hall, Digbeth Hall, Digbeth rd., Birmingham. 2 till 5 p.m.

Sunday December 7th.

NATIONAL HUNGER STRIKE SUPPORT MARCH

Organised by broad based ad-hoc committee. Assemble 1 p.m. Speakers Corner.

Wednesday December 10th.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Activities throughout the country to support the Hunger Strikers. Phone the Troops Out Movement 01-267-2004 for details. Part of international effort co-ordinated by Sinn Fein and solidarity groups abroad.

BAREFOOT DOCTORS OF RURAL CHINA

Film show organised by East London Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding. 8 p.m. Whole Thing bookshop, 53 West Ham lane, Stratford, E 15. Admission 30p.