

Socialist Challenge

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NO AID TO THE SHAH'S ARMY



DEATH TO THE GENERALS

THE carnage of recent days in Tehran will have cleared up any lingering doubts over the nature of the Bakhtiar government.

Ayatollah Khomeini's refusal to have anything to do with Bakhtiar has proven correct.

First Bakhtiar tried ham-fisted deceit, pretending that Khomeini had agreed to meet him in France.

When that failed he let the army out on the rampage.

Eyewitnesses tell of the cold-bloodedness of the killings: soldiers lined up on rooftops and in the streets, firing volleys at chest height whose only aim can have been to kill.

Only professional army units were used, conscripts being reckoned unreliable.

But even so army morale was low. Several soldiers joined the demonstrators, some of them after shooting particularly brutal colleagues.

The people got a symbolic revenge on Monday when they



Popular justice against the military murderers as general is attacked in the streets of Tehran on Monday.

waylaid a general of the paramilitary gendarmerie. The violence of the treatment he received was an indication of the frustration and anger at thousands of brutal army murders.

It was the mullahs who intervened to stop the general being hanged.

This should serve as a warning of the future role the religious leaders are likely to play, though so far they have been obliged to keep pace with mass feelings.

And one of them, Khomeini, is of course the most unbending symbol of the struggle. Bakhtiar should be

forced to let him back into Iran at once.

Iran's generals are beginning to show their power. The threat of a coup to bring back the Shah cannot be ruled out.

Although they may not favour such a solution at the moment, it is the imperialists who

have supplied the army with the wherewithal — a highly sophisticated military establishment twice the size of Britain's.

The fight now must be to force the Labour government to withdraw all military aid — for British guns will be used directly against the

Iranian workers and peasants.

The first chance to do this will be on Saturday 3 February, in a march of solidarity. Assemble Trafalgar Sq, London at 1.30.

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EDITORIAL

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Iran: what is to be done?

THE MASS upsurge in Iran has shown no signs of abating. The reason is obvious. The Shah has left the country, but it is still being run by those who sustained the monarchy. The Bakhtiar government has turned out to be even weaker than was originally envisaged by the Shah.

In reality it is the Iranian army which is attempting to rule the country. It has carried out new massacres, it has executed airforce members who were sympathetic to the mass struggle, and it is attempting to control the streets.

But it is not meeting with success. The only way in which it could immediately regain control is by massacring tens of thousands of people in each of the major cities. This has no doubt been considered, but it is a path fraught with dangers. The single most important drawback is that it could lead to sharp splits within the army itself and provoke a civil war, whose outcome would be uncertain.

The Iranian masses have already shown that they are not going to accept any manoeuvres by the Army/Bakhtiar regime. Those in Washington who entertained hopes that the departure of the Shah might satisfy the masses must now be sorely disillusioned. For it is perfectly clear that the masses want to get rid of the entire apparatus which was built to protect and preserve the Shah's rule.

The main reason for Khomeini's popularity and stature in Iran at the present time is his uncompromising hostility to the Shah over the years. His refusal to accept the Bakhtiar government coincides with the instincts of those in the frontline of the struggle. No serious political commentator can now doubt that the majority of Iranians regard the Bakhtiar government as an illegitimate monstrosity manipulated from behind by the Shah's generals. Bakhtiar will not last very long.

Khomeini's return to Iran cannot be postponed more than a few weeks at the most. His arrival will mark the end of the present phase and impel the masses towards institutionalising their demands for democracy by actions from below. For even after Bakhtiar falls the struggle will by no means be over.

The need to organise workers committees to fight for a Constituent Assembly, the legalisation of trade unions, freedom of the press and political parties, will go hand-in-glove with purging the apparatus of all the Shah's filth. The generals and the torturers should be brought to trial, the Savak and the police should be disbanded, soldiers should elect their officers, etc.

Khomeini's reception party will include millions of people. Many of them will be expecting all their demands to be fulfilled. Socialists will fight to ensure that the struggle continues until they are.

Callaghan and the TUC

AS THE lorry drivers' strike approaches its end it looks as if they have won some substantial gains. They were demanding £65 and a 35-hour week. An independent tribunal has awarded them £64 and a 40-hour week, which amounts to 20.75 per cent.

The award will be regarded by lorry drivers as a victory. It will provide further impetus to the public sector workers who, even according to the National Opinion Poll, have more public sympathy than any other sector of the working class.

Callaghan knows that a clash with the public sector workers will ensure the defeat of the government at the polls. His last-minute attempt to call in the TUC leaders is a blatant pre-election ploy. The thinking is as follows: make concessions to the public sector to avoid a strike and concoct some deal with the TUC till the elections.

The only problem is that this might not work. The public sector workers are in an angry mood. The hysteria unleashed by the press barons will only make them more determined. They should not, in any event, expect anything from the TUC-government talks.

The best way to win their demands is to embark on a co-ordinated national strike now, with elected strike committees in every town deciding on the essential services that should be maintained. That is the lesson of the lorry drivers' strike. Callaghan has understood it and it is important that public sector workers do not lag behind.

THE FIRST WORD

Picketing

An exercise in workers' struggle

By Geoff Bell

LAST FRIDAY'S temporary injunction banning 'secondary picketing' at an East London factory came as no surprise.

On one side was Reginald Fall, a lorry driver and member of the Transport and General Workers Union. On the other was the giant firm United Biscuits.

In 1977 United Biscuits donated £20,000 to British United Industrialists. A good deal of secrecy surrounds this institution. However, an article in the *Observer* some time ago reported that most of the money collected by BUI is 'passed on to the Conservative Party to spend on free-enterprise propaganda... apart from direct donations to the party this is the biggest single source of industrial gifts.'

The championing of the Tory cause by United Biscuits is confirmed by one member of the board of directors — none other than James Prior, Tory spokesperson on employment and the man responsible for Tory policy towards the unions.

The company's chairperson, Hector Laing, has access to the top financial circles in the country through his directorship of the Bank of England.

Against such a combination Reginald Fall didn't stand much of a chance — unless, that is, he could count on neutral treatment from the High Court.

But again the omens were not on Brother Fall's side. Only 1.2 per cent of the most senior figures in the judiciary come from working class backgrounds — an actual decrease from the period 1820-75, when the figure was more than twice as high.

The particular judge hearing last Friday's case, Desmond James Conrad Ackner, is a doctor's son. He was educated at Cambridge and enjoys the rich man's occupations of sailing and 'collecting antiques'.

As a recently published study, *The Politics of the Judiciary*, by J.A.G. Griffith, put it:

'Law and order, the established distribution of power both public and private,



the conventional and agreed view among those who exercise political and economic power, the fears and prejudices of the middle and upper classes, these are the forces which the judges are expected to uphold and do uphold.'

nothing to do with the 'inhumanity' shown by strikers. If it was so concerned about the sick and the elderly, the ruling class wouldn't have supported cuts in social expenditure, and wouldn't be demanding more cuts today.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TRADE UNION CONFERENCE 2
Our alternative to Callaghan

- * The Lucas Experience, with Phil Asquith (exec. member, Lucas Combine)
- * Workers Control in Iran, with a speaker from the Iranian workers movement.
- * Closures and Workers Control, with Carl Brecker (Hounslow Hospital Occupation Committee)
- * And more! (All speakers in a personal capacity)

Saturday 24 March at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham

Tickets £1 from SC Trade Union Conference, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

OUR POLICIES 2

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

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

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

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles. Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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 the millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

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

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

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

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)

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Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper St, London N1.

HOMENEWS

Remember Clay Cross How Haringey councillors could pay up

THE PUBLIC sector unions' plan to step up selective action to win their claim is bringing their relationship with Labour councils more and more into focus.

By Brian Hearse

Striking caretakers in the North London borough of Haringey have kept all the local schools shut for more than a week.

Members of the National Union of Public Employees, their demand is for £60 a week — two-thirds of the national average wage for manual workers.

The caretakers open and lock the schools. The only other people with school keys are head teachers.

But if the latter were to open the schools it would be a risky business. An effective picket would put teachers on the spot and could end all deliveries of food to the schools in question.

The closure of the schools has highlighted another problem as well: the lack of adequate creches and facilities for working or single parents.

In a blatant attempt to exploit this situation, some parents from Creighton Comprehensive mounted a small

demo last Monday demanding that the school be opened.

But this demo consisted largely of local Tories and their supporters (including Hugh Rossi MP), and was outnumbered by a counter-demonstration backed by local Labour parties, Women's Voice, the National Union of Teachers, Communist Party, Socialist Workers Party and International Marxist Group.

The NUPE strike has received the support of Haringey's Labour council, and this has added to the determination of the strikers and kept up their morale.

Local Labour councillors make no secret of the fact that they regard the NUPE claim as totally justified.

So why doesn't the local Labour council simply pay up? Because that would be taking 'unilateral action', and would almost inevitably lead to a cut in its rate support grant from the government.

This argument is identical to that used by Hackney

council, which only has a single Tory member. And similar talk can be heard from other Labour councils.

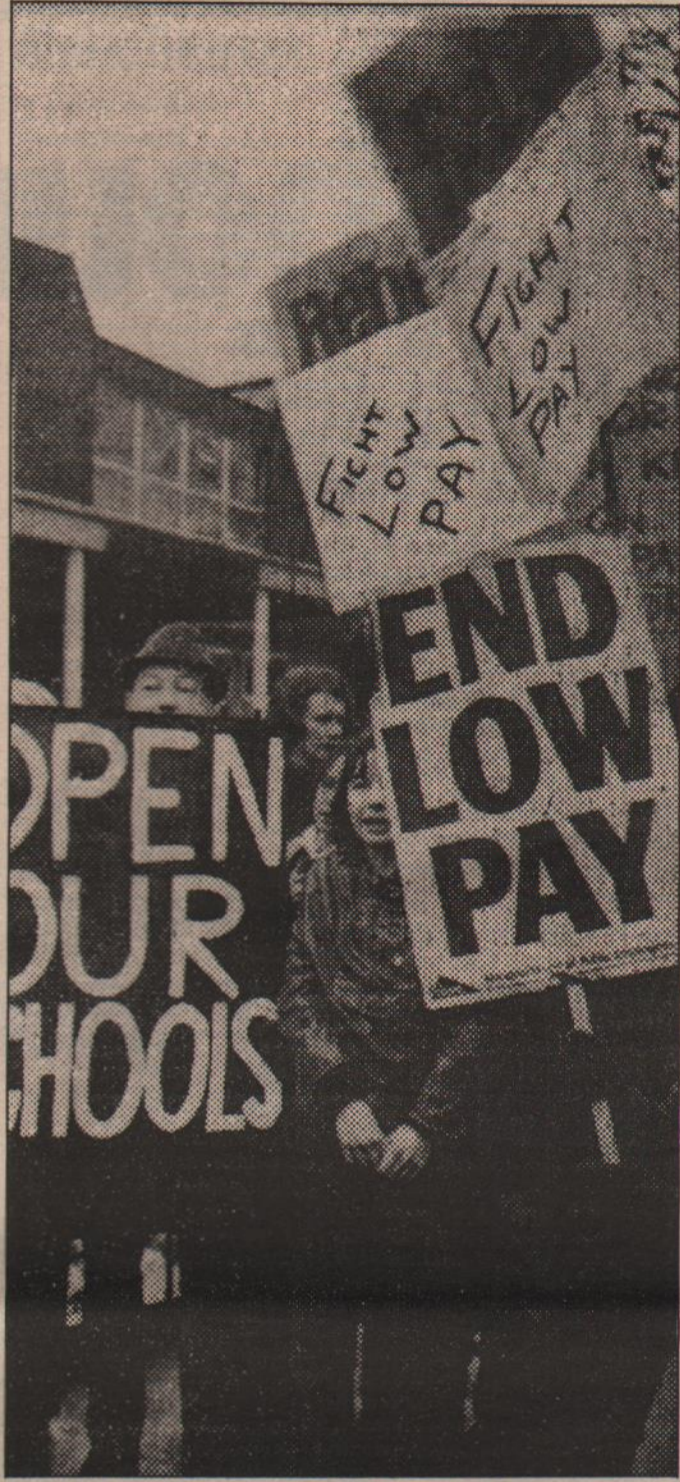
It is here that the whole experience of Clay Cross becomes extremely important. The Clay Cross councillors disregarded Tory government policy and refused to raise council house rents or implement cuts.

The result was that virtually the entire population of Clay Cross was united behind the councillors. If other Labour councils had followed their example a real opposition could have been built against the Tory government.

The fact that it is a Labour government in power strengthens the case for emulating Clay Cross. Haringey, Hackney and other councils should pay their workers and prepare a fightback.

They should, in conjunction with trades councils, organise mass meetings to explain their case.

The coming conference of the London Labour parties on 3/4 March offers an excellent opportunity to generalise the fightback.



Counter-demonstrators outnumber Tories calling for reopening of school.



ASLEF leader Ray Buckton

Divisions weaken rail fight

By Martin Eady, NUR London No.7 branch, and Peter Grant, ASLEF Paddington branch

THE STAGE is now set for a united struggle by all rail workers to win the rail unions' claim for a 'substantial increase'.

Yet this is unlikely to come about without a major battle by the rank and file against the prevarications of our union leaders.

The ASLEF leadership has remained silent on the national claim, while mobilising its membership behind the claim for a 10 per cent responsibility allowance which relates only to train drivers.

This has now gone to arbitration, with official strike action suspended. But the ASLEF leaders show no sign of directing the militancy displayed over the sectional claim towards the struggle for the overall pay claim.

Last year they settled for 9 per cent and in 1977 actually reduced the basic rate by £1.32 a week in order to comply with pay restraint.

Management's offer on the present claim amounts to a rise of 7.5 per cent. While the NUR's demands, which include a 35-hour week and no job loss, look good on the surface, it remains to be seen how much 'substantial' is.

It would need to be of the order of 50 per cent to give NUR members — presently on a paltry £45 for 40 hours — a living wage without the 'excessive' overtime which Sid Weighall claims to be so keen to eliminate.

In reports to district councils, executive members have been talking about a 'real' productivity deal that 'will not result in trading jobs for money'.

This contradiction in terms is supposed to mean that if business improves some of the increased takings from fares should be given to the workers.

Surely, if the railway is doing more business we should be campaigning for more jobs to reduce the dole queue.

And to base even a part of our wages on the performance of the capitalist economy is at best to foster illusions in that system: at worst to line us up for a pay cut.

A co-ordinated struggle against all the railway employers would have more chance of success than limiting it to British Rail, but there have been no moves to extend the fight to London Transport, National Carriers, or Freightliners.

Our task as socialists on the railway is clear: to organise in support of an across-the-board increase for all rail workers, a 35-hour week, no loss of jobs, and no productivity deals.

Socialist Unity—saying what Labour won't

SOCIALIST Unity will be holding its national conference on 3 February at Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, London NW3.

The main purpose will be to map out its plans for the next general election.

JANET MAGUIRE will, in all probability, be contesting Lewisham on behalf of Socialist Unity.

We asked her how she viewed the present crisis and why Socialist Unity will be important in any election.

Janet works in the ECG department of Guys Hospital in South London. She is branch secretary of ASTMS South East London Medical Branch, a delegate to the union's 1979 Annual Conference and a member of ASTMS No 8 Divisional Council.

“ Unless the left stands candidates in the general election, issues like cuts in the health service, the plight of the low paid and the battle for women's rights will not get a hearing.

Right now in Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, we are faced with a massive cut back in the hospitals.

A 'confidential' document being considered by the Area Health Authority says that it has a number of options open to it in trying to meet the

Government's demands for reducing expenditure.

Every one of these options is horrendous. They range from chopping 1686 beds, to closing eight of the 18 hospitals in the area.

The three trades councils in the area have set up a committee to organise resistance to any cuts.

We are going to hold public meetings and demonstrations and will campaign inside both the labour movement and the community for action against any reductions in the health service.

This means we must reject the policies of the Labour Government, and although we shall demand that local Labour MPs and councillors give us their support, it would be crazy to rely solely on them.

Their past record of giving in



JANET MAGUIRE

to Callaghan and Healey warns us against doing that.

Socialist Unity can use the heightened interest in politics created by a general election to show people that there is a socialist alternative to cut-backs.

If we are to defend the NHS then we must take a stand against low pay.

I have worked in the NHS since I left school and my take-home pay is still only £39 a week.

Nor, I am sorry to say, will most of the Labour MPs be saying that during the election.

The NHS employs more women than any other employer in Britain — and these women are among some of the worst paid in the country.

Women, together with old people, are among the biggest sufferers from declining services and longer waiting lists for hospital treatment.

Abortion rights are also threatened by the cuts.

The Labour government has not just been silent about women's rights, it has consistently attacked them.

Socialist Unity can expose the failure of the Labour government to improve the situation of women and fight for the real involvement of women in the campaign.

Socialist Unity stands for full and equal rights for all women.”

SOCIALIST UNITY Benefit with Belt and Braces rock band, Latin American music, curry supper, refreshments. 7.30pm at St Matthews Community Hall, Brixton (opp Lambeth Town Hall) — 5 mins from Brixton tube (Victoria line), buses 35, 2, 3, 196, 159, 95, 37, or BR from Victoria. Adm £1 (50p wageless).

The lost Tribunes

The Labour lefts and the crisis

'BRITISH PIGEON fanciers', wrote Trotsky in *Where is Britain Going?*, 'by means of an artificial selection, achieve special varieties, with a continually shortening beak. But there comes a moment when the beak of a new stock is so short that the poor creature is incapable of breaking the egg-shell, and the young pigeon perishes, a sacrifice to compulsory restraint from revolutionary activities, and a stop is put to the further progress of varieties of short-bills.'

The response of left social-democracy to the present crisis reveals that fanciers Wilson and Callaghan have shortened their beak to such an extent that the species appears to be on the verge of extinction. But what would happen if pigeon Benn were mated with pigeon Skinner?

By Tariq Ali

The present wave of industrial struggles has, not unnaturally, excited socialists. Discussions in and around the headquarters and newspaper offices of the far-left organisations abound with analogies. It is therefore necessary to make an important distinction between the present wave of militancy and all those that have preceded it this century.

The difference is that the present struggle takes place when the sixth Labour Government this century is holding office. Labour has furthermore held office for eleven of the last fifteen years. This situation offers many opportunities to revolutionary socialists. But it also contains some dangers.

LABOUR FOCUS

When the Tories are in office the struggle has an automatic political focus for organised workers: to replace them with Labour. When Labour is in office a mass struggle can lead either to a strengthening of the forces on the left of social democracy (this happened partially in 1969 when the CP and left trade union leaders launched an offensive against the *In Place of Strife* proposals) or lack any political focus whatsoever.

The present struggle is clearly of the latter variety. Its demands are for more money. Implicitly workers are in this way refusing to accept responsibility for the crisis. This is excellent as far as it goes. But how far can it go?

It is not sufficient to endlessly repeat that we need a socialist alternative. This is patently obvious. The fact is that no force to the left of the Labour Party is capable of supplying an alternative which would be acceptable to even a section of the masses. Neither the CP nor the far left, albeit for very different reasons, can fill the vacuum at the moment. This brings us to the disappearing political beaks of left social-democracy that we mentioned earlier.

IDEOLOGY

Readers of this paper do not need to be reminded of the economic or social crisis. What has not been sufficiently stressed is the extremely severe

the crisis. The corporate strength of the British working class has probably never been greater. This has resulted in an amazing cultural-political offensive by the ruling class and its ideological extensions.

One of the most popular contemporary plays is Tom Stoppard's *Night and Day*. It is directed against trade unions in the name of 'individual freedom'. The play has been widely acclaimed by most theatre critics. Then there is Anthony Burgess's recent novel, *1985*. It identifies its enemies without any finesse

The anger of the ruling class can further be seen in the news reporting of strikes over the last week. For three continuous days (23, 24, and 25 January) the BBC and ITN TV news bulletins delighted in giving a voice to a small minority of lorry drivers opposed to the strike. Further spice was added by showing housewives attacking pickets. Just as the pickets began to reply the sound faded.

PEERAGES

In the face of this unprecedented assault the traditional left leaders of the workers movement are either accepting peerages (Scanlon) or extolling the virtues of passive acquiescence (Benn). The press of left social-democracy has reached a pathetic ebb. Entering the pages of *Tribune*

Labour Party has never been so disorganised and weak. Its leaders have chosen to remain in the Government in the name of a spurious unity. The fact that this unity is directed against the needs of the workers movement seems to be an insignificant factor. The rank-and-file left social-democrats confine themselves, essentially, to asking what they think are embarrassing questions.

Callaghan's wage freeze, Dennis Skinner's barbs notwithstanding, went unchallenged by the left. Owen's support for the Shah elicited virtually nil response from left Labour MPs. The only issue which incites them to insubordination is the Common Market. And here, too, the only alternative they offer the workers is national chauvinism and demagoguery.

vicious circle of social-democratic politics. But they are willing prisoners. It is almost as if they are thankful that their beaks are too short to break the shell. For the other prospect is far too frightening. It would involve struggles outside parliament.

In the period 1970-74 when the Tories were in power a new current appeared in the Labour Party. It was not part of the Tribunate caucus. It considered itself more radical and direct. Its main inspirer was Tony Benn, who went out of his way to identify himself with some workers' struggles. Donning a cloth cap he went to the occupied shipyards on the Clyde and marched on anti-Tory demonstrations.

COLLAPSED

The Labour Party itself moved to the left. Propelled into power by the 1974 miners' strike, the new Labour Government saw the appointment of Foot to the Cabinet. *The Economist* predicted that neither Foot nor Benn would stay long in office as Labour was bound to move rapidly to the right. It was wrong on the first count.

As the left trade union leaders acquiesced in the social contract, Benn felt that his political project had collapsed. He now accepted demotion in the Cabinet without resigning. He had abandoned any notion of organising a fight back against Government policies.

The lack of any organised fightback by either Benn or the Tribunites has seriously demoralised many Labour supporters. The Tory offensive thus goes unanswered on every front.

As to the MPs who ask what can 'realistically' be done, we say the following. An alternative election manifesto should be prepared which is capable of enabling activists to answer the Tory attack.

REFUSE

In addition, left-wing Labour MPs should organise an opposition in parliament to campaign against the Government's economic policies. They should refuse to vote for the Budget. They should withdraw support unless military aid to the Iranian army is stopped. They should demand the withdrawal of troops from Ireland and the repeal of the racist Immigration Acts.

They should utilise the limited weapons of the party (*Tribune*, *Labour Weekly*) to project their ideas. But most important of all they should organise an opposition to the Government in the party and the country as a whole. Public meetings should go hand-in-glove with speaking to meetings of shop stewards committees, etc.

This is not only desperately needed at the moment. It is the best possible way in which to prepare for a fight against a future Tory government. For Callaghan has virtually ensured the success of the latter.

(In the next months Socialist Challenge will spell out what economic alternative is needed to meet the crisis.)



MICHAEL FOOT — history repeating itself as farce. HUGH SCANLON — his response to the crisis was to accept a peerage. TONY BENN — extols the virtues of doing nothing

LABOUR'S INDEPENDENT WEEKLY

Tribune

ENTERING the pages of 'Tribune' these days is like visiting a mortuary.

crisis of Fabian and left social-democratic ideology. This has never been as pronounced as it is at the moment. The Labour left lacks even a left-reformist programme.

We are currently witnessing the most ferocious post-war ideological assault on the British working class and its institutions. This is primarily concentrated on the trade unions. It is a reflection of the fact that increasing sectors of society are becoming unionised.

In contrast to what happened in the Thirties, the size of the unions has increased rather than diminished as a result of

whatsoever. They are trade unionists, feminists and black immigrants.

HYSTERICAL

Add to these the hysterical diatribes of Paul Johnson in the *Daily Mail* and the *Evening Standard* or the patronising anti-left columns of Peter Jenkins in *The Guardian* and one realises that there is hardly a columnist in the national press who is to the left of Callaghan. Keith Waterhouse of the *Daily Mirror* is an honourable and singular exception. The provincial press is infinitely worse!

these days is like visiting a mortuary. It is the re-vamped *New Statesman* which, if anything, defends traditional left social-democratic positions with much greater verve and consistency.

The present crisis finds the Tribunites in a state of utter collapse. Nye Bevan's biographer is now the Leader of the House of Commons. His flights of sophistry have made him a leading apologist for the Government. He proves with every passing day the truth of the old Marxist adage that history repeats itself the second time as farce.

The left in the Parliamentary

'What can we do?' a left-wing MP will ask in the middle of an argument. There is a growing feeling of helplessness and demoralisation. They accept Callaghan's logic that any opposition means a Thatcher government. But this logic has been disproved. For what will accelerate the process of returning a Tory government is the social and economic policies of the Labour Government.

SOULS

The Labour left in parliament have become damned souls imprisoned within the

Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Photo: LAURENCE SPARHAM (FL)

Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

HOME NEWS

Low pay: the road to an all-out battle

'WHILE maintaining emergency services and avoiding inhumanitarian actions, our campaign from now on will escalate until we find a solution.'

The fighting words of David Basnett, general secretary of the General and Municipal Workers' Union and acting chairperson of the TUC.

What kind of 'solution' do the union leaders have in mind and how do we build for the all-out strike action that can achieve what the unions are officially claiming — £60 and 35 hours?

By Patrick Sikorski

The course of the pay claim by water workers well illustrates the pressure on the public sector union leaders to call for selective strike action.

Water workers in the GMWU who make up two thirds of the industry's 30,000 workforce have decisively rejected the latest deal agreed by their officials.

The offer was for 14 per cent, which on closer examination amounted to only 1.6 per cent above the government's 5 per cent norm. The rest was bonuses and productivity.

It was the water workers in the North-west who had put the final nails in the coffin of the 5 per cent in the public sector when the initial 9.3 per cent offer led them to take immediate strike action.

For the public sector as a whole, the union leaders floated the plan for a 8 to 9 per cent increase in basic pay and promises of more in years to come through pay comparability and an inquiry into low pay.

That percentage was laid to rest by the massive march on 22 January and the revolt of the rank and file later that day at Central Hall.

Now the bureaucracy has switched to a call for the 'going rate' plus comparability.

Pressure from local authority workers in the GMWU persuaded national officials to call selective action in the form of all-out strikes in 22 authorities throughout the country at the beginning of this week, just before negotiations re-opened on Tuesday.

The union leaders are well aware that anything less than 15 per cent on the basic rates will be

rejected by the membership. So they are now looking to this level of settlement coupled with an inquiry into low pay.

They would like a one-off pay review board exercise as was used for the police and fire fighters, while the government and the right wing on the TUC General Council would like to see permanent pay boards for the public services.

This would be a first step to the complete surrender of free



collective bargaining and the right to strike in the public sector.

The strategy of selective strike action that the union leaders are pursuing has particular weaknesses from the standpoint of the rank and file.

By relying on the 'stronger' sections, this strategy increases the gulf between the better organised, relatively better paid full-time workers, who are mainly men, from the weakly organised, poorly paid mainly women part-timers.

NUPE is operating a system of cash limits on official strike pay, allocating a set amount for each division. Thus strike pay in some parts of South Wales is as

low as £5, while in Nottingham it is around £30.

And by issuing the selective strike instructions from union headquarters, the public sector leaders hope to exert their control over the strikes and inhibit the development of strong joint shop stewards committees which can build action from the base.

Fighting for all-out strike action for £60 and 35 hours is the way to slice through these plans. It has to be built starting from those workplaces which come out.

They need to elect joint shop stewards committees to run the strike; hold regular mass meetings; organise flying pickets to bring out other workplaces; and call mass rallies of stewards to organise all-out action in that area.

These committees, based on the structures of the unions, should set up strike funds and visit factories and offices in their area or organise collections and solidarity.

They should determine the level of emergency services to be provided.

In order that the offensive against low pay has the broadest possible backing, the demand needs to be raised for a recall of the TUC, to win support from the whole movement for the pay battle.

Such a recall conference would have an additional task: to instruct the generals of the TUC to call off their talks with the government about new pay controls and instead set about framing a socialist alternative to the crisis.

CORRECTION

Last week we quoted Camden ambulance driver Bob Elliott as telling strikers that 'the police are scabbing on the strike by driving ambulances'.

Brother Elliott (who is not a shop steward as reported, but was speaking in a personal capacity) has asked us to make it clear that he was in fact referring to the police's action in fitting out and using their own Black Marias as makeshift ambulances.

We would like to apologise for this mistake.

Manchester

By Carole Fitzhenry
Manchester NUS

IN MANCHESTER joint action between students and public sector workers looks like paying off for both sides.

During the 22 January Day of Action, most of the city's 47 colleges were closed — either by the authority itself, or because students went on strike in support of the public sector action and picketed to close the colleges.

Salford University students joined the picket at the Frederick Road bus depot, freeing drivers on strike there to visit another depot where drivers hadn't yet come out.

NUPE workers at Manchester and Salford universities have said they will support student action on grants if such a request is successfully put to their union.

The International Marxist Group and the Socialist Workers Party are jointly organising a rally in Cheetham Hill in support of low pay action.



Hull

By Pete Middleton
NUPE nurse, De La Pole Hospital, Hull

A CALL for all-out strike action by public sector workers was rejected by a meeting of the NUPE-COHSE joint shop stewards committee in Hull on 24 January. Instead the meeting endorsed the NUPE leadership's position of selective strike action and a levy on all members.

Arguments such as 'The members won't back us' and 'We must concentrate on strategic sections' were used to defuse the militancy of kitchen workers at the Kingston General Hospital who were a hundred per cent for striking.

As the official strike committee, the meeting elected ten of its number to decide which section of workers should be called out and when. Yet the very next day boiler house workers at the De La Pole psychiatric hospital began a week's strike without waiting for the sanction of the joint shop stewards committee.

To build for all-out action, we should urge all sections willing to come out to do so, and demand support from the stewards committee. The sooner a strike committee can be directly elected the better.

Birmingham

By Kathy Ambrose
NUPE nurse, Birmingham

THE 'popular' press had a lot to say about the cancer patients sent home from Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

They had rather less to say about the press statement put out by the area health authority acknowledging that this action had nothing to do with the pickets, but was simply the decision of a consultant.

The press has failed to report that Birmingham's hospitals were admitting only emergency cases well before the public sector action began — because of the cuts.

Thirteen hospitals in the city are presently facing the axe.

* A public inquiry ordered by Birmingham council into the social workers' strike action has recommended that council employees should be forbidden from taking part in any public protest over council policy, even in their own time.

The Tory-controlled council is to consider the report.

Camden



By John Suddaby
Secretary, NUPE general branch, Camden

MY BRANCH, representing local authority workers in Camden, has sent a resolution to NUPE's London divisional council, calling for all-out strike action.

Shop stewards in Camden will be meeting to decide on whether to call for all-out action in the borough. Selective action is to begin with petrol pump attendants, threatening all local government transport.

Newcastle

THE ACTION of caretakers in Newcastle and Sunderland has shut 160 schools, while the strike by incinerator workers in Tyne and Wear has meant the indefinite suspension of refuse collections.

Petrol pump attendants at Newcastle council depots are out, which has put paid to road gritting, and every hospital in the North-east is on emergency services only.

NUPE militants have succeeded in extending the membership of the local authority inter-union co-ordinating committee to lay representatives, and this body will now link up with the health co-ordinating committee.

Nottingham

IN MANY areas of Nottinghamshire refuse workers and council workers are on indefinite strike. Hospitals in Nottingham are on emergency admissions only due to a strike by laundry workers. Telephonists are also taking action this week.

Ambulance drivers are

refusing to do paper work and are not taking radio calls and the county courts at Shire Hall are being picketed.

Water workers have been on unofficial strike all week in Mansfield and are attempting to spread their action through flying pickets.

University workers are on an overtime ban, and have called out central catering workers. Bar staff are to strike this week.

A contingent of strikers travelled to London on Tuesday to lobby the national joint negotiating committee meeting.

Campaign for Action in NUPE public meeting, Monday, 5 February 7.30pm WEA Shakespeare St, Nottingham.

CAN is producing two thousand leaflets for distribution throughout the area calling for all-out strike action and an immediate one-day stoppage to allow mass meetings to discuss ways of stepping up the action.



Ring us!

WITH widespread industrial action among the one and a half million public sector workers, among others, we depend for effective news coverage on our readers across the country.

Send us the facts from your locality, together with comments from those lined up against the pay norms about how they consider the battle should be conducted.

You can ring in reports on 01-359 8180/9.

London teachers unite

By Vanessa Wiseman and Betty Hunter

THIS YEAR's Inner London Teachers' Association elections in the NUT are off to a dramatic start with the Labour and Communist Party candidates threatening the far left with legal action.

They took exception to a leaflet issued by the Socialist Teachers Alliance which pointed to the failure of the previous leadership to effectively defend teachers' jobs in the face of the cuts demanded by their employers, Inner London Education Authority.

The alliance has two candidates, for the vice-president and treasurer posts (Wiseman and Hunter, respectively). It is supporting a Rank and File candidate, Amanda Lean, for the association's general secretary position.

There is a joint platform, advancing policies on women, racism, salaries and pensions as well as conditions in the schools.

This unity on the far left in the election campaign is a significant step towards fighting for an alternative to the present leadership.

The voting deadline is 9 February. We urge all teachers in the London area to give us their votes to help build for a real fight against the ILEA's policies of school closures and larger class sizes.

Attack on students

By Pamela Holmes

STUDENT unions battling against cuts in living standards and education provision are facing attacks on their right to organise, as events at Essex University show.

At 7am last Thursday, police broke into a student occupation at the University over exorbitant rent increases. Fifteen students, including the union president, were arrested.

Despite lengthy interrogation — the students were held for between 30 and 40 hours — only two were charged; one in

connection with a leaflet which was distributed on the campus last term.

A further seven arrests were made on the Thursday evening when students picketed the police station. Nevertheless picketing continued until all were released, by 1am on Saturday.

Essex University has developed a tradition of victimising student militants since the student union was established in the early '70s. Every effort must be made to prevent a repetition.

An emergency general meet-

ing of the union will be electing a defence committee whose task will be to seek support in the student and labour movements.

A proposal will also be put for a speaking tour and national demonstration to take up the behaviour of the police as well as that of the university authorities.

Messages of support and requests for information and speakers to: Student Union, University of Essex, Colchester, Essex.

OPEN FORUM

Glasgow 1919

The struggle for workers' power

THIS WEEK sees the 60th anniversary of a strike centred on Glasgow for a 40-hour working week.

It was no ordinary strike, but a major working class offensive against British capitalism, described at the time as 'a Bolshevik uprising' by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Many of the questions raised in the current crisis were also raised then — mass picketing, the role of union officials, the use of the Army as strike breakers.

So in marking the anniversary of the Glasgow 40-hour strike we should learn from yesterday the lessons for today.

By Mike Lomax

The strike wave which hit Britain at the end of the First World War was a reflection of a revolutionary ferment which was spreading in many parts of Europe.

There was the Spartacus rising in Berlin in January 1919; a Hungarian Soviet Republic existed from March to August 1919; in June there was an unsuccessful rising in Vienna; in Ireland the War of Independence was being waged.

The crisis took a particular form in Britain.

The end of the war saw militancy among engineering workers at a high pitch. The number involved in disputes in the last half of 1918 was double that of the first six months.

Fear of unemployment resulting from the rundown of the munitions industry gave rise to the demand for a shorter working week, especially from the shop stewards movement which had grown in strength and authority during the war.

In an attempt to control the militancy and to regain the initiative within the industry, the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers met the employers' federation two days after the Armistice.

AGREEMENT

Six days later agreement was reached on a reduction of hours from 54 to 47. A ballot of union members was rushed through with a majority voting in favour of the agreement.

But there was a great deal of dissatisfaction about the way the vote had been conducted. The ballot paper had been worded in such a way that a vote against 47 hours seemed a vote in favour of 54.

The areas in which the shop stewards movement was strongest were determined to press on with the demand for a 40-hour or even a 30-hour week. With the introduction of the new hours in January 1919, strikes broke out in the shipyards of Tyneside, Teesside, and Humberside; but the discontent was highest in

40-HOUR STRIKE/ 35-HOUR WEEK DAY SCHOOL

Sat 10 February, 10.30-4.30

Cowane Centre, Cowane St, Stirling

Speakers: **Harry McShane**; **Martin Ross** (POEU, Dundee); **Ian MacDougall** (Scottish Labour History Society).

Sponsors: Central Region Federation of Trades Councils; Stirling Trades Council; Stirling, Falkirk and Grangemouth CLP; Stirling District Labour Party; Stirling Area (Hospital) NUPE; and Stirling branches of CPGB, SWP, IMG.

Further information: Gordon Love, 23a Wallace St, Stirling.

Glasgow.

On 5 January a conference of Clyde shop stewards, called by the Clyde Workers Committee, met in Glasgow. They rejected the 47 hours and demanded a reduction to 30 as a way of cutting unemployment.

A recall conference on 18 January attracted 800 delegates. The movement had been unofficial, but the response to the Clyde Workers Committee initiative was so great that the Scottish TUC, the Glasgow Trades Council, and the Clyde District Committee of the Shipbuilding and Engineering Trades were all forced to support the conference.

PERSUASION

At the conference itself the majority of speakers were in favour of the 30-hour demand, but the full-time officials persuaded the delegates to leave the final decision to a joint committee representing the shop stewards and all the trade union bodies present. However, the conference rejected the advice of the officials in voting for strike action from 27 January.

When the joint committee met the claim was amended to 40 hours. Future Labour MP Emmanuel Shinwell, chairperson of the Glasgow Trades Council and official of the seamen's union, was elected chairperson of the committee, and future Communist MP Willie Gallacher was put in charge of tactics.

The shop stewards movement and the Clyde Workers Committee (led by revolutionary socialists like Gallacher, Arthur MacManus, and Tommy Clark) were the dynamic force behind the 40 hours movement.

But their conception of how the struggle should be conducted was vague. Nor did any discussion take place in the Clyde Workers Committee on what tactics to follow. They seemed to have a blind faith in their ability to win. Thus the CWC newspaper of December 1918:

'Issue your ultimatum to the common enemy and fight him if satisfaction is not forthcoming. The overwhelming advantage of manpower [sic] is on our side. It only requires organisation and victory is ours.'

On the first day of the strike approximately 70,000 came out. Although not the entire workforce, they represented the key sections of the engineering and shipbuilding industries.

UNOFFICIAL

The national executives of the unions were opposed to the action, so the battle was against not just the government and the employers but the official union leadership as well.

The unofficial nature of the strike confused some workers, but on the second day mass pickets up to 10,000 strong toured the factories 'encouraging' them to close.

Subsequently most factories were closed in a couple of days. Those remaining open were shut on the third



ANGER against the war profiteers fuelled militancy in Glasgow — photo shows union leader Robert Smillie addressing wartime protest meeting.

day when the workers at Port Dundas power station struck.

These initiatives were strengthened as the strike committee extended its organisation. A daily **Strike Bulletin** was produced from 30 January, and district strike committees were formed to which each workshop in the area sent delegates.

Sub-committees for picketing, entertainment, relief, and information were set up, and an elaborate system of keeping everyone informed was evolved with the establishment of an information bureau in the city centre.

TROOPS

By the middle of the first week the strikers seemed to be winning their battle to spread the dispute. The whole of the engineering and shipbuilding industry had been stopped. The Scottish miners were also out under the influence of the Miners Reform Committees, who favoured a five day week with a six-hour day.

With the convening of the Scottish TUC conference on 1 February, a Scottish general strike was looming. In addition Belfast was also stopped by a general strike and the English industrial centres looked like following. A nationwide stoppage was on the cards.

The way the Tory-Liberal coalition government intervened can be seen from the minutes of Cabinet meetings. The policy adopted was to try to strengthen the hands of the union officials.

As Bonar Law said, 'the trade union organisation is the only thing between us and anarchy, and if the trade union organisation was against us the position would be hopeless'.

But the trade union leaderships were very much with the government, and so the Cabinet discussed arrangements to arrest the strike leaders. The War Office was told to 'consider arrangements for placing troops in the vicinity of Glasgow'.

The main problem facing the government was that they dared not send in troops without some sort of 'provocation' from the strikers. That provocation was carefully arranged by the Glasgow city authorities.

On Wednesday 29 January a mass meeting of 50,000 workers took place followed by a demonstration to the

city centre. Then a deputation went to visit the Lord Provost, who agreed to write to the government asking it to intervene on behalf of the strikers.

The deputation was invited back on Friday to receive the reply, and another demonstration was arranged for that lunchtime.

John MacLean, the best-known Scottish Marxist leader, warned the strike committee that the Lord Provost was preparing a trap — to go along to the Friday meeting would be to play into the hands of the city council and the government.

He pleaded that the strikers should at least be prepared to defend themselves and the demonstration from attack. But the strike leaders like Shinwell were in no mood to throw away what they saw as a chance to settle the dispute peacefully and quickly.

On Friday morning massed demonstrations of workers streamed into the city centre. The 11-strong deputation duly went into the City Hall.

Willie Gallacher was addressing the demonstration outside when suddenly the police, after provoking an incident on the edge of the crowd, waded in with their batons. They went wild, batoning down men, women and children — whosoever was within reach.

PROVOCATION

The crowd began to fight back, and the police started to get the worst of the mêlée.

But when the Riot Act was read by the Lord Provost, Gallacher and another leader, David Kirkwood, by this time under arrest, appeared on a balcony and asked the crowd to disperse. This they did, while the strike leaders were marched off to jail.

This was just what the government had been waiting for. By 10 pm that night troops and tanks were pouring into Glasgow. By the next morning the city was an armed camp, and the government declared that they were not dealing with a strike but a 'Bolshevik uprising'.

RISING

Nothing could have been further from the truth as far as most of the strike leaders were concerned. As Gallacher wrote afterwards: 'A rising was expected. A rising should have taken place. The workers were ready and able to effect it; the leadership had never thought of it.'

Consequently the leaders of the strike had no answer to the government's show of force. The Cabinet rushed through an Order in Council making the strike illegal, while the engineers' union executive stepped in and suspended the district committees in Glasgow, Belfast and London. On 12 February the strike was called off.

The defeat came about because the government realised what the strike leaders did not; that essentially what was involved was not a fight for 40 hours, but an intensely political struggle for control of the streets, the factories, the unions, and ultimately the state itself.

So although the Glasgow 40 hours strike can and should be remembered for an amazing display of rank and file militancy, it should also be remembered as an illustration of its limitations.

Without a clear political alternative, and without a well-organised revolutionary party, the Glasgow strike was almost doomed to failure once the stakes were raised as high as they were.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TRADE UNION DAY SCHOOL

on

Rebuilding the Left in the Unions

Saturday 17 February 1979

Open to all supporters of Socialist Challenge in the unions.
Venue: Starcross School, Risinghill Street, London N1. Entrance 50p.

HOME NEWS

Mass picket call

Stevens trial set for 19 February

There are no racists in Britain
And coppers never lie
And Enoch's an angel
And pigs can fly!

[Chorus to 'Wolverhampton', a song written for the Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee by the Belt and Braces Band]

ON 19 FEBRUARY the Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee is calling for a mass picket outside Stafford Crown Court.

Why? Because on that day Dave Stevens is facing three charges of assault on police officers, and one of assault on a police inspector causing actual bodily harm.

The anti-racist committee is calling for the dropping of all the charges, which were brought by the police when Dave was arrested on a demonstration protesting against racist violence and police harassment of black people last March.

Dave was arrested during a scuffle caused by a man in the crowd who ran out at the march. Dave, along with the others on the march, was exercising his democratic right to demonstrate peacefully — yet he's the one in the dock.

Renée Short and Bob Edwards, both MPs for Wolverhampton, have called for the dropping of the charges. NS Noor, President of the Indian Workers Association (GB), and GA Singh,

Vice-President of Wolverhampton Sikh Temple, have called for the dropping of all charges.

The Secretary of Wolverhampton Trades Council and the No. 7 Regional Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union have called for the same. But still the trial is going ahead.

The Wolverhampton anti-racist committee, of which Dave is treasurer, has produced detailed accounts of racist attacks and police harassment against local black people.

It is the right to demonstrate in protest against such violence, without fear of police victimisation, which is at stake in this trial. A strong anti-racist movement will not be built in this country without defending that right.

Already steps have been taken to build the picket on the first day of the hearing.

Wolverhampton IWA are organising to mobilise their members from Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Derby. NS Noor, President of the IWA (GB), has called for all Asian and black organisations to join the picket.

The Students Union at the Poly is organising to send a coach, the Trades Council is sending its banner, and the West Midlands Fire Brigades Union is sending a delegation and requesting that the national union banner be sent.

The Wolverhampton CPSA Benefit branch is contacting other branches in the West



Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

Midlands to go on the picket. Meanwhile Renée Short MP and NS Noor will be presenting a petition signed by 5,000 people to the Home Office early in February.

The anti-racist committee has written to the ANL asking them to mobilise for the picket, and participate in presenting the petition.

This trial could well prove a test case. First because Dave faces a possible prison sentence for peacefully demonstrating. But secondly because the

dropping of the charges could well help to explode the myth that pigs can fly.

BIRMINGHAM meetings to defend Dave Stevens:

Thursday 1 February, 1pm, Birmingham University Guild of Students.

Monday 5 February, 7.30pm, at Australian Bar, Hurst St. — all-Birmingham meeting sponsored by ANL, CARF, AFFOR, etc.

Dave Stevens will speak at both meetings.

Above: the arrest of Dave Stevens during the March demonstration. Below: David McNee (right), Metropolitan Police Commissioner and James Anderton (left), Manchester Chief Constable, both leading figures in the 'law and order' campaign.



On the basis of such work the Defence Committee was able to call an impressive picket of West Ham Magistrates Court when Mr Ahmad's case came up on 8 January. Mr Ahmad was cleared, but the magistrate still tried to justify the bringing of the case by the police. The Defence Committee is

now planning to picket the appeal by one of the Virk brothers. As they say on their leaflet summing up the lessons of the Ahmad case:

'If black people are to defend themselves...the whole of the black community must be mobilised.'

Mobilising black community

By Rich Palser

'IN THIS country there is one law for the victims of racist attacks, and another for those who commit them.'

This is what Mrs Ahmad from Newham, East London, believes, and she speaks from bitter experience. Her husband, a Ford worker, found himself in the dock for assault after being on the receiving end of fascist abuse and violence.

The Newham Defence Committee brought the case to light: 'Mr Ahmad has often been abused. Bricks have been thrown through his window. The police said they could do nothing unless Mr Ahmad could identify his attackers.'

'On 22 October another window was broken. Mr

Ahmad caught one of the youths and called the police.

'The youth's parents arrived and shouted racist abuse at Mr Ahmad, who locked his front door. The father broke another window, smashed open the door, and threatened Mrs Ahmad with a knife.'

'When the police arrived they took a statement from the youth's parents accusing Mr Ahmad. Two days later West Ham police charged Mr Ahmad with assault.'

A week later Mr Ahmad's home was attacked again. He was beaten and had to spend two weeks in hospital with head injuries.

In spite of clear evidence it took three weeks for the police to arrest the racist. Meanwhile Mr Ahmad still faced the

assault charges from the previous incident.

His case was far from unique. The Newham Asian Federation and the Anti Nazi League alone have recorded over 50 cases of harassment and attacks on black people in Newham, and doubtless there have been many more.

This has led to increasing recognition that the black community has to be mobilised to defend itself.

So in mid-November the Newham Defence Committee was formed. Initially backed by the Indian Workers Association (GB) and the Black Socialists Alliance, it has since won wide support from individual Asians as well as the Newham Asian Federation, The Steering Committee of

Asian Organisations, and Newham ANL.

Championing the stand that 'self-defence is no offence', the Defence Committee began to mobilise the community by holding a picket of West Ham police station to demand the release of the Virk brothers — jailed for defending themselves against an attack by racists — and the dropping of charges against Mr Ahmad.

About 120 people were there — mainly local black residents but also a small contingent of supporters from Newham ANL and the Ford Workers Group.

Ten thousand leaflets were distributed within the black community, and the Ford Workers Group helped get them to black workers in Dagenham.

How police plan to change the rules

By Sarah Hart and Paul Crane (Release Collective)

★ Greater powers to hold people in police stations without charging them.

★ Opposition to the presence of outsiders during interrogations or the taping or filming of interrogations.

★ Greater powers with people who refuse to talk and for magistrates or a jury to draw inferences of guilt if a person stays silent either in the police station or in court.

★ Greater powers to stop and search people randomly, throw up road blocks, arrest people

who refuse to give their name and address, greater powers to fingerprint and photograph suspects.

★ Powers to the police to vet jurors' backgrounds and further reduce the majority needed to reach a verdict.

★ Powers to appeal against acquittals (so you can never be sure when the case is over).

These are just a few of the things that the police and other law enforcement bodies are asking the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure to recommend to the government. The police have argued that

until now they have been able to rely on people's ignorance to do 'necessary' things they don't strictly have the legal power to do — such as take someone to the police station to 'help with enquiries'.

But now that there are law centres, free legal aid, etc., and hence expert legal advice available to all, the rules need to be changed.

In other words, now that the public are aware of their rights we need to take them away, otherwise the police are seen to be breaking the rules.

What is more, this argument actually makes too much of the

few cases where people have won out against the police.

In fact most people are still unaware of their 'rights' in relation to the police — and many of these exist in name only, since there is no means of enforcing them.

The police have asked for greater formal powers on the basis that they are the 'impartial experts' in their field — like a surgeon or engineer — and should therefore have more say in the matter than most.

They have presented the same picture of the breakdown of society — declining

standards, end to family discipline, industrial unrest, etc. — and the need for a strong and determined answer to this 'social crisis'.

The Police Superintendents recently claimed: 'In 1978 it is regrettable but true that our normal state of society is under serious threat...public disorder is almost the norm in many places.' Official crime statistics do not support such hysteria, but the image in the media is a familiar one.

Changes in the law usually follow recommendations from commissions such as this. It is important that there is some

response to the law enforcers' picture if such changes are not to go through on the nod.

However, the government has excluded the issue of police accountability from the Commission's terms of reference. So even if more libertarian rules were accepted, how could they be made to stick?

There must be a defence to this campaign to sweep away formal democratic rights.

★ The Release Bust Book, Trouble with the Law, has just been published by Pluto Press (£1.25).

ARMS

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE has obtained a copy of a letter from an Iranian agency requesting an order of shotguns. The letter (reprinted on this page) is addressed to the Vickers Arms Co Ltd, an arms merchant of Edmonton, N. The request is for 46 Automatic Browning Shotgun, .375 Magnum, and is signed by Colonel G.H. M. of the Logistics Support Centre (Europe). Presumably the shotguns are not intended to shoot down MIGs!

By Geoffrey Sheridan

LOGISTICS Support Centre (Europe) resides in a modern four-storey office block at 15 Young St, Kensington in West London, conveniently around the corner from the Iranian military attaché's offices in Kensington Court.

The Logistics unit, which places orders for the Iranian military, has

already taken somewhat precautions against intruders. The office building, named House, can only be entered by through two sets of locked doors. Casual visitors will find no bell means to make their presence known. Nor does it seem too anxious to advertise its activities. The office is listed in any conventional telephone directory, nor is it available through a directory operator.

مرگ بر رژیم شاه
دست امپریالیست ها از ایران کوتاه
به پشتیبانی بریتانیا از شاه پایان دهید
از مبارزات کارگری ایران پشتیبانی کنید

IRAN

Demonstrate: تظاهرات
Saturday February 3
Trafalgar Square
1.30pm

Down with the Shah's regime
Stop British support for the Shah
Imperialist hands off Iran
Support the Workers' Struggles in Iran

How can we stop these tanks?

By Steve Potter

SHAH! SHAH! SHAH! That massed shout from the elite of the Iranian army last week chilled the bones of even the most hardened Western journalists.

The march past of the 2,000-strong Javidan brigade at the Lavizan military base near Tehran was the curtain raiser for the occupation of Tehran airport the next day.

On that occasion the move by the army was approved by the Bakhtiar-Shah government. A future government might not be so lucky.

The danger of a coup will remain as long as the repressive apparatus built by the Shah is intact.

The top ranks of the army face a bleak future. Even the Bakhtiar-Shah government has been forced to say that it will bring those responsible for the crimes of the last 25 years to justice. While Bakhtiar won't do it the masses certainly will try.

The only army top brass who would escape such an offensive will be those who follow the example of the Shah.

Nevertheless there are powerful factors against a coup. Although the professional ranks of the army remain intact, the conscripts have not been used in any systematic way against the masses.

What would tip the balance would be the attitude of the major imperialist powers, in particular the USA and to a much lesser extent Britain.

These are the powers which have helped to turn the Iranian army into a force which today has at least twice the soldiers and armaments of the British army.

Thanks to the USA the Iranian airforce has the most advanced fighter planes, and helicopter gunships; the navy sophisticated submarines and frigates.

Thanks to Britain the Shah assembled a mighty hovercraft force suitable for the invasion of the Gulf states, the beginning of the Rapier tracked missile forces and the latest Chieftain tanks.

All this armoury was assembled so that the Shah and the USA could realise their common goal of Iran acting as imperialist policeman in the Middle East.

But now it is the helicopters and tanks which come to the fore — not to beat the Russian threat, but to meet the masses.

If it is the imperialists who will eventually decide the question of a coup in the light of the development of the mass movement in Iran then it falls to the labour movement, particularly in

the USA and Britain, to make their governments certain what the popular response would be.

One of the best ways in which American and British workers can act is to break the links of iron and steel which bind the Iranian army to the imperialist powers.

The tanks and helicopters — the strike force of any coup — are reliant on American and British spares and technical assistance. *Guardian* journalist Martin Woollacott has calculated that the helicopters would be grounded in a month if Bell Helicopters were compelled to withdraw its maintenance force and supply of parts.

Likewise the armoured divisions would grind to a halt if the British government and the Vickers engineering group were forced to do likewise.

The Shir Iran tanks that the British government-owned Royal Ordnance factories and the Vickers Engineering group are building are part of a massive order for 2,000 tanks placed by the Shah.

The tank was ordered directly from the British government — the main contractor being the Barnbow Royal Ordnance factory in Leeds.

Based on the Chieftain tank, the Shir Iran is protected by the new Chobham plastic reinforced armour.

Its 120mm gun is currently the most powerful tank gun in the world. It uses sophisticated surveillance and firing systems including infra-red sights for night time operation and a laser range finder.

The tank is assembled by the chief subcontractor, Vickers, at the Elswick plant in Newcastle. Armour plate comes from the old Vickers British Steel plant in Sheffield. Turrets and guns come from the Royal Ordnance factories in Nottingham and Leeds.

Of the thousands of smaller parts some are subcontracted to other Vickers plants at Scotswood, Crayford, Team Valley and occasionally Thetford. The engine will come from either British Leyland or Rolls Royce.

Campaigners for solidarity with the people of Iran have already started activity against the supply of these tanks. In Leeds leaflets were distributed to AUEW shop stewards, calling for 'No loss of Lives, No loss of Jobs!'

They appealed to workers at the Barnbow factory to stockpile the tanks and parts and prevent their export to Iran. This takes up the example of the Hawker Siddeley workers, who hoarded aircraft engines that were due to be given to the Chilean airforce.

The Vickers National Combine Committee of Shop Stewards has

drawn up its own strategy. Following the example of the Lucas Combine, its document, *Building the Chieftain Tank and The Alternative*, outlines an alternative to building tanks.

It rejects the argument that stopping production of tanks loses jobs, pointing to the instability of the Iranian regime. Instead it proposes plans for manufacturing equipment, mining machinery, energy and environmental devices and the like.

Further action may be possible at the docks. The main ports for the export of the tanks are Liverpool and Hull. The Ministry of Defence rather than the dockers usually loads the tanks. Monitoring of these operations is currently under discussion.

The Committee Against Repression in Iran is planning action around the issue of the tanks as part of the build up to its national conference on Saturday 31 March. The conference is called on the basis of Solidarity with the Iranian Struggle, US and British Hands off Iran. (Further details and delegates credentials can be obtained from CARL, Box 4, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1. Copies of *Building the Chieftain Tank and The Alternative*, 10p plus postage from Days of Hope Bookshop, 115 Westgate Road, Newcastle.)

The trade in death

By Richard Carver

THE proposed deal between the Iranian air force and Le Personne is just a small example of a flourishing arms trade.

Nearly a third of the £3,700m output of Britain's 8,000 arms companies is exported and Iran is the single largest buyer, with a military establishment twice the size of the British. So these private capitalists have a direct stake in maintaining the Iranian status quo.

But the main feature of the modern arms trade is state participation. No longer are the arms merchants regarded as moral bounders who would happily sell guns to both sides (though the recent history of the Middle East shows that that contradiction remains).

'The morality lies with the user', is the verdict of Ronald Ellis, the Head of Defence Sales. It is a view which has found general approval since state-regulated arms exports have become an

instrument of foreign policy as well as a centrally planned intervention into the economy.

On a deal such as the small Le Personne contract there is little contact with the British state. But for any substantial sale both parties may have to deal with the state at a number of points:

The Defence Sales Organisation, a department of the Ministry of Defence, is the main arms sales agent.

The Labour government set it up in 1966 on the recommendation of a report by the then British Leyland managing director Donald Stokes. It was the beginning of a long relationship between Leyland and the DSO: two out of the three DSO Heads, including the present one, have been Leyland directors.

The Minister responsible was Denis Healey. At the time Labour still had a Minister of Disarmament, a problem which Healey brushed away with: 'we must also take what practical steps we

can to ensure that this country does not fail to secure its rightful share of this valuable commercial market.'

The DSO was initially little more than an aggregate of the sales departments of the different armed forces. It has since developed into a streamlined sales broker, organised on a geographical rather than service-by-service basis.

As with any such state broking agency the DSO can direct business where it chooses. Its criteria may be commercial — it shows no favours towards state-armed arms factories — or more sinister.

The 1977 Racial bribes trial revealed how two directors of a Racial subsidiary bribed a colonel employed by the DSO over a contract to sell military communications equipment to Iran.

Racal is another company with a longstanding relation with the DSO. The DSO's founder Head was a Racal director and Sir Lester Suffield, who was Head at the time of the bribes, was

alleged to have had 'a close business relationship' with Racal's chairperson. International Military Services is the British state's military contractor.

Buyers may be referred there by DSO.

It was formerly known as Mill Technical Services (it is still gen-

Reporter of the year

SIR Shapoor Reporter, who until recently was the key figure in arms deals with Iran, is a larger than life figure — a spiv on the grand scale. His career is a good illustration of the sort of people used by the arms trade and how Anglo-Iranian relations are conducted.

He was a psychological warfare expert in India in 1941-43 and later attached himself to the Iranian royal family. All the while he kept his link with British Intelligence. From 1948-54, the period of the US-engineered coup in Iran, the British lent Reporter to the CIA.

He was the Shah's foremost business

adviser. One of the defendants in the 1977 Racial bribery trial claimed Reporter administered the P.F. Foundation, whereby the pocketed all 'commissions'. This was after the Shah had outlawed bribery. Another defendant said: 'I can imagine needing to bribe anybody. Reporter knows he's going to get the consultant's fee.'

Reporter was intermediary of business deals with the Shah. Labour Ministers Edmund Dell and Tony Benn went through his arrange visits to Tehran.

AND IRAN

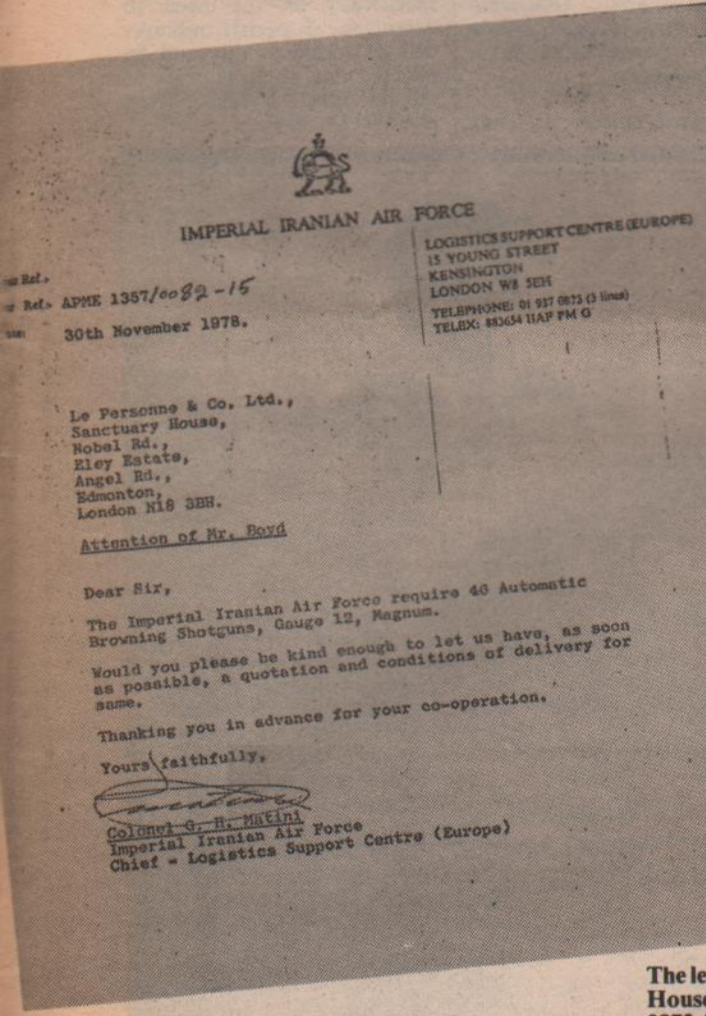
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None of this is very remarkable, except for the light it casts on the Iranian state's buying operations and how the arms trade works. On this page GEOFFREY SHERIDAN visits the home of the Logistics Support Centre, RICHARD CARVER looks at some of the implications of this case and the role of the government in promoting arms sales, and STEVE POTTER argues that a campaign against arms exports is a central task of the solidarity movement.

The current Kelly's guide does not even recognise the existence of the building!
Colonel G.H. Matini, the head of the Centre, does not appear on the London Diplomatic List. A flustered embassy telephonist was unable to confirm or deny the existence of this department and the voice which answered the telephone at the Centre itself seemed a little uncertain about where it worked. The Logistics Support Centre shares

the building — according to a nameplate visible from the street — with the Galustian Engineering Co. and the Perren Fire Protection Co.
The unit's security against unauthorised entry does not seem to be extended to its equipment ordering procedures. When *Socialist Challenge* rang to speak to John Boyd, Manager of Le Personne's arms department, his assistant mistook us for the Logistics Support Centre itself.

The company hadn't yet replied to the request for a quotation on the Browning shotguns, we were informed, because the details given were too vague. We had to be more specific about the barrelling of the guns. Then Le Personne, an equipment ordering agency, could obtain details about supply from the Belgian manufacturers of the gun.
We said we'd let them know.



The letter from the Iranian Air Force ordering shotguns; and Haig House, where the Logistics Support Centre has its offices. Ring 937 0873 for further information.

What sort of party?

THE RETURN of Ayatollah Khomeini to Teheran will mark the end of the first phase of the mass struggle which brought down the Shah. In the period that follows the Iranian left will be confronted with enormous tasks. In recent weeks both Socialist Worker and Socialist Challenge have stressed the necessity of building a revolutionary workers party in Iran. But more is needed than just words.

By Tariq Ali

DURING the last six months Socialist Challenge has concentrated on analysing the Iranian political crisis in some detail. We have stressed that demands for democratic rights culminating in the election of a constituent assembly were crucially important at the present time.

We argued along these lines not because we are in favour of soft-peddalling on the question of soviets, dual power or the establishment of a workers state. We did so because we think that the struggle will develop further out of the contradictions which are developing in the struggle for a constituent assembly.

It is always important to search for a bridge between the present level of consciousness of the masses and the future. It is important to find even the smallest footholds to that bridge. For without them one can easily be reduced to empty, albeit correct, propaganda. Trotsky was fond of quoting an old German proverb in this regard: 'Indeed a silk hat is very fine, provided only that I have mine.'

At the present time the masses want democracy and they are correct. We have to strengthen this move for democratic rights and fight against any manoeuvres by the army or sections of Khomeini's supporters which delay elections for a constituent assembly.

At the same time the economic boom of the 1960s has created a new working class, which is characterised by an impetuosity and courage rarely seen in the West. It also has not directly experienced the defeat of 1953, when a military coup restored the Shah to power.

The need to fight for and organise trade unions is another important task which confronts socialists and those who are in favour of real and lasting democratic rights.

Before there is a mass revolutionary party, there will be a nucleus of revolutionaries. Its ability to grow will not be determined by any abstract models of party-building, but by their ability to respond to the present situation in Iran.

It would thus be foolish if the central task of Iranian revolutionaries in the working class was seen to be building rank-and-file groups in a situation where unions are only now beginning to emerge.

The party cannot be built independently of its programme or its central political tasks. In a number of articles the comrades of the British Socialist Workers Party have indicated that they too are in favour of building a revolutionary party in Iran.

In a recent article in *Socialist Worker*, entitled 'Iran, it's time to have a party', Nigel Harris wrote:

'The only way the workers can establish a stable order is for themselves to take the lead, to take over the state. But for that they need an organised and disciplined party with a clear programme expressing the interests of workers.'

We agree completely with those sentiments. But a number of questions arise. The political current represented by the SWP has hitherto argued that it was not possible to construct a revolutionary international. It therefore sought close links with likeminded organisations in other countries.

Likemindedness, however, consisted of agreement on tactics rather than the fundamentals of the Marxist programme. This approach resulted in disaster, as Portugal and Italy revealed.

In Portugal the hectoring ultra-lefts of the PRP[BR] must bear part of the responsibility for the success of the November 1975 counter-revolution, while in Italy the rank-and-file of Avanguardia Operaia drifted rightwards before its eventual break-up.

Some SWP leaders are now extremely critical of their former allies in these two countries.

Does the recognition of the need to build a party in Iran signal an end to the old shibboleths of the SWP or is it essentially an attempt to recruit more Iranians in Britain? That is still not clear.

The Fourth International has a modest group of supporters in Iran at the present time. They have recently launched a weekly newspaper called *Che Bayad Kard* and are preparing a conference of Iranian revolutionary socialists.

Their aim is to construct a revolutionary workers party. How does the SWP view this and is it proposing to build an alternative organisation in Iran?

We are not making any extravagant claims for the FI in Iran. But we do stress that our ability to lay the basis for an organisation in Iran flows from our view that a revolutionary International can be constructed and needs to be built today.

It must be a disciplined organisation, but one that is internally democratic. The last thing that is needed is a small group established on an ultra-centralist basis, which strangles internal discussions, stifles the growth of independent-minded cadres and becomes a sect.

The political crisis in Iran [or for that matter in Peru or southern Africa] does indicate that British revolutionaries cannot simply be contented with providing solidarity. They must play a part in helping to build revolutionary organisations throughout the world.

The SWP should admit this and participate in the process, not just in Iran but internationally.

referred to as Millbank) and was under the control of the Crown Agents.

It recently became an MOD department under the personal control of the Secretary of State. This was presumably to prevent its activities being exposed as the Crown Agents' financial affairs were coming under increasing scrutiny.

Millbank handles most deals with Iran. It also emerged during the Racial trial that Millbank was a channel for payment of 'commissions'. Sir Shapoor Reporter, a Tehran-based business consultant, received £250,000 from Racial.

Sir Lester Suffield revealed at the trial that Reporter had also got over £1m in 1971 for helping secure a £100m contract to supply Chieftains to the Shah's regime. The payment was directly approved by the British government, which knighted Reporter in 1973 'for services to British interests'. (See box.)

The Royal Ordnance Factories, 13 of

them, are state-owned arms producers employing 22,500 people with sales of £211m in 1976. This is only a fraction of private arms production.

The Ministry of Defence research and development establishments design and test new armaments; the Royal Ordnance makes them.

According to Master of the Ordnance Sir Hugh Beach, he is 'simply here to do a job. If there is a contradiction, then that is for government to reconcile. As far as I understand it, they don't find any insuperable difficulty in reconciling it.'

Export Licences are the last point of contact between the arms dealers and the state and the one they must all go through — even on a contract as small as 46 shotguns.

One Department of Trade employee told *Socialist Challenge*: 'You even need a licence to export caps for a child's toy gun.'

The Department of Trade insists that each licence is given close individual

consideration. In practice it is unlikely that any but the big contracts get the full treatment. This consists of submission to a panel of advisers appointed from top civil servants in the relevant government Departments, in this case the DoT, MOD and Foreign Office.

The decision can be taken right up to cabinet level, though it is only in exceptional cases — as when the Foreign Secretary vetoed an arms deal with El Salvador — that the public gets to hear of it. All details of individual export licences are secret; only aggregate totals are released.

Like the entire arms trade it is an under-the-counter operation of immense political significance, concealed by the innocent jargon of commerce and the civil service.

But the crucial weakness of the arms export machine is that it still relies on workers to make and transport the weapons.

There lies our chance for solidarity.

Peru repression stops Blanco's visit

REPRESSION in Peru has taken its toll. The military regime arrested 2,000 trade unionists and socialists in an attempt to stop the recent general strike. Although it has now released all but 27 the threat to the left is still considerable.

One of the possible casualties will be the Rally Against Imperialism in London on 2 February and the Socialist Unity conference the following day. The main speaker at each was to have been Peruvian Trotskyist and peasant leader Hugo Blanco.

It now looks increasingly unlikely that Blanco will be able to come, though of course both events will be going ahead with substitute speakers.

By Dave Hayes

REPRESSION in Peru today is not the same as in Argentina, Chile or Uruguay, where massacres have taken place after the working class had been decisively defeated.

Blanco says that a race has begun. The ruling class is trying to win time by combining talk about democracy with hard selective repression.

The working masses and

revolutionaries on the other side are building up their independent self organisation. The granting of the Constituent Assembly has not held back mass activity as the generals had hoped.

General strikes have taken place with increasing regularity. Miners, peasants, teachers, public sector workers and school students have all been involved in bitter struggles.

The demand for the

reinstatement of the 2000 victimised trade union militants from the famous July 1977 strike against IMF austerity measures has unified many of the struggles.

What has scared the generals and their imperialist backers most of all has been the growth of popular assemblies in many areas and the strengthening of the class struggle current (led largely by revolutionaries) in the trade unions.

The generals also didn't bargain for a dozen revolutionary MPs in the Assembly. These MPs have said quite openly to the masses: we will use this 'institution' partly won by our struggles. Don't put your confidence in the assembly to resolve your problems, continue your struggles and fight for a workers and peasants' government.

It is still too early to say whether the failure of the general strike marks a retreat in the mass movement.

THE Latin American aspect of the Rally against Imperialism will be maintained by the substitution of Socorro Ramirez for Hugo Blanco.

She was vice president of the teachers union in Colombia and presidential candidate for the class struggle slate UNIOS in the recent elections — with the only manifesto to carry a specific section on the struggle against women's oppression.

Ramirez is a well-known figure in the abortion campaign in Colombia. She is a leader of the Partido Socialista Revolucionaria — a Colombian sympathising organisation of the Fourth International.



Repression remains selective. Out of the 2000 militants detained only 27 remain inside as of 19 January.

They include Herrea Montalvo, general secretary of the sailors' union, and the general secretary of the print union.

The two prisoners in the most serious danger are Luis Olibencia and Guillermo Bolanos, both journalists on a Trotskyist paper called *Revolucion Proletaria*.

The government is using

Decree law 22339 against these prisoners. It provides for the code of military justice to be applicable to civilians and establishes as a crime 'besmirching the image of the armed forces'.

Although Blanco is unlikely to come this week we should still keep our attention on Peru.

A statement on Latin American repression and solidarity which was to have been released at a press conference for Blanco has already won the support of the British Argentina Campaign, the Chile Committee for Human Rights, Big Flame, International Marxist Group, Stan Newens MP and Alan Christie of the National Union of Students.

It is hoped that a statement specifically on the need to defend the Peruvian militants will be added to this and released this week. (Copies of the statements available from *Socialist Challenge*).

Whites vote in futile bid to save Rhodesia

By Richard Carver

NINETY thousand Rhodesian whites vote this week on the proposed constitution. Its most obvious effect will be to change the name of the country to 'Rhodesia-Zimbabwe'.

'Majority rule' is purely cosmetic, since the country's tiny white minority has nearly a third of the seats in the new parliament set aside for it. And the apparatus of the state — armed forces, police, judiciary, civil service — will remain untouched.

The final insult is that it is not even the entire population, but just the whites, who are being consulted in this referendum.

With all these guarantees a majority of Rhodesian whites will probably vote for the settlement and stick with Prime Minister Ian Smith.

But that majority will be much reduced compared with the last general election and even those who vote yes must be bewildered that it is 'good ol' Smithy' — who in 1965 promised 'no majority rule in my lifetime' — who is leading them towards Rhodesia-Zimbabwe.

But Smith's sudden conversion to African control (qualified by the fact that he regards himself as African) marks no significant change of position.

The racist atrocities of the police and army escalate weekly. The latest report from the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia, for instance, details how the security forces are burning down villages which are alleged to support the anti-government guerrillas.

Nearly seven times as many African civilians have been killed by troops as the number of white civilians allegedly killed by guerrillas. And many

of the latter killings, notably those of missionaries, can be directly attributed to undercover units of the Smith army.

These figures also exclude the death of thousands of people killed by Rhodesian troops in their 'search and destroy' raids into neighbouring Zambia and Mozambique.

Statistics like these get minimal coverage in the British press. So do the United Nations estimates of the number of black refugees who have fled the country.

There are some 117,000 in refugee camps in Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana, not including those who are out of the country training with the Patriotic Front guerrillas.

The total number of refugees almost equals the number who fled Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge regime — again not a comparison which has been publicised.

So if it is not altruism which lies behind Smith's belated conversion, what is it?

The only serious explanation is the almost total disintegration of governmental power; the regime is losing the war with its own population.

Several months ago there were reports that large tracts of country were in the hands of the guerrillas, who were even launching attacks on the suburbs of the major cities.

That process has continued. Thames Television producer Peter Taylor recently visited Zimbabwe and reports the growing support for those whom the government calls 'ters', or terrorists.

He summarises their feelings: 'We support the guerrillas because they are our children; they are the ones fighting for Zimbabwe, their battle is our battle, the transitional government has done nothing for us.

All this they say with no terrorist guns at their heads, as the government would have the rest of the world believe.'

Taylor also tells of the declining credibility of the erstwhile nationalist leaders who joined Smith's government. Bishop Muzorewa's support has faded away, even on his home territory of Umtali — so much so that he has to ship in busloads of supporters to save the embarrassment of small public meetings.

The only serious basis of support for Muzorewa and his government colleague Reverend Sithole is their own private armies: 'on-side ters' in white racist jargon.

A fatally stretched white army has simply handed over control of some areas to heavily-armed bands of hoodlums. These areas are known as 'frozen zones' and the private armies as 'auxiliaries' but this does not disguise the reality.

Neither are they, as their leaders would have us believe, Patriotic Front members who have defected. Some are young blacks attracted by the prospect of a job and a square meal.

More often they are the sadists that all wars attract: 'There have been many dead,' one auxiliary said with a grin. 'Much blood. You should see it run out.'

Rivalry between different groups is intense. Muzorewa claims that Sithole's groups exercise a 'nationwide Hitlerite terror'.

His own army, of course, has a more democratic purpose: it is 'to teach people how to vote'.

State terror and a breakdown in order — that is what Rhodesians will be voting for this week. And it is their only option outside the guerrilla victory which now looks inevitable.



MAN of God: Muzorewa (centre) clutches AK47, surrounded by private army.

INTERNATIONAL

The lost freedom of Astrid Proll

ASTRID Proll now faces extradition since the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate has ruled that there are cases for her to answer in West Germany.

Her hopes of staying in Britain and avoiding probable death in a German prison now rest entirely on her claim to British citizenship as a result of her marriage.

If Astrid is returned to West Germany, what will she face?

By Jude Woodward

WHEN Astrid Proll was arrested in Hamburg in May 1971 she was held for 2½ years until her trial eventually started in September 1973. There is no reason to suppose that the West German authorities will be any quicker in bringing Astrid to trial this time. She faces the possibility of being held on remand for an indefinite period.

Between 1971 and 1973 Astrid was subjected to two periods of sensory deprivation and total isolation in the 'silent wing' of Koeln-Ossendorf

prison.

Even when not being subjected to the torture of sensory deprivation she was kept in solitary confinement — before she had even been convicted. Eight members of the Red Army Fraction, with which Astrid has been connected, have died in West German prisons.

Currently, there has been an escalation of guerilla activity in West Germany and the repressive climate has intensified.

Astrid will probably face treatment and sentencing that reflect this situation rather than



Civil rights in Germany. German artist Kurt Jotter's view.

the crimes that she is supposed to have committed.

With the increasing erosion of civil liberties in West Germany, where people can be prosecuted for even drawing attention to prison conditions, the likelihood of any campaign in support of Astrid is very small.

Astrid was released from prison in 1973 because a

circulation expert said her life was in danger due to the ravages of prison conditions and the effects of torture.

There is no reason to suppose that if she is returned to West Germany, her conditions will be any better this time.

When she was arrested in London, Astrid said: 'I do not expect to survive if I am returned to Germany'.

Renewed pressure must be brought to bear on Home Secretary Rees to insist that Astrid Proll be allowed to stay in this country.

Apart from quite possibly sentencing her to death, her extradition would imply that the Labour government endorses the continued erosion of democratic rights in Germany.

West Germany - the steel sell-out

By Eric Eauvives

THE West German steelworks are busy again. But only after lying deserted for forty days as 100,000 strikers demanded a 35-hour week.

Order reigns once more in the Ruhr. The bosses paid a high price in lost production during the strike — as much as £250 million according to some estimates. But then the stakes were high.

To have conceded a 35-hour week in the steel industry would have been to open up a breach through which the rest of the working class could have poured. So the bosses held out.

And now employers throughout West Germany are demanding a signed contract to maintain the 40-hour week before they will negotiate on anything else at all.

They are in a position to do this thanks to the leadership of the IG Metall union who were not above falsifying the results of the ballot on the final sell-out deal.

The union claimed a 54.6 per cent vote in favour. But subsequent inquiries in a number of plants have shown that the deal could not possibly have secured a majority.

In fact the peculiar concept of workers democracy in IG

Metall, requiring a 75 per cent positive vote to launch or continue with strike action, would have meant the end of the strike in any case.

But the union leadership obviously felt that such a minority vote would have threatened its own position. And so a few 'adjustments' were made.

So the most important labour dispute in West Germany for thirty years ended with no reduction in hours and only a small wage rise and slight increase in holidays. But it would be wrong to talk of a crushing defeat.

The size of the vote against

the union leadership shows this. So too does the fact that this was only the most recent and powerful in a series of working class struggles.

The number of days lost in strikes or lock-outs in 1978 was 5.8 million — an all-time record in West Germany.

Furthermore, this struggle has acted as an inspiration and example to other workers, well beyond the frontiers of West Germany. In placing the 35-hour week at the forefront of their demands the steelworkers have shown a way forward to all workers.

'Leaders will weaken union' - steelworker

KARL BRINKMANN is a shop steward at the Mannesmann-Huckingen steel plant in Duisburg, and also a member of the Social Democratic Party which is in government. TOM JORDAN asked him how the union leaders had managed to get the strike called off.

That's the big question, of course. It's not a matter of personalities. Right from the beginning I don't think any of the high-ups wanted a strike.

First they said to the militants: 'Of course we want it, but you'll never get the backing of the workers.'

Result: an 87 per cent vote to strike.

Then, two days before the strike was due, there was a compromise offer on holidays — better than we finished up with in the end.

But the shop stewards told the IG Metall leadership: we're not interested, it's the 35-hour week we're after. And they had to go ahead with the strike.

However, they weakened our position step by step. They progressively abandoned our basic demand for 35 hours.

At the beginning it was a question of 35 hours. Then it became a 'move towards 35

hours'. Then a 'move towards 39 hours'. And now they flourish the extra holidays, claiming that this is somehow an inroad into the 40-hour week.

Yet as one of them said in the first days of the strike: 'What use are holidays if we're unemployed outside the factory?'

These people have a different understanding of trade unionism. They don't see the union as an instrument of struggle to defend the interests of the workers.

I think they see it more as an element of integration into the

state — they're acting more from the point of view of their SPD party card than their trade union card.

So they obviously don't have much interest in leading a struggle which serves the interests of the union members. They're tied to those who are in charge of running things in this country — the social-democratic leadership.

When the interests of the union run up against the interests of the state, I'm ready to believe that the entire leadership is prepared to weaken the union.

WHAT'S LEFT

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

ANTI-RACISM and Education, 2-day teach-in. 5/6 Feb, 10am - 9pm. Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London WC1. 01-636 1912. Lectures, films, discussions, workshops. Free. Creche.

PICKET GARNERS: Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £6. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-2401056.

NATIONAL Abortion Campaign film benefit. **Shirin's Wedding** — a Turkish woman leaves her village to avoid an arranged marriage. She travels to West Germany seeking her lover — a migrant labourer. Shows her double oppression as a woman and migrant worker. Sun 4 Feb, 1pm at Scala Cinema, Tottenham St, London W1. Adm: £1.60 (£1.10 unwaged).

TWO Italian socialists looking for room(s) in Central/North West/West London. Can pay up to £15. Willing to exchange Italian-English tuition. Contact 01-229 1750.

TROTSKY's Marxism by Denise Avenas of the French LCR. Discusses permanent revolution, the role of the party and bureaucracy, from the viewpoint of the relationship between politics and economics. A4, 35 pages, 35p plus 10p p&p, 10% off and post free for orders over 10. PO's, cheques with orders to: Oxford Socialist Challenge, 26 Bullingdon Rd., Oxford.

MAY DAY GREETINGS: trades council or shop stewards committees, would your trade union branch put its May Day Greetings in Socialist Challenge? If so, just send us the name and address of the branch secretary and on 28 February the branch will be mailed allowing the item to be raised at the branches' March or April meeting. Copies of the circular, including rates, from D. Weppler, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

GAYS in the NUT conference planning meeting. 12 noon sharp, Sat 3 Feb at 7 Blackheath Grove, London SE3. Any teachers in the NUT are welcome. Tel 01-790 2454 for further details.

ISLINGTON Women's Voice Group public meeting — 'Out-patient abortion facilities in Islington'. Speaker: Prof Huntingford from the London Hospital. Tues 6 Feb, 8pm, Small Hall, Central Library, Fieldway Cres, Off Holloway Road, London N7.

MANCHESTER: 'The Crisis of British Imperialism'. A series of public forums organised by the Revolutionary Communist Group. Forum No 2: The Labour Party and Imperialism. Wed 7 Feb, 7.30pm, Longsight Town Hall, Stockport Rd, Longsight.

TASK FORCE Camden Centre need fourth team member to work with pensioners in groups and individually. Experience in community and/or neighbourhood work desirable. Political awareness, sense of humour, energy and ability to work on your own with team support, are important qualities. Salary: £3375 (under review). Please write or telephone for application form and job description to Task Force, 6 Malden Rd, London NW5. Tel: 01-267 3381. Closing date for applications 21 Feb.

CARI public meeting, Wed 31 Jan, Edinburgh FSC Hall, 7.30pm. Speaker from London CARI.

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Papers No 4. Revisionism, Imperialism and the State: the method of Capital and the dogma of state monopoly capitalism. Through a critique of the revisionist dogma of SMC the main article by Frank Richards puts the struggle against the reformist leadership of the labour movement on a firm programmatic foundation. Available from the Revolutionary Communist Tendency: BM RCT (4), London WC1V 6XX. 50p plus 15p p&p. Make cheques payable to RCT Association.

DESIGNER required to work for **Socialist Challenge/** FI Litho. Apply in writing to FI Litho, 328/9 Upper St, London N1

SOCIALIST Challenge designer urgently needs accommodation. Anything anywhere in London considered — long or short term. Please phone Bill: 359 8288 in office hours, 267 9419 evenings/weekends.

Intercontinental Press combined with INPRECOR

JOSEPH HANSEN, who died in New York two weeks ago, was the founder and editor of Intercontinental Press/Inprecor.

He transformed it from a mimeographed journal to its present form as a unified magazine reflecting the views of the Fourth International. It bears Joe's stamp throughout, its low-key and meticulous style sometimes concealing a controversial and polemical streak.

It is appropriate, then, that the present issue (Vol 17, No 3) should carry a lengthy appreciation of Joe by his longtime comrade George Novack.

Single copies are 30p plus postage, but a far better way of honouring Joe Hansen and the institution he did so much to build is by taking out a subscription: £9 for one year, £5 for six months or £2.50 for an introductory offer of 10 issues.

Write now to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor.

UTOM MEMBER BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS ... BUT FASCISTS FAIL TO HALT BLOODY SUNDAY MARCH

By Geoff Bell



FOUR HUNDRED assorted fascists made repeated attacks on the Bloody Sunday commemoration march held in London last Sunday. Steve Tolliday, a member of Camden/Islington branch of the United Troops Out

Movement, was beaten unconscious in a tube on his way to the march. He was set upon by a gang of between 15 and 20 people. After the assault his attackers chanted 'British Movement' as they left the tube station. Steve was still in hospital receiving treatment for kidney injuries as Socialist Challenge

went to press. The march itself, which attracted 1,500, was repeatedly harassed and attacked by about 400 members of the British Movement and the National Front.

Smoke bombs were thrown in Oxford Street at the demonstrators, who were commemorating the seventh anniversary of the killing by the British army of 14 civil rights

demonstrators in Derry. There were 41 arrests, and according to Scotland Yard all but two of these were NF members.

National Front opposition to Irish self-determination is nothing new. In the past few years the Front has made many attempts to link up with extreme Loyalists in the North of Ireland.

These have included talks with a number of para-military organisations, including the Ulster Volunteer Force.

International Tribunal has preliminary hearing

By Tomas Marlowe

THE preliminary hearing of the International Tribunal on the British Presence in Ireland was held in Paris last weekend.

Three judges presided at the hearing — Judge Bloch (France), Ron Knowles, editor of the *Journalist* (England), and Phil Flynn, deputy general secretary of the Irish Local Government and Public Services Union (Ireland).

They concluded that there was a prima facie case for an investigation of the British presence in Ireland and they sanctioned the convening of a full-scale tribunal hearing in the summer.

The judges heard evidence alleging infringements of human rights in the North of Ireland. Witnesses presented evidence regarding British repression in Ireland, including personal testimony of interro-

gation procedures and statements from prisoners smuggled out on toilet paper.

Among those giving evidence was Father Faul, a catholic priest from Dungannon, Co Tyrone. Faul has investigated many cases of systematic ill-treatment of prisoners. He gave a graphic account of conditions in Long Kesh where over 350 prisoners are currently 'on the blanket'.

The judges' verdict stressed, 'it was no part of our function to decide whether the evidence presented to us showed that the British government has been guilty of breaches of human rights or to examine the causes'.

But Bloch, Knowles and Flynn did state:

'We have no hesitation in saying that the presence of Britain in Ireland raises serious and disturbing questions. We regard it as fundamental to the whole question of Britain's

presence in Ireland to examine the manner in which the Northern Ireland statelet came into being and the manner in which it has been maintained and also through detailed consideration whether in fact it can be maintained without resort to breaches of human rights charters.'

The judges concluded: 'We therefore find that the Tribunal has made out a sufficient case for a thorough investigation of British presence in Ireland and consider it essential that a full hearing... take place'.

The judges verdict revealed that they heard 'detailed expert evidence' on:

- ★ the history of Britain in Ireland;
- ★ the partition settlement;
- ★ 'the nature of the six county statelet of Northern Ireland and the inherent discrimination

that exists there';

★ the background to the civil rights movement of the late 1960s and 'the reaction of the Unionist majority to the peaceful registration of a claim to equal rights';

★ 'the re-emergence of armed conflict';

★ the withdrawal of political status for those 'convicted under the special laws and before the special courts introduced in Northern Ireland';

★ the use of long periods of remand to 'effect a form of internment';

★ the nature and consequence of British economic policies in Ireland;

★ 'the effect on women and children of systematic physical and psychological brutality, intimidation and harassment by the security forces including evidence of extensive sexual

brutality and intimidation'.

The judges also looked at allegations of censorship and 'manipulation of the media by the security services', as well as various examples of repressive legislation, including the Special Powers Act, the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The judges expressed the hope that 'as many people and organisations as possible' will submit evidence to the full tribunal. They added 'it would be of considerable help to the judges and the jury that the British government should be represented at the hearing'.

The full hearing is planned for the summer and the judges directed it to be held before 'a panel of international judges and a jury drawn from the British Labour Movement'.

In a statement on the hearing

the Tribunal organisers ask that 'necessary assurances regarding the protection of witnesses from harassment and detention under the ever increasing misuse of the Prevention of Terrorism Act will be given by the British government so as to enable this hearing to be heard in London, the original venue for the prima facie hearing.'

The Tribunal organisers can now go ahead with building support, and assembling judges and a jury for the full hearing. But a lot of work still needs to be done, especially as regards collecting evidence.

The Tribunal Planning Committee continues to need all the help it can get. Its next meeting is on Tuesday 13 February at the St Clements Building of the London School of Economics. It begins at 7.30pm and all who want to help the Tribunal should try to attend.

All photos: G. M. COOKSON [Socialist Challenge]

An outstanding revolutionary leader

JOE HANSEN 1910-1979

By Jon Rothschild

Hansen came into the Trotskyist movement in 1934 at the outset of a transformation in the quality and activity of the revolutionary Marxist forces, which were everywhere plunging into the mass movement of the working class. In 1936, Joe and his wife and comrade, Reba, moved to San Francisco, one of the centres of organisation of a maritime strike that paralysed the entire west coast of the United States.

Hansen integrated himself into that struggle, helping to edit the *Voice of the Federation*, organ of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, which grouped together all the maritime unions.

In September 1937 Joe and Reba moved to Coyoacán, Mexico, to become part of the household of Leon Trotsky. They remained there until late 1940, after the murder of Trotsky.

Hansen was therefore at Trotsky's side throughout the last great political battle of the Russian revolutionary, against those forces in the American Socialist Workers Party that had challenged the Fourth International's analysis of the class character of the Soviet state.

When Hansen returned to New York after Trotsky's death, he became part of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, devoting himself primarily to the party press.

The most historically significant elements of Hansen's contribution, however, came after the war. The moral and political courage of those American revolutionaries who were able to resist the social isolation and even physical threats of McCarthyism needs little elaboration.

But there were other dangers besides the obvious ones of repression and isolation. The entire Trotskyist movement, beginning with Trotsky himself, had expected a revolutionary upsurge after the Second World War which would see the transformation of the small Trotskyist parties into mass organisations leading hundreds of thousands of workers.

This analysis, as we now know, turned out to be incorrect. The Trotskyist movement was thrown into intellectual turmoil; it faced wholly new problems of analysis and action, demanding correct responses as a precondition for the very survival of the movement.

Joe Hansen made a decisive contribution to the elaboration of that analysis. He was one of the first to realise that the Soviet leadership, under the impetus of its occupation of the East European countries and the necessity of defending itself against the onslaught of the Cold War, had indeed effected social overturns in Eastern Europe, establishing a new state form: workers states bureaucratically deformed from their very origin.

The problem was new, and it cannot be said that Hansen's articles — or anyone else's — answered all the outstanding questions completely. But it was comrades like Joe Hansen who evinced the freshness of approach and lack of dogmatism that were to be responsible for the survival of the Trotskyist programme throughout the hard years of reaction.

This period, however, did take its toll on the world Trotskyist movement. In 1953 the Fourth International suffered a split — one which many comrades consider was not justified by the existing political differences.

Hansen was to have been the person

THE INTERNATIONAL revolutionary movement lost one of its most outstanding leaders on 18 January, when Joseph Hansen died in New York at the age of 68.

He had devoted forty-five years of his life to the movement — as trade union activist, journalist, secretary to Leon Trotsky, translator, editor, founder of *Intercontinental Press*, party leader, and revolutionary strategist.

One of the most conscious and consistent internationalists ever produced by the American radical movement, Hansen was, in the literal and best sense of the word, a cosmopolitan, a world citizen.



delegated by the SWP leadership to travel to Europe in late 1953 to explain the party's position on the disputed issues. But he was denied a passport by the McCarthyist State Department.

One wonders — particularly given the role played by Hansen in the reunification of the FI nine years later — whether the split could not have been avoided had he been able to make that trip.

It is difficult for revolutionary militants who have come to political activity since 1968 to comprehend the difficulties of the 1950s. Not a few groups managed to preserve their organisational existence only at the cost of retreating into such blind sectarianism that later, when the objective situation changed, they were unable to seize upon the new opportunities for growth.

This problem was compounded by the fact that one of the most central events in transforming the conditions of the world class struggle was yet another instance of a development unforeseen by revolutionary Marxists: the Cuban revolution.

Cuba was, as Joe Hansen was to put it in one of his most important essays, the 'acid test'. The American SWP passed that test in recognising the Cuban revolution for what it was: the establishment of the first workers

state in the Western hemisphere; the first socialist revolution since 1917 to be led by forces that had not come out of the Stalinist movement.

That it did so was due in no small measure to the work of Joseph Hansen. He visited Cuba in 1961 and was instrumental in the establishment of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in the US, which organised the defence of the revolution against US imperialism.

Most important, he produced the most significant articles analysing the import of the Castroist leadership, the Cuban state, and the efforts of the Castroists towards international organisation.

The majority of the organisations of the Fourth International from which the SWP had divided in 1953 also passed the test of Cuba. Hansen played a central role in bringing about reunification of the world Trotskyist movement in 1963, effectively leading the political struggle against those forces which opposed it and helping to draft the political documents which provided its basis.

One of the immediate fruits of the reunification was the foundation of *World Outlook*, the journal that was later to become *Intercontinental Press*. Beginning as a mimeographed

bulletin produced in Paris by Joe and Reba with the aid of Pierre Frank, it rapidly filled a vacuum in international reportage, analysis, and documentation.

In 1965 Joe suffered a massive attack of peritonitis, from which he nearly died. Publication of *World Outlook* was interrupted, and Joe and Reba returned to the United States. He never fully recovered his health, but he was determined to take up his activity again as soon as possible.

World Outlook was re-launched in New York, with Joe as editor. Its technical facilities gradually expanded, and it grew in size as a staff of writers and translators was assembled. In 1968 — that watershed year of world revolutionary politics — *Intercontinental Press* again offered the most thorough and penetrating news and analysis published by the revolutionary movement anywhere in the English-speaking world.

Joe himself, along with several other comrades of the SWP, travelled to France to cover the events there. He was arrested by De Gaulle's police, held overnight, expelled from the country and barred from returning.

From 1969 onwards, Hansen's activity was centred on the tendency struggle in the Fourth International. Hansen was the author of the first — and most penetrating — criticism of

the errors of the resolution on Latin America adopted by the Ninth World Congress of the Fourth International in 1969. Thereafter he produced a good portion of the political documents of the minority tendency in the International, on Latin America and other issues.

It may be said without exaggeration that one of the greatest reasons why the tendency and faction struggle of 1969-1977 resulted not in another split but in the eventual dissolution of the major tendencies was that Joe Hansen was a central leader of the minority.

Uppermost in his mind was not only the intrinsic importance of the political issues at stake, but also the unity of the Fourth International, the organisation to which he had devoted his entire conscious life.

Apart from this manifold political legacy, Hansen made another contribution which was nearly unique. He introduced into the American revolutionary press a quality which has been — and, lamentably, still is — most rare. It can be summed up in a single word: professionalism.

Joe had immense respect for journalism and writing, which he considered, as he often used to put it, a craft. There was no reason, he felt, why a revolutionary journal should be filled with typographical errors, grammatical blunders, garbled quotations, inaccuracies of detail, and other hallmarks of the amateur pen pusher.

He himself was a master of style. He had a subtle sense of humour and irony, which he never lost even at the height of the most intense polemics.

Hansen instructed a generation of American militants in revolutionary politics; but he also taught a smaller, yet significant, number of party members how to write. I know because I was one of them.

But Joe also had another quality, perhaps even more rare in revolutionary leaders, to which I would like to pay a personal tribute. Trotskyists, as James P. Cannon used to say, 'mean business'. They take their politics — and therefore their internal political struggles — seriously.

All too often, intense political struggles drift into personal acrimony. Not because revolutionaries are necessarily nastier than other people, but because they consider the ideas for which they are fighting crucial to the future of human society. They then find it impossible to work with their opponents, let alone delegate any political responsibility to them.

Joe Hansen, as I can personally testify, was entirely free of this defect. I was a member of the staff of *Intercontinental Press* for several years in the early 1970s, including 1973, the year the tendency struggle in the Fourth International reached its initial peak of intensity and became a faction struggle.

I was not a member of his tendency or faction at that time, and later became a supporter of the international majority, speaking for it in the SWP, occasionally against documents written by Joe.

Despite this, I never had the slightest personal difficulty working with him and was even delegated editorial responsibilities on the journal. He showed me, as he showed others, the meaning of revolutionary morality and, what may come to the same thing, simple personal decency in the heat of political struggle.

In some sense, that may be his greatest contribution of all.

LETTERS

A lorry load of...

I WAS amazed to read your 'First Word' article on the road haulage industry (11 January). In it you describe the way in which the fragmentation of the industry by private ownership leads to the inefficient use of vehicles.

You conclude: 'All such waste could be done away with if there was one road haulage company that was planned on a rational, efficient, coordinated basis. If, in other words, the industry was nationalised.' It is claimed that 'then conditions would improve remarkably'.

In fact, 'nationalisation' would simply be the prelude to massive redundancies: that is what the capitalist state understands by 'efficiency'. The very inefficiency that you describe is one reason that capital as a whole would not be at all opposed to the nationalisation that you are arguing for.

Nationalisation could rationalise the industry and thus lower its prices to its capitalist customers. And cuts in the labour force could be more easily made by a 'democratic' capitalist state in the interests of a 'socialist' nationalised industry than by capitalist bosses.

The fact that surplus value would be lost to haulage capital is irrelevant, since it would simply be transferred to the capitalist customers by a further lowering of prices, as has happened in all other nationalised industries. Because haulage is such a basic industry this would be of benefit (and therefore approved of) by most of the capitalist class. Only the ideological question, and the problem of 'where will it stop?', prejudice capital against such a nationalisation.

We should be demanding not nationalisation but **nationalisation under workers control**. This could ensure that more efficient use of vehicles and drivers' time resulted in a shorter working week with no loss of pay. It could prevent the value created in the industry being given to capitalist customers as low prices. It could begin to deal with environmental effects of goods vehicles.

In fact, it could be a start towards an industry 'rational, efficient, coordinated' for the working class.
JAMIE GOUGH (London)

Deutscher prize

THE Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize is awarded each year to a work which contributes to the development of Marxist thought. The Prize for 1978



has been awarded to Rudolf Bahro for his book *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, recently published in an English translation by New Left Books.

The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize for 1979, to the value of £100, will be awarded in the autumn of 1979 and a jury drawn from among the sponsors will be glad to consider work published or in typescript. Any such work should be submitted by 1 May 1979 to The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize, c/o Lloyds Bank, 68 Warwick Sq., London SW1.

RALPH MILIBAND (On behalf of The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize)

Overcoming sectarianism

I AGREE with the aim of building a unified and broad-based solidarity campaign for the Iranian Revolution. I am as dismayed as you are by the splits in the solidarity movement and the sectarian attitude exhibited by the Iran Solidarity Campaign towards the Committee Against Repression in Iran and the International Marxist Group. However, I have reservations about Steve Potter's reply to the Socialist Workers Party/Socialist Worker Student Organisation (11 January).

There are different ways of dealing with a situation like this. On the one hand we can recognise the ISC and the layers mobilised by it as being a significant and legitimate part of the solidarity movement.

It is then possible to tackle the serious sectarian errors made by them, using the pages of *Socialist Challenge* and an intervention into the march to insist on our right to take part in this area of the solidarity movement. This orientation is surely consistent with *Socialist Challenge's* stated aim of building a unified and broad-based movement.

On the other hand one can relate to

the ISC as simply an undesirable phenomenon, publicly ignore them, and hope they'll go away. In practice *Socialist Challenge* did this by scrupulously ignoring the ISC mobilisation and march, thereby denying them any legitimacy. A sectarian response to sectarianism like this is not going to further unification of the solidarity campaign.

P. MITCHELL (Bristol)

Profits are the dynamo

PAUL Spotter (18 January) criticised your front page headline 'The crisis is a crisis of inequality', saying that it was a crisis of capitalist relations. Your editorial reply glibly stated that you thought it was fairly obvious that one amounted to the other. You are not only misleading but also wrong.

First, the IMG has many a time criticised the SWP for its 'It's the rich wot get the gravy', Lord Mayor's banquet, Rolls Royces, etc. approach. British capitalism cannot afford 'excessive' wage claims. Profits, not inequality, is the dynamo of the economic system.

Second, to whom is it obvious that inequality equals capitalism, other than revolutionaries and demagogues of 'this great movement of ours'? Our task is to explain the links between present consciousness and revolution-

THE LENGTH of letters printed will usually be kept down to 400 words in order to encourage as wide a range of contributions as possible. All letters may be cut at the Editor's discretion. Unsigned letters will not normally be published, although we will withhold real names from publication on request.

ary change.

The editorial board choose to echo simplistic but healthy sentiments about inequality. Who needs a transitional programme?

FRED LEPLAT, MIKE TAIT (Camden)

Challenging reformist leaders

YOUR new year editorial (4 January) certainly rang out the old. Exactly a year ago J. Ross's preview of 1978 convincingly argued that the setbacks in the class struggle were due to the bankrupt leadership of the working class, and not, as the CP claimed, to the enormous strength of bourgeois institutions.

The CP's argument reflected a refusal to challenge that leadership. Ross's argument was of course our old friend the 'Trotskyite dogma' that the world crisis is essentially a crisis of working class leadership — still as true in '78 as in '38. Now you are letting this old acquaintance be forgot: '...the last year has shown the enormous recuperative power of the bourgeois-democratic institutions through which the ruling class mediates its rule in the West'.

The dangers of blaming setbacks on bourgeois institutions without stressing the misleadership which makes this possible are there to see in the current positions of the CP and SWP. Both, for different reasons, fail to build a real challenge to the labour bureaucracy through a united front approach based on workers democracy.

Instead politics is reduced to a 'battle of ideas' against the bourgeois media, with the working class supposedly hopelessly brainwashed unless they read the right newspaper.

If you stop to consider Doctor

Death, Hua Guofeng, or the history of the Tudeh Party, the Iranian revolution is the strangest excuse for dropping this key notion from your arguments. The weakness of reformist obstacles in Iran does not abolish reformism in Europe — except in your editorial vocabulary. Nor is Europe 'stagnant' unless you forget big political strikes in Denmark, the German metalworkers, and the British wage struggle.

The basis of an internationalist perspective like that of the Fourth International is a grasp of the **interconnections** of the sectors of world revolution, not a mechanical contrast between them.

CHRIS B (Swindon)

Average is mythical

IN your feature on the NUPE claim (18 January) you use the concept of the average wage to justify the claim. This is misconceived for two reasons.

Firstly, because it sets one group of workers against another — it's really another case of the special pleading which you rightly criticise. Secondly, it betrays an uncritical approach to official statistics, which we must remember are never ideologically neutral — for example they tend to lump 'the whole community' together rather than clarifying class divisions.

For the statisticians it is never a question of workers and capitalists but of at least five distinct 'socio-economic groups'. The idea of the average wage is particularly misleading because it hides the fact that, as there are a small number on very high pay and a large number on low pay, the average will always be higher than most people earn.

The left must justify the wages struggle on other grounds than comparisons with some mythical average.
GEORGE GRIME (Uxbridge)

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

THE DEADLINE for this column is midday on the Saturday before publication.

NORTH WEST

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2352.

GREATER MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge. School students who support the paper and would like to get involved in anti-fascist activity, please contact Chris (273 5947, day) or Steve (226 4287, evening), or write to Manchester SC Centre, 14 Piccadilly.

SALFORD Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted at the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre c/o 14 Piccadilly, Manchester with a view to forming a Salford SC group.

MOSS SIDE Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper at Moss Side Centre, Saturday, 11-1.

OLDHAM Socialist Challenge group now meets fortnightly on Wednesdays. For details phone 061-136 2352 or write to Manchester SC Centre, c/o 14 Piccadilly.

PRESTON Socialist Challenge group meeting: 'Callaghan's challenge to the unions — is there an alternative to pay policy?' Speaker Angela Trikin (Manchester public sector worker). Wed 7 Feb, 7.45pm, in Windsor Castle pub, Egan St., Preston.

NORTH EAST

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want

to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29057.

DURHAM Socialist Challenge Supporters Group. For details contact: Dave Brown, 2 Pioneer Cottages, Low Pittington, Durham.

MIDDLESBROUGH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturday Juchtime near the lottery stand at Cleveland Centre. Also available from Newsfare in Linthorpe Road.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES readers can buy *Socialist Challenge* from Green Books, upstairs in the Spencer Hall shopping centre.

SCOTLAND

For information about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland please contact *Socialist Challenge* Books, 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Open Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangement (221 7481). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-346 0466 for details.

DUNDEE Information about *Socialist Challenge* activities from 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Join in SC sales outside Boots (corner of Reform St) each Saturday 11am-2pm.

YORKSHIRE

HUDDERSFIELD SC group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at the

Friendly & Trades Club, Northumberland St.

DEWSBURY Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturday mornings in Westgate at the Nat. Westminster Bank, 12.30-2.00pm.

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge sales regularly Saturdays 11am-1pm in the Piazza.

YORK Socialist Challenge is on sale at the York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate or from sellers on Thursdays (12.30-1.45) at York University, Vanbrugh College; Saturdays (11.30-3.30) at Coney Street.

YORK Socialist Challenge group meeting: 'Trade unions and the wages struggle'. Sun 4 Feb, 7.30pm, at 48 Heslington Road.

MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters throughout the Midlands contact the *Socialist Challenge* Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham (021) 643 9209.

LEICESTER Socialist Challenge group meeting on 'The fight to end low pay'. Wed 7 Feb, 8pm, Highfields Community Centre.

COVENTRY Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Tuesdays 8pm in the Old Dyers Arms, Spon End. Next meeting 13 Feb.

NOTTINGHAM Socialist Challenge Forum: 'The Liberation of Southern Africa' (speaker Tony Southall). Thur 8 Feb, 7.30pm, in Room 8, Peoples Hall, Heathcote St. *Socialist Challenge* can

be bought at Mushroom Books, Heathcote St.

BIRMINGHAM Socialist Challenge meeting: 'The trade unions and the crisis'. Speakers: Simon Temple (lorry driver, TGWU 5/35 branch); Pat Hickey (TGWU shop steward, Rover Solihull); Chris Adamson (former NUPE area officer); Bob Pennington (IMG Political Committee). Wed 14 Feb, 7.30pm, Australian Bar, Hurst St.

SOUTH WEST

ISLE OF WIGHT readers can buy *Socialist Challenge* from the Oz Shop, 44 Union St, Ryde.

BATH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 2-3.30pm, outside Macfisheries. Ring Bath 20298 for further details.

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm above bar, Post Office, Bargate.

PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturdays, 11.30pm-1pm, Commercial Road Precinct.

SWINDON supporters sell *Socialist Challenge* 11am-1pm Saturdays, Regent St (Brunel Centre).

FOR INFORMATION on activities in the South-West, write to Box 002, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6.

BRISTOL Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm in the 'Hole in the Ground', Haymarket.

SOUTH EAST

BRIGHTON SC forums fortnightly on

Tuesdays. Contact Micky on 605052 for details.

NORWICH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday in Davey Place (opp. market) and bookstall Thursdays at University of East Anglia.

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. For details phone Steve on Wivenhoe 2949.

LONDON

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge supporters sell every weekend: Saturdays meet 10.30am, Whitechapel tube; Sundays meet 10am, Brick Lane (corner of Buxton St).

WALTHAM FOREST paper sales every Saturday, 11am-noon outside the post office, Hoe St, Walthamstow, London E17.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge Group meets every fortnight (phone 247 2717 for details).

BRENT supporters sell every Saturday, 2.30pm, at Kilburn Sq., Kilburn High Rd, London NW6.

SW LONDON sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm, at Clapham Junction (Northcote Rd), Brixton tube, Clapham Common tube, Balham tube. Also on bookstalls outside Oval tube, Herne Hill BR, and at Shepherd's newsagents, Braganza St.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE school on 'The trade unions and Eastern Europe', Sun 18 Feb, 10-1: What policy for the trade unions? 2-5: some campaigns: Repression in Czechoslovakia (Jan Kavan); the Soviet trade union group (Vladimir Derer); the case of Rudolf Bahro (Gunter Minnerup). Venue: Starcross School, Risingshill St, London N1. Adm. 50p.

HACKNEY supporters sell every Saturday, 12-2pm, in Kingsland High St, Dalston — meet outside Sainsbury's.

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge supporters group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the Britannia pub, Mare St, E8. 1 Feb: 'Stop school closures in Hackney', introduced by Jon Duveen (Hackney NUT).

LONDON Socialist Challenge benefit night for the Fund Drive with Oxy and the Morons, Tues 13 Feb, 7.30-11.30pm, at North London Poly (Ladbroke House annexe), Highbury Grove.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge supporters next meeting: 'The socialist answer to the crisis', with speaker from public sector trade union. Thurs 1 Feb, 7.30pm, at West Green Community Centre, Stanley Rd, N15 (Turnpike Lane tube). Paper sales at Finsbury Park and Seven Sisters tubes, Thurs evening; Muswell Hill and Crouch End Broadways, Saturday morning. Also available at Muswell Hill Bookshop, Muswell Hill Broadway; Vares newsagent, Middle Lane, N8; and Bookmarks, Finsbury Park.

SW LONDON Socialist Challenge group meeting with speaker from All-Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement: Tue 6 Feb, 7.30pm, at St Anne's Hall, Venn St. (off Clapham High St.). Nearest tube Clapham Common. **PADDINGTON/N KENSINGTON** Socialist Challenge group meeting: 'Nuclear power — a socialist view'. Speaker Julian Cohen (BSSRS). Wed 28 Feb, 8pm, in meeting room of the 'Tabernacla', Talbot Rd. (Powis Sq.), W11.

UNDER REVIEW

'Blue Collar'

Workers without a history - or future

THE CREDITS at the end of 'Blue Collar' thank the police and the Michigan Checker Motor Corporation. The brutalising effects of a long day in a factory, which the film intermittently depicts, are said to be 'not reflective' of conditions at Checker.

Has a comfortable non-exploitative way of extracting surplus value from the work-force been discovered there?

No, but liberal reviewers have found no difficulty in reconciling these obsequious credits with the film's avowed radicalism, writes PAUL TICKELL.

First, the plot. Gerry, Polish in origin, and Zeke and Smoke, both black, work in a big car plant — 'plantation' as Zeke calls it. Gerry and Zeke have families and are in a precarious financial position (though the women in *Blue Collar* are strictly background).

The three decide to rob their union's safe, rationalising this decision by blaming the union bureaucrats for not fighting enough on their behalf.

They get little money out of the robbery but do find a notebook which details illegal loans made by the union to people in Las Vegas and New York — probably the Mafia. The three protagonists get crushed in the rush by interested parties to recover the compromising book.

The union, which has ties with the local police, wants it back. The FBI wants to get hold of it so as to discredit all unions, corrupt or otherwise. The union bureaucracy has Smoke murdered and buys Zeke off — he is made shop steward.

INFORMER

In order to stay alive, Gerry becomes an FBI informer.

What are the political conclusions which *Blue Collar* draws from all this? The film certainly shows what corrupt union bureaucracies

are like in the US and how they have links with organised crime and collude with the state — in this case the police.

But such criticisms, however controversial the subject-matter might be for Hollywood, are founded on no more than an individualistic radicalism.

For instance, the attacks which the militant Zeke launches against his union bureaucracy are presented as integral to his character — the insights of a particular worker who happens to be humorous and a good speaker at union meetings.

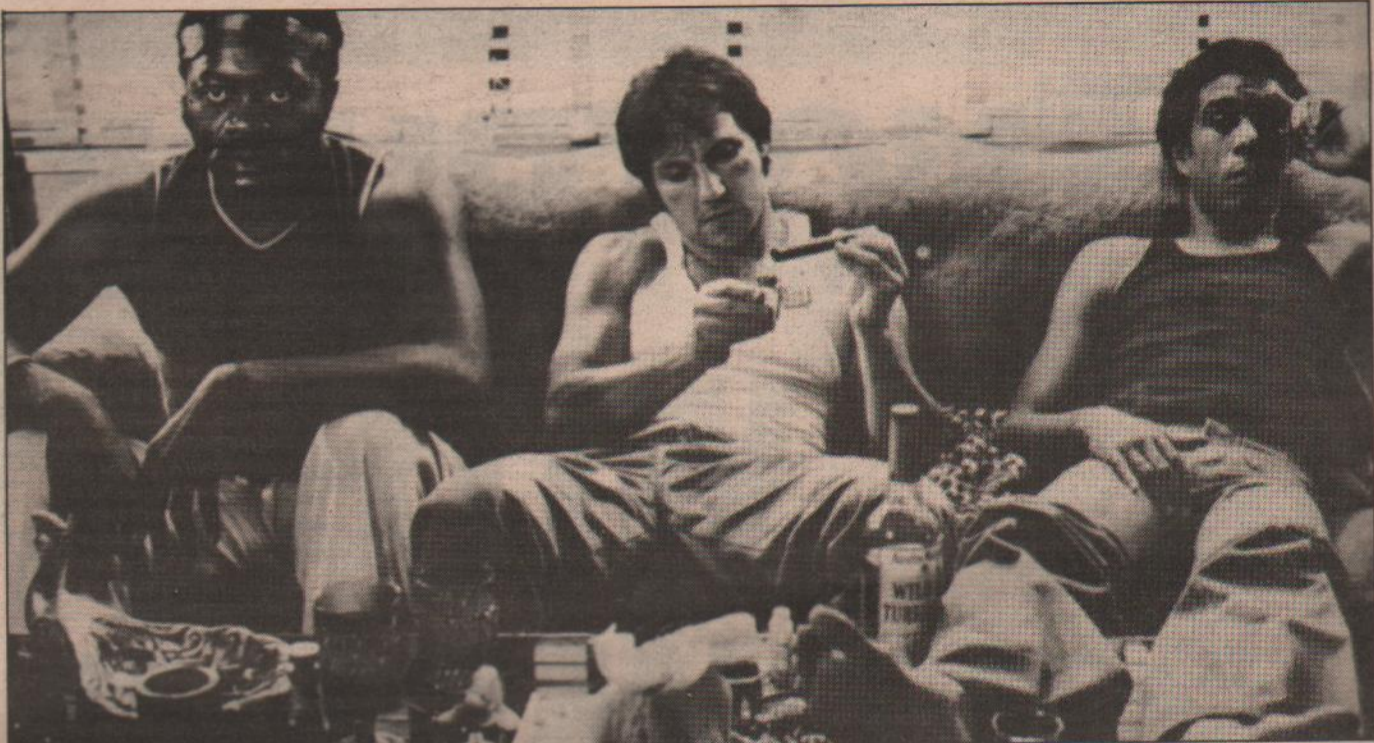
ANARCHIC

Throughout the film the lines of class struggle are drawn between the union on one side and the working class on the other.

Thus, in one scene a worker — and a real 'character' of course — gives anarchic vent to his feelings by destroying a vending machine which a union steward refuses to have fixed.

Blue Collar gives no hint as to what lies behind the union bureaucracy — and the ownership of the factory.

Paul Schrader, the director of the film, is at least aware that the politics of individualism are doomed — this is one of the themes of *Taxi Driver*, which he scripted for Martin Scorsese.



It's always the morning after for Yaphet Kotto, Harvey Keitel, and Richard Pryor in 'Blue Collar'

The individual actions in *Blue Collar* — Schrader claims to have read his Sartre — are seen as futile.

Smoke, for all his macho and some moments of glory with a baseball bat, goes under. For all their assertiveness and 'strength', so do Gerry and Zeke, though they don't actually die.

This aspect of the film deflates the Hollywood myth that the individual hero can take on the system and beat it.

But surely *Blue Collar* has set itself a wider task than this? It has the condition of a whole class in mind, as its very title, drawn from the coy jargon of technocrats and managers, implies.

However, the film remains locked in the individualism which it partly criticises and its message seems to be: Don't mess around with the system — it's too big and powerful for you the individual.

The fact that this message might be applicable to the

individual but not, under certain conditions, to the working class, is yet another way in which the title is misleading.

The film's pessimistic implications vis-à-vis the working class are nowhere more apparent than in the final sequences. Gerry is being escorted from the factory by the FBI. He is confronted by a self-righteous Zeke who accuses him of selling out.

Both, equally guilty of selling out, set about each other's throats. The sound-over is the repeat of an earlier piece of dialogue of Smoke's in which history is seen as a fatalistic struggle between young and old, black and white, them and us.

JUNGLE

There is no class struggle, just one between victims of some unchanging law of the jungle.

Here the ideology of the film

is a throwback to the fatalism of late 19th century naturalistic fiction which imaged society in terms of the animal kingdom; the survival of the fittest.

The film's pathological attention to detail is a further parallel with this earlier mode.

Its appreciation of the working class is without perspective; it never progresses beyond detail: those who are blue collar are no more than the sum of their personal characteristics.

The pessimism which the film's naturalistic ideology gives rise to is of a circular, enclosed kind: the working class are helpless and trapped, predestined to an eternal struggle without progress.

In using religious epithets to describe this pessimism, it's as well to note Schrader's Calvinistic upbringing and his liking for directors with an interest in the mystical, as indicated by his book *Transcendental Style in Film*.

Not that it's a matter of looking to Schrader for a dose of socialist hope.

After all, there is some room for pessimism in the late '70s: the generalised alignment of left groups and the emergence of a strong working class party have not yet happened on the scale expected at the beginning of the present crisis. But there's still time.

FRUITLESS

The point about the claustrophobic pessimism of *Blue Collar* is that there is no time: the final frame of the film, catching Gerry and Zeke in fruitless combat, is ominously frozen, out of time. As far as Schrader is concerned the working class, the blue collar, have no history — and no future.

BLUE COLLAR is showing at Gate 2, Brunswick Square, London WC1 and is likely to be given a limited regional release.



Film director: 'I hate unions'

PAUL SCHRADER, the director of *Blue Collar*, spoke to the US magazine *Seven Days* about the film, unions, and management.

Why did you devote so little time in *Blue Collar* to attacking management and so much time to attacking the union?

In researching my material I found that there is not much love expended between the average American worker and the union.

Workers are probably more pissed off at the union because it professes to help them. They know the company will work them to death. They accept it.

In the end, they probably respect the company for being 'honestly' corrupt in saying 'We'll fuck you in every way we

can', whereas the union is duplicitous.

So your worker protagonists can think of no better way to express their hostility and alienation than ripping off their union?

I think the notion of robbing their union is a perfect symbol for not liking their lives. It's so perfectly self-defeating to attack the group that is supposed to help them.

They give almost no thought to it. And that's the way I feel.

I hate unions. I've always been in trouble with unions. They hate the individualists, the nonconformists, as much as the company does.

The workers in this film are sheep. I think that's the most unsympathetic work force ever put on film. It makes you almost sympathise with the factory owners.

If I had those assholes working for me, I'd have them whipped and chained.

The end of *Blue Collar* seems much like *Taxi Driver*. Corruption is everywhere and all the characters have lost.

I really don't think that's a problem, because the moment a black audience in Detroit or Chicago sees the film, they'll realise:

'That's right. The big organisations and companies use racism to see that nobody improves their lot.'

If only 5 per cent of the audience accepts that fact, it is enormously hopeful. It implies 'Things could be otherwise'.

Blue Collar ends with a voice-over speech: 'Everything they do...is meant to keep us in our place.' Who are 'they'?

All big organisations. In my mind, the government, the company, and the unions are all the same. They are the Captains of Industry, who rule the world.

Socialist Challenge

OUR FUND DRIVE

ONCE AGAIN readers have come to our rescue. With only a third of this quarter gone, we've already topped £1,000.

This week's contributors included John May of Swindon, who sent £2, saying:

'I am a NUPE member and have been extremely pleased with your coverage of the public sector pay claim and increasingly pissed off with the Daily Mail etc. and their shit-throwing episodes.'

Kenneth Morrison is not so pleased with some of our recent efforts. But that didn't stop him from sending us a donation to help improve the paper. He writes:

'Your newspaper doesn't always achieve honesty, but it comes a lot closer than any other British weekly or daily.'

Apart from individual donations, we also rely on collective efforts. Supporters in London are hoping to make money for the paper through a Socialist Challenge Benefit Night featuring New Wave band Oxy and the Morons and the Criminal Record disco.

That's on Tuesday 13 February from 7.30 to 11.30pm at the Ladbroke House annexe of North London Poly in Highbury Grove, N5.

Meanwhile thanks to this week's contributors:

J. May	£2.00
C. Tamvaclis	5.00
Other Bookshop	9.18
E. J. Ryan	10.00
K. Morrison	10.00
A. R. H. Collins	5.00
Cardiff IMG	15.00
Bath SC supporters	15.00
Ian Lund	1.55
Manchester IMG	5.75
Des Stevens	2.00
Camden SC group	12.00
HKhamis	5.00
Money for stamps	5.00
L. Folwell	3.00
Nottingham IMG	14.00
Liverpool IMG	17.65
Graham Trott	3.00
A. Tortorella	2.00
Anon	10.00
L. Heinsman	2.00
P. Bellis	5.00
Week's Total	£159.13
Cumulative Total	£1,035.36

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NO TRUCK WITH LOW PAY!

THE VICTORY of the lorry drivers points to one obvious conclusion. Aggressive, militant strike action pays. And yet the lorry drivers faced considerable opposition during their dispute.

From the government. Labour ministers made repeated attacks on the strikers. Premier Callaghan even went so far as to advocate the crossing of picket lines.

From the media. The press and television launched co-ordinated and hysterical attacks on trade unionists: prophesying mass lay-offs (which didn't materialise), acute food shortages (which didn't materialise), and deaths (which, in the case of one picket, did materialise).

From the union leadership. Moss Evans, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, sought to limit the effectiveness of the strike by issuing an 'official code of conduct' for pickets.

Fortunately for the strikers, the code was largely ignored

By
Geoff Bell

and their aggressive tactics forced the employers to settle.

With the end of the lorry drivers' strike, all attention now focuses on the battle in the public sector. And again these low paid workers face the same opposition.

From the government. Callaghan has insisted that the upper limit to any settlement will be 8 per cent — and not even that for most of the public sector workers.

Education Secretary Williams has advocated the crossing of picket lines outside schools, and Transport Minister Bill Rodgers has proposed an immediate freeze on wages.

From the media. Prophecies of imminent death compete for front page attention with demands that the right to strike be severely limited.

Through the pages of every single national newspaper the

rich and powerful hit out at those who clear away their rubbish, those who clean up hospitals, those who bury the dead.

From the union leadership. Despite the many calls for all-out strike action in the public sector, the leaders of the unions involved still insist that limited 'selective' action can ensure victory.

But if all the water workers came out, if all the rubbish was left uncollected, if all the schools were closed, if all the hospitals were reduced to emergency cover, then the government would queue up to settle with the same determination with which haulage employers queued up to settle.

So a comparison between the lorry drivers and the public sector workers can and should be made. Their claims are similar, they face the same opposition.

Most important of all, if the tactics were the same — all-out action — the result would be the same: victory for the low paid.

Mass pickets on Nottingham paper

By Andrew Jenkins

MASS picketing has been the response of trade unionists to the sacking of 27 journalists by the Nottingham Evening Post. The journalists are also

producing an alternative weekly paper.

The Post proprietors have been determined to keep out unions since the defeat of a strike in 1973 paved the way for new technology on management's terms.

When NUJ members at the Post came out on official strike at the beginning of the provincial journalists' pay dispute they were sacked. At the end of the strike earlier this month the manager of the newspaper said: 'When I sack people they stay sacked.'

The Print Industries Committee of the TUC has called for a boycott of advertising in the company's papers, but management is determined to stick it out.

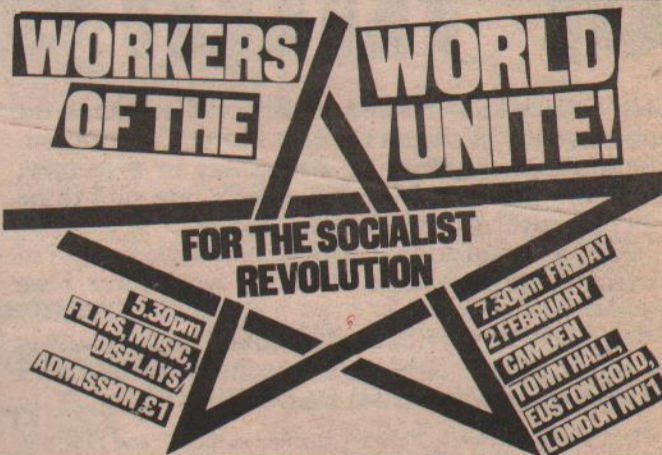
They have even made moves to obtain a private dock on the East coast to ensure that supplies get through. The only

way that the journalists can win is through mass pickets to stop the papers getting out.

The first such picket last Saturday attracted 200 supporters and successfully stopped the movement of vans until the police moved in. Five pickets were arrested including Jake Ecclestone, the NUJ vice-president.

The union has called for mass picketing every Saturday, starting at 10am in Foreman Street, Nottingham.

The first issue of the Nottingham News, the new paper produced by the sacked journalists, is out today. To help — by selling, distributing, or advertising the paper — ring Nottingham 47347 or 44469. Nottingham Forest football manager Brian Clough has set the pace by refusing to talk to the Post because of its anti-trade unionism.



This person supports British troops in Ireland
-See p12



Photo: G. M. COOKSON [Socialist Challenge]