

Socialist Challenge

£100 a week extra

SOME SACRIFICE

UNEMPLOYMENT races towards 2 million, the increase in take-home pay of nursing auxiliaries is restricted to a miserly £5 a week, but now we are all meant to feel sorry for the 'top people' who this year are to have wages rises averaging 12.5 per cent.

What a lot of nonsense!

Let's for the moment leave the statistics aside and spell out what the increases announced by Thatcher on Monday really amount to.

High Court judges are to get a rise of nearly £100 per week.

Field Marshals are to get an increase which will mean they are now receiving nearly £650 a week.

Heads of nationalised industries are receiving a rise of, on average, just under £100 per week. Some of them — such as the head of the British National Oil Corporation and the head of British Steel — will now be pocketing over £1,000 a week.

Remember as well that all those awarded these increases received their last rise only three months ago when top civil servants and nationalised industry chiefs saw their pay go up by 25 per cent and MPs saw theirs go up by 10 per cent.

And what about the 'top people' not affected by Thatcher's announcement? Earlier this week *Labour Research* published a survey of top-paid company directors. It showed that 33 of these receive £70,000 or more per year.

One of them, Lew Grade of the Associated Communication Corporation, paid himself a massive £195,209 last year. Another, Austin Bide of Glaxo Holdings, awarded himself an increase of 64 per cent.

The differences between these salaries and those of the workers in their companies is astronomical. Take the example of the Wedgewood company.

A director there, Sir Arthur Bryan, was paid a salary last year of £138,877. That was 45 times the average pay of the Wedgewood worker. In other words if Bryan were sacked 45 more workers could be employed by Wedgewood.

Nor are salaries all these directors have to fall back on. A multitude of 'fringe benefits' are also available. Perks include company cars, private health insurance, low interest loans, school fees for children, company flats, and free holidays. Add in as well dividend payments from shares.

Indeed there remain tens of thousands of people in this country who grow rich without ever having to do a day's work — landlords, shareholders, and the like.

How much would nurses like to be in a position where they were asked to make the 'sacrifice' of receiving a weekly pay increase of only £100. How grateful would the redundant steelworkers be if they were paid only £1,000 a week.

How much would the low paid in the entertainment industry appreciate receiving just ten per cent of Lew Grade's salary.

How much more hypocritical garbage about 'equality of suffering' can this Tory government come out with?

Miners throw down the gauntlet

IT'S going to be a tough winter for the Tory government if the National Coal Board don't give the miners the £100 they're asking for.

The miners' message to the Tories was spelled out loud and clear by Mick McGahey, President of the Scottish Miners, at Eastbourne earlier this week. Calling for the miners to give a lead to the rest of the trade union movement, he argued that the battle with the Tories would be a tough one:

'This resolution, vigorously pursued, can create the conditions in which we can have the earliest possible general election and get rid of the Tories.'

'Keith Joseph "Baldwin" has declared to this country not only that the wages of the workers must come down, but he has encouraged the workers to scab on trade union rates of pay. We must take up that challenge.'

'Wages,' he said, 'are crucial in the face of the most vicious, reactionary Tory government this century.'

The miners' claim is backed by the threat of industrial action, with a special delegate conference and a ballot to be held at every pit head first.

It looks as if the left will also score a victory in the debate on the Employment Bill later this week. A resolution from the Derbyshire coal field calling on the TUC to mount a campaign — including industrial action if necessary — of non-cooperation with this new legislation when it becomes law on July 16 has won executive backing and is likely to be passed.

Mick McGahey also made it clear that he saw job and wage protection as part of the same battle against the Tory government:

'If anyone believes that the threat of pit closures caused by Government policy and the importation of cheap coal means that wages are no longer an issue, let me disillusion them.'

'Not only will we fight against pit closures, not only will we struggle to maintain job security but we will also establish reasonable rates of pay.'

The miners have the power to bring Maggie Thatcher to her knees as they showed in 1974 when they kicked out the Tory government led by Heath. To use that power now when unemployment is higher, cuts in social spending are sharper, and the cost of living is greater is vital.

If the miners' leaders turn their fine words into action over the winter months they should receive the backing of every trade unionist in Britain.

SUMMER SCHEDULE
FOR the next few weeks, during the summer holiday period, *Socialist Challenge* will be 12 pages. The new look *Socialist Challenge* will be out at the beginning of September — for details see page 2.

LOBBY THE TUC FOR JOBS

OUR POLICIES

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

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

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

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 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

.....Tel no

EDITORIAL

The future of Socialist Challenge

Socialist Challenge was launched at a time when the fightback against the attacks of the Callaghan government on working people were only just beginning. A big debate was taking place both in Britain and Europe about Euro-communism and socialist strategy.

It was in this situation that the IMG began its campaign for revolutionary unity and opened the Socialist Unity electoral campaign. Shortly afterwards the Anti Nazi League was formed.

We launched Socialist Challenge as an open, debating paper, open to all currents on the left to express their views.

Today the political situation has changed radically. The election of the Tory government has given rise to a widespread struggle against its vicious anti-working class policies. The steel strike and the developments inside the Labour Party show that a new pattern of struggle is emerging.

Socialist Challenge has to change to meet the new opportunities and problems thrown up by this period. There is widespread agreement among Socialist Challenge supporters that important changes in the paper are needed.

For a long time, the paper tended to fall into a rut; to develop a style which could become an obstacle between revolutionary politics and thousands of workers who are coming into struggle against Thatcher.

While Socialist Challenge has always been a campaigning paper, centred on the major working class struggles both in Britain and abroad, nevertheless today the paper needs to express its views in a style appropriate to a new audience.

Socialist Challenge will remain a paper open to debate by the various currents in the workers' movement. But we want to carry fewer of those debates internal to the far left (which have sometimes dominated the letters page) and develop a closer dialogue with the overwhelming majority of workers, who still adhere to reformist rather than revolutionary ideas.

In making this change we don't want to restrict the range of political topics covered but the way they are treated.

How would our proposed changes affect the paper prac-

SOCIALIST Challenge wants to dramatically widen its audience. The

steel strike showed us that militants are ready and willing to write for

and sell our newspaper.

We're going to re-launch Socialist Challenge in a big way in the autumn. Write in and tell us what improvements you'd like to see.

Socialist Challenge

FOR US: Cuts in Living Standards

FOR THEM: Unleashed Profits 76-77

10% wage cuts
1.5 million unemployed
17.7% inflation
£2.6m cuts in public services

Four Big Banks - £200 million
ICI - £240 million
GEC - £278 million
Amcor, British Foods - £80 million

Socialist Challenge

Build the Anti Nazi League

INSIDE: FRANCE: Atomist's Bombardment; PAPER: E & S; BOOKS: REVIEWS: John F. Kennedy, David Edgar, Crompton; MUSIC: Marc Wainwright

Socialist Challenge

WORLD CUP OF TERROR

SOUVENIR ISSUE

VOICE Rally

Socialist Challenge

IRAN: A NEW POWER IS BORN

Socialist Challenge

Whether it's Callaghan or Thatcher, FIGHT THEIR TORY POLICIES

RETURN A LABOUR GOV'T BUT VOTE SOCIALIST UNITY

Socialist Challenge

DISGUSTING!

£330 a week for steelboss

£10 a week for steelworkers

BUT BILL SIRS DOESN'T FACE THE DOLE

ALL OUT ON 14 MAY DAY OF ACTION

tically? First, we want to strengthen the links between Socialist Challenge and its readership. We need more articles written by supporters directly involved in struggles.

We want more direct contact between the editorial staff and the paper's supporters.

Secondly, we want to popularise the paper. This means writing shorter articles, re-vamping the language and style of the paper, and making it more accessible to the new reader, or the regular reader who hasn't had

ten or fifteen years' experience in socialist politics.

To carry all this through we need the help of you, our readers. Over the next couple of months we want you to write to us putting forward your criticisms of the paper and making proposals about how to change it. Don't worry if you don't have completely worked out solutions — send in your criticisms and suggestions anyway.

In the coming weeks we will be arranging a series of meetings for our supporters in the

localities, to debate the needs which they feel should be met in our columns.

From September we want to 're-launch' Socialist Challenge. The design will change, but most of all, we hope, the content. That is partly up to you.

The precise way in which the paper changes will depend on the letters and articles which you send us, making criticisms and suggestions. For the next couple of months our columns are open to you for this debate. Take this opportunity to explain to us the nature of the paper that you want.

NALGO leaders back Uhl defence campaign

NALGO President John Meek, General Secretary Geoffrey Drain, and national executive member Tony Ayland have pledged their support for the campaign in defence of the Czech Marxist Petr Uhl and other jailed civil rights campaigners in Czechoslovakia.

NALGO has already protested officially to the Czechoslovak embassy over the jailing of the Charter 77 leaders last October. A resolution

from the Bury branch went up through the North West and North Wales District Council of the union last December. The union's journal, *Public Services* has carried an article explaining the case of the role of Charter 77 to members.

At the union's annual conference in Eastbourne last month, no less than 63 delegates signed an appeal to the Czechoslovak government protesting against Petr Uhl's conditions of imprisonment and demanding that a socialist lawyer from this country be allowed access to the political

prisoners.

Among the signatories of the appeal was NEC member Tony Ayland, who has played an important role over the last three years in taking up the cases of victimised Polish workers and the savage repression of Romanian miners in the Jiu valley after a strike in the Autumn of 1977.

Other signatories include Liverpool branch chairperson Graham Burgess, Bury branch secretary Brian Knowles, Gloucestershire branch chairperson Peter Steele, Derby city

branch chairperson Steve Coupland, Glamorgan branch secretary D C Davies, Chichester branch secretary Bob Hazell, GLC branch chairperson John Plant, Harlow TUC secretary Danny Purton, Aberdeen branch secretary Hugh Robertson, and the Southwark branch chairperson.

The Charter 77 Defence Committee is hoping that this initiative by NALGO leaders will be followed up by similar moves in other unions to produce a flood of protest from the length and breadth of the labour movement.

HOMENEWS

During the years of boom the population of Coventry doubled. Workers were recruited for jobs in the city from Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and later from the West Indies and South Asia.

The car industry and associated engineering flourished in Coventry. With a labour shortage and a strong shop stewards organisation since the First World War, workers were able to gain considerable control over their conditions of employment.

The Coventry Toolroom Agreement, signed in 1941, effectively regulated the wages of semi-skilled engineering workers in the workers' favour. A schedule of rates was produced and shop stewards negotiated comparability on the basis of the best-paying plants in town.

Plummeted

Similar practices included the 'gang' system whereby workers pooled wages and established a measure of collective control over their jobs.

The success of plant-based strike actions in maintaining and improving wages and conditions for large numbers of Coventry workers helped fuel the illusion that the Coventry workforce could sort out its problems without reference to national politics or the unions at national level.

As the recession started to bite at the beginning of the '70s the bosses began to chip away at the concessions won by Coventry workers during the boom.

In 1971 the Coventry Toolroom Agreement was ended. In the same period the 'gang' system was smashed, measured day work was introduced, and workers were forced to accept large scale redundancies.

In the early '70s the combativity of the workforce was high and a large number of local strikes maintained wage levels and won higher agreements, but this success was shortlived.

By the end of the decade Coventry had plummeted in the wages league, while local employers were finding it easier to abandon mutuality agreements and introduce speed up and labour mobility.

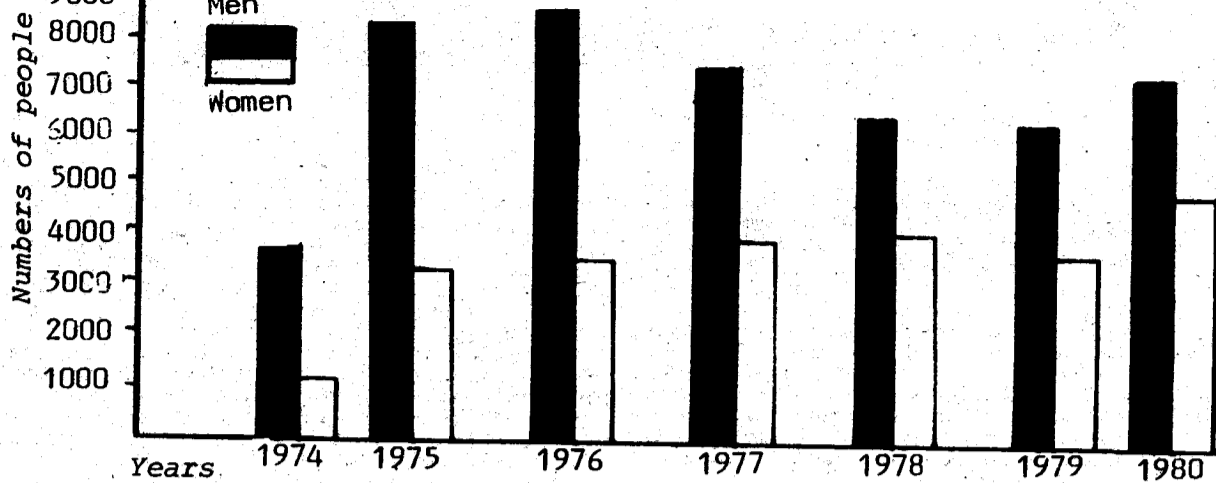
Components

Edwardes' success in BL — where the tiny wage rise earlier this year was linked to a package of management prerogatives on working practices — has been repeated across the components industry.

Increasingly managements seek to bypass shop stewards and convenors through the use of ballots, internal personal letters, and mass media.

The impact of the new recession in Coventry has been dramatic — the local building industry has collapsed, the closure of BL's Canley plant, with 9,000 phased redundancies, and 'streamlining' at the other BL and Talbot car plants in Coventry not only lengthen the dole queues but have a knock-on effect in the whole car components industry, which is the

UNEMPLOYMENT IN COVENTRY — ON THE INCREASE AGAIN



Coventry 1950-1980 From boom to bust

THROUGHOUT the '50s and '60s Coventry, in the West Midlands, was known as a boom town. Its workers had some of the highest wages in the country, the lowest levels of unemployment, and a Labour council that was inspired by ideas of town planning and community development.

With the onset of the present recession

the town is facing problems on a scale it has not dreamt of. Yet there are no miracle solutions; there will be no 'municipal socialism' for Coventry alone.

WILL REESE and NORMAN GINSBURG look at the background to the recession in Coventry and the facts of life for workers in the town today.



backbone of Coventry's economy. closed with 800 redundancies.

Every week the local press reports closures in engineering and components. Most recently Renold Chain

What does all this mean for Coventry workers? Each week the dole queues grow longer, and more

and more young people decide to leave the town. Coventry in the '60s was full of young workers — male and female — who came to the town with young families. Now the popula-

tion is shrinking and getting older.

Hospital facilities that were adequate for a population of healthy young people are not so adequate for unemployed, older workers, on poor diets living in substandard conditions. Yet the local health authority is being forced to declare cuts to keep within its cash limits.

Because Coventry's industry is based on semi-skilled labour, most young people could expect an apprenticeship followed by reasonable work. Not anymore. A recent survey showed that a third of fifth form school leavers last year were still without permanent employment a month ago.

Only one in three of those who passed the construction industry's exam will find apprenticeships with Coventry builders.

Evicted

Coventry in its boom years established a tradition of a high level of employment for women. Now the town has a higher proportion of registered unemployed women than men.

During the boom years Coventry women struggled to establish the right to waged work, the relative prosperity of Coventry workers was based on the two-wage family, so the present slump affects families even more adversely. Each week an average of two families are evicted from either their council housing or from the home they are buying on a council mortgage.

The days when Coventry seemed like the new Jerusalem for its own working class have faded away. Instead there is a glamorous cathedral, a huge shopping centre, derelict housing, lengthening dole queues, ill-health, and poverty.

Workers at the BL Jaguar plant in Coventry put up a fiery resistance to Edwardes' plan to cut a swathe through their working conditions, but they were isolated and couldn't stand up to the combined weight of the union bureaucracy and Edwardes trying to get them back to work.

This should have shown once and for all that Coventry workers cannot take on their problems alone.

Despite this there is still an illusion carried over from the boom years that Coventry has a local economy; that all it has to do is be flexible, ride the present storm, and before long Coventry will be great again.

Solutions

In the '50s and '60s plant-based actions and local concessions like the Coventry Toolroom Agreement put Coventry workers ahead of the field in wages and conditions. These tactics are not an effective reply to the level of attacks as the bosses internationally try to make workers across Britain pay for their economic crisis.

The solutions required now demand that workers forge links not only nationally but internationally and place demands that insist that workers shoulder no responsibility for the crisis.

WHAT'S LEFT SC EVENTS

RATES for ads to appear in What's Left. 5p per word or £4 per col. incl. Deadline: noon Sat. prior to publication. Payment in advance.

ENFIELD Revolution gig and disco. 3 Strange Angels and Instant Class IX. Sat 12 July, 8 'til late, at Scope Community Centre, 232a Ponders End, High St, Enfield.

PRESS Freedom conference, sponsored by the NUJ, TUC, and the Campaign for Press Freedom. Sat, 12 July, 10am to 6.30pm. Social 7.30 to 10.30pm, with showing of CARM film *It Ain't Half Racist, Mum*. At Leeds Trades Club, Seville Mount, Leeds. Everyone welcome.

PUBLIC meeting: 'South Africa Next'. Speakers from SWAPO, IDAF, ASTMS. Tuesday 15 July, 7.30pm, Manor Gardens Library, N7. Free. Anti-Apartheid group.

PUBLIC meeting on Iran. Khomeini's capitalism: the imperialists close in. Speakers: Inez Landa and Mike Freeman. Fri 11 July, 7.15pm, Friend's House, Euston Rd, NW10. Organised by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency.

IRELAND — the issues at stake: A series of forums organised by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency. No 5 — What is the Republican Movement? Speaker: Frank Richards. Wed, 16 July, 7.30pm, University of London Union, Malet St, Warren Street tube.

WANTED: screen printer for the Other Printshop in Manchester. Experience not essential but some artistic capability and organisational efficiency are. Phone Criss on 061-236 4905

HANDS off Ireland Defence Campaign. Public meeting with film 'Prisoner of War'. Tues, 17 July 7.30 pm, The Swan, Stockwell.

ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside

C&As — for more info ring phone Colin, 574068.

AMNESTY FOR ST PAUL'S. New badge available for 20p. Special offer of 15p for order of 15 or more. Send 10p for cost of postage. All proceeds to St Paul's Defence Fund. Write to Bristol Anti Nazi League, Box 1, Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Bristol.

BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.

BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat 10-4. For more info phone 643-0669.

BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.

BRIGHTON: For info phone Nick, 605052.

BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Montpellier, Bristol 6.

CARDIFF: SC sales Newport Town Centre outside Woolworths 11-12.30; Cardiff British Home Stores 11-12.30. Also available from 108 Books, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.

DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge public meeting, 'Revolution in Central America and the Caribbean'. Tuesday 22 July, Homerton Library, 7.30pm. Speakers: Fitzroy Ambersley (recently returned from Caribbean and Grenada), Toni Gorton, and Nicaraguan Solidarity Committee speaker.

HAMILTON: SC on sale 8-11 every Sat outside County Bar Almada Street, every Sat outside Safeway 1.30-5. For more info contact Paul, 17 Clyde View or John at 54 Eliot St, Hamilton.

HUDDERSFIELD: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.

LAMBETH: SC now available at kiosk Brixton tube, Oval tube, Herne Hill British Rail and Tetric Books Clapham.

LEWIS: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Brunel Centre).

LEWIS: SC sales at Newsfare shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linsthorpe Rd, Middlesbrough, and at Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Mkt, Stockton High St.

LEWIS: SC public meeting: 'Can the Labour Party bring socialism?' Thurs 10 July, noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.

LEWIS: SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities. Tel. 061-682 5151.

LEWIS: SC supporters sell every Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.

LEWIS: SC sold every Saturday 1pm Mersey Square. Tel. 061-236 4905 for more information.

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IMG NOTICES

BIRMINGHAM TOM Picket on Irish political prisoners on release of Liz Lagrau from Armagh jail. Saturday 12 July, 11-1pm at Post and Mail, nr Steelhouse Lane.

ANTI-CRUISE missiles fraction: the first meeting of this new fraction will take place at the National Centre on Saturday 19 July. The meeting starts at 11am. All branches to send one representative.

BULLETINS. Out now! Bulletin on Afghanistan (35p), Minutes of World Congress (£1.50). Orders being taken now for CC bulletin (40p). Still available: IMG conference minutes and IMG International information bulletin. All bulletin orders to be taken through IMG branches.

CENTRAL Committee report backs: branches should schedule report backs from the last CC from CC member resident in their area. Otherwise the centre will provide a reporter at the normal speakers fee. Documents available in the next two weeks.

Trotskyist International Liaison Committee
Public meeting
Wednesday 23 July at 7.30pm
*For a full discussion on the crisis of the world Trotskyist movement.
*Reconstruct the Fourth International!
Speakers from the WSL and TILC sections
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1
Ticket £1

IMPERIALISM IN THE EIGHTIES
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST TENDENCY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 5/6/7
SEPTEMBER 1980
Post-war stability established under the domination of US imperialism is giving way to a new battle to redivide the world. Imperialism in The Eighties will discuss the present tendencies and assess their significance for the working class.
For further information, agenda, venue write to Helen Swift, (A9) BM RCT, London WC1V 6XX, or ring 01-274 3951, or see the next step. Conference fee £5.00 prepaid, £6.50 door.

HOME NEWS

By Brian Grogan

WE'VE just had the worst unemployment figure since the war. Keith Joseph, guru of the Tory government, says it's all our fault.

His solution? Joseph explained: 'Unrealistic pay claims imposed upon management which are not offset by rising productivity and which, therefore, lead to rises in prices simply price the firm or commodity out of the market.'

Of course, Joseph takes it as read that profits should remain untouched by wage rises. But leaving that aside, two questions spring to mind.

Why is it that a fight for wages which barely keep up with the cost of living supposedly cause unemployment while it didn't in the 1950s and 1960s?

And how was it possible for unemployment to double under the last Labour government when living standards fell by 16 per cent?

Moreover, which industries are being hit by catastrophic redundancies? The car industry has been badly affected, yet British Leyland workers received a mere 5 per cent rise wage rise this year. Given that the rate of inflation is 21.8 per cent this means that they took a wage cut of 16.8 per cent.

Do wages cause inflation?

Twelve thousand jobs have been lost in British Leyland in the last year.

Steelworkers received 16 per cent — a cut in real income of 5.8 per cent even for those lucky enough to get the full award. Yet 50,000 jobs are already in the process of being slashed, and butcher MacGregor is calling for 10,000 more.

The root cause of unemployment is not decent wages. It is the profit system under which we live, which is prone to economic recessions. These occur because there is no planned relationship between production (that is, investment) and people's needs.

In a socialist system we would solve this problem by organising production according to a rational overall economic plan, drawn up according to society's needs and resources after full discussion through workers' councils.

Without a rational overall plan, each firm in a capitalist system sets out to do one thing: maximise its profits. The result of this anarchy is that production under capitalism is subject to successive periods

of boom and bust.

This has taken place regularly throughout the history of capitalism.

The drive for profits in a period of boom leads each firm to produce as much as it can. The result is a flow of resources into that sector and overproduction.

The market is incapable of absorbing the goods which have been produced at a price that is profitable. The underlying decline in the rate of profit is worsened and investment takes a nose dive.

Firms go bankrupt, masses of workers are laid off, and unemployment rises. This is what is happening today — made all the more severe because it comes on the back of a similar shock wave in 1974-75.

The counter-measures that hid the full effects of these periodic recessions in previous post-war years are no longer applicable. In the context of the massive profits' crisis, government deficit spending and credit expansion don't have the effect they once had.

Instead inflation threatens to go through the roof and lead to a general collapse.

Rather than taking such counter measures, the government is intent on removing all so-called counter-cyclical restraints.

So rather than extending government borrowing it has been cut to half of what it was during the last recession. Money supply is tightly controlled, forcing credit costs to go sky high.

In other words, the full effects of the anarchy of this system are once again being experienced as they were in the 1930s. Thatcher hasn't caused the situation, but she has deliberately made it worse. The real problem, however, is the system of production for profit rather than need.

In 1980 we have a right to work. We cannot undercut each other at the factory gate, destroying our unions' strength. To the Mad Monk's demand that we share wages, we should say we'll share the work — with no loss of pay. Take it out of profits.

If your system can't manage in this day and age, then we will run things our way. We will smash this anarchic system and replace it with a planned economy.

That's what we say, and we demand that the leaders of the Labour Party and the unions say it as well.

Post Office profits—we want the wealth shared

By Colin Talbot, Westminster POEU

OVER a hundred thousand Post Office engineers received a letter last week from Post Office Telecommunications managing director Peter Benton, who has evidently taken a leaf from Sir Michael Edwards' book.

Benton thinks he can go around normal negotiating procedures and appeal direct to

the rank and file. He's in for a shock.

The reaction to his letter has been to increase support for our pay claim. A member of our branch returned the letter saying: 'I didn't agree with the Leyland recovery plan either.'

Excerpts from Benton's letter and Westminster branch's reply — one of several sent in by different branches — are printed below.

Open letter to all members of Telecommunications staff in Engineering, Technical and Allied grades

ANNUAL PAY REVIEW: 1 JULY 1980

I and my senior managers were dismayed to learn that the recent POEU conference had voted by a small margin to claim a pay increase this year amounting to 37 per cent. This was, I understand, against the strong advice of the Union's NEC.

Most recent pay settlements elsewhere have been well below 20 per cent, and many of them have included agreement to special measures to reduce the cost and to raise efficiency.

We have already put our prices up this year — by an amount equal to about 17 per cent on the average telephone bill. We will make further increases when justified but we cannot conceivably raise charges by an amount sufficient to support a grossly extravagant pay claim such as that voted by the POEU conference. If we tried to, we would infuriate our customers and many jobs would be at risk.

I must therefore state in the plainest terms that the Post Office simply cannot entertain such an enormous and unjustifiable

claim...

Peter Benton

An Open Letter to Peter Benton, Managing Director Telecom

YOUR 'open letter' of the 20 June was a particularly pathetic attempt to undermine the POEU's just claim for a 37 per cent pay increase.

You state that such a claim cannot be justified. The facts show otherwise:

*Comparison with outside industry and other public sector workers: between 1975 and 1978 our wages fell by 14.3 per cent in real terms, more than any other public sector workers. We are still trying to make up that gap.

*The continuing co-operation of our union in productivity measures, which have made this industry so profitable. And this despite the fact that the rewards have been pitiful.

You point out that our prices have gone up this year. True, but over the last five years our prices have fallen substantially in real terms. How long do Post Office engineers have to subsidise big firms and government departments through our low wages?

In 1978, in a speech to the POEU conference, you said, 'I place high value on the loyalty and dedication to the service that your members have shown in the past, and the flexibility with which they have adapted themselves to the changing needs that new developments have placed upon them.' We hope that you will now put words into action, put a figure to that 'high value', and get round the table with our representatives.

We would remind you that our national executive are the people we elect to negotiate with you, and we are totally opposed to your efforts to subvert the normal channels of communication by the issue of your 'open letter'. Perhaps instead of this provocative action your time and money would be better spent in trying to agree a fair settlement to our claim.

T. Young, branch secretary

ACCORDING to figures published by Barclays Economic Review, Post Office engineers wages dropped by 14.3 per cent between April 1975 and April 1978. Last year pay just about kept pace with inflation.

Below

The figures below show what has been happening to Post Office Telecoms over the same period. Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the massive increase in work while 9 shows that the workforce has shrunk. Figures

4, 5, and 6 show that as well as having a high 'official' profitability, PO Telecoms pays out millions in interest to the City of London, and 'writes off' millions in depreciation, which goes into its multi-million pound investment programme.

Telling

The most telling figures are 7 and 8, which show that while Telecoms income has grown, wages have fallen behind — very dramatically.

The facts behind the claim

	total	per cent
1. Increase in Number of Exchange Connections	3.6m	29.0
2. Increase in Number of Telephone Stations	4.9m	24.0
3. Increase in Number of Effective calls	107,013.0m	139.0
4. Total Profits	£1,193.82m	10.7 (aver. yearly)
5. Total Interest Payments	£1,454.02m	14.8 (aver. yearly)
6. Total 'Depreciation'	£2,544.12m	26.0
7. Increase in Income	£1,855.42m	133.6
8. Increase in Wages Bill	£363.22m	54.5
9. Decrease in Total Workforce	14,711	6.0

Scotland: the Thirties are back

By Des Tierney

WITH the announcement of the latest unemployment figures, it's clear that the situation in Scotland is deteriorating rapidly. It's no longer 'No return to the '30s' — they're already here!

The total unemployment figure is 223,150 (9.9 per cent). However, this is concentrated in certain areas, notably in the West of Scotland. In the Dunbarton area it rises to 15 per cent, in Greenock to 14 per cent, and to 13.5 per cent in the Strathclyde region.

The figures represent a growth in unemployment of 90,000 in one year, and 140,000 since 1970.

Worst hit are school leavers who make up 30,000 of the total. One hundred and thirty people turned up for an interview in response to a recent advert for an office junior — last year there were only a dozen postal applications for a similar position.

Singers, Goodyear, British Steel, Massey Ferguson, Monsanto Chemicals, SKF (ballbearings), Talbot, and Weir's are just a few of the major companies which have shut or declared major redun-

dancies over the past year. In recent months the world recession and the monetarist policies of the Tories have accelerated this process.

The loyalty of Scottish industrialists to the Tories has been strained, although John Davidson, chairperson of the CBI in Scotland, held fast to the party line when blaming the crisis on 'excessive wage demands'.

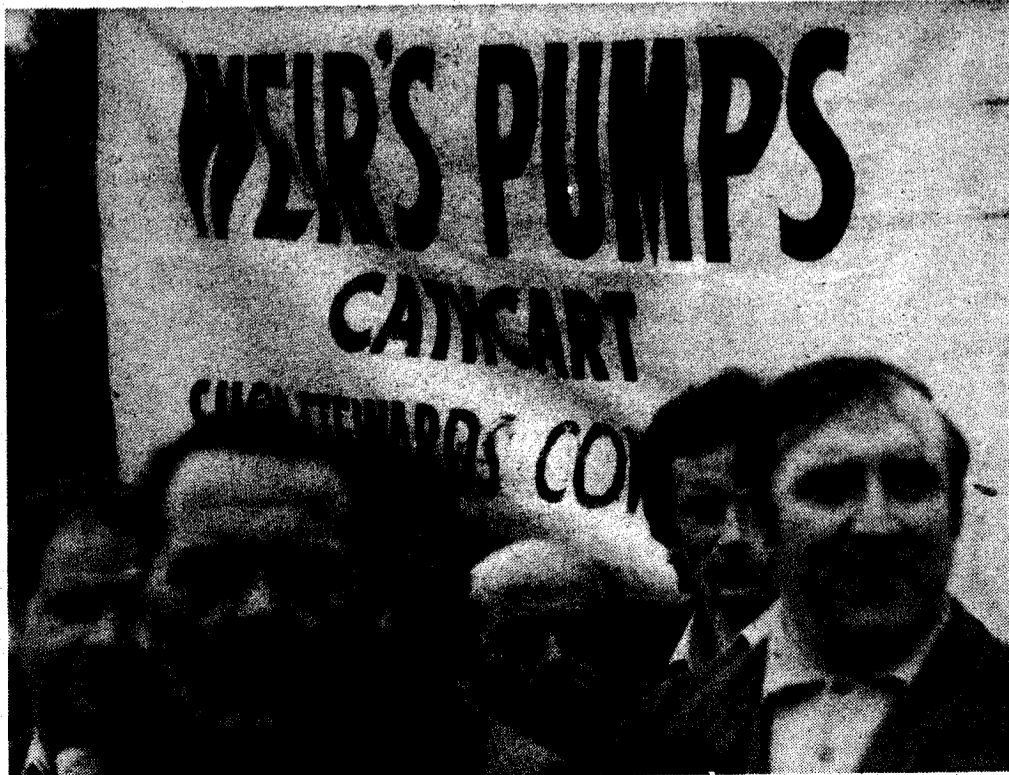
Yet it has been the trade unions' flexibility and willingness to work with management that has allowed the situation to deteriorate so much.

*At Goodyear tyres, the union leaders persuaded the workforce to work an extra shift to increase profitability;

*At Govan shipyards, workers were persuaded to work through their summer holidays to increase productivity;

*At Scott-Lithgows, unions approached management to ask how they would increase productivity;

*When shop stewards at Prestcold decided to fight, they discovered that the workforce had resigned itself to redundancies. In retrospect, the stewards admitted, their co-operation with management in previous years had 'softened up' the workers.



Weir's pumps — one of the many major companies in Scotland which have been shut or declared major redundancies in the last year.

*During the steel strike, the Scottish TUC used the threat of impending redundancies to ensure that the steel pickets allowed through finished and semi-finished steel products.

Instead of encouraging and leading mass actions against redundancies, instead of demands for a shorter working week with no loss of jobs, nationalisation without compensation of firms

declaring redundancies, and alternative production schemes, the union leaders are at pains to demonstrate how 'reasonable' and 'practical' they are. They use a lack of an alter-

native as an excuse for their inactivity, and brand militants as 'adventurist'. At Talbot cars, where 13,000 redundancies were declared last month, John Carty, the shop stewards' convenor, expressed this clearly: 'It would be futile to become involved in industrial action,' he said, 'there is no alternative. I support the STUC in its call for import controls.'

To underline the seriousness of the Scottish unemployment figures, another major employer announced its closure the day after the latest figures were announced. BRS, the second largest employer in the new town of East Kilbride, announced a closure that will add 15,000 workers to the dole queues.

The reaction of the trade union leadership has been predictable. Gavin Laird, the Engineering Union's Scottish officer, bleated about how reasonable the workforce had been — they had worked short time for the last 18 months and accepted the loss of 1000 jobs last year.

The STUC has finally been provoked into action, and is discussing convening a 'Scottish Assembly on Unemployment' to bring together the various sections of 'Scottish society' to discuss unemployment.

John Henry, deputy secretary of the STUC, is confident of the success of this policy: 'I think it will be very difficult for even this government to ignore that.' He must be joking. The only thing that is going to move this government is the united action of the Scottish working class. And that's the last thing the STUC is prepared to organise.

London Labour Briefing conference — no way forward

OVER 200 delegates from CLPs, trade unions, and trades councils from all over London attended a discussion conference on Saturday on how to resist the Tories Local Government Bill and how to fight for a socialist GLC.

London Labour Briefing (LLB), a magazine whose policy is to print anything submitted to it from the left, called the conference. But the delegates took no policy decisions.

The main theme of the meeting was how to prepare the resistance to Michael Heseltine's Bill which will cut the money available to local authorities and increase central government's control over how money is spent.

Heseltine wants local councils to make cuts and will penalise high spending councils like Lambeth which raise rates rather than cut into inadequate social services.

Rates

As Bryn Davies (GLC councillor/Vauxhall CLP) pointed out, there is no possibility of further rate and rent increases this autumn as the Tories will 'claw back' any increase by further cuts in the money available to local councils.

Cuts or confrontations with the Tory government are the stark alternatives facing labour councils.

The conference also discussed how to fight for a socialist Greater London Council, which was seen mainly in terms of amendments to Labour's GLC manifesto and getting left candidates elected.

Many questions were raised about the remoteness and lack of accountability of the GLC, but no ways were posed of linking the GLC with the local campaigns against the cuts.

The most disappointing aspect of the conference was its lack of a clear policy for fighting the Tories. Labour councils need to build a mass movement against the cuts if they are to save services, but they will not be able to do this if they make the cuts the Tories want.

Rate and rent increases are cuts in another form. Local councils have no choice but to fight the Tories, and London Labour Briefing provided no way forward for the labour movement in London.

Apology

WE would like to apologise for a mistake on page six in last week's issue. An article entitled 'Opposition to rate rises in Lambeth' said that the Labour Party in Lambeth was totally opposed to putting up the rates. In fact, it was Lambeth Labour Left not Lambeth Labour Party that expressed such a position. Lambeth Labour Left is a grouping of militants from different Labour Parties in the Lambeth area.

THE deadline for short news articles for this page is 10.30am Monday. Articles up to 200 words can be rung through on Sundays on 01-359 8189.



Adwest-police deny right to picket

By Stuart Cumberpatch

AFTER last week's highly successful mass picket of the Adwest Engineering factory in Reading where sixty workers were sacked in May for working to rule for a pay rise and defending a fellow worker, police on Wednesday 2 July retaliated in force.

Sixty police, including the Thames Valley Tactical Support Group, prevented sacked workers from picketing the gates. When Danny Broderick, the TGWU convenor, attempted to talk to scabs in front of the gate, he was dragged from the picket line by six police, arrested and later charged with obstruction.

The picket, including support from Oxford, Swindon and Basingstoke workers, was maintained for two hours. Thirty of the pickets and sacked workers then went to Reading police station to demand Danny's release.

He was eventually freed an hour later. When he

emerged, he said: 'The police are obviously determined to break this strike — they blatantly denied our right to picket the factory gates'.

In response, he appealed for more support on Monday 14 July, the next day of action, to back the sacked workers' demands: unconditional reinstatement and compensation, abolition of the dictatorial works' rules and disciplinary procedure, and a decent wage rise.

The use of the Thames Valley's version of the SPG shows that the police are using the dispute as a dress rehearsal for future attacks on workers when the Employment Bill comes into force. It is crucial they do not succeed.

Messages of support and information to: Danny Broderick, Flat 4, 46 Berkeley Ave, Reading. Money urgently required as all state benefits have been stopped.

School students' union doesn't face up to the crisis

By Richard Rozanski, former national organiser, NUSS

A political, organisational and financial crisis is racking the National Union of School Students, but unfortunately the union's conference last weekend provided no way out of its problems.

Rebel, the school student wing of the Socialist Workers Party, had a majority of delegates at the conference. On Sunday afternoon this majority was used to take delegates down to the Henley Regatta, which the Right to Work planned to disrupt. This subordination of the union to the activities of the SWP is symptomatic of Rebel's approach.

The conference degenerated so much during the first day that many people left on Saturday evening and

didn't return — unfortunately this included the comrades of the Socialist Youth League.

Only about 35 people attended the second day, during which there was a finance report, John Deason talking about the Right to Work Campaign, and two workshops squeezed into about two hours.

Revolution Youth tried to reconvene the conference to put an emergency resolution condemning the way that it had been handled, and calling

for continued debate about the future of the union. This was blocked by Rebel.

The school student's union will only be built by political campaigning work but apart from a motion supporting the Right to Work, Rebel failed to put forward a single motion mapping out work around any political campaigns.

Revolution Youth argued for serious campaigning work inside NUSS on unemployment and Cruise missiles, while fighting for the leadership to organise the union at a local level into proper branches and areas.

Revolution Youth will be building the Lobby of the TUC, the Right to Work Campaign, and the Campaign Against Youth Unemployment, as well as building the demonstration against Cruise missiles called by the CND for October.

It is through such work that we believe NUSS can be built as a mass school students' union.

Despite all our differences we hope that we can continue to work with the comrades from Rebel, as well as the Socialist Youth League, towards this end.

Scottish republicans under attack

By Ian Sutherland, organiser of the Scottish Republican Socialist League

THE Queen's visit to Scotland has cast an ugly shadow across those fighting for progressive policies. An unprecedented spate of state harassment has taken place and the main victim is the Scottish Republican Socialist League.

This is a revolutionary socialist group which stands for the establishment of a Scottish socialist republic.

On 27 June, the police picked up 13 supporters of this group under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Nine were held for periods of two to seven days. Four others — Isobel and David Hunter, Lewis McDonald and Colin Hammond — have been charged with serious offences. These include conspiring to acquire firearms, ammunition, and explosives for acts of terrorism.

They are also charged with conspiracy by criminal means to further the aims of the SRSL.

Ironically, the organisation takes a Marxist position against individual acts of terrorism. All socialists are urged to defend our organisation against these attacks.

Shotgun police

WAKING up at dawn to the sound of shattering glass and heavy feet thumping up the stairs, you are confronted by police armed with shotguns and revolvers.

A routine raid by the RUC in West Belfast or Derry? No, this was the experience of the latest victims of Jim Anderson's Manchester police force who carried out two armed, dawn raids on houses in Manchester at the end of June.

15-year-old Antony Green was in the first house. They

just burst into my bedroom and a double-barrelled shotgun was pushed under my nose as I lay in bed. His father, left with a shattered front door, has demanded an apology from the police. They have refused to give one.

Realising that they had gone to the wrong house, the police then rushed to another, smashed through the front door, and burst into the bedrooms.

The only person there was the panic stricken girlfriend of the man they were looking for, apparently in connection with a robbery.

The man concerned, who was working at the time of the raids, was later taken to a police station by two detectives and released after an identity parade.



AT LAST! A NATIONAL NURSERIES CAMPAIGN

Last Saturday saw the launch of a national childcare campaign. The London Nursery campaign and the Surrey Docks childcare project attracted 200 people to a conference in East London last Saturday to launch a national childcare campaign.

Twenty different unions had members in attendance at the conference. Not only unions with a high percentage of women members but the AUEW and the print union NATSOPA were also represented there.

The conference could not have come at a better time to launch a national campaign. Not only is nursery provision in Britain appallingly low — there were only 500 local authority nurseries in 1978 — but even these limited facilities are coming under the Tory axe.

A quarter of mothers with children under five in Britain today go out to work yet nursery provision is appallingly low — there were only 500 local authority nurseries in 1978 — and even some of these face the chop under Tory spending cuts.

The conference clearly saw the need to shout about this situation. An interim steering committee has been set up which invites affiliations. Cost of affiliation £15 National organisations, £5 local groups and £2.50 for individuals.

DHSS recruit abortion spies

THE Department of Health and Social Security is recruiting ex-police officers to harass and attempt to close down licensed abortion charities.

This is the only interpretation an advertisement placed by the DHSS which appeared in the *Guardian* on 26 June.

The abortion charities provide around 50 per cent of abortions in Britain because of the failure of the NHS to provide adequate facilities.

But the DHSS, which has overall authority for the National Health Service, rather than step up its own facilities is now willing to pay a salary of nearly £10,000 to anyone prepared to intimidate the charities.

The nature of the work is made clear in the *Guardian* advertisement when the DHSS stipulates that 'candidates (men and women) must have CID experience'.

The post is advertised as, 'a key investigatory and liaison ... in connection with ... the Abortion Act'. It entails 'liaising with police and other official bodies; following up any suggestion of irregularity or abuse involving the subject of abortion; and preparing cases for prosecution and presenting evidence in court'.

The target for such investigation will be 'nursing homes' and 'approved institutions' which have a licence to carry out abortion.

It appears that the DHSS and its own quasi police force are attempting to introduce by the back door what the anti-abortionists were unable to achieve in parliament when, last February, they failed to get approval for the attacks on the abortion charities included in John Corrie's private members Bill.

Already, according to the advert, there is a 'small London-based team' involved in this work.

A phone number for candidates for this post of abortion spy is given in the advertisement as Basingstoke (0256) 68551.

Readers of Socialist Challenge might like to phone this number — quoting reference G/5409 — and explain why they aren't applying.

Defend Nasira Begum

Support all those threatened by immigration laws
Demonstration
Saturday, 19 July, 12.30pm
Whitworth Park, Manchester

Steel union publishes plan for industry Profits for BSC don't guarantee jobs

By Dodie Wepler

FOR a trade union to put considerable time and resources into publishing an 180-page book, filled with facts and figures and outlining a plan for the industry in which its members work, is a major event. The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the major steel union, has done just that.

The book, *New Deal for Steel*, published last week, documents how:

* British steelworkers are the lowest paid in Europe, with the longest working week and fewest holidays.

* Labour costs per ton are the cheapest in Europe.

* Gross waste and mismanagement are the hallmark of the BSC.

The pamphlet also contains the secret management documents which map out the callous boardroom deliberations over the destruction of entire steel communities.

Material

Such in-depth material can only be an aid to serious trade unionists needing to grapple with the problems of working in an industry wracked by the current economic recession.

Unfortunately, *New Deal for Steel* is dead wrong in its starting point and steelworkers looking to it for a guide to action in the fight to save jobs and protect their interests will be led up a garden path.

For all its knocks against

management, the pamphlet endorses the fundamental proposition of the BSC: that it should achieve the profit levels set by the Tories. It then tries to square that with the defence of workers' interests.

But any serious militant knows that their interests are 100 per cent incompatible with starting with the need to boost profits. At best, the pamphlet is utopian. At worst, it amounts to an alternative management plan which involves an attack on workers' rights.

What is the basic problem as far as the ISTC leadership is concerned? It's bad management. The document is indeed a searing indictment of the present management. The inefficiency and waste which the pamphlet documents is scandalous.

But the roots of this inefficiency can't be put down simply to the personal shortcomings of Villiers and Scholey. The wrong investment decisions come from an inability to deal with the anarchy and unpredictability of the capitalist market. A new management team can't alter that!

Any proposal that BSC workers should take the responsibility for the ups and downs of the capitalist market under a new management team will be music to Tory ears! Yet this is what the pamphlet gets caught up in, when it sees workers' interests as identical to BSC profits.

MacGregor has been brought in to be more ruthless than Villiers. This fits in with the needs of the bosses and Tories in the midst of the recession.

Just consider the ISTC proposal that the management of BSC should prepare now for a new upturn in the market. This is plain silly, as an alter-

native to Butcher MacGregor. Working people today are coming to see that the way capitalists prepare for a new upturn is by boosting profits, boosting productivity and by attacking workers' interests, weakening their ability to resist by enforcing mass unemployment.

That's no solution to the job losses that steelworkers face today. Yet in our society, there is no other way to prepare for an upturn in the market unless we break with the whole rotten system.

Millions

Today literally millions of workers are being victimised for living in a capitalist society which is governed by the anarchic laws of production for profit. In a planned economy, rational economic choices would be made to suit people's needs. In a capitalist system, booms and slumps occur regularly as the bosses determine production according to profits.

And that's the fundamental point which the ISTC pamphlet doesn't recognise. The responsibility for the crisis in the steel industry doesn't lie with the working class. Today's crisis is a result of decisions taken by management, and determined by their over-riding interest in making profits.

But the jobs which BSC is willing to let go by the board to keep their books in the black are jobs that will disappear for tomorrow's workers as well. That's why job losses have to be fought: they aren't our jobs to give away.

AVERAGE ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT COSTS PER EMPLOYEE: 1974-8

Average USA	£11,300
Stelco (Canada)	£9,600
Cockerill (Belgium)	£8,500
Estel (Holland)	£8,100
Average Germany	£7,800
Average Japan (1974-7)	£7,300
Arbed (Luxemburg)	£7,100
Sacilor (France)	£6,800
Italsider	£6,000
Ensidesa (Spain)	£4,800
BSC	£4,600

Source: BSC comparative financial statistics - major world steel companies through the seventies

Have you sponsored the lobby for jobs?

THOUSANDS of leaflets have been produced by the Mobilising Committee Against Unemployment which has called for a lobby for jobs at the TUC Congress in September.

Sponsors for the lobby are growing and now every effort needs to be made to get more delegations to Brighton on Wednesday, 3 September. That's when the economic debate is scheduled.

The fighting basis for the lobby is: 'No to unemployment - for 35-hour week now!' and 'For a fight to kick out the Tories'.

If your union branch, shop stewards committee, or Labour Party will support the lobby, then write to the Committee, c/o 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP, and get the text of a model resolution appealing for sponsorship.

WELL before the strike earlier this year the British Steel workers were sitting in carpeted board rooms reading a secret document.

This involved the jobs of steelworkers in a pull BSC out of economic mess.

The document is *New Deal for Steel* published last week by the Steel Trades Confederation.

The secret document 'The return to financial business proposal for the steel industry.'

The dossier shows disregard for workers' steel industry. Page calculations have shown how to make a target fit.

Profits

BSC management has three options in its fits. First, the 'Redco' involved closing the Lackenby plants, Keissett and Llanwern and Ravenscraig plant.

The second possible 'Llanwern option' suited Port Talbot workers whose plant open if adopted, but the closure of the steel industry!

Finally, the 'South' was based on closing Talbot and Llanwern.

By looking at the disadvantages of each consideration, BSC has a final plan which involves thousands of steel workers with increased productivity agreements and those plants which has decided will remain.

The surprising document is that it is put into effect by month. This has a corporation where it to be 'consultation'.

THEY ARE NOT OUR

A fight would send shockwaves through the country

LAST week's meeting between the TUC Steel Committee and the board of the British Steel Corporation resulted in deadlock over the closure of the Bewley Road plant at the Warrington works. Colin

Herd, ISTC convenor at the plant which is scheduled to close on 18 July, attended the meeting and explains what was at stake.

THE closure of Warrington Steel will be a devastating blow to the area. Already unemployment is higher than the national average; 45,000 people are chasing 1,500 job vacancies.

Warrington is a viable operation. Over the past two years we have submitted to productivity deals, de-manning, and so on. Now, it is clear that questions must be raised about the effectiveness of such a moderate attitude.

Such an attitude has led to management informing union officials on 17 April of BSC's decision to close the entire works. This was not only inhuman but contrary to the provisions of the 1975 Iron and Steel Act, which states there will be 12 months consultation and negotiation given to bodies representing the majority of the workforce.

The ISTC is now testing the legality of this refusal by BSC management to consult in the High Court. Time to prepare the fightback is vital to us - which is why management throw normal procedure out of the window. It's the same thinking which informs their refusal to open their books for our inspection. In fact, we know that management has removed or destroyed all the books from 1975 to today.

Warrington is not the only plant under sentence of death. The secret BSC documents just published by the ISTC show that a butchering job has been in preparation for many, many months. More recent revelations show that both Llanwern and one of the Scunthorpe plants are threatened with total closure along with Consett and Warrington. But everyone seems prepared to go like sacrificial lambs to the slaughter. A common fight is the only way to stop this.



At present Llanwern is looking up the motorway to the Consett closure for its slavation, and Ravenscraig is looking down the motorway for the same reason. But the report shows clearly that no one is safe. Every capitulation only encourages them. The acceptance of slimline at

Port Talbot and Llanwern didn't save anything. It only brought total closure nearer.

A determined decision by Consett to go for an all-out fight would completely alter this situation. Warrington is just a small rolling mill; Consett is a big producer. BSC will not change its policy by arguments about viability. Consett workers have to start from the fact that BSC has decided to sack them even though they are presently breaking all records for weekly production. All the viability arguments in the world won't impress BSC.

An all out united fight is needed. Warrington has got commitments from Rotherham, Skinninggrove, and Scunthorpe that they will not take our orders while we are fighting. This shows that solidarity is there.

Sirs has said he will back our fight. Good. A united front of the whole movement based on no closures and no job loss would send shockwaves throughout the country and make the Tories think twice about destroying the British Steel industry.

But if Warrington decides to fight, we will take our fight through to the end. If the TUC Steel Committee can't see the urgency and the need for a national fight against the corporate policy of the BSC, then it is up to us, the workers within BSC, to take through the issue.

*Warrington stewards recommended a fight against closure at the mass meeting last Monday, but it was decided to ballot the workforce. This was underway as we go to press.

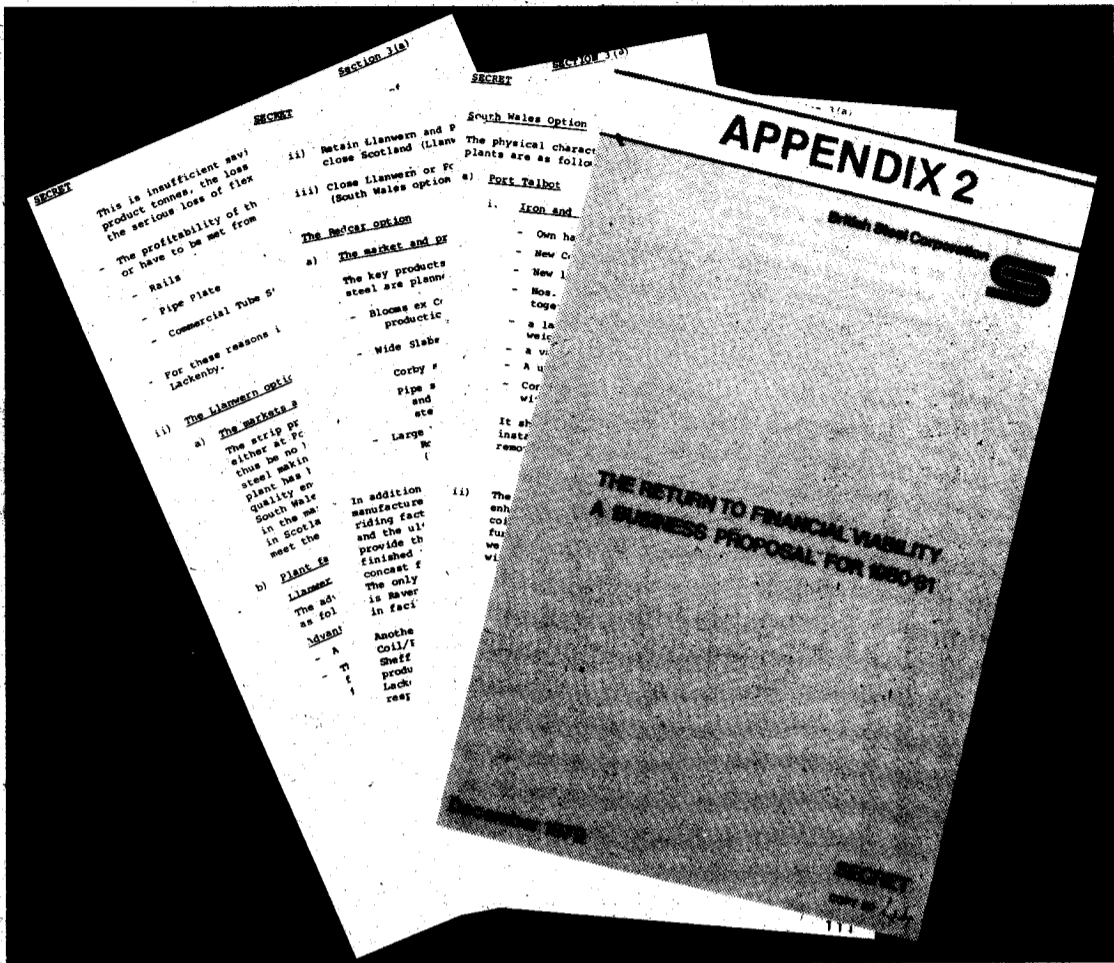


A letter to Warrington workers

'PLEASE don't sell our jobs. It's up to you to fight for our future. If you accept redundancies we might as well accept unemployment. Remember us when you decide whether to fight or give up. We need your jobs or we'll have no future.'

'They are not only your jobs that you are selling. They are ours as well. What's the point of us trying to find work when there are no jobs to have.'

Secret BSC document revealed



workforce and management!

As Bill Sirs points out in his introduction to the pamphlet: 'Last November, we became convinced that the Corporation was only going

through the motions of listening to our own views. Meetings were being used only to seek to extract from the unions ratification to previously made BSC decisions.'

This is the same conclusion that

the Corby steelworkers came to a few months earlier.

Charlie Keeney explained in an issue of the *Llanwern Steel Sheet* published during the strike: 'Corby

could produce strip steel more cheaply than bringing it in, with only a small investment in new plant, much smaller than the amount they intended to buy our jobs with.

'We tried to make the Corporation see this. It was at this point that it finally dawned on us — they didn't want to know, they'd never wanted to know.'

'The whole quest for viability had been a gigantic hoax at our expense. BSC's plans had never changed. We had been fed this thread of hope in a cruel attempt to keep us quiet until they were ready to give us the chop.'

Consett workers today face a similar problem. But even if their plant notches up profits for BSC, this won't guarantee jobs.

BSC has decided. All the research in the world to prove that an individual plant can 'make it' in the British economy isn't going to change the mind of the steel bosses.

So-called 'consultation' clearly hasn't helped. The TUC Steel Committee — minus Bill Sirs and a few other members — saw the secret document at a meeting with BSC in December.

Prepared

Just think how much better prepared steelworkers could have been if that document had been distributed throughout the membership by the union officials before the national steel strike.

Of course, this would have gone right against the rules of participation by unions in such meetings with management.

Even the late appearance of this document will be useful to workers in steel, because it contains BSC's detailed plans for each and every plant in Britain.

Charlie Keeney's warning to other steelworkers during the strike is just as relevant today: 'Don't fall for BSC lies, brothers and sisters, as we did at Corby, because unless you fight against it, they will close you anyway...'

'Carry on the fight against the closures. If you don't fight from the very start, you'll soon find that the closures demanded are ever-growing and the time-tables on shut-down ever shorter.'

BOC workers call bosses' bluff

By Valerie Coultas

'YOU'VE got 90 days to change your mind about sackings or we'll start a ban on overtime.'

That was the unanimous view of British Oxygen shop stewards at a special meeting on 26 June. Threatened with 300 redundancies, the 3,000 workers at BOC depots throughout Britain have called the bosses' bluff.

'The only thing we are prepared to discuss in the next 90 days is a shorter working week or early retirement,' said John Walsh, the convenor at Hackney. 'No one goes down the road until the company starts talking about that.'

John Walsh has a shrewd idea of how to fight sackings. Pulled into the office by the manager at his depot, John was told how much money he would be offered if he would accept voluntary redundancy. Despite telling the manager that he was not interested, John was told that he would get £6,500!

Militant

John was not sure whether the figure was high because of his 25 years' service to the company, or because of his militant views, but he was certain that he would have nothing to do with voluntary redundancies.

'I have no right to sell my job because I'm selling away someone else's future, a youngster leaving school for instance,' he explains.

'I think the trade union movement as a whole should take a stand against voluntary redundancy. I wouldn't be working in BOC today if someone had sold my job.'

Mickey Boulter, deputy convenor at Hackney, who faces the chop if management gets its way, agrees with John that taking voluntary redundancy is short-sighted.

'Where else would I get a job in Hackney today?' he asks. 'They've closed most of Lesney's, making 3,500 people redundant. I've lived in Hackney all my life and I'm not moving anywhere. The Tories have cut earnings-related benefit, so unemployment's no joke today.'

Brian Jordan, a shop steward at BOC's Ipswich depot, thought that it was scandalous that 'thousands of kids were leaving school without hope of a job.'

'The unions and the government should bring the retirement age down to 60,' he said, 'and give people a reasonable pension to live on.'

If BOC workers are forced into a confrontation they hope for support from other workers, particularly the dockers who are members of their own union — the Transport and General.

Government

If the private owners of BOC refuse to budge, argues John Walsh, the trade unions 'should be prepared to take over and demand that the government guarantee jobs by taking BOC into public ownership.'

John pointed out how people in Britain had been brainwashed into grabbing things for themselves, which was why it was necessary for socialists to put forward the arguments for sharing the wealth of the country at the present time.

'The main industries taken over by Labour government's in the past have been bankrupt ones. The people whom the government bought out have earned more money from compensation payments than they would have earned from continued ownership.'

John would be happy to see all major industry under public ownership but he was insistent that trade unionists actually working in nationalised industry should have more control over production than in the past.

JOBS TO SELL

Fighting policies to stop job loss

FIGHTING for jobs is not an easy thing to do. With the catastrophe of mass unemployment facing the working class, there are no simple solutions. What is desperately needed is a workers' solution to the crisis.

The Llanwern Jobs Action Committee has drawn up a draft charter which outlines the kind of policies which — if they gain wide support in the labour movement — would begin to provide the basis for a fight which could halt the job loss.

The charter calls for government subsidies and for the full implementation of a guaranteed 35-hour working week and worksharing with no loss of earnings.

It demands the complete nationalisation of steel producers, processors, and stockholders. It calls for a complete stop to closures.

Adoption of the 12 points of the charter, the Jobs Action Committee argues, 'will give workers a real voice in control of the industry and protect it from decimation'.

But a fight for any of its proposals would run counter to the bosses' drive for profits. Nationalisation of the more profitable parts of the steel industry is not something which management will easily agree to.

As the charter recognises, many of its proposals would need to be implemented at the level of government. These kind of policies begin to directly challenge the so-called 'rights' of private property. They challenge the bosses' control over industry.

Work-sharing, for instance, can only be an interim measure, especially if it is achieved in a single industry. A workers' solution to the crisis would require a complete 'retooling' of the

whole economic system. And this is something that only a government could do. But a workers' government committed to these policies would have nothing in common with the last Labour government.

A real workers' government would have to wrest control of the economy from the ruling class.

To implement a rational plan for the economy, it would have to expropriate the core sectors of industry and the finance houses. This would need to be backed up with the action taken by workers, and sanctioned by the government, to organise workers' control over industry.

Unemployment and over-production would disappear if the government was out to serve the interests of British people. A crash programme of useful public works — building homes, schools, hospitals, and stimulating industry — would require more workers, not fewer.

A planned economy would also need a government monopoly over foreign trade to check the effects of the market forces.

This policy of taking power is quite different from the plan offered by the ISTC leadership today. It wants to better manage capitalism for the bosses.

A new militant left-wing movement in the steel industry with strong links throughout the labour movement could not only fight to kick out the Tories, but it could begin to challenge the anarchic profit system which is throwing thousands of workers on the dole queue.

Copies of the *'Steelworkers Charter'*, the draft document for discussion printed by the Llanwern Jobs Action Committee, is available from: *Steel Sheet*, c/o 5 Sydney Street, Newport, Gwent, Wales.

Consett fights closure

NEARLY 3,000 Consett steelworkers voted unanimously on 20 June to fight against the BSC plan to close their works.

On Wednesday the steelworkers marched through London streets and put their case at a meeting at Central Hall and to MPs at a lobby.

Union leaders and a number of MPs have already given their backing and now the fight is on to broaden the support for the Consett workers!

'We leave school next June. It's already hard enough to find work now. What will it be like when your job is gone? We can't do anything about it. We are in school, but you must fight for us as well.'

'Remember, one of us could be your son or daughter. Have you asked your children if they would prefer a holiday on the Isle of Capri or their father and mother bringing home a wage packet?'

'We demand a future. We look to you to defend our right to work. Why should we suffer because you won't fight?'

Bob Bourke, Consett High School.

**HOW WE
FOUGHT
THE
BOMB**

Direct action at Pickenham rocket base in 1958.

Activity against British possession of nuclear weapons started in the mid-1950s. There had been a small demonstration at the Aldermaston nuclear weapons research plant in 1955. Two years later Harold Steel attempted to sail into the area where the first British H-bomb test was taking place at Christmas Island in the Pacific.

The plan for the first national march to Aldermaston came out of that, and the Direct Action Committee against nuclear weapons was formed in 1957.

About the same time the campaign against weapons tests — which involved such people as AJP Taylor, Kingsley Martin, Stephen King-Hall, John Collins, and Peggy Duff — began transforming itself into CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The Committee of 100 eventually came out of the Direct Action Committee.

The Committee of 100 itself was organised to carry out mass civil disobedience — slightly different from direct action at the bases. Its real inspirer was Ralph Schoenman, Bertrand Russell's secretary and later a founder of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Schoenman got people like Russell, Robert Bolt, Doris Lessing, and Venessa Redgrave to support us.

In the early stages, the Direct Action Committee was sponsored by members of the Victory for Socialism group — Michael Foot, Frank Allaun, and John Stonehouse were among our sponsors.

The split between the Direct Action people and the constitutionalists was there from the beginning. A lot of people at local level were supporters of both the Committee of 100 and CND, and a few people at the top, like Lord Russell, supported both.

The Direct Action Committee and after that the '100' centred on two types of activity that CND didn't want.

First, the direct action at rocket bases and the big sit-downs in Central London. Secondly, sustained attempts to get industrial action by workers involved in producing the weapons and building the bases.

Much of my time as a full-time organiser was spent speaking to shop stewards committees, trades councils, and so on.

All the propagandising to trade unionists helped to publicise the campaign, and we did have some successes.

PAT Arrowsmith, well-known today for her activity against Britain's role in Ireland, was a leading organiser of the campaign against British possession of nuclear

weapons in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

She told Socialist Challenge about the campaign waged by the Committee of 100 against nuclear bases in Britain.



The Direct Action Committee concentrated on nuclear bases — the Committee of 100, which grew out of it, was organised to carry out mass civil disobedience.

For example, the workers at Bristol Siddeley, who produced Bloodhound rockets and Vulcan nuclear bombers, held a one-hour token stoppage in 1960. They drew up their own alternative plan about how the factory could be used for peaceful purposes.

We got a day of action by workers at the Carrington petro-chemical works. The Communist Party shop stewards tried to sabotage it at the last moment but the

workers voted them down. The CP was always nervous about industrial action. The 'Newsletter' people — later to become the Socialist Labour League — supported industrial action but never did anything about it.

There were several other examples of industrial action, such as the dockers in Liverpool who refused to handle goods associated with nuclear weapons.

There were a great many actions at

rocket bases, as well as the sit-downs in Central London. We organised non-violent action at bases from Swaffham in Norfolk to the Holy Loch base in Scotland.

The actions at the bases culminated in a day of action in 1962 when we carried out actions simultaneously at the Weathersfield, Ruislip, Greenham Common, and other bases. I think by this time the state was getting rather disturbed by

the extent of our activity.

As early as 1959 our organisers had been given two months 'preventive detention' sentences — people forget that there was such a thing even before the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The police increasingly became more violent.

After the simultaneous action at different bases, six of our organisers were charged with conspiracy to break the Official Secrets Act and were given 18-month sentences. This undoubtedly had a demoralising impact on the campaign.

The big sit-downs in London were probably the biggest acts of mass civil disobedience seen in this country for decades. The third sit-down, in 1961, was banned under the Public Order Act. Fifty members of the Committee of 100 were bound over not to organise or participate in it — but it went ahead anyway.

It ended with hundreds arrested and considerable police violence. Bertrand Russell, despite being very frail and ill, spent a week in prison. Many others spent longer terms in prison. The late Anne Kerr MP was given a month in prison.

The campaign against nuclear weapons became successively bound up with Vietnam and other issues. Vietnam seemed as if it was the main flashpoint where a nuclear war could take place — so our activity was diversified, but never completely ended.

I think the resurgence of the anti-nuclear campaign is very positive. There are lots of young people coming into the anti-Cruise missiles campaign, and also there seems to be quite a bit of support in the areas where the missiles are to be located.

This is a big change. I can remember being pelted with fruit in country market towns when we took our campaign to the local people!

I'm a sponsor of the nuclear-free Europe campaign, although I'm sceptical about the value of the Salt 2 treaty.

I believe that the campaign against Cruise missiles should be conducted through building local CND groups. That way you can take up a range of anti-nuclear issues. CND is against NATO and for unilateral disarmament. EP Thompson and the END campaign are unilateralist, but they put the stress on the European dimension. I think that CND and END are complementary.

EP Thompson will be speaking at a meeting organised by the Campaign for a Nuclear Free Europe at Central Hall, Westminster, on Thursday, July 10, at 7.30pm.

By Geoffrey Sheridan

It's not every day that socialists consider an insurrectionary situation is at hand; that a country is on the brink of a struggle the outcome of which can only be the overthrow of capitalism or fierce repression of the masses with many murdered.

That is the position today in El Salvador, the smallest of the republics in Central America but by far the most densely populated.

Since the early 1960s El Salvador has undergone considerable industrialisation, so that there is now a relatively large number of urban industrial workers among the country's 4.5m people.

The music hall joke that countries like El Salvador are 'banana republics', subject to periodic coups by cigar-chomping generals acting for United States companies, has turned sour for its signifiers.

With the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua a year ago, Washington stopped laughing. Now the revolution in Nicaragua threatens to be repeated in El Salvador, the borders of which are just 100 miles from Somoza's former fiefdom.

On 24-25 June there was a two-day general strike in El Salvador which shut down more than 90 per cent of industry, commerce, transport, and government offices.

Siege

It was called by the Revolutionary Co-ordinating Committee of the Masses (CRM). This was formed at the beginning of the year and groups together five left-wing organisations, most of which have a military wing.

The general strike gained impressive support. It was joined by some 60,000 workers in CRM-led unions, 18,000 teachers, and 80,000 government employees. Even small business people who run bus and lorry companies and food shops closed for the two days. The daily newspapers were shut down too.

El Salvador's military government, not to mention its mentors in Washington, was left in no doubt what the mass of the country's people want.

After 2-day general strike Salvadorans prepare for insurrection

The strikers demanded a halt to the military repression and an end to the state of siege. They called for a stop to US military aid and interference. They demanded the right to strike, and the release of political leaders who have been jailed by the junta.

Confrontation

The strikers made preparations for the full-scale confrontation which now seems imminent. The CRM called for the period of the strike to be used to organise people's committees and self-defence militias. Many such meetings were held.

Food, water, and medical supplies are now being stocked for the anticipated insurrection.

During the general strike, while the government put thousands of troops on the streets, together with tanks and armoured cars, and the right-wing paramilitary group ORDEN made its presence felt, there were few armed clashes.

The discipline of the strikers largely ensured that. But on 26 June the junta showed its love for the people who so massively reject it. A densely populated working class area in the capital, San Salvador, was shelled. Reports indicate that at least 25 people were killed and hundreds wounded or captured.

The attack was a prelude to the invasion of the nearby National University, where CRM leaders were holding a press conference. According to the

Nicaraguan daily *El Nuevo Diario*, foreign correspondents who were present compared the attacks to the genocidal measures of Somoza before his hasty departure for Florida.

The reason why the junta's backer, the US ruling class, is frantic can be seen from a glance at a map. Cuba, just off the United States mainland, has already demonstrated its willingness to export revolution.

The foreign minister of Nicaragua, which straddles the isthmus connecting North and South America, has warned President Carter that any form of direct US intervention in El Salvador 'would be like aggression against our own person'.

The only policy open to US business interests in Central America is terror. That was shown on 14 June when hundreds of Salvadoran peasants fleeing an army attack tried to cross the Rio Sumpul into Honduras.



They were driven back by units of the Honduran army, and then gunned down by the Salvadoran National Guard. Six hundred were murdered. A fisherman found the bodies of five children in his net.

That's Carter's view of human rights. Our solidarity with the people of El Salvador would not please Carter or his friend Thatcher.



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Who invited South Africa to bomb Angola?

By Roy Alexander

THE utter hypocrisy of imperialist politics was exposed in recent weeks as South Africa's invasion of Angola was met with only a murmur of criticism from the vast majority of those who have been shouting about the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Even the most virulent anti-communists have to face the fact that the Soviets are fighting alongside Afghan forces who represent something in their country.

Yet the South Africans have made no attempt to dress their invasion by thousands of troops, backed by armoured columns and air strikes, as anything but a violation of Angola's national sovereignty.

According to Angolan sources, the racist invaders were responsible for over 600 civilians deaths and dozens of casualties of Angolan troops. They have done their best to wreak havoc in the fragile economy of southern Angola, driving thousands of head of cattle across the border into Namibia.

This operation follows a pattern set by the Rhodesian forces with their strikes deep into Mozambique during the months preceding the Lancaster House settlement. This similarity is more than superficial.

South Africa is presently involved in discussions with the UN over its 'internal settlement' scheme for Namibia — similar to the Smith-Muzorewa set-up in Zimbabwe. South Africa may be prepared to make certain concessions, but only if it is sure that it can keep power out of the hands of the SWAPO guerrilla fighters.

The violence of the racists' Angolan bid results from their determination to crush SWAPO forces in Angola to give them more

flexibility in international discussions.

There are also reports that South Africa has plans to install anti-government forces connected with the pro-imperialist UNITA group, led by Jonas Savimbi, in the areas it has invaded. Savimbi has recently returned from a trip to the United States to lobby financial and military support for his sabotage operations.

As a result, right-wing leaders in the US Congress are proposing to repeal a law which prevents the president from legally giving such aid or authorising similar work by the CIA.

Ronald Reagan has already announced that he would back UNITA if he is elected president.

All this activity is due to imperialism's concern to defend its massive investments in Namibia's key mineral industries.

With Rio Tinto Zinc financing the world's largest uranium mine at Rossing and British Nuclear Fuels buying its illegally exported production, we in this country should need no reminding of this fact.

The international solidarity movement has to act to prevent South Africa gaining advantage from its bloody operation. It must insist on the isolation of South Africa's 'internal settlement' regime, and reject any settlement that infringes the right of self-determination of Namibia's black majority or restricts the right of the SWAPO fighters.



AROUND THE WORLD

China

LAST week the Chinese Communist Party celebrated its 59th anniversary. It did so by calling for the elimination of 'feudal and bureaucratic influence' within its ranks.

Commented the *People's Daily*: 'The influence of feudal thinking runs deep and broad. Our party is no exception. Such practices as the lack of compulsory retirement, patriarchal tendencies, personality cults, bureaucratism, factionalism, seeking privileges and nepotism are all aspects of feudalism.'

Algeria

INTERNATIONAL protests and strikes at Algerian universities have secured the release of 24 workers, students, and trade union militants who had been jailed for demanding that the Berbers be recognised as a separate ethnic group.

As reported in Socialist Challenge (26 June), the imprisoned militants were to be tried before the state security court for taking part in strike action in the Berber province of Kabylia.

Poland

THOUSANDS of Polish workers have gone on strike in spontaneous protest against increases in meat prices.

According to the dissident-organised Self Defence Committee, 17,000 workers staged stoppages in the Ursus tractor factory plant in Warsaw and 3,500 struck at a vehicle parts factory in Tczew, near Gdansk.

The strikes have been described as the most widespread since 1976 when walk-outs and street protests forced the

Polish Government to drop plans to raise food prices.

The price rises which have caused the protests include doubling the cost of beef and bacon.

Brazil

AS part of his tour of Brazil, Pope John Paul II last week visited the shanty town of Vidigal, on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. The large crowds which had welcomed the pope elsewhere in Brazil were peculiarly absent in Vidigal. Less than 100 local people turned out and the rest of the pope's audience was made up of security agents.

The reason is that in the early hours of the morning of the pope's visit the majority of the town's inhabitants were cleared out in a massive police operation designed to 'clean up' Vidigal and rule out the possibility of the poor using the visit as an occasion for anti-government protest.

The theme of the pope's address was 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'

United States

IN the USA there is political asylum and political asylum. Last week in Florida a district court judge ruled that between 1978 and 1979 the US government had illegally rejected the claims for political asylum of more than 4,000 Haitians.

Judge James Lawrence King said that the government had been 'following a line of discrimination and political expediency' in refusing the Haitians asylum. He said that an attempt by the US State Department to defend the tyrannical regime of President for Life Jean-Claude Duvalier was 'unworthy of belief'.

Judge King also contrasted the attitude Federal authorities had shown to the Cuban refugees with those of the Haitians, the latter having the misfortune to come from a country with which the US has friendly relations.

As to the Cubans, the original claims by Castro that the refugees from there included large numbers of criminals are now being substantiated. Almost 1400 of them have now acknowledged that while in Cuba they committed serious crimes — including murder, robbery, and rape. An additional 9,417 refugees have admitted committing what are described as 'petty offences'.

The ugly face of Islamic justice

By John Leadbetter

ISLAM is an eminently practical religion. 'Trust in Allah,' said Mohammed, 'but tie up your camel first.' In recent weeks the Iranian people have experienced a new drive by Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) to do just that.

For desert travellers to lose their camel is to lose their lifeline. Keeping a hold in the masses is just as crucial for the survival of régimes.

With the launching of an 'Islamic Cultural Revolution' and widespread purges of the universities and the civil service in Iran, the authorities are once again trying to offset the perennial challenges to their hold on power.

The ugly face of Islamic 'justice' and morals beams out once again in this process.

In the past few days Iranian women have come under attack from the régime. Khomeini denounced certain ministries as being 'dens of prostitution' and ordered all women working in government and public offices to wear the chador on pain of dismissal.

With a blockade of the country by the imperialist powers, the economy in ruins, and millions unemployed, the government is seeking to drive women back into the home and the family. This is part of its austerity drive against the working class and the oppressed.

Coupled with this is an assault on all freedom of sexual choice. The horrific incident in Kerman, in which four men and women were stoned to death for 'prostitution, homosexuality and rape', is unique only in the form that it took.

Many innocent people have recently lost their lives in equally violent circumstances.

Hundreds of women demonstrators were kept isolated from any male supporters by Islamic Guards, and several were attacked.

The new wave of attacks is not only aimed against women. Six hundred students, teachers, and employees have been expelled from Tehran university in the past week, and hundreds more from the Oil Ministry. The reasons are not hard to find.

Since last August the university has been the headquarters of many of the left organisations, including the Fedayeen and the Mujahaddin. The start of the 'Cultural Revolution' was marked by armed attacks on the campus by supporters of the IRP, in which many socialists lost their lives.

Workers in the oil industry have

continually represented a threat to the government's control over oil production and revenues. Four leaders of the oil workers in Abadan who visited Tehran to present various demands on the government were arrested and have been imprisoned for over two months.

A militant campaign has been mounted for their release, and this has revealed the need for greater organisational co-ordination between the developing workers' bodies. The purges in the industry are aimed at derailing such struggles.

Most alarming of all is the official call for the dissolution of the Fedayeen and the Mujahaddin, issued at Friday prayers last week.

Again, such a call comes as no surprise. Both organisations have called mobilisations of tens of thousands on the streets in open defiance of Khomeini's partisans over the past few

weeks. The campaign against the forces of the left is now certain to be stepped up, and it's likely that so, too, will the campaign against the Kurdish people.

Dangers threaten the organisations of the working class and the struggles of the national minorities. The left, both internationally and within Iran itself, will have to remain alert. But it would be foolish to underestimate the potential resistance to attempts to 'tie up' the Iranian camel.

The determination and resilience of the Kurdish struggles, and the impetus towards self-organisation within the working class show the way to a further advance on the road to socialism. Camels can be long-suffering and patient creatures, but they also pack a powerful punch.

It is that punch that socialists have to organise in Iran today.

What are the Tories up to in Ireland?

By Geoff Bell

IF the Tory Government has its way Ian Paisley will soon be the head of a new political administration in the North of Ireland.

He will lead a government in which no Catholic will be permitted to serve and which will have the right to decide where houses are built, which areas get economic aid, and who will work in the civil service.

That is the essence of the Tory's 'discussion paper' on the future of the North of Ireland published last week. What it amounts to is the reinforcing of the sectarian statelet of the North of Ireland. As such it is bound to be resisted by the majority of the Irish people.

These facts are heavily disguised by the drafters of the discussion paper. Not surprisingly, they have also been glossed over by the media's interpretation of it. They are there nevertheless.

The Tories are proposing to set up an 80-person 'Assembly' which will have authority over agriculture, commerce, education, employment, housing, health and social services.

Housing

In the allocation of publicly-owned housing, and in employment, the Loyalist majority in the North of Ireland has a long record of discriminating against Catholics. One of the 'reforms' of the past ten years was to take housing out of the hands of the politicians and transfer control to a 'non-political' Housing Executive.

A number of decisions of this body concerning the building of houses in Catholic areas have, in the past, aroused the anger of Loyalist leaders. The Tories are now proposing that housing powers will be returned to the Assembly in which the Loyalists are bound to have a majority.

Within the Assembly a new executive will be formed. The Tories' discussion paper outlines two options for forming it.

Rejected

First, that it be composed entirely of the majority party in the Assembly, or a coalition of similar parties.

Alternatively, while the majority would have most of the places on the executive, minority parties would be guaranteed seats on it.

This second option resembles the 'power-sharing' arrangement which was overturned by the Loyalist general strike in 1974. It is

the scheme still favoured by the largely Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party but it has already been rejected by the Loyalist parties.

Ian Paisley, head of the Democratic Unionist Party, commented that he would not negotiate on the basis of this proposal, while James Molyneaux, leader of the Official Unionists described it as 'a very serious blunder'.

Indeed, although the discussion paper recommends this power-sharing executive, it goes to considerable pains to explain why it is impracticable.

It says that such a scheme 'could not be imposed' on the Assembly because 'in the last resort the majority would control the Assembly and would be in a position to vote down all proposals from minority members of the Executive'.

The discussion paper concludes: 'For a system of the kind described to work, there would need to be a willingness on the part of the majority to join in working the system.'

Assembly

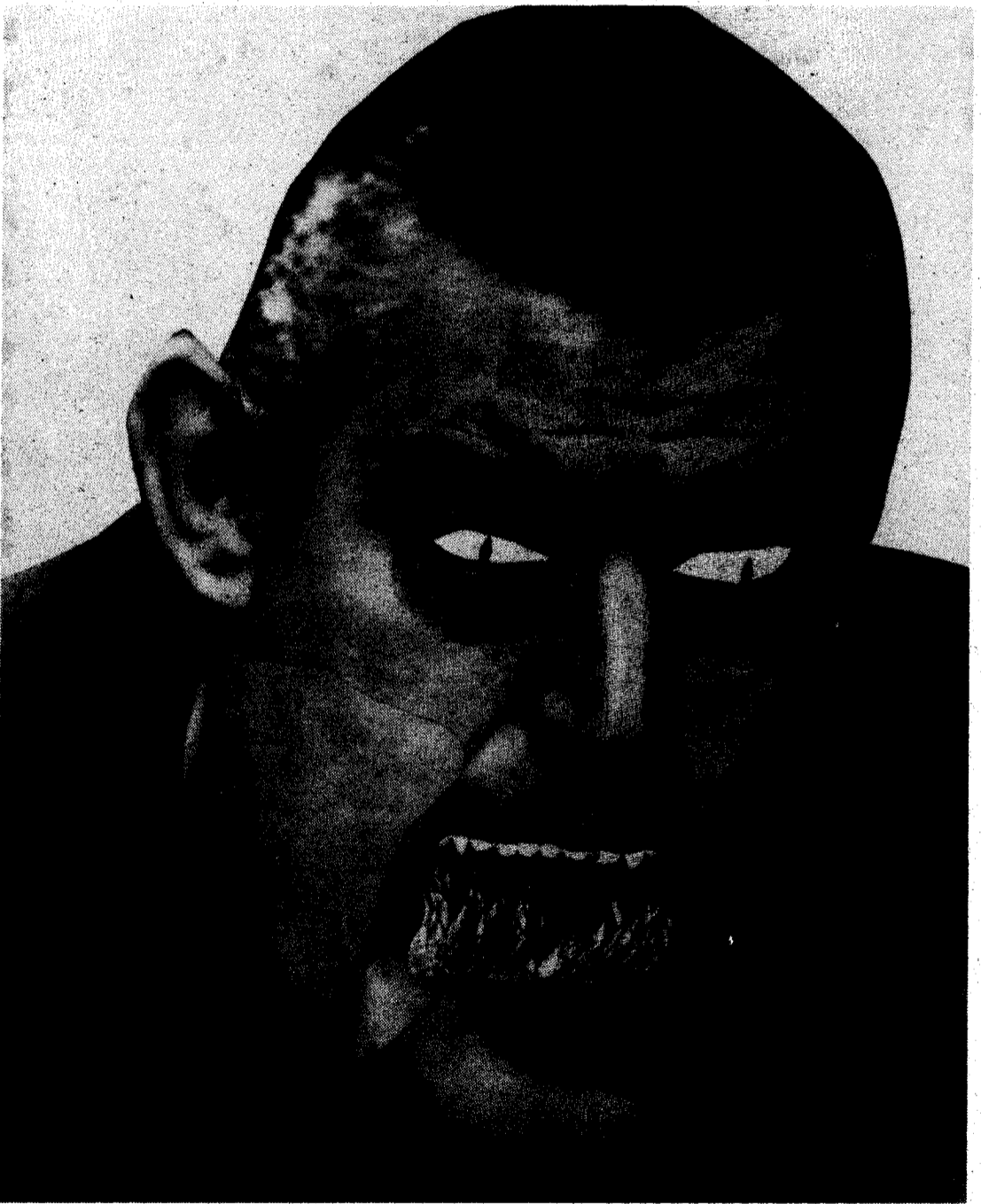
Because the Tories must have known before they published their proposals that the Loyalists would show no 'willingness' to 'join in working the system', it is obvious that this option is only included as a piece of window dressing to try to keep the SDLP interested in continuing negotiation.

The alternative offered by the British government would be to rule out any participation in the executive by non-Unionist parties, and to have instead a 'Council of the Assembly' in which minority parties would have 50 per cent of the seats.

It is this system that the Unionist parties support. Paisley described it as 'a basis for discussion' and Molyneaux 'a way forward'.

A warm Unionist response is hardly surprising.

Introducing the North of Ireland's next Prime Minister



Ian Kyle Paisley

By Tory Government Appointment

The proposals leave open whether the Council would be able to delay, refer back, or block legislative measures. The strongest power the Council could have would be the power to veto legislation. But that, the government paper says, 'in practice would never be used'. If there were deadlock the British Secretary of State would have authority to over-ride the veto.

In other words, in the final analysis, the likelihood is that the Council would be unable to prevent the executive from doing whatever it liked.

There is the further point that while 50 per cent of the Council

would be made up of parties that did not support the executive, there would, in all probability, be minority Unionists among them who on crucial questions would vote with the mainstream, thereby giving a majority in the Council to the Loyalists. As SDLP leader John Hume said, this scheme is 'straightforward majority rule'.

The Tories clearly favour this option. While the 'power-sharing' alternative is criticised in the government paper, the Council scheme is not. Indeed, much of the paper is given over to promoting it.

It remains to be seen whether the SDLP fall in behind the scheme. At the moment it appears

unlikely, especially since the paper makes no concessions to the idea of a united Ireland. For this omission the British government has already been criticised by Dublin, and the SDLP would find it very difficult to sell 'straightforward majority rule' to the Catholic community.

But the Tories have made it clear that with or without all-party support they will consider implementing their proposals, possibly by means of a referendum in which the Loyalist majority could be expected to give support to the non-power sharing alternative.

Which means that the Tories

have two choices: either to hand over power in crucial matters of policy to the Loyalists, among whom Ian Paisley has majority support; or to continue direct rule.

Neither offers much comfort to the Catholic community in the North of Ireland, or to most Irish people in the 32 Counties. The main problem the Tories still face is the hostility and opposition of the Irish majority.

The Tories' policies will succeed only with the aid of the guns of the British Army. But so far they have not defeated the Irish people and there is no sign of their doing so in the foreseeable future.

A People's Palace on the Mile End Road

By Valerie Coultas

London is a city full of class inequalities. Parks are more numerous, shopping centres more varied and the streets cleaner in middle class Hampstead and Kensington than in working class Willesden and Tower Hamlets.

The Half Moon Theatre, one of London's best known 'alternative' theatres, has decided to throw caution to the wind and take theatre into the heart of London's East End. They want one and a quarter million pounds to build a People's Palace on the Mile End Road.

Fringe

The Half Moon Theatre began in 1972 when two out-of-work actors, Maurice Colbourne and Michael Irving, cleared out a disused synagogue at 27 Allie St, Aldgate and found a natural theatre. It got its name from the passage nearby and soon established its identity as one of the most enterprising of the 'fringe theatres'.

'The shape of the building,' says Michael Irving, 'gave an intimacy that very few theatres could achieve, enabling us to create a space which enclosed the audience in the world of the play.'

The simple, bold sets by Claire Sorell — often made from what could be found on local building sites — exploited the warm, down-to-earth atmosphere of the theatre.

Bold

But the Half Moon became particularly renowned for the boldness of its approach and its high standard of acting. From *Henry IV* to *The Hammers are Coming*, from *Arturo Ui* by Brecht to *Hamlet*, the Half Moon defied the critics, playing to packed houses and created its own tradition of popular socialist theatre alongside classic plays.

Death of an Anarchist, a socialist comedy about the Italian



police force, achieved box office success in the West End after being first performed at the Half Moon in 1979. *Hamlet* was taken to the Mile End Road and received popular acclaim. Variety was the spice of Half Moon's life.

Community involvement had always been a top priority with the actors themselves. But as commercial London expanded, the Half Moon came to feel more and more isolated from the community it wished to serve.

In 1887 the first unit of a People's Palace was opened in the East End; its object was to create a centre for education as well as for social enjoyment. Queen Mary College grew out of this idea.

The Winter Garden was established and a music hall and culture palace thrived for fifty years. With the onset of war and the growing specialisation of higher education institutions the plan was dropped.

Popular

213-223 Mile End Road, next to Stepney Green Station, is where the Half Moon company intends to build a new People's Palace and reclaim popular theatre in the East End. By 1982 they hope to have a 300-seat theatre, bar, restaurant, bookshop, a young people's theatre, and rehearsal rooms that will be available for use in the

evenings and weekends by local groups.

It is an ambitious project and requires a lot of money. Illyted Harrington, chairperson of the appeal committee — and of the Inner London Education Authority — is right to say that the 'Half Moon have got a lot of nerve' to demand such an enormous amount of cash at a time of economic stringency. The Labour Party in London should commit itself to funding the project when it regains control of the Greater London Council and help to break down the class inequalities in the provision of social amenities in the capital city.

A Marxist 'speak-your-weight machine'?

SOCIALIST Challenge has now established itself as the only revolutionary weekly it is possible to read regularly without falling asleep. However, I wonder if other readers who follow publications of the International Marxist Group/Fourth International in Britain, notice how this success is not repeated.

I suspect there is little to be done with *Intercontinental Press*, but the IMG's house journal - *International* deserves some critical attention from the readers via this letter page.

There is no sense of debate in *International*. No doubt this is partly due to the Catch 22 situation that political opponents with whom the journal would wish to discuss think it worthless to write for because so few read the exchanges.

But I think it goes deeper. Take the recent critique of *Beyond the Fragments*. Apart from being about a year behind everyone else, the review turns upon demonstrating how historically 'anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian communism, and a loose kind of centrism have been tried before and found wanting.'

This is an utterly counter-productive argument with a group of writers whose inspiration is that *Leninism* has been 'found wanting', and they and their co-thinkers do not worry at the lack of historical precedent for their ideas.

I use this as an illustration of the apparent role of *International* as a Marxist 'speak-your-weight-machine' coughing up the correct line at infrequent intervals for 'cadres' heroic enough to plough through it.

Finally, I must protest at the totally anarchic use of pictures.

On page 29 we have a jeep being pulled by two bullocks. This is captioned 'Partisans greet allied troops'. I rest my case.

Have I been too hard on the journal? I hope other readers will contribute.

MIKE HOLBROOK, Howden
Le Wear, Co Durham

Arms and the Afghans

LET us agree that there are no completely reliable reports of what is taking place in Afghanistan. Neither the 'Kabul press', which *Socialist Challenge* (3 July) quotes as if it were authoritative, nor the Western press can be trusted to tell the 'truth'.

Accordingly it is best to try and evaluate all the reports that are available. This article conspicuously failed to do.

One example can be cited — the issue of arms supplies to the rebels. The SC article quotes one single report on this subject — the *Daily Telegraph* of 22 June, which suggested the rebels were receiving Western weapons.

Unfortunately the SC article 'edited' this quote from the *Telegraph* which also suggested the rebels were receiving Chinese weapons.

More importantly the bulk of the reports which are available suggest the West is not, in any substantial sense, arming the rebels:

For instance: 'The Russians must be well aware that external aid has so far played only a marginal role in the Afghan resistance' (*Economist*, 14 June);

'The only evidence of arms supplied from abroad are Egyptian-made Kalashnikov assault rifles and a few British versions of the NATO rifle. The latter are thought to be Indian Army weapons, captured in the

1971 (India-Pakistan) war' (*Observer*, 22 June);

'The American administration has no desire to supply modern weapons to the Muslim fighters. To do so, Washington feels, would only make the situation worse by touching off sharp reactions in Pakistan, which fears reprisals and push the Soviets into reacting more harshly.' (*Le Monde*, 10 June);

'The Pakistan leadership seems to be moving towards an understanding with the Russians on the basis of acquiescing to the Soviet domination of Afghanistan and restricting military aid to the insurgents in return for Moscow holding off from encouraging subversion in Pakistan.' (*Financial Times*, 3 May);

'Only a trickle of arms is reaching the guerrillas.' (*International Herald Tribune*, 30 May);

'The West have been of precious little use to the people. What they have done they have done for themselves ... the guerrillas lying dead in the Paghman mountains are carrying frontier museum guns and captured Soviet weapons.' (*Guardian*, 10 June).

This might be all part of an international press conspiracy. But it is the fact that the bulk of the reports available confirm the above.

And if this is a conspiracy, a 'big lie', then is it not all the more dangerous to ignore it?

GEOFF BELL, London

Women's Fightback: the facts

WE are very pleased to see that the IMG and Socialist Challenge believe that Women's Fightback 'shows potential', and understand the important breakthrough that a merger between *Women's Fightback* and *Women in Action* could represent for the labour and women's movements.

We feel, however, your report

did not do justice to the conference. You report our decision to lobby the TUC and campaign round the Employment Bill, but several major initiatives we are launching were not mentioned. The conference also decided:

- * on a major push to involve the mass of women trade unionists to start to force the implementation of policies adopted by the TUC in words but not in action;

- * to offer a perspective to the thousands of women in the Labour Party who are alienated from the Labour women's organisation by building women's sections as fighting, campaigning bodies;

- * to build a mass campaign against the attacks on a woman's right to work which was not limited to a lobby of the TUC, though that is its first major focus;

- * to support the aims of NAC;
- * to support plans for a women's festival, and to argue for it to take a stand against the Tory attacks on women.

We feel, however, that these omissions were not as serious as your deliberately misleading coverage of the elections for the Fightback steering committee. As the Conference Arrangements Committee, we were responsible and feel it incumbent on us to put the record straight:

- 1 We do accept that the hustings were hurried, as was the rest of the business of the conference. In the circumstances, we feel we provided adequate time given the very crowded agenda.

- 2 We waived the time limit for receiving nominations in order that everyone who wished to could stand.

- 3 All nominees had the opportunity (albeit fairly brief) to say where they stood politically and what their record of activity was.

- 4 Efforts were made to include sisters' political affiliations and record on the ballot paper.

- 5 Far from representing only one tendency, the steering committee that was elected reflected those sisters who had done the

most work up to the conference. This was acknowledged by Judith Arkwright, the IMG's women's organiser, at the first meeting of the new steering committee.

6 'Workers Action' was not the only tendency represented on the ballot papers, if that is what Val Coultas means by the 'slate'. The IMG had several sisters nominated and indicated as IMG. There were also — in fact a majority — of women who aligned themselves with neither political group.

It should be clear that the steering committee that was elected reflected the verdict of a conference composed, in the main, of women standing outside the aforementioned political tendencies.

We hope that now that the IMG has agreed to support and affiliate to the Campaign and has a co-opted member on the steering committee, future Socialist Challenge coverage of Fightback's activities will be unclouded by these kinds of unsupported implications.

ANGELA BRITAIN, FIONA
MACKAY, GERRY BYRNE

Belt & Braces defy bourgeois critics

WHEN Belt & Braces' show 'Accidental Death of an Anarchist' played the fringe circuit, the bourgeois press lauded it to the skies. When it transferred to the West End, however, they were less enthusiastic. The *Daily Mail* called it 'a load of tosh' and attacked the audience for not being smart enough. Could it be that they were frightened that the excellent politics of the play might reach too many people?

Tariq Ali described it as 'simply brilliant'. So far over 50,000 people have agreed with him and have been to see it. If you haven't made it along there yet, not's the time to go because Socialist Challenge readers are being offered £2.00 off the two top-price tickets until 31 July, on production of this issue of SC.

Performances are Mon-Thurs at 8pm, Fri-Sat at 6.00 and 8.40pm. Wyndhams Theatre, Charing Cross Road (next to Leicester Square tube). Tel: 01-836 3028.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

New Half Moon Building Fund

Any donation from 5p to £5,000 will help us to build our theatre.

We will be grateful for any help and will show our gratitude where possible. For a donation of over £50 we will inscribe your name in the Pamphlet Tower — the flagship of our complex; for a donation of £300 we will affix your name to a seat in the auditorium.

Please send all donations to Renee Deutsch, New Building Co-ordinator, Half Moon Theatre, 27 Allie Street, London E1. Cheques payable to The Half Moon Theatre Building.

A bold new approach

SOCIALIST WORKER has set a bold example to the left. Its new editor, Joanna Rollo, seems to have made some extremely healthy changes to the paper.

The daring centrespreads on Emma Goldman, Olive Schreiner, and Women in Russia came as a welcome surprise in a newspaper that has traditionally concentrated on the 'industrial' struggle.

The centrespreads on Iran and South Africa also show how international questions can be presented in a lively and clear way.

If Socialist Challenge wants to increase its circulation it would do well to take a leaf out of *Socialist Worker's* new book.

Marion Furley, Wolverhampton

A word in your ear. Four hundred, to be precise — or preferably less. That's your limit!

Belt & Braces defy bourgeois critics

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Socialist Challenge

Iranian women rebel against the veil

TWO thousand angry and brave Iranian women protested against the imposition of the veil in Tehran last Saturday.

The women were angry because they had been ordered to wear Islamic dress in all ministries, the state radio and television, the national oil company and even in military establishments.

They were brave because they faced the wrath of Islamic counter demonstrators, a large number of them men, calling them 'whores' and crying 'death of the foreign dolls'.

The women, many of them civil servants, were dressed in black — in mourning for their lost freedom. 'Bani-Sadr, you must answer us!' they chanted.

'If I have to wear the veil I shall resign', said a secretary from the commerce ministry.

Many civil servants had turned up to work clad in black to show their solidarity with the women's protest.

Two revolutionary guards caused a five-hour delay on the flight from Zaheda in eastern Iran, to Tehran because they objected to women not wearing Islamic dress. Eventually the plane left after passengers staged their own demonstration.

Once again, as in March last year on International Women's Day, the chador has become the focus for controversy over the place of women in Iranian society.

Khomeini and the Shi'ite clergy are encouraging women to 'preserve their chastity'

and 'draw their veils over their bosoms' in order 'not to reveal their finery except to their husbands'. They are trying to portray the demand for free choice in dress as the 'left overs of American culture', inciting Islamic bands to assault women who dare to dress as they choose.

They argue that these women are aspiring to an independence that contradicts the preachings of the Koran.

Last time there was a conflict over the chador the protests of women, both veiled and unveiled, forced Khomeini to back down and say that the wearing of Islamic dress was 'optional'.

This time the battle will be harder. The abortive rescue attempt to free the hostages in the American Embassy has hardened the attitude of the Iranian people to western culture as a whole.

By dubbing the women who protest against the chador as 'dolls of the Pahlavi regime', taking instructions from the *Voice of America* radio station, the clergy have whipped up religious hysteria against women's freedom.

It was not Khomeini and the mullahs who overthrew the Shah. It was the mass mobilisation of the Iranian people, many of whom were women.

It is only by appealing over the heads of the clergy to the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people that Khomeini will be forced to retreat once again and the battle of the veil will be won.



£6,000 One last big effort

WITH only ten days to go to the end of the International Marxist Group's emergency fund drive, we've just received £3,730 towards our £6,000 target.

During the last few months we've strained every nerve to support the struggle of the steelworkers on wages and closures. We've helped to build a tremendously successful youth march for jobs in South Wales and seen the launch of Revolution Youth.

Now we are in the forefront of a campaign against Cruise missiles. All the campaigns have required tremendous resources and a lot of money.

We asked all our members and supporters for donations to meet the

costs, and we've received donations from steelworkers, teachers, railworkers, and health workers as well as collections from over half the IMG branches.

So now we're appealing to all those who have not yet contributed — Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and other IMG branches. We need your contribution, too, and from trade unionists — engineers, NALGO members, civil servants.

Doctors and dentists in particular, with their recent massive pay award, can send us a substantial donation. We need YOUR help to reach the £6,000 target in the next 10 days.

Rush donations to: The Week, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques should be made out to 'The Week'.

Help your paper!

JUST under £1,000 was the final total for last quarter's Socialist Challenge Fund Drive appeal to bring down the Tories.

And that was mainly thanks to some of our regular supporters' sterling (ouch!) efforts. But we need much more help from all our readers — in all, we need £2,500 every three months just to keep the baliffs from the door.

So before you rush off for your summer holidays on a distant sandy beach, put

aside a contribution for the best newspaper on the left!

Our thanks this week to:

T&G shop steward (Elland, Yorks)	£5.00
MB	15.00
Ed Mahood	10.00
'Indian Joe'	50.00
Rob Jones	5.00
Cardiff IMG	5.00
L. Schiffer	.50
Education TV workers	10.00
Canterbury IMG	5.00
TOTAL	105.50

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