

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Rank and file must put teeth into TUC call

DON'T WAIT: STEP UP THE FIGHT

AT THE SPECIAL TUC on Monday the leaders of the big unions gave belated recognition to the swelling revolt of lower paid workers against the government's wage freeze.

The call for a 'one day national protest and stoppage' must be supported by every trade unionist. So too must the decision to 'co-ordinate and lead co-ordinated action in support of affiliated unions in dispute.'

If the TUC decisions are translated into massive industrial action, then they can give an enormous boost to the fight against the wage freeze and in defence of the right to take industrial action against low pay.

But the danger is that those who voted against the calls for action at the TUC and even many of the union leaders who voted in favour will now try to sabotage them in practice. They will postpone effective solidarity action with the gas men and hospital workers until it is too late and will try to water down the one-day strike until it is no more than a question of half-day stoppages and prolonged dinner hour meetings.

Instead of seeing the strike as the beginning of a massive campaign in support of groups of workers under attack, they will see it as a once and for all sop to their consciences.

AWARE

No one should be surprised by such manoeuvres. The leaders of the big unions have spent most of the last year talking to Heath.

It was not some overnight conversion to militancy that made them vote for the one-day strike. It was an awareness on their part that their hold on the unions could be undermined by the militancy of lower paid groups of workers.

Workers must not wait for Vic Feather to give a lead in making the TUC decisions effective. If rank and file militants had not acted unofficially then the TUC's limited call would never have been achieved. And unless militants prepare the ground now there is no guarantee of the one-day strike's success.

The TUC leaders who refused adequate support to the postal workers, the miners and the dockers, are unlikely to give real backing to the hospital workers and the gas men unless forced to do so from below.

PREPARE

Rank and file activists in every union must insist that their leaders live up to the promises given at the special TUC. But no one should sit back for officials to give the go-ahead before taking action at rank and file level.

The Tories hope they will be able to wear down the gas men, the hospital workers, the teachers and the civil servants while the rest of the trade union movement stands by without taking real solidarity action. And words alone from the TUC do not worry them.

Shop stewards' committees and union branches not yet in the Tories' firing line must prepare for solidarity action with those workers that are in the trenches. Collections, blacking,

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TUC Report:
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Health workers' blood is up



HOSPITAL WORKERS on the picket line at Fulford, York, have been receiving tremendous support both from drivers of delivery vehicles and local residents who have supplied tea and biscuits. There have been vicious allegations in the local press that essen-

tial drugs and foodstuffs have been turned away. In fact, drivers have been so overwhelming in their support that pickets have had to persuade those with necessary goods not to turn back. Picture shows some of the strikers on picket duty.

Factories and students swell IS fund

'I ENCLOSE £1. I appreciate the consistent support given by Socialist Worker to the Irish working class in its struggle against British imperialism. The £1 is to help the expansion of Socialist Worker into a better and bigger weapon to attack the Tory government and the rotten system they represent.' So wrote one reader this week.

An old age pensioner from Aspall sent us 25p with a promise 'to give 25p every week until we raise the £30,000.'

Students in Manchester Polytechnic sent us £16.48 with a message: 'From student IS supporters and SW readers at Manchester Polytechnic, who realise that the main fight lies at rank and file level. Small amount reflects how hard freeze is hitting us, and much of the money has been raised on Appeal Sheets in the odd couple of bob. However, in this way, more money can be raised each week.' Thanks, too, to the Students Union of York for their £50 donation.

One of the most encouraging

features is the growing number of collections we are receiving from readers in places of work. Readers on the West Yorkshire buses in York collected £5.15. £1.10 was received from readers in Pressed Steel Fisher in Birmingham and £1 from a GKN Birmingham worker. A jumble sale in Nelson raised £11.72.

As usual IS branches did their bit. We received the following: From Wandsworth £100; Tower Hamlets £14; Guildford £4.52; Teesside £15; Cumbernauld £21.10; Sheffield £35; Liverpool £30.50; Warley £1; Glasgow North £21.72; Walthamstow £23; Sunderland £5; Bristol £30; Woolwich £35; York £49.85; Barnsley £12; Stirling £15.50; Rugby £10; North Herts £60.

We received £963.89 during the week, bringing the grand total to £23,332. A few more heaves and we'll arrive at our target of £30,000.

● Rush donations to Tony (Jiff, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8LN.

Barber lathers up the rich

TONY BARBER's 'neutral' budget on Tuesday brought joyful news to one section of the population at least. It left intact tax changes introduced last year, due to come into effect this April.

These will mean considerable increases in income for the lucky few who get incomes of £5000 and more.

Consider, for instance, Sir Frank Figgures, the man who is to be charged with preventing any group of workers getting more than a £1 plus 4 per cent wage increase. His salary is to be a cool £300 a week as head of the Tories' new Pay Board.

Under the tax changes he will pay £350 a year less tax. Edward Heath likewise will be £6 a week better off.

All over Britain company directors and shareholders will be gaining similar benefits.

A few thousand people only will benefit from these changes. Yet between them they will start sharing £300 million a year extra from the beginning of April.

By contrast, the seven million old age pensioners, who will not get a meagre £1 increase in their pensions until October, will have to share £500 million a year.

'Fairness'

The government has claimed that its policy is based upon 'fairness', yet it is dividing out almost as much among the few that are very rich as it is among the vast number who are very poor.

The government has tried to sugar the pill in a number of ways—although the sugar cannot taste too sweet to pensioners who somehow have to survive through the summer as rising food prices and the effects of VAT eat into their pensions.

The cut in the cost of the insurance stamp is designed to try to appease workers. But 4p is hardly enough to pay for the increase in, say, a pound of sausages in the last three months, let alone compensate for the 6 per cent by which prices have risen during the wage freeze.

It is no real concession at all for the government to announce that children's clothes, that have never been taxed in the past, will not be subject to VAT in the future—particularly as the prices of many other goods will be pushed up by VAT.

The other 'concession'—the ending of taxes on confectionery—is little more than a deliberate attempt at deception. Although the prices of sweets and soft drinks are not nearly as important for most people as the prices of bread and meat, they have a big influence on the government's own Retail Price Index.

By cutting their price, the government hopes to hide the real increase in the cost of living on other items.

Troops on murder charge

TWO British soldiers have appeared in a Belfast court accused of attempting to murder three Catholics outside the city last June. The soldiers belonged to one of the British Army's plain clothes units which are armed and drive around Belfast in civilian cars. These units have been responsible for the deaths of many civilians in the city over the last year, and every time the army have accepted responsibility, they have insisted that the victim fired first.

The case in question was no different. The three men were standing at a taxi rank on the Glen Road, Andersonstown, on 22 June—the day the Provos announced their truce—when someone fired on them from a car.

The army later issued this statement: 'Shortly after mid-day a mobile patrol wearing plain clothes and on surveillance duty was travelling eastwards on the Glen Road. A group of men standing at a bus turnabout opened fire on the patrol and shot through the rear window of the vehicle, narrowly missing a soldier. The patrol immediately fired back and the men were seen to fall.' Another man in a nearby house was also shot by army fire.

Unusual

In spite of the army's statement, the men were never charged with shooting at soldiers. But they and witnesses were adamant that nobody had been armed. The spot from which they allegedly fired is open ground and offers no cover. Also, the men could not have possibly identified the passing car as an army vehicle.

The fact that two soldiers have been arrested is extremely unusual and may indicate friction between the police and the military forces.

There are also a number of other peculiarities. Firstly, the soldiers used a Thompson sub-machine gun, the type of weapon usually associated with the IRA, and never officially issued by the army.

Secondly, when questioned about the weapon and ammunition, one of the soldiers stated, 'That ammunition had nothing to do with me. The ammunition belongs to the police at Castle-reagh, and was issued by the Special Branch.' The ammunition was clearly issued for use in a Thompson, implying Special Branch collusion in the shootings.

Suspected

Thirdly, one of the arrested soldiers, Capt James McGregor, is an officer in the Parachute Regiment, although that regiment was not in the North on this particular date. It is known that the Special Air Service Regiment is officered by men seconded from the Paras.

The SAS is a regiment of the British Army trained in counter-insurgency techniques, including the use of soldiers in civvies who act as agents provocateurs and killers of 'unwanted members of the public' as Frank Kitson, the army's counter insurgency 'expert', puts it.

It has always been suspected here that little was being done to curtail the activities of the sectarian assassins because the British Army was itself involved in them, through the activities of the SAS. This case will certainly increase speculation.

William Whitelaw's claim that he is horrified by the assassinations should now be seen as nothing more than a sop to British public opinion. The Tory government is deeply involved in the assassination campaign. Imperialist policy in Ireland is dependent on terror tactics, murder, and devious underhand techniques.

MIKE MILLER

THE CYNICS were wrong about the special Trades Union Congress which met on Monday. The TUC leaders could not quite get away with doing absolutely nothing to defend the working-class movement against the Tories' latest attacks.

Instead the TUC has taken positive steps. It has agreed to do next to nothing.

Vic Feather and his fellow democrats and constitutionalists came unanimously to the congress with the line that no decisions whatsoever should be taken. There should be no resolutions, merely a meandering debate about the minor flaws in the beauty of the General Council's 'Economic Policy and Collective Bargaining in 1973' policy document.

Such a farce was too much even for thorough-going right wingers (with a fight on their hands) like Joe Gormley of the Mineworkers. He insisted that the trade union movement had to stop pussyfooting around and take some united action.

Magic

Much to his own surprise Gormley won and the General Council's ruling against resolutions was defeated. The members of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers' delegation had decided that some call for action had to be made.

And on Sunday Jack Jones of the Transport Workers Union was swinging his delegation into line behind them. Twenty four hours earlier he had swung them into quite the opposite direction.

So resolutions were taken after all and various unions went to the standing orders committee where the fixing was done. Magically the Mineworkers motion supporting a general strike against the Tories and calling on



Pandemonium in the Central Hall: delegates mill about after the defeat of the General Council's 'no resolutions' ruling.

affiliated unions to test their members' feeling for such a move disappeared.

It was withdrawn by Gormley who felt somehow that it had no support. In its place came a composed resolution from the Engineering and Transport unions.

But while all the fixing was underway off stage, Vic Feather was leading in the discussion of the General

Council's policy document. His contribution should be greatly prized for the remorseless way in which it portrayed impotence as strength, hand-wringing as good strategy.

'Since our congress in September we have met the Prime Minister ten times—three at Chequers, seven at Downing Street . . . We went to Chequers the day after the Prime Minister told the Conservative Party

conference that he wanted the trade unions and the employers to share fully with the government the benefits and obligations of running the national economy.

'That proposition presented a challenge to us as well as the government. I still believe it is a good description of what the relationship between a government and the trade union movement should be.'

Promises, promises in new Labour-TUC policy

IN A BLAZE of publicity the Labour Party and the TUC issued their alternative to the government's freeze policy last week.

The document—'Economic Policy and the Cost of Living'—appears to make concessions to the unions . . . until you begin to look more closely at it.

It begins with an impressive listing of different ways in which the Tories have pushed through measures that increase the inequality between the rich and the poor. It notes, correctly, that 'the government has chosen to redistribute income and wealth on a massive scale to the most privileged sections of the community—those benefiting most from investment income and capital gains . . . and that the Tories have introduced 'new social charges right across the board, including dearer school meals, and much higher health charges.

'It has presided over a huge drop in council house building, down by some 50,000 a year since 1970,' it says.

Pioneered

What the document does not mention is that all these policies were actually pioneered by the last Labour government.

Between 1964 and 1967 Harold Wilson's policies increased the amount of tax paid by workers earning £16-£19 by 5 per cent, but the amount of tax paid by those getting more than £60 by only 1 per cent.

Labour likewise imposed prescription charges at a rate of 12½p, a higher level than even the previous Tory government had charged. Labour abolished free school milk for secondary schools—preparing the way for the Tories to do the same for junior schools.

The Labour government delib-

erately cut down on the number of new houses being built, so that its own previous target of 500,000 new houses a year was at least 25 per cent under-achieved. And it pushed up council rents, laying the ground for the Tories' 'Fair Rents Act'.

Finally, of course, Labour in office introduced its own compulsory wage freeze and tried to push through its own version of the Industrial Relations Act—In Place of Strife.

Now it pretends to be repentant. But, significantly, it actually promises very little in concrete terms that would indicate an improvement on its past performance.

It says that it will repeal the Housing Finance Act—but it does not say anything about reducing the rent increases that have already been pushed through. If the election takes place in two years' time, as seems likely, that means that rents that have already doubled will stay that high.

On health charges, it merely promises that they will be 'phased out as quickly as possible'. The only really positive promises are that the old age pension will be raised and that food prices will be kept down by means of 'subsidies where necessary'.

Other prices will be controlled, but, as at present, rises will be permitted after taking account of 'profits, profit margins and productivity'.

There is talk of cutting the arms budget—but even if these cuts were put into effect, more than £2000 million would be wasted on it.



WILSON: 'tripartite' agreement

Promises from the Labour Party in opposition are nothing new. Wilson made promises in 1964. Is it likely that they will be kept this time?

At its tail end the document makes a statement that must, to put it mildly cast doubt upon such a project.

Unprecedented

On taking office, it says, a Labour government would decide its policy in consultation with the TUC and 'having due regard to the circumstances of that time'. It makes the point that 'it will be impossible to specify the precise economic circumstances in which the next Labour government takes office.'

'The precise economic circumstances' in which the 1964 Labour government came to power were that those who owned the wealth in Britain were shipping money overseas at an unprecedented rate.

Harold Wilson himself described in

his memoirs how the head of the Bank of England effectively told him that 'it was impossible for any government, whatever its party label, whatever its manifesto or the policies on which it was elected, to continue unless it immediately reverted to full scale Tory policies.'

Wilson also admits that 'things that we had decided to do—for example, an increase in the old age pensions—had to be timed in such a way as to minimise speculative consequences.'

Nothing in the Labour Party-TUC document indicates how things will be different next time. The whole basis of the policy suggested is one of 'agreement' with the 1 per cent who own the majority of industry. It speaks with eagerness of the possibilities open for 'tripartite machinery', made up of representatives of the unions, the government and the owners of big business.

Such 'agreement' will leave completely untouched the real economic power held by the 1 per cent. Those who own the wealth will continue to decide whether there will be investment and jobs or flights of money abroad and unemployment.

And while they continue to enjoy total economic power, they will easily be able to enforce their demands on a Labour Party whose policy is one of 'agreement' with them.

Despite this document, the next Labour government will be even worse for workers than the last.

Chris Harman

THE ISSUE

Feather's was a highly political speech. It spelt out in great detail that the working-class movement must be subordinated to the capitalist system even when that system is visibly in decline.

The one issue that separates the TUC from the Tories, said Feather, was the lack of compulsory controls over food prices and rents. After all, he went on 'there is only one government at a time and we have always tried to maintain a working relationship with it, whatever its political colour.'

And the reason it is 'shortsighted' of the government to try and put trade unions in a straitjacket (to make strikes illegal, he means) is that 'collective bargaining is the way of avoiding disputes . . . it is in the interest of industrial peace that collective bargaining should go on.'

And though the big battalions of the TGWU and AUEW opposed Feather on his recommendation that nothing at all should be done by way of action, their spokesmen in no way challenged the logic of his approach.

For Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon too, the battle is not about fundamentals. It is about who administers the wage policy, about the extension of controls to food prices and rents. Nothing more.

There is no explanation for the behaviour of successive governments. The assumption is that they are mildly, or even severely, irrational and can still be brought to see reason across the negotiating table if some token generalised action is taken by the movement.

But there was another factor at work in the situation. Harry Urwin of the TGWU, who moved the motion which pledged the TUC to invite member unions to take part in a day of protest and stoppage against the government's wage control policy, touched on this.

Sneer

Urwin talked of those in the movement who were sneering at their leaders' failure to match their big words with deeds. His motion was a clarion call to demonstrate solidarity, to match deeds to words—for one day.

But despite the delicacy of formulation, the people who were for outright collaboration with the government offered no similar olive branches. Like the Tory government they take heart at moderation.

Frank Chapple of the Electricians explained that on the three occasions he had been to the talks with the government he had not found them so unyielding as his friend Hugh Scanlon was making out. And Congress should never forget that it was embarking on



GORMLEY: surprised



JENKINS: defeated



FEATHER: remorseless

a course of action that had terrible consequences—a real fight with the government of the day.

Chapple had raised no objection to the General Council's attempt to prevent any real discussion at the Congress, but once even token action was under discussion, Chapple's delegation walked out. Such talk was 'unconstitutional'.

So too with the Post Office Workers. Tom Jackson indicated once again from the rostrum that any real opposition to the Tories would actually be to the government's advantage.

It would somehow discourage people from voting Labour at the next election. His colleague Norman Stagg protested bitterly at the TUC's move to fight the government. This was dangerous, he said, because people would not respond. Mr Stagg will doubtless do his best to ensure that they do not respond.

At no time was there any move to

challenge such logic. And the big block votes were contemptuously moved into action to strangle the proposition from ASTMS, the Journalists and the Technical Teachers. This envisaged the setting up of a co-ordinating committee of the General Council and the various unions actually involved in fighting the government.

This could not be tolerated because it would have disturbed the balance of forces on the General Council and could have put some power in the hands of those who might actually use it.

Avoid

At no time and in no way in the congress were the real issues discussed. The gas workers' strike was paraded as an example of the government's inflexibility. It was very sad that workers who had given such wonderful productivity should get their wages frozen as a reward, it was stressed.

And there was no discussion of actually helping their struggle and those of the teachers' and the hospital workers' to victory. Real discussion of unleashing and organising the whole strength and resources of the movement was carefully avoided, as it must be by those whose politics allow them to envisage only stage armies.

It is a tatty beginning. And if the paper tiger is not to be exposed as a paper bag, no effort must be spared to force definite commitments to defend the gas men and the hospital workers and those who will follow them into the firing line.

The TUC leaders are haunted by the implications of real generalised industrial action. That implication is the well-hidden secret of history—that all of society rests upon the labours of the working class, that potentially the working-class movement has the power to end the rule of the tiny minority of the rich and the powerful.

In the weeks and months to come, the task is to unite those sections of the movement already in battle with the Tories, to involve new sections and to create the real, living basis of a mass struggle to bring this government down.

Report:

Laurie Flynn

Pictures:

Mike Cohen

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

'TELL ME WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE and I will tell you what you are.' That is really all that needs to be said about that current idol of press, radio and television, Dick Taverne.

Taverne himself is of no importance. He is merely one of a long line of turncoats—Aidan Crawley, Hartley Shawcross, Desmond Donnelly and many others—who have made their names on the right wing of the Labour Party and then departed from it for greener pastures still further to the right.

The by-election results, though, are important, both for the realities they reveal and for the myths that are being created about them.

First, the realities. The government is profoundly unpopular—its candidates were also-rans in all by-elections—but the Labour Party, far from gaining support cannot even turn out its traditional supporters and has suffered massive defections to 'third party' or independent candidates.

Second, the myths. The results show, so the commentators tell us, that the Labour Party has moved too far 'left' and loses votes because it is dominated by 'left-wing' union leaders, whereas what the voters want is a 'centre party' with moderate policies.

This is the purest hogwash. Giles Radice, formerly of Winchester College, Oxford and the Brigade of Guards, is as right wing a Labour candidate as even Roy Jenkins could wish to see. He achieved a massive drop in the Labour vote at Chester-le-Street. And his union backing came from that pillar of the far right, Alderman Andy Cunningham of the GMWU. Moreover the 'leftism' of, for example, the Lincoln Labour Party is purely verbal. The proof? What did those 'left-wingers' do about Fair Rents? They obeyed the government. They put up the rents.

As to the proposed 'centre party' so dear to the hearts of millionaire newspaper barons, what would its policies be? Substantially those of the Liberals: that is, support for Common Market entry, support for an incomes policy swindle, support for the Industrial Relations Act or similar 'reform' (that is, castration) of the unions. But those are exactly the policies of Edward Heath today and of Harold Wilson when he was in office.

The fact is that the 'third party' vote is a protest vote—not a vote for particular policies but a vote against 'the system' with which the Labour Party is correctly identified as much as the Tories. It is an expression of deep-seated discontent. The Labour Party is not benefiting from this discontent, indeed is suffering from it along with the Tories, not at all because it is 'too far left' but because its record in office weighs more heavily than its promises.

It is our job to turn the discontent into useful channels, into the fight against capitalism. The by-election results are significant as a symptom of the enormous possibilities that are opening up for revolutionary socialists and of our responsibility to utilise them to the full.

ANARCHY RETURNS

NOT SO very long ago there was a spate of speeches, articles and books—many of them from members of the Labour Party—telling us that we lived in a 'post-capitalist' society. The old anarchy of capitalism had been abolished by intelligent government planning and international agreement. The old problem of economic instability, with its devastating effects on unemployment and living standards, was a thing of the past.

The latest results of capitalist planning and 'international agreement' is a chronic and growing instability of the international currency system that will rip all 'agreements' wide open and lay the basis for a trade war like that of the 1930s. The last 'settlement' of this problem—dollar devaluation against gold—lasted exactly three weeks.

The current idea—a joint Common Market 'float'—will, even if it is achieved, merely stave off the immediate crisis by creating a still greater crisis in the not-too-distant future.

The chickens are coming home to roost. Capitalism is sliding into a world crisis. The long-run answer is precisely that socialist reconstruction of society that the Labour lackies and capitalist 'experts' tell us is 'old fashioned' and 'outdated'.

Warmer weather means chance to grab extra sales

by Margaret Renn
Circulation Manager

YORK BRANCH of the International Socialists has found another way of boosting street sales of Socialist Worker.

'Now that the weather is getting warmer,' they report, 'all you need is a spot, preferably in the middle of town, some posters and a loud voice. York has a square just next to the market which can be booked through the City Council.'

'We don't need to have a platform as the council has kindly provided benches. We used the Socialist Worker on sale here posters by writing 'Support the Gas Workers—Smash the Freeze' and other similar slogans on them and pinning them to the benches we were using as a platform.'

'A few members sold the paper or gave out leaflets and a few others started a crowd. Two members took it in turns to speak and within 20 minutes we had a

genuine audience.

'We kept it up for nearly two hours and had an audience of up to 100 people. Sellers cover the same square every Saturday but don't normally sell more than half a dozen. During the meeting we sold nearly 30 papers, made contact with a striking hospital worker and handed out 500 leaflets supporting the gasworkers. We'll be doing it again as soon as we can.'

It is very important, with all the struggles taking place against the government and its wages freeze, that we take up every opportunity of selling Socialist Worker to counteract the lies and distortions of the mass media and the press, and boost the circulation to 30,000 copies a week.

If you want copies of Socialist Worker to sell in your town, or in your factory or office, please contact me on 01-739 2639 and we can arrange for the paper to be sent direct to you.

'As-you-were' election in Ireland

WHEN Irish premier Jack Lynch called a general election in the 26 Counties a month ago, he and many others applauded the brilliance of the coup. The timing seemed just right to get a strong Fianna Fail government before the British White Paper on the North. It was not long, however, before Fianna Fail's confidence was badly shattered.

The voters were saying they wanted a change—and all that was immediately available were the offers of the 'National Coalition', Fine Gael and the Labour Party. Votes were concerned about rising prices and the problems of making ends meet, not about 'national security' and 'law and order'. In retrospect, there was little reason why they should have been.

The 14-point 'statement of intent' from the coalition parties seemed to give answers to the most pressing questions. Fine Gael and Labour found they were getting a response to such promises as the one to take VAT off food (a measure which they 'sold' as radical and new) but which was, in fact, canvassed

From Brian Trench in Dublin

some time ago by leading capitalists as a means to 'take pressure off' wages).

Fianna Fail panicked a little. They reacted as only Fianna Fail could—with a newly discovered plan to take all rates off dwellings, promises of a few new factories, and a premature 'leak' from a report by the Commission on the Status of Women.

In the end, however—and after several counts in a number of constituencies—the coalition got home with 73 seats, against 69 for Fianna Fail, and two Independents. Liam Cosgrave will be the next Taoiseach (Chief), and a few Labour men will hold minister's posts.

What's the difference? Perhaps a smoother ride for the British government's plans for the North. Maybe a few reforms more quickly than Fianna Fail would have introduced them (though nothing to match such promises as the one to 'halt redundancies').

There will be no change on anything of importance. To replace the tensions which

existed between 'republican' and anti-republican wings of Fianna Fail in power, there will be the tensions between social democrats, liberals-Labour style, liberals-Fine Gael style, and arch-conservatives on the right of Fine Gael, a party with a fascist past.

'Stability' was a theme running through the propaganda of all major parties and it is the prime wish to the British ruling class to see it in Ireland—but the coalition no more holds a recipe for stability than the previous Fianna Fail government did.

Respectable face

Of the two groups outside the mainstream, Sinn Fein ('Officials') did better than Aontacht Eireann, the party led by ex-minister Kevin Boland. Sinn Fein stressed social and economic issues to the virtual exclusion of any demands to end repression, of which they, too, are victims. They did their best to put forward a respectable face. Their president, Tomas MacGiolla, claimed they envisaged getting two or three seats this time, and a few more next

time.

Aontacht Eireann played up the 'national issue'—they even had cars going around on polling day blasting out 'A Nation Once Again'—but not even two well-known candidates, Kevin Boland and Captain Kelly (of Arms Trial fame), scored significantly.

The Labour Party has come into the government on the tail-coats and the transferred votes (under the proportional representation system operating in Ireland) of Fine Gael. That provides no comfort at all for Irish workers. They will have to steel themselves for a fight to defend democratic freedoms and living standards no less than under Fianna Fail.

Many working-class supporters of Labour are annoyed and disillusioned at the leaders' deal with Fine Gael. It will depend on the efforts of revolutionary socialists if the workers can be brought into direct confrontation with the Labour leaders, and thus open the way for building a mass party which really pursues the interests of the working class.

FASCISTS STEP UP ATTACKS

TUESDAY 13 February. Perugia University: A fascist squad armed with iron bars, helmets and nazi flags attacks an assembly of staff, workers and students.

Wednesday 14 February. Fiat-Turin: Fascists armed with iron bars and chains try to force workers of the Fiat factory to take their leaflets at the gates. Two workers are isolated and beaten up for refusing. The police stand by.

Thursday 15. Bologna: Fascists blow up a monument to the Partisans. The police take no action. **Monday 19. Rome University:** A fascist squad attacks left-wing students. One student has his head cracked open by an iron bar.

Wednesday 21. Naples: At a huge student demonstration against police repression, plain-clothes police and fascists infiltrate the demonstration and attack students. At the same time the police launch a savage attack on the demonstration with CS gas and bullets. Many students are seriously injured, one is still in a coma and expected to die.

Thursday 22. Rome: After two days of fascist attacks on the students of a high school the police, firing CS gas, and fascists armed with pistols, charge the students defending the entrance. Many students are injured, eight are arrested.

That was not an exceptional ten days for the fascists. Since December 1969, the scores of para-military fascist squads in Italy have been involved in almost daily violence against militant workers and students, left-wing parties and the offices of the labour movement.

December 1969 was the month when the Italian state unleashed a counter-offensive against the working class and the student movement after the great battles of the 'hot autumn'.

Fascist violence is one weapon in the arsenal of that counter-offensive. While the police and the courts have turned a blind eye, the fascists have bombed, murdered and maimed.

There is an extensive network of fascists and sympathisers in the state bureaucracy. Money flows in from small and medium sector employers up and down the country and from abroad (notably from the Greek military regime and the CIA), while the parliamentary wing of the fascist movement, the MSI, has captured an increasing number of votes over the last year.

SHEATHED

But the Italian ruling class as a whole has no intention of backing a new fascist experiment. The fascist weapon can be sheathed at a later date.

While powerful employers like Fiat's Agnelli employ fascists in the private police force they have created in their factories, they are not prepared to support them politically.

The fascists have attempted to build up a mass following as an alternative form of power for the ruling class—among the 'silent majority' in the cities, among students and school students (last year they occupied 18 schools in Naples) and among poorly organised workers.

They have sponsored a 'trade union', the CISNAL, to disrupt shop floor organisation. But their main source of recruitment are the lower middle class and the 'lump' workers in the under-developed South, where all the contradictions of Italian capitalism—poverty, unemployment, corruption—explode into periodic rebellions.

by Mike Balfour

Their support there is largely due to their campaign against the failure of successive governments to do anything effective about the burning problems of the South.

But since last autumn the fascist movement has fallen on harder times. Although they have stepped up their campaign of violence with the active support of the police and judiciary, they have failed to create a mass movement. The renewal of working-class struggle over the national

agreements in the major industries, the mass anti-fascist mobilisation among students and workers, the strengthening of the revolutionary left in schools and universities have effectively isolated them.

ABANDONED

Nothing better illustrates this than the fiasco of the 'March on Trieste', a pilgrimage to commemorate the Mussolini era. Only 30 fascists, locked in seven cars and



Fascist leader gives the Nazi salute during a recent demonstration

Peron bamboozles the left with illusions

by Vic Richards

THE POLITICAL atmosphere in Argentina was electric three months ago with the return of Juan Domingo Peron, who was dictator from 1945 to 1955, and massive demonstrations in his support. Now the campaign for the presidential elections is taking place in an atmosphere of anti-climax.

Large sections of workers and even socialists had their hopes raised by the illusion that major change was at hand. Even many of those who remembered Peron's true record of manipulating the aspirations of workers to strengthen his own personal position were led to believe that, whatever his personal politics, the movement around him could be swung to the left and be the driving force for radical change or revolution.

Peron's mastery of political illusionism did not fail. He muttered (and continues to mutter) vague phrases of how he would be an urban guerrilla if only he were 50 years younger.

The urban guerrillas and socialists active among the Peronists somehow failed to notice that all this meant was that Peron was prepared to give them only moral support. They did not criticise him, and the myth built around his name, as if he were some sort of revolutionary socialist, went largely unchallenged.

Peron's performance was rather less

convincing where the military rulers were concerned. It was General Lanusse, the army strongman, who enticed Peron back, against a strong body of opinion within the armed forces.

After six years of army rule, the Argentinian economy had not recovered from inflation and stagnation, and the unions—controlled by Peronists—had not been broken. There were increasingly serious splits among the military, and well over a third of the population was politically under the sway of Peron.

Lanusse thought that if he could force the former dictator to return, Peron would either discredit himself by not standing for the presidency, or become president on the military's terms. In the present situation in Argentina, these terms could only be an attack on workers' living standards and organisation.

Repression

Peron tried to use the mass enthusiasm for himself to get concessions from the military so that he could play a more independent role. But Lanusse was correct in his estimation of Peron: he regarded mass mobilisations as stage armies and feared any real intervention of the working class in politics. Unwilling to play the part

escorted by 1000 policemen, began the 'march', and so great were the demonstrations on the way that it had to be abandoned after two days of detours.

Massive demonstrations up and down the country have at last forced the state to begin to incriminate some of the fascist bombers. Last week six were jailed for three years each for blowing up the Socialist Party headquarters.

But the growing anti-fascist struggle must be linked to the struggle against state repression for it is part and parcel of the current offensive against the labour and student movement.

of the army's stooge, Peron left Argentina in mid-December.

Since this partial victory, the military have further strengthened their position by increasing repression. The Peronist ranks were already split before he left. The left current appealed to Peron's left phrases, while the bureaucrats feared being overwhelmed by mass action and the danger of arousing expectations of fundamental social change.

The mass of Peron's followers were confused by his departure, and the politicians and union bureaucrats seized the opportunity to divert their energies into electioneering.

In the present election campaign, the masses are not involved and electoral opportunism is rife. Virtually every political tendency is competing, but the candidates are all tired old hacks, with the exception of the two left wing socialist candidates. Almost all are over 60, some over 70. The first round was on Sunday, the second on 25 March.

The Peronists' candidate, Hector Campora (63) admits to being a puppet: his slogan is, 'Campora in the Presidency, Peron in power'. In the Peronist front are people such as ex-President Frondizi, who persecuted Peronists while in power.

The Peronists are expected to pick up 40 per cent of the votes in the first round, and are planning to make deals with others

BRIEFING

IN the South African government's latest campaign against white liberals, eight leaders of the English-speaking National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and a radical lecturer have been banned for five years.

This means an end to their political and social lives. Banned persons must remain within a certain area, cannot meet more than two people at a time, and cannot be quoted in publications. Recently Winnie Mandela, wife of the imprisoned African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, broke her banning order by meeting a fellow banned African. She was jailed for a year.

A parliamentary commission has been investigating NUSAS for a year. It found the banned students guilty under the Suppression of Communism Act, which can be applied to anyone who speaks out against the government. According to the Commission the NUSAS president, who warned at a recent student conference that 'the time was approaching when one's conscience would have to take precedence over the law', was 'acting in a manner which could be described as permitting a climate of revolution'.

The students are really being punished for their solidarity strikes with the thousands of black students on strike last June. At the time, student demonstrators were baton-charged by police. Now the government is putting in the boot.

The banned students are scapegoats, to satisfy the mass of the white population. White student militants are an easy explanation for the increasing ills of the system of white supremacy, as the black working class begins to flex its muscles.

TWO recent articles in Pravda complain that the lower levels of the Russian bureaucracy are dragging their heels over computerisation. Russia's rulers are concerned at slow development in this field—with only 6000 central computer systems, they are technologically nine years behind the USA.

At the Togliatti car complex (built by FIAT), all the former management and control systems continued to operate alongside a new computerised production control system which should have replaced them. A motive for resistance to computerisation is that managers' salaries are based on the number of workers in their factories, which computers reduce.

in the second round. The Radicals, the next biggest party, are expected to get a quarter to a third of the votes.

Threats from military quarters to prevent the Peronists from taking office if elected have led to a counter-threat from the Radical Party to withdraw from the elections, as it wishes to prevent the further discrediting of parliamentary democracy. Tensions within the armed forces, on the other hand, have led the military commanders to reassert their support for Lanusse. For good measure, the 'state of siege' declared as long ago as July 1967 has been extended.

Resistance

Whatever the final election result, the new president will certainly be another middle-class demagogue, unrepresentative of the needs and aspirations of the Argentinian working-class. The next regime should find no sympathy among workers and socialists in Argentina or abroad. But its lack of a serious base will mean that it will lack stability and will be unable seriously to attack the unions and workers' wages.

The military may soon even impose another dictatorship. But the erosion of Peronism and the continued resistance of the Argentinian workers means that revolutionary socialists have a chance of leading the fight back.



Stern gang shoot up rents (with a little Labour help)

PERHAPS the best example of the fairness and impartiality of the freeze is the persistence with which the rents of tenants of private landlords in London are being doubled. The government argues that it can do nothing about these rents because they are 'controlled' by Labour's Rent Act, 1965 (known in Whitehall as Crossman's Double Cross).

Every three years a gentleman calls from the local council with an application from the landlord for an increase in rent. He is the rent officer and his job is to arrive at some agreement between landlord and tenant. If there is no such agreement, either party can appeal to a Rent Assessment Committee.

By Crossman's law, two of the three committee members must be (1) a lawyer and (2) a valuer or accountant. The third man can be anyone at all, and it doesn't matter really who he is because on the whole the landlord's interest will be looked after by the lawyer-valuer majority.

On 20 February, in mid-freeze, a Rent Assessment Committee considered six registrations from a block of flats in Wrights Lane, off Kensington High Street. The rents had already been assessed by a rent officer, who had made his recommendations. The landlords appealed. When the Assessment Committee made their decision, the result looked like this:

Original Rent	What Landlord Asked For	What Rent Officer Recommended	What Rent Assessment Committee decided
740	980	940	1400
610	960	900	1000
661	1000	920	1300
681	943	910	1100
686	963	920	1100
751	1018	920	1200

Mrs Gloria Baldwin, the secretary of the Wrights Lane Tenants Association, says that she and her members thought that the committee had taken leave of their senses.

On the contrary, however. Committees all over London are arriving at the same sort of conclusion. Only recently, at Phillimore Gardens, Kensington, a committee shoved up rents by £4 a week more than the rent officer has suggested.

The owners of the property in Kensington are the Metropolitan Property Holdings Ltd, Mr William Stern's breakaway from the giant Freshwater group of London landlords in 1971. Since then Metropolitan have bought Key Flats and have gone into the construction business as well. In the first year of trading, the company made a profit of £605,000 by collecting rent from 20 blocks.

Since then Metropolitan have bought Key Flats (another 5000 tenants) and gone into property speculation all over the country.

They have borrowed about £20 million from various banks and insurance companies. 'In general,' says the first company report, 'excellent relations were maintained with a number of the City's leading banks and insurance companies.'

A recent revaluation of all Metropolitan's properties increased their total value from £23.5m to £43.1m.

Mr Stern and his fellow directors, in short, have never had it so good. They can depend on the Rent Assessment Committee to make things even better for them, at the considerable expense of London tenants.

In 1971, there were 2142 appeals to Rent Assessment Committees from landlords. In 1534 of those cases, the rents were increased from the recommendations of the rent officers.

In 1972, there were 3134 appeals—and in 1755 the rents were increased over the rent officer. Stern and Co are using the committees as automatic rent-increasers.

The Kensington assessment committee on this occasion was staffed by Mr F M Landau, a barrister, Mr C J Bradley, a valuer, and Mr Harry Hynds, JP, who lives in Hornsey, and was Labour MP for Accrington from 1945 to 1966.

I rang Mr Hynds, who agreed at once that he had been party to the Kensington rent increases.

'The purpose of these Assessment Committees,' explained Comrade Hynds, 'is not to bring rents down, but to set a fair rent.'

Mr Stern and the others who make millions because others have to live in houses couldn't agree more.



Magpie in the nest

Mr Bastable's hush-hush venture with Tory right

but it is networked throughout the country.

Tony Bastable took over control of Magpie at the start of the present school year.

He made the Monday Club film on a voluntary basis, and even persuaded some of his friends in television to help him with the work without charge.

THREADBARE CLAIM

I WAS INTERESTED to see that Courtaulds are suing the Department of Trade and Industry for money owing to them in investment grants. Perhaps this means that the DTI is digging in its heels over payment to Courtaulds for machinery which started in 'development areas' (and so was eligible for grants) but was very quickly moved to 'non-development areas' where the grants would not have been forthcoming.

Take the Courtaulds mill at Skelmersdale, Lancs, whose closure (and the redundancy of 1000 workers) was announced last November, and then withdrawn after universal fury.

Mr Bastable is 'extremely anxious' that his connection with this seamy venture should not be revealed. If any member of the television technicians' union were to ask the authorities how it is that a man who makes disgusting political propaganda for the Monday Club should be in such a high position of responsibility in children's television, he would be very embarrassed.

But Mr Bastable will not be the first Monday Clubber to play a prominent part in children's television. The 'terrible twins', Ross and Norris McWhirter, have just completed their series of seven programmes, entitled The Record Breakers, for BBC children's television.

In an article at the time (18 November) Laurie Flynn and Steve Emms commented on the high cost of machinery at the mill. 'The 198 ultra-modern Sulzer looms,' they wrote, 'were never moved out of the storage sheds, far less unwrapped and installed.'

The other night the looms mysteriously vanished. Any day now they are expected to turn up in some other Courtaulds factory which might not be in a development area.

The looms cost about half a million pounds. If investment grants were paid, the taxpayer contributed about £200,000.

DJINGLING WITH DJANOGLY

'INSIDER DEALINGS' as everyone now knows is the term given to the time-honoured practice of buying shares in advance of a take-over bid (or such like) which the buyer knows of in advance and which in due course pushes up the price of his shares.

A good example is the case of Mr Simon Djanogly and Mr Jack Djanogly, the brothers who control the giant Nottingham Manufacturing company, whose Mansfield Hosiery mill was hit last autumn by a nine-week strike by Indian workers.

Between April and September last year the two Djanogly brothers bought 163,000 shares in a languid little concern called G H Heath at prices ranging from 44p to 49p a share, and salted the shares away in charitable family trusts.

In October, the Heath company was taken over... by Nottingham Manufacturing, controlled by the Djanoglys, whose 164,000 shares rose in value as a result by approximately £57,000.

The money was made by the Djanoglys in this enterprising manner would have been enough to have paid all their striking Indian workers the full £5 extra which they were claiming.

THE SLOGAN OF THE YEAR competition has already been won by M Rene Piquet. No three in the French Communist Party and the party's chief of propaganda. He has devised the following slogan for the Communist candidate in Toulouse:

'To vote for Concorde means to vote Communist.'

PARLIAMENTARY PUFFS

THE CLASHES of meetings for 'extra-curricular' parliamentary activity are sometimes so annoying. Take, for instance, the meeting of the Lords and Commons Cricket Club, (chairman, Aussie Russell Kerr (Labour, Feltham), secretary John Farr (Tory, Harborough) at 5pm on 28 February. It clashed with the all-party Sports Committee meeting (chairman Tam Dalyell, Labour, West Lothian, secretary John Hannan, Tory, Exeter).

And it would have been difficult for anyone attending either of these meetings to see the film: Travels of an Artist in the West Himalayas, which was showing in the Palace of Westminster cinema. The cinema was booked by Sir Frederick Bennett, (Tory, Torquay) whose last essays into the West Himalayas were on behalf of Yahya

Khan, the Pakistani dictator who got so much support from Sir Fred during his invasion of Bangladesh.

Another interesting meeting that day was the one called by the Joint Parliamentary ex-Royal Marine Group (chairman Ken Lomas, Labour, Huddersfield West) and secretary Patrick Wall (Tory, Haltemprice). The meeting was called 'to discuss a number of outstanding items'.

There has been quite a rush for tickets for the lunch in Dining Room D organised by the Anglo-Belgian Group (chairman, the eternal host, Clive Bossom (Tory Leominster), secretary Edward Bishop, (Labour, Newark). The attraction (apart from the food and drink) appears to be the Belgian Ambassador, the honoured guest, whose name happens to be Monsieur Rothschild.

A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST MANIFESTO by Kuron and Modzelewski. The famous open letter to the Polish Worker's Party, written in 1964. A vitriolic analysis of the Eastern European regimes and a call for social revolution. 29p postage included, from PLUTO PRESS Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road London NW1.

GEC convenor who fights the colour bar

HUGHIE HAY came to Coventry from Jamaica 15 years ago. Two years after his arrival he was taken on at the giant GEC telecommunications factory which employs more than 7000 workers.

'We had a shop steward who wasn't very efficient,' he says. 'One week we worked all seven nights on a Nigerian contract which the management wanted to rush through. On the sixth night my brother who was working next to me went to the toilet and fell asleep.'

'After about a quarter of an hour, I went to the foreman and asked permission to go and wake him, since I realised he was asleep. Three times the foreman stopped me. My brother came back an hour later and the foreman sacked him. The steward accepted the dismissal.'

'I went to the convenor the next day and asked him to take up my brother's case. He got my brother reinstated at once, with back pay for the time he had lost. At the next shop floor meeting I went along and moved a vote of no confidence in our shop steward, which was carried, and I was elected steward.'

At that time, General Electric were taking on hundreds of black workers. They desperately needed low-paid, unskilled or semi-skilled labour, and the rates of pay were the lowest among large factories in the area.

Hughie Hay was swamped with complaints, and the pressure of work, on top of a hard shift, was too much for him. He collapsed from nervous exhaustion, and was promptly sacked. After 11 months out of work, he was taken on again, and, within weeks, re-elected as shop steward.

Confidence

In 1966, at a mass meeting of the 700 night workers, he was elected senior steward (convenor) for all night work in the factory, and still holds the job today. He has the complete confidence of GEC night workers.

Hughie Hay gets to the factory some three quarters of an hour early to look at the notes about different workers' problems which have arisen before the shift has even started. He works on average nine hours through the night on 'individual piece work problems, complaints about supervision, personal problems—everything. There are times when I get home as late as 3.30 the following afternoon,' he says. 'Just time for a short sleep, a cup of tea and back to the factory again. I reckon I get on average about 11 hours sleep a week. Last week, when they sacked one of our stewards, I don't think I got any sleep at all!'

For all the work it entails, Hughie Hay still prefers the piecework system to the threat of Measured Day Work 'which is creeping up on all of us.' Measured Day Work, he says, means the end of 'the close contact between stewards and members. Workers lose confidence in their stewards because there is less the stewards can do for them.'

'It's a way of shifting the balance of power towards the management.'

If MDW is a threat in the future, the biggest threat at present is redundancy. 'We've never had a real fight about redundancy in GEC,' he says sadly, 'even though we've had two massive redundancies declared in the factory since I've been there. There's always been too many people prepared simply to accept redund-

Making Hay while the moon shines...



Picture of Hughie Hay by Bill Joseph

ancy, and we don't organise a fight against it in the GEC combine as we ought to.'

Nevertheless, says Hughie, the workers at GEC, poorly paid as they are, are prepared for a fight if they are properly led. He disagrees with many of his colleagues that women workers and black workers are in any way responsible for apathy or lack of militancy.

'I've never seen this at mass meetings,' he says. 'The women and the coloured workers are just as ready to fight as the white workers—in some cases even more so.'

Outside GEC, Hughie sits on several committees dealing with racial discrimination in Coventry. 'Coventry is not as bad as many other places for the colour bar,' he says, 'but one of our greatest problems is the larger car industries in the area. Many of them operate a colour bar.'

For several years, Hughie Hay has led the fight in the town against the colour bar at the huge Standard factory in the town.

Until last October Standard employed no coloured workers on the shop floor. Hughie Hay's constant pressure through various local committees has shamed the company into employing a token number, but he is not satisfied.

'Alvis also employs a colour bar, and the worst colour bar of all is at

Rolls-Royce.'

In his time, Hughie Hay has applied for a job at all three factories and been turned down in circumstances which proved to him that the companies operated a colour bar. 'Eleven of us went for a job at Rolls-Royce at a time when they badly needed workers,' he says. 'Ten got taken on. They were white. They couldn't find any room for me.'

Although he believes in what he calls 'chipping away' at the problem of racial discrimination through local community relations councils and the Race Relations Board employment panel, he agrees that it's only when militants on the shop floor raise the question of colour bars and racialism that it will be properly solved.

Showdown

Hughie Hay has nothing but contempt for the trade unions' coming to terms with the Industrial Relations Act. 'My union,' he says (the Transport and General), should not have paid the £50,000 fine [to the industrial court]. It was better that the government had taken the fine and we had had a showdown, rather than let them go on taking it until we have no money and no fight left.'

Nor is he happy with the £1 plus 4 per cent which his workers have been offered as a result of the government freeze. 'We will decide what to do about it after the TUC special congress,' he says. 'I think they should call a general strike—and not just for one day.'

He has never been a member of the Labour Party or any other political organisation, and his political views, on his own admission are unclear.

When I asked him about the possibility of a new socialist party, he admitted cheerfully, 'I've never really thought about it. Something's got to be done, but someone would have to convince me you're going the right way about it.'

'I don't believe in a violent revolution. I'm afraid that you'll just end up with the same apathy as you had before, and it won't be worth it.'

As the political crisis grows, I hope somebody convinces Hughie Hay—and fast. One thing is certain. No socialist revolution will be possible without the fighting spirit and devotion to the working men and women around him which characterises the life-style of men like Hughie Hay.

PAUL FOOT

CLORE

Britain's top tycoon gives more 'leisure' to his workers

A CHEAP piece of sociology was handed out by Sir Charles Clore, chairman of the multi-million-pound giant Sears Holdings, in his last annual report.

'The next decade will witness a steady increase in the demand for leisure facilities as the general standard of living in the country is raised and working hours are shortened.'

Last month, William Cottons, a subsidiary of Sears in Loughborough, increased the leisure time of its workers by 100 per cent. The 663 men were sacked.

Clore became chairman of Sears in 1953, when its only interests were manufacturing and retailing footwear. Its profits that year were £1,200,000. This year Clore estimates profits of not less than £40 million for the group, a 33-fold increase in 20 years.

Clore has guided Sears' expansion into engineering, department stores, motor vehicle distribution, jewellers and betting offices. Sears also has interests in the United States, Canada and Germany and owns 109 companies worth £300 million.

While the profits have gone up the number of workers have gone down—by 1000 a year for the past five years alone.

STOPPED

But footwear has remained the most important part of Sears Holdings, providing 46 per cent of the profits in the past two years. Its giant subsidiary, the British Shoe Corporation, owns nearly 2000 shops, including the Dolcis, Saxone, Freeman Hardy and Willis, Curtess, True Form, Lilley and Skinner and Cable chains.

Between Marble Arch and Oxford Circus on London's Oxford Street there are 18 shoe shops—half of them belong to Sears.

Sears' bid to take over the Timpson group in November 1972 was stopped when rival bidders United Drapery put on the pressure to have Sears referred to the Monopolies Commission. Sears already controls 45 per cent of the all-important chain shoe shop business.

A Bentley group factory: tough organisation is needed to stop sackings



Just two of Clore's shoe chains

The shoe industry as a whole is in a sorry state, with closures announced every week. These are due in part to imports, but also to the policy of Charles Clore, who uses the import threat to hold down the wholesale price of British-made shoes.

He can do this because of his near-monopoly of retail outlets. He buys cheap and sells dear. A pair of ladies boots might cost only £3 to make but they will cost £11 in your local high street.

Sears Holdings gets the difference: the British Shoe Corporation made £17,400,000 profit in 1971.

But the Sears engineering interests are the most important to Leicester and Loughborough. They employ 10,000 men and form the backbone of the Leicestershire engineering industry.

Workers in the Bentley group, a Sears subsidiary, have been among the best-organised locally and have

FRIEDRICH ENGELS
THE CONDITION
OF THE
WORKING CLASS
IN ENGLAND
INTRODUCTION BY ERIC HOBBSBAWM



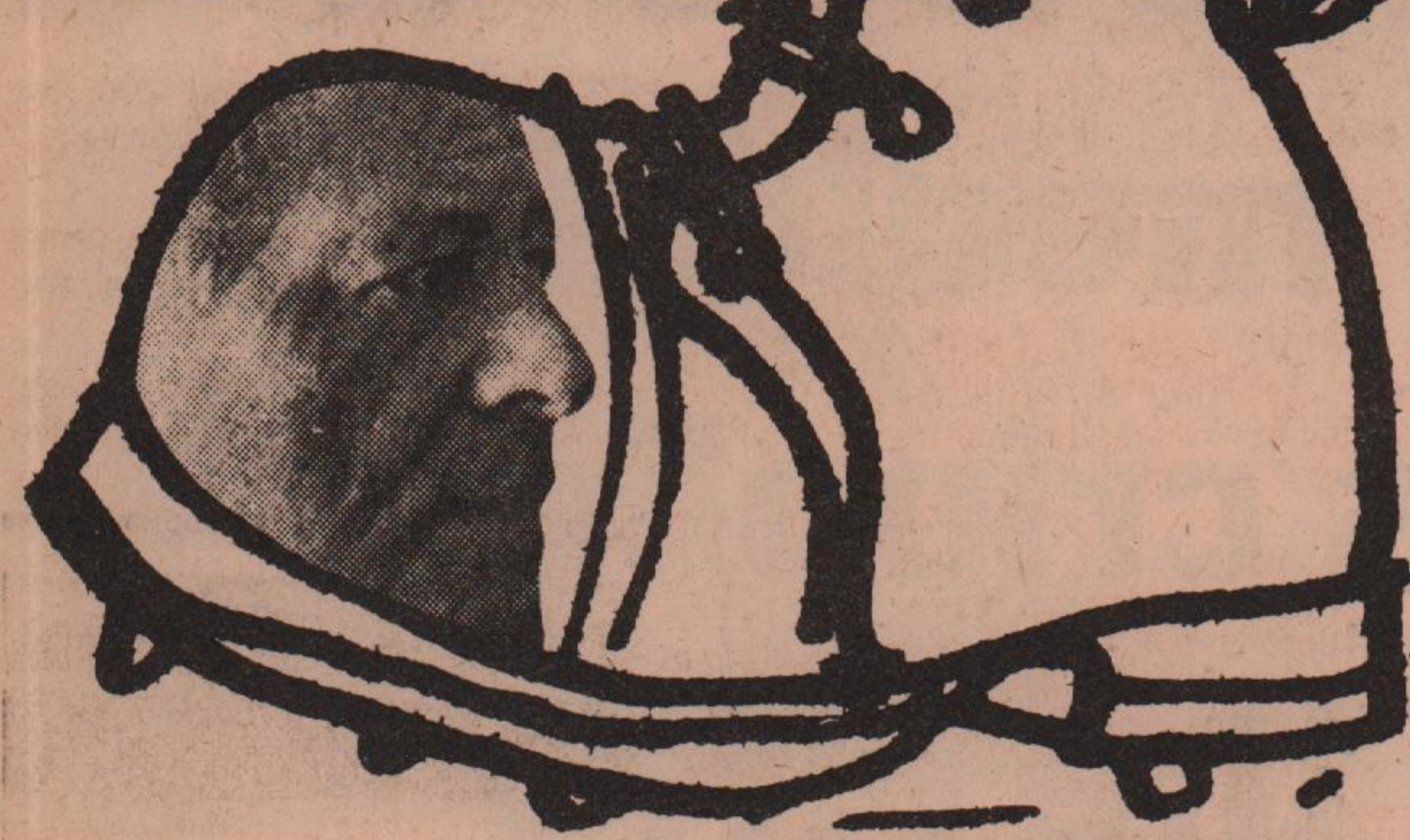
ENGELS

It is common to think of Friedrich Engels as the shadow and rich benefactor of Marx, and nothing more. He was, however, a man of outstanding ability in his own right—and much of Marx's work was based on Engels' knowledge of 19th century century working conditions.

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PUTS THE BOOT IN



shown their readiness to defend their wages and conditions. The Bentley shop stewards' combine committee forced the group's managing director to negotiate with them last June for the first time ever.

And all the signs point to battles ahead.

At Cottons, for example, the factory was built about 10 years ago during a boom in demand for knitting machines. It was a white elephant from the start: it was far too big. For several years now the knitting machinery market has been in decline.

In August 1971, after 200 redundancies in the previous May and December, 400 more workers, including 100 apprentices, were made redundant. The policy of letting Cottons run down seemed deliberate.

WEAKENED

No wonder one steward claimed that 'certain factions wanted to see Cottons go to the wall' and that the closure was as much to do with boardroom politics as with the economic viability of the firm.

Workers claimed there was sufficient work in the group to prevent redundancies: and only a fortnight later another factory in the group increased its workforce by more than 100.

The men's willingness to fight for their jobs was severely weakened by the response of the trade union officials. After the 400 redundancies were announced not one public

Bob Carter reports from East Midlands

statement of opposition came from the engineering union's district secretary, Ernie Scrivens.

About the latest 663 sackings he has been more outspoken. 'The cutback of the labour force is needed to make the company viable for the future,' he said. So outspoken has he been that the union's local technical and supervisory section (TASS) has reported him to the executive for making reactionary press statements without consulting the membership and so undermining the fight.

Two years ago Cottons shop stewards sent for a report on their firm from the AUEW research department. They were told by the district secretary that this could be done only through him and he did not think it relevant.

The lesson is clear for all workers in the factory: they should rely on their own strength and accept no redundancies.

Now it is almost certain that the factory will be closed in two years time. Sears is not going to keep a half-empty factory open—it will

either rent the factory out (already British Leyland, British Electrical, Freers and Mansfield Hosiery have been mentioned) or sell off the site for redevelopment.

The prospect is bleak not only for Cottons. Sears has made it clear in several statements that any expansion of investments will be in the leisure business, through William Hill, its bookmaking subsidiary, and through as many shoe retailers as the Monopolies Commission will allow.

DIFFICULT

Against this background and the inability to find fresh markets for knitting machinery, an attack on the workers seems more and more likely, despite record profits last year. There are even rumours that Clore is thinking of 'hiving off' Bentley.

The combine stewards have a difficult task on their hands. They must start a campaign among their members to ensure co-ordination and solidarity.

They also need to take the combine committee more seriously and back talk with action. As one leading steward said: 'We need to know exactly what tricks Sears Holdings and Bentley Engineering are up to and organise to fight them. We should realise that even though the lads get good wages and have a regular job at the minute, there is no real security.'

And he added: 'We also need to know how this whole rotten system works and organise to fight that.'

Sears: keeping it in the family...

SIR CHARLES CLORE, chairman: 77 directorships, of which Hill Samuel and Orange Free State Investments are the most important outside Sears. He has possibly fallen out with fellow directors at Hill Samuel after they backed the United Drapery bid for Timpson against his own. Orange Free State Investments is biased towards South African companies. He has more than 1,200,000 shares in Sears and 777,000 in beneficial holdings. Also more than £800,000 in debenture stock. He sold his property interests in 1966 for £10 million.

LEONARD SAINER, who married Clore's daughter: 13 directorships and more than 100 million shares in Sears interests, 95 million of them in British Shoe Corporation.

MRS WINIFRED SAINER: directorships in Selfridges, Lewis's and Miss Selfridge.

JOHN CHRISTIAN GODFREY WEGERIF, Clore's cousin: 33 directorships including Phoenix Assurance, which runs Bentley's compulsory pension scheme. The terms for this are worse than many non-contributory schemes in the private sector. He can afford to pay his ex-wife £6000 a year in alimony.

CHRISTOPHER WEGERIF: Bentley Engineering Group co-ordinator, 1971.

STEPHEN WEGERIF: Bentley Engineering Group marketing director, 1971.

NOTE: The non-beneficial holdings of Leonard Sainer include an interest in 5,944,032 ordinary shares in Sears Holdings as a trustee, with Lord Melchett and Edward Footring, of the C Clore Family Settlement. The beneficiaries under the settlement are Alan Evelyn Clore and Mrs Vivien Louise Duffield.

HOME FIT FOR RATS

UNTIL last week the Smith family were living in a condemned and rotting house in Nottingham's Dundas Street. Their plight was reported in Socialist Worker two weeks ago.

The council has now rehoused them. Press publicity has helped to get some action for this one family. But there are many, many others left to rot in similar circumstances thanks to the deliberately created housing shortage.

Next door to where the Smiths were housed until last week, live the Murphy family. They too have visited the Nottingham council time after time asking to be rehoused. They too have been told that nothing can be done before next year unless they move from one condemned house into another.

Mr and Mrs Murphy and their 12 children have to live in three rooms because the rest of their house is totally unfit for human habitation. The children have to be sent to bed early to give the older Murphy's room to breathe in the tiny cell-like living room.

ROTTING

Ten of the kids sleep in the one bedroom, five in the one bed. The smell of decay is overpowering. Green fungus hangs off the ceiling. Wallpaper hangs off the walls.

Access is via a rotting staircase. The stairs are a constant danger for young Stephen Murphy. He has fallen down them three times recently. He suffers from leukemia.

The lavatory is outside. It is rotten throughout with all the fixtures and fittings coming away from the wall.

This plus the fact that the broken-down lavatory is inhabited by a large sewer rat which terrifies the children, has forced the Murphy family to use a pail inside the house as a substitute toilet. When it's full they empty it outside.

On the other side of the Murphy house from the Smith's is a place that has been boarded up for three years. It is jam-packed with rats. At night you can hear them running about.

They have now found their way into the Murphy household, gnaw at

There's a hole where the roof should be...



FLASHBACK to our report on the Smith family

the wood and the food and leave their droppings everywhere.

The Murphy children all suffer permanently from bad chests. One of the little girls is totally covered in sores.

There are no electrical power points in the house. All appliances are run off the lights through adaptors.

This is extremely dangerous. A house up the road burned down recently because its occupants were forced to use this dangerous system and a fire resulted.

FORK OUT

The Nottingham Council says it cannot do anything for the Murphys. There are no houses available and not enough being built. Nonetheless the money was found for wonderful new Taylor Woodrow shopping centre.

And the people of Nottingham and elsewhere continue to fork out money to fund the arms race. There are thousands of Murphys left to rot while the big business system grinds on.

TREVOR SHAW

Preparing for Power

J.T. MURPHY

IN this book first published in 1934, Murphy considers the role and success of the revolutionary left 50 years ago and its later isolation. The author was a key figure in this first shop stewards' movement.

Special offer to Socialist Worker readers: FREE hardback copy of Victor Serge's novel BIRTH OF OUR POWER with every copy of Murphy's book, £1 plus 21p postage. PLUTO PRESS, Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1 8LH.

BLEEDING TO DEATH

Private medicine is crippling the NHS

ON MONDAY, porters, cleaning staff and kitchen hands (members of the National Union of Public Employees and the General Municipal Workers) came out on strike for the week at St Leonard's Hospital in Hoxton, East London.

They are demanding £4 a week like the hundreds of thousands of other hospital workers up and down the country who are taking similar action. Their rise has been frozen at £1.84.

John Clark is one of them. He has a wife and two children (aged five and two). His basic pay for 40 hours is £20.98. Those 40 hours can be made up of two spells of night work, two shifts of 3pm until 11pm, rounded off by coming in the next morning and working from 7am until 3pm. His take home pay as a casualty porter for those 40 hours is £17.50.

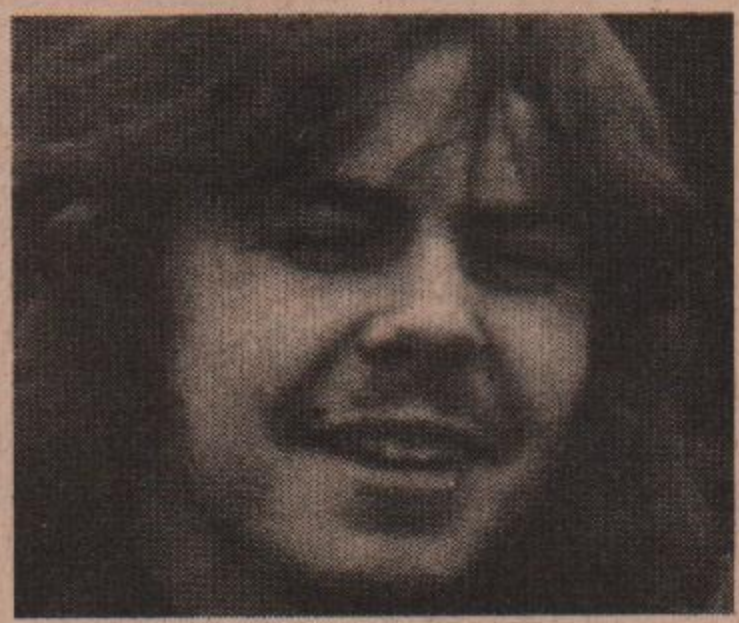
'To stay alive and go home with a few bob in my pocket for the occasional pleasure I have to work 64 hours a week. I do 16 hour shifts with no official break.

'People like me have three minutes to get machinery for re-starting people's hearts to the bedside, to wire them up so that they will work. People like me have to lift patients who are in a terrible state so that they can be washed. We receive no training yet we have to do it so no-one gets hurt. People like me clean up all the filth and blood and we do it to help people survive and get better. We do it for a pittance.

'We will not have it. But what do the union leaders do? They run away from their responsibilities. We've got to take this government on and they should be leading us with a clear call for all-out action.'

Alex Porter is 20-years-old. He too is a porter at St Leonards. Prior to that he was unemployed for six months. Before that he was a male nurse in a psychiatric hospital in Scotland.

'I left that because of the way the patients were treated—like cabbages. And that spirit runs through the whole of the National Health because of the way it is starved of funds.



ALEX PORTER



JOHN CLARK

'This strike has been called by the rank and file. The unions have evaded all their responsibilities with their policy of selective strikes and over-time bans alone.

'Everything goes up except wages and this guy has the insolence to call it a freeze. My rent for a third share in a slum bedroom and use of an outside toilet is £4.50 a week.

'Often against impossible odds hospital workers (including nurses and doctors) do their utmost to help people. But we've been exploited and used at every turn. They're a bunch of liars when they say that we're hitting at the sick. If anyone dies as a result of our dispute or the gas workers' struggle then the responsibility lies directly with the government.

'The trade union movement as it is at the top won't bring this government down. But if we put our backs to the wheel, we can bring them down. The time is coming when we'll get rid of these exploiters both at work and in the other parts of our lives.'

WHAT goes on inside British hospitals is decided by 9610 rich men and women called 'consultants'. They are appointed by committees dominated by other consultants.

They are lords and masters, not only inside the hospitals but in the Regional Hospital Boards, on each of which there is an organised cabal of six or seven consultants, who effectively govern the board's policy.

Consultants are well paid by the National Health Service. All of them earn £90 a week, and most earn a great deal more. But most consultants have 'opted' for a little private work on the side.

This profitable sideline, originally offered to the consultants to keep them in the Health Service, has been so enriched by the growth of private health insurance schemes like BUPA that it sabotages the Health Service in every area.

Although only one per cent of beds in hospitals are designated by the government as 'pay beds', 15 per cent of consultants' manpower and effort is devoted to them.

Sometimes the consultants put their private patients in beds which are allocated for National Health patients. When the glittering new Walsgrave Hospital, Coventry, was opened in 1971, the special private wing at the top of the hospital was not yet ready for patients. So private patients were slapped into wards designated by law for public patients.

A chief consultant at the

Walsgrave was Mr J C Heather, who also happened to be chairman of the planning committee of the local Regional Hospital Board.

When this illegal practice was uncovered, there was some embarrassment at the Health Ministry, and even a hint of a public inquiry. The consultants, who prefer things in private, got to work and the inquiry was dropped.

Mr Heather, needless to say, did not resign. He was not prosecuted for breaking the law. He continued to mint money from private patients at the Walsgrave. He is dead now, but the central principle of his life—that the Health Service is a short cut to riches for the consultant—is still being practised throughout the land.

In his evidence last year to a House of Commons Committee which investigated private practice in the Health Service, Dr Stark Murray of the Socialist Medical Association, estimated that the National Health Service subsidises 3500 hospital consultants by about £25 million a year.

This subsidy takes various forms.

A chief laboratory technician wrote to the committee: 'In Biochemistry, the various tests are gathered in groups for estimation on automatic equipment and each series of tests are on a select schedule and run at certain fixed times of day.

'The arrival of a single "private" specimen, which must invariably be done "straight away", throws the whole routine into chaos—the day's work is delayed and/or an NHS patient has to be supplanted!'

The technician wrote that he and his colleagues had tried to complain about this disruption, only to be told that private practice was 'pure profit' and that nothing should be done to hinder it. He wrote: 'They do not consider the wasted expenditure in X-ray, Pathological department etc, or the disrupting effects there.'

Private patients pay on average £57 a week for 'board and lodging' in the hospital, for special private rooms, television, and the like, but they do not pay for all the extra service in the hospital. Nurses often complain that private



Nurses: a box of cots

'The pharmacies, has clear Sir Ronald Edmonds PROFITS Beschamps Glaxo Boots

patients expect harder for the course, nurses workers get nothing

Overwhelming submitted to showing that helped by the benefit from the queue' for hospital

DIST

A more sinister consultants is waiting lists and the private medical secretary of a big city follows:

'I noticed that not taken in rot

SWEETS

Health Service staff are used to look after private patients without extra charge. A junior hospital doctor wrote anonymously to the House of Commons Committee about the eye department of his hospital:

'The consultant operated on private patients in the Ophthalmic department operating theatre after the afternoon's NHS operating list had been finished. The regular nursing staff were in attendance at the private operations for which extra duty they received an occasional box of confectionary.'

The consultant probably made £500 from his afternoon's work. The nurses got sweets, but the men and women who sterilised the theatre, washed the linen and cleared away the mess—the 'ancillaries'—received nothing

The same consultant would also expect junior doctors and nurses to help him operate on patients in a private clinic.

The junior doctor wrote: 'The nursing sister on duty would sterilise the necessary instruments which she then placed in air-tight containers. These were taken to the clinic in the boot of the consultant's car.'

The use of National Health Service equipment for private patients is the biggest part of the consultants' and private patients' subsidy.

DR DAWS

MONDAY

Mr Seymour is tall, grey and now very thin. Lack of muscle has let his eyes fall deep into his face and wasted away his cheeks, leaving his face bony and expressionless.

The nurses complain they can no longer find anywhere on his scrawny limbs to plunge their needles. But his abdomen is quite round and tense with malignant fluid. Fluid which exerts such a pressure on his intestines that he regurgitates most food soon after eating. On a good day he could be coaxed into holding down a cup of tea and some scrambled egg.

But on most days he sits beside his bed, his belly covered over in a blanket, staring blankly at the ward TV.

Mr Seymour is dying of asbestosis. For 30 years he lagged pipes with South African Asbestos without the barest warning or protection. It was only in his sixties he became short of breath and racked with a dry wrenching cough.

He died slowly and painfully. It is difficult to be dignified when you can't swallow or breathe properly and your stomach sticks out two feet. But Mr Seymour did die with dignity.

Today I attended his obligatory post-mortem. Two jovial pathologists eviscerated Mr Seymour, chipping open his spinal column and slicing his liver to look for further malignant disease.

His diaphragm was caked with thick deposits of fibrous tissue in reaction to the asbestos he spent his life inhaling. His lungs went into a special plastic

bag to be sent to Board, who will mount them.

If Mr Seymour fortunate, after the of the pathologist Board, she might on the pension awarded for the months of his life.

TUESDAY

Major burns are first a particular hair, a reddened screaming and sheets, body fluid and shock starts kidney failure and comes the maiming

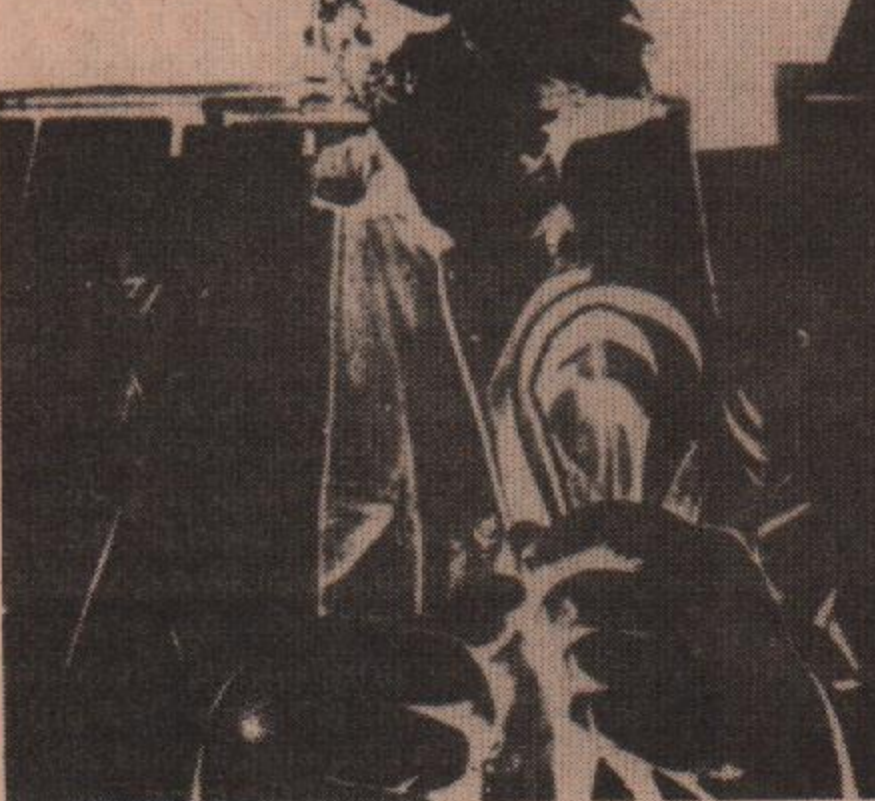
Burns have specialists and good centres. distant. A Turkish blaze came into and worst burner swaddled in a But they had to centre, a two-hour away. And the current plans, which skills in hospital where people live this kind of distant

WEDNESDAY

Casualty Dept only place left in the night. Some

International Socialism 56

Crisis on the Left: Liaison Committee, Tenants, France Popular Front 1936, Students, Miners 1948-70. March 1973 15p



The March issue of International Socialism journal takes a critical look at the state of the left as the working class prepares for a major confrontation with the government and analyses the experience of recent key struggles.

Articles include:

John Charlton: **The Miners**

Jules Townsend: **The Liaison Committee**

Hugh Kerr: **The Tenants' Struggle**

Richard Kirkwood: **France 1936**

Martin Shaw: **Student revolutionaries**

Reg Groves: **The crisis of 1931.**

Plus Notes of the Month and book reviews

International Socialism Journal, 6 Cottons

Gardens, London E2 8DN

Annual subscription £2.10 (12 issues)



...olates for helping consultants on the private side

...erical side of the business, including proprietary medi-
...ator been helped by a very low level of winter sickness.—
... chairman, Beechams, Annual Report 1972.

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(...eapeutics)	16.5	20.3
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	24.95	34.24

nurses to work
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... evidence was
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... private patients,
... consultants who
... wives 'jump the
... beds.

RESS

... practice of the
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... tion... and that

were communicated to the House of Commons Committee. The Tories in the majority on the Committee were, however, unmoved. They concluded, 'Private practice operates to the overall benefit of the health service.' They recommended: 'No major changes to the system are needed.'

MASSIVE

That was in March last year. In August, the Tories produced a White Paper, which proposes to put the Health Service even more under the control of consultants than it now is. It proposes Area Boards consisting of local worthies underneath the Regional Boards, and 'District Management Teams', consisting entirely of appointed officials.

The most egalitarian Health Service in the world, which is sustained solely by the massive exploitation of its workers, will be even more prone to the ravages of £500-a-week consultants who are currently lecturing £18-a-week 'ancillaries' about their 'responsibilities to patients'.

some had been waiting three to four years when, according to my statistics there was no reason why any patient should have to wait longer than six months for an eye operation at the hospital. When I asked the reason for this, the reply I received was:—

"If we keep them waiting long enough they get fed up with being unable to see, and agree to become private patients." I was greatly distressed by this remark as elderly patients, mostly with cataracts, were constantly either telephoning or coming to my office pleading when could they come into hospital as they had been waiting so long.

These and many other examples of the cruelty, waste and exploitation of private practice

ON'S DIARY



the Pneumoconiosis
... slice and stain and
...r's widow is very
... due consideration
... of the Pneumocon-
... get some increase
... her husband was
... last five agonising
... it was £3.08 a week.

modern Poor Law whereby a place can be got for the night if sufficiently convincing medical-sounding complaints are given.

But if you fail to convince, you are diagnosed, with a particular curl of the lip, a 'social problem'. Most hospitals are so pushed for space there's nothing much else to do but turn people politely away.

But anyone who still believes in an 'affluent society' should stand by the exit door for an evening. A typical score of patients examined but sent away might include a travelling man with legs swollen and ulcerated, a junky scarcely able to walk, a wife attacked by her husband (extremely common this for all those who think women's liberation goes on a bit too much) a couple of drunks who have fallen over or lost their way and at least three people who haven't got round to registering with a General Practitioner. A half civilised society ought to be able to help these people, through their private wreckage without turning a hair. Ours has to show them the door.

THURSDAY

One of the most embarrassing things about hospitals is gratitude. Nurses walk around queasy from excess boxes of chocolates, hospital rooms are choked with flowers from patients, porters have their arms wrung at the front gate by departing patients.

Embarrassing because people ought on the whole, to be less grateful, to

be used to being treated with consideration and dignity. Patients actually ought to leave hospital angry at the conditions all staff have to practice medicine in and the wages they get.

A patient told me: 'One thing I would march on the street for is if they tried to close our Health Service.'

But they've been doing just exactly that for 20 years and nobody much has gone on the streets anywhere. The Labour government started the decline from the 1945 ideal by passive neglect, the Tories have followed on by active dismantling of the NHS. An industrial militant, also a patient, put it better when he said: 'I have always had a problem trying to get across to men who have got colour TVs and cars how the real standards of living of the working class are being cut away. But all I need do is take them for a walk round this place for them to see what I mean.'

FRIDAY

The only people with time on their hands in hospitals are the drug company reps.

They lurk in canteens and corridors with bribes and flattery for the doctors (free gifts of diaries, samples and equipment but expensively printed research reports just to show they don't think the doctors are all greedy fools). The reps tend to keep up the appearance that hospital doctors themselves can no longer afford to maintain: regimental ties, Cowes Yacht Club and waistcoats.

Parliament and

**the law:
take the
advice of
Gladstone**

'I AM SORRY to say that if no instructions had been addressed in political crises to the people of this country except to remember to hate violence, to love order and to exercise patience, the liberties of this country would never have been achieved.'

The man who said this was not a marxist. He was that pillar of nineteenth century respectability, William Ewart Gladstone, leader of the Liberal Party and four times Prime Minister.

Gladstone knew what he was talking about. He came into politics at the time that the industrial capitalists and their middle-class allies were fighting the older class of capitalist land-owners for political power.

Because in those days parliament was the place where decisions were taken, the industrialists fought for 'reform of parliament'—that is for their own control of it.

And they got their way, as Gladstone well remembered, by mass agitation, the use of limited violence (rioting, the burning down of Bristol city centre, the sacking of Nottingham Castle) and the threat of worse to come—of revolution—unless the Tories surrendered.

No major political change was ever made without such means—or still more 'unconstitutional' means like the seventeenth-century revolutions which brought the capitalist landowners to power.



by
**DUNCAN
HALLAS**

Bleat

Gladstone could afford to tell the truth about this central fact of politics because the 'liberties' he had in mind were the ones needed by the capitalist class. And in his day, the working class—shattered politically by the defeat of Chartism—was no threat to the men of property.

Today the political representatives of capital and their 'Labour lieutenants' cannot afford such honesty. They and the television, radio and newspapers they own or control, bleat about 'the sovereignty of parliament' and 'the rule of law'—considerations which they cheerfully (and rightly) disregarded in the days before they gained power.

'Yes, all that is true,' say the tame professors and spokesmen of the Labour Party. 'But now things are different. It was all right to defy parliament in the last century but since 1928 we have had universal suffrage. Everyone can vote.'

'Now parliament represents the will of the majority. Therefore we must obey the Industrial Relations Act, accept the "Fair Rent" racket and allow the government to abolish the right to strike for higher wages. In the fullness of time there will be a general election and if "the people" so desire, they will get a different government which will abolish all these things.'

Tale

There are so many things wrong with this argument that it is difficult to take it seriously. First of all consider the question of 'Incomes Policy'.

The Tory election manifesto of 1970 told us that 'the main causes of rising prices are Labour's damaging policies of high taxation and devaluation... So wages started chasing prices up in a desperate and understandable attempt to improve living standards... Labour's compulsory wage control was a failure and we will not repeat it.' (A Better Tomorrow, p11.)

The Tories (like Labour before them) are doing, in this field as in so many others, exactly the opposite of what they promised. And does any serious person believe that the future election pledges of the Tory and Labour parties will be worth the paper they are written on?

More fundamental yet, the

story that parliament still decides policies (as it did when it was a ruling class preserve) is a fairy tale for political children. As more and more people got the vote so parliament became less and less important.

When Heath decided to reverse his line and adopt an 'Incomes Policy' strategy, who did he open discussions with? With parliament? Of course not.

He arranged talks with the direct representatives of big business (the CBI) of organised labour (the TUC, not the Labour Party) and with the chiefs of the state bureaucracy. Their agreement was important to the government. That of parliament was a formality.

Power

True, sham battles are fought in parliament. There is a great deal of sound and fury. But the real battles—against the Industrial Relations Act, against 'Fair Rents' and now in defence of the right to strike—take place in industry, on the estates. For real power lies with the owners of

industry, the state machine and the organised workers.

Which is why there is so much frantic propaganda about 'parliamentary democracy'. The aim is to weaken one side in the class struggle—working people—by persuading as many as possible that they should not use their own strength to beat off Tory attacks but rely instead on an impotent opposition in parliament.

Action

That way big business and its political representatives are sure to win. To go back to Gladstone's remarks, if working men and women had, in the past, 'loved law and order and exercised patience' the basic rights to organise and to fight not only for wages but for political rights of all kinds, would never have been won in the first place.

Today when the right to strike is to be 'legally' abolished—and the law will certainly go through—it can be preserved intact by direct action. And it must be preserved.

'Political and social freedom are not two separate and unrelated ideas, but are two sides of the one great principle, each being incomplete without the other.'



**JAMES
CONNOLLY**

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REVIEW

BOOKS

FROM THE CHASTITY BELT TO THE FACTORY FLOOR

TODAY'S socialist historians have had to dig through the accumulated layers of Cold War muck, Stalinist rubble and social-democratic debris to rediscover how in the past the exploited and oppressed have resisted and built alternatives.

Such excavation is vital, so that today's revolutionaries can learn from those of the past.

But apart from a few articles, almost nothing has been written on the history of the struggle against one of the most pernicious and deeply ingrained myths of capitalist society—the myth that women are inferior to men.

The publication of Sheila Rowbotham's *Women, Resistance and Revolution*, an attempt to show some of the ways women have fought back during the past 600 years, is therefore a significant event.

The book starts by looking at the position of women under feudalism—another type of society in which they were treated as inferior, and shows how the very structure of the feudal economy prevented women from seeing themselves as oppressed.

Deadweight

Women could only begin to see their oppression with the growth of capitalism, which in breaking through the deadweight of medieval religious dogma propelled both men and women towards thinking for themselves.

Almost from the start there were women (and some men) who fought against their oppression, using first religious, then secular arguments to back up their case. By the 18th century, Sheila suggests, such resistance can broadly be separated into two kinds: working-class women protesting against their economic condition most notably in food riots, and upper and middle-class women refusing to accept definitions of female inferiority.

But none of these women saw that the answer to their problems involved a change in the whole system of society—that the liberation of women called for the liberation of humanity from capitalism.

Such ideas only appeared under the twin impact of the industrial and French revolutions. Even then the only solutions offered were utopian—that human relationships could be transformed either simply through propagating the right ideas or by withdrawing from society and setting up ideal communities.

No coherent theory emerged until the 1840s. Ironically its authors were both men—Marx and Engels—who, while agreeing with the utopians that the oppression of women was

Julian Harber reviews Sheila Rowbotham's latest book: *Women, Resistance and Revolution*, published by Allen Lane, price £2.95



ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI, the only woman member of the Bolshevik Central Committee whose writing on women's liberation is discussed in detail in Sheila Rowbotham's book.

inevitable under capitalism, showed that the only way capitalism could be abolished was through the activity of the working class. The emancipation of women was therefore impossible without the emancipation of the working class.

This was a discovery of fundamental importance. Sheila Rowbotham devotes a whole chapter to a discussion of the views of Marx and Engels on the history and nature of women's oppression. Both believed the liberation of women one of the essential goals of any socialist revolution.

But neither Marx nor Engels made any real attempt to show how women might mobilise to fight for socialism. It was not a pressing problem in a period when the working class as a whole was for the most part inactive.

It became an important problem only at the end of the 19th century with the rise of the socialism of the Second International. And though women were involved in many exciting struggles during this period, it was not really solved. Even the

most sophisticated work of the day, Bebel's *Women and Socialism*, did not come to grips with it. Bebel recognised the nature of women's oppression but instead of discussing which women could mobilise on what issues he simply exhorted all women to struggle.

How far the Bolsheviks overcame this obstacle before 1917 Sheila Rowbotham doesn't say, but certainly women were active during the Russian Revolution. Indeed it began with a demonstration by women over the price of bread.

Once the Bolsheviks were in power they introduced an ambitious programme which aimed to establish total equality between men and women. Within weeks of their seizure of state power there was a complete legal transformation of the family—including equality of husband and wife before the law, the abolition of the distinction between illegitimate and legitimate children and easy divorce. Abortion was to be available on demand and there were plans for the abolition of the drudgery of

housework through the introduction of 'public restaurants, communal kitchens, laundries, cloth-mending centres, collective house-keeping arrangements and facilities for children.'

By the early 1920s this vast creative upsurge had been halted in its tracks. With the triumph of Stalin it was not just defeated but routed. The book catalogues in grisly detail the various ways in which Russian women were again treated as subordinates.

Sheila Rowbotham concludes her book with an examination of the position of women in certain Third World countries and tries to show that in societies that have experienced anti-imperialist revolutions there have been real advances towards women's liberation—notably in China, a society for which she shows great enthusiasm.

Short shrift

Any book that aspires to such a wide canvas must inevitably leave things out, so it is perhaps a little unfair to criticise Sheila Rowbotham for what she omits. Nevertheless there are two main criticisms of this book.

The book gives too short shrift to what has come to be called 'bourgeois feminism'—the struggle of middle-class women for reforms within capitalism. The socialist movement has generally been hostile to such women, it is true, but they often won advances for women which all socialists must be in favour of—notably access to higher education and the professions.

The history of such struggles has lessons for the Women's Liberation movement today—witness the attempts of certain of the British suffragettes to set up their own police force when the Home Office refused to allow women constables.

My second criticism is that Sheila abandons the industrialised West entirely after 1914. Because of this

there is no consideration of such interesting questions as how far the early Communist International took the struggle of women seriously, the role of women during the Spanish revolution (how far did the anarcho-syndicalists put their libertarian theories of women's liberation into practice?) and—most important—why in our part of the world ideas of women's emancipation have been so dead for such a long time, while other revolutionary ideas have survived—though often in rather shrivelled forms.

But there is a more fundamental criticism. Except where she is discussing the transition from feudalism to capitalism, Sheila really fails to locate the struggles of women in economic and sometimes even in political context. The history of women's liberation becomes mainly the history of ideas.

This leads her to some odd conclusions—notably that societies like China and North Vietnam are socialist.

Less access

Certainly it is true that through revolution in these countries women have become less oppressed. In some cases there have even been steps to liberate women from the home in ways so far only dreamt about in the West.

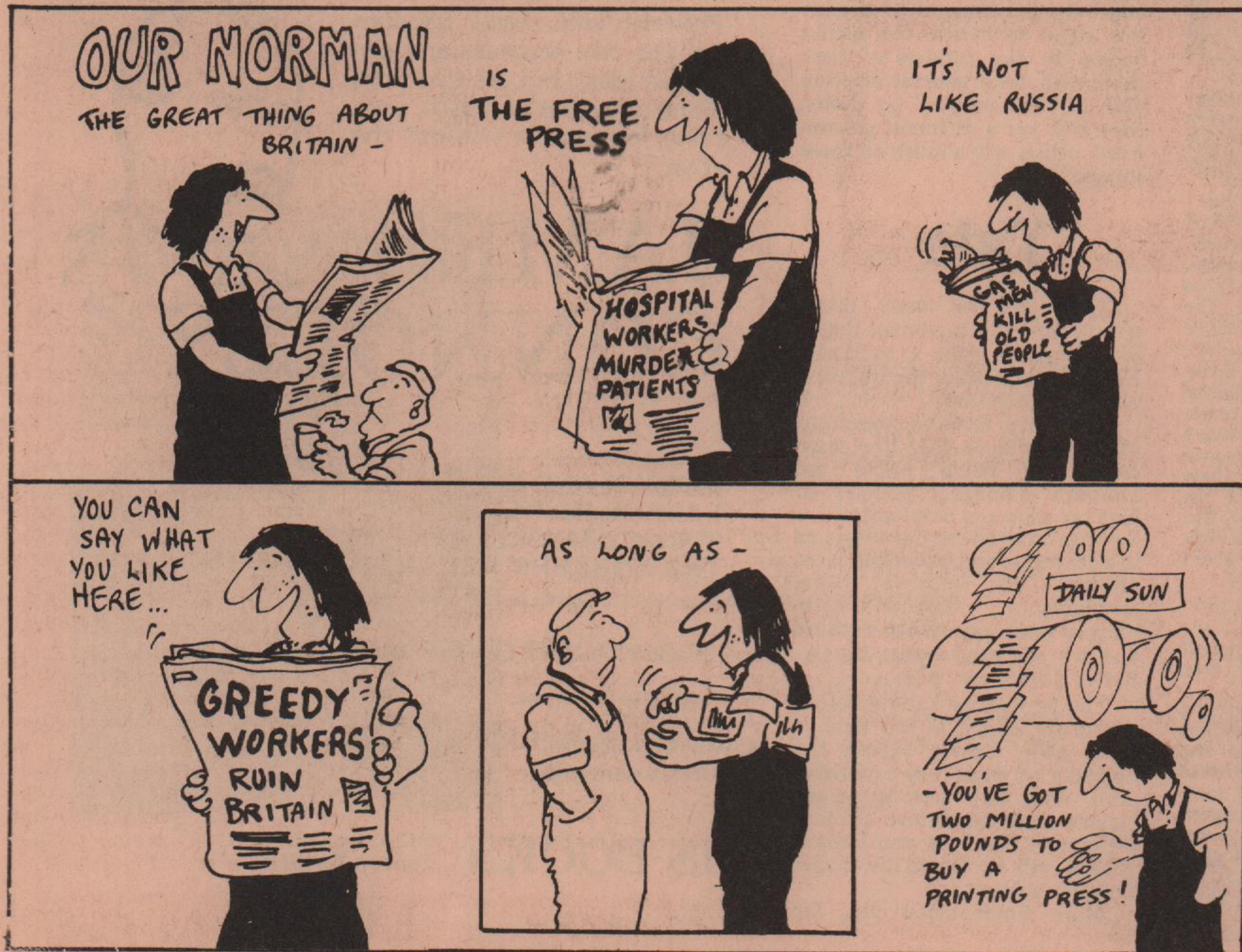
But with all decision-making in such societies in the hands of authoritarian non-democratic parties, the vast majority of women have even less access to political power than they do in Britain. To drag on Marx, who was nothing if not a democrat of the most radical kind, on to the side of such societies is absurd.

Because Sheila Rowbotham does not see the position of women in such countries in a total economic and political context, she fails to consider the possibility that a modernising state capitalist elite, desperately needing to mobilise its population for production, might actively encourage radical measures to get women out of the home and into the fields and factories. Certain forms of women's oppression while essential to private capitalism in Britain, actually hinder the development of state capitalism in China.

By limiting herself mainly to the realm of ideas, Sheila Rowbotham largely fails to tackle the problem of what in our society has led to recent flourishing ideas about women's emancipation. Why were such ideas so dormant in the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries?

I think the answer to this question strengthens the socialist women's case against that of middle-class reformist women. Even if the women's cause has not always advanced when the workers' cause has advanced, whenever the working-class movement has been defeated so has the women's movement.

Strangely enough this book, by not really tackling this problem and by not really emphasising enough the fact that the women's cause has gone through set-backs as well as advances, tends to perpetuate that myth of constant progress which we as socialists should be doing so much to destroy.



VICTOR SERGE

Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901-1941

TRANSLATED BY PETER SEDGWICK

The memoirs of Victor Serge, revolutionary, novelist and poet, are a testimony to the experience of three successive revolutionary generations—the anarchism of pre-1914 France, the syndicalism of Barcelona 1917, finally Russia as Stalin took over. Out of the annihilation Serge himself survived as virtually a lone witness.

70p including postage, from

IS BOOKS, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN

STARVED, STALLED AND STRANDED

THE Victoria and Albert Museum in London is currently showing some 50 photographic prints from the archive of the American Farm Security Administration covering the years 1935-1941. The work exhibited is only a small part of the total archive which was assembled by this small office during the Depression.

In July 1935 the president of the United States, F D Roosevelt, created the Re-settlement Administration; two years later it was renamed the Farm Security Administration. The purpose of the office was to oversee farm production and attempt to alleviate suffering brought on by the Depression and five years of continuous drought.

The prints exhibited include the work of Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, and Walker Evans. The work of Dorothea Lange is excellent and her approach to photographing those who were, in the words of one of the million or so migrant labourers on the road at this time, 'starved, stalled, and stranded', is ruthlessly honest.

She refuses to milk the situation or the conditions she found for the obvious poignancy a lesser photographer would have settled for and gone away satisfied for having 'discovered'.

Her photo entitled the 'Migrant Mother' has already received the doubtful status of 'classic'. It stands in danger of becoming one of those standardised images, completely estranged from its historical context, useful in assuaging the liberal conscience whose only demand is pathos.

A useful corrective to this dramatisation by curators and other collected bleeding hearts who have singled out this photo ever since it was first exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1962 is the exhibition itself. Seeing the Alabama tenant farmer of Anniston Ala., the barbwire of Dalhail, Texas, the unemployed tenants, and the 'Deputy with a gun on his hip during a strike in Morgantown West Virginia' gives a far better insight than most histories of Depression America.

The Dust Bowl Ballads of Woody Guthrie are also played constantly in the exhibition and are a perfect accompaniment to the photographs. Listen to the words. The exhibition is free and is there until 25 March.

This is an ideal chance to see modern America trying to be born. It was a still birth.

JOHN HELLEBRAND

STIRRING IN THEIR SLEEP

The Freedom of the City by Brian Friel, Directed by Albert Finney, Royal Court Theatre, London.

THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY is about Bloody Sunday in Derry—but doesn't follow the events of that day exactly.

A civil rights meeting in Derry is broken up by an army CS gas attack. Three people stagger blinded into the Mayor's Parlour in the Guildhall building. They drink the municipal booze, masquerade in ermine-lined councillor's robes, talk about their reasons for marching while waiting for the coast to clear.

Meanwhile, outside the building the army have become convinced that 40 armed terrorists have occupied the building. When the three finally

emerge with their hands up they are shot dead. An official inquiry finds the army was not at fault.

The play has been misrepresented, probably deliberately, by almost every national daily critic.

The three intruders represent accurately the confused mixture of people and motives to be found on any civil rights demonstration. Michail Hegarty is a 22-years old 'moderate' who believes that what was really impressive about the early Civil Rights marches was 'all the people marching in silence. Rich and poor, high and low, doctors, accountants, plumbers, teachers, bricklayers—all shoulder to shoulder—knowing that what united them was their rights, and knowing that because it was their rights nothing in the world was going to stop us getting them.'

To which Skinner, a 21 years-old unemployed Bogsider of hooligan tendencies replies, appropriately enough, 'Shite'. For Skinner 'it has nothing to do with doctors and accountants and teachers and dignity and boy scouts. It's about us, the poor—the majority—stirring in our sleep. And if that is not what it's all about, then it has nothing to do with us.'

Lily Doherty, the third of the Bogsiders to stumble into the Holy of Holies lives with 11 children and a sick husband in a two-roomed tenement flat. She marches, as she finally admits to Skinner, because one of her children is a mongol and somewhere in the depths of her pain for him she struggles to find vaguely a measure of solace by marching for a general betterment of things, whatever that might amount to.

'Me in the middle of it all, marching for Declan. Isn't that the stupidest thing you ever heard?'

The judge says in even terms that 'it is not our function to make moral judgements.' A professor of pathology explains that the effect of a 7.62mm bullet 'once it's inside the body... is similar to a tiny explosion in that it shatters the bone and flesh tissue. And then, as it passes out of the body—at the point of exit—it makes a gaping wound and as it exits it brings particles of bone and tissue with it which makes the wound even bigger.'

An American sociologist pontificates casually about the 'subculture of poverty'. A priest first idealises the dead then denounces the 'evil people' who 'have one purpose and one purpose only—to deliver this Christian country into the dark dungeons of Godless communism.'

The three explain how they died.

MICHAEL: 'And then the Guildhall Square exploded and I knew a terrible mistake had been made. And I became very agitated, not because I was dying, but because this terrible mistake might be recognised and acknowledged. My mouth kept trying to form the word *mistake-mistake-mistake*. And that is how I died—in disbelief, in astonishment—in shock...'

LILY: 'And in the silence before my body disintegrated in a purple convulsion, I thought I glimpsed a tiny truth: that life had eluded me because never in my 43 years had an experience, an event, even a small unimportant happening been isolated, and assessed, and articulated. And the fact that this, my last experience, was defined by this perception, this was the culmination of sorrow...'

SKINNER: 'And as we stood on the Guildhall steps, two thoughts raced through my mind: how seriously they took us and how unpardonably casual we were about them, and that to match their seriousness would demand a total dedication, a solemnity as formal as theirs. And then everything melted and fused in a great roaring heat. And my last thought was: if you're going to decide to take them on, Adrian Casimire, you've got to mend your ways.'

Mr Finney's production is determinedly undramatic, eschewing the temptation to contrive emotional climaxes. There is nothing to be said about Stephen Reed and Raymond Campbell as Skinner and Michail. They could not have been played any better. Carmel McSharry, as Lily, is hampered by a Southern Irish brogue that probably doesn't matter very much but I think it does matter that she looks marvellous—and marvellously unaged—for a mother of 11 who lives in a slum.

This is not a marxist play, but there is much in it for marxists to admire, to learn from. It conveys better than anything else I have seen what it is like in Northern Ireland.

And if you believe that the bourgeois lie machine does not operate in the national papers' arts pages, go to it and then read the reviews published by the Telegraph (Eric Shorter) and the Times (Irving Wardle) or the London Evening Standard (Milton Shulman). In the Times Milton Shulman complains that the behaviour of the three characters is not true to life. Now how the hell would he know?



San Joaquin Valley, California, 1935: a picture by Dorothea Lange from the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum

For audience read 'absolute idiots'

HAVE you ever been on telly?

What a bloody stupid question. Of course you haven't. Ordinary people don't get on the box unless you're caught sucking Polos, picketing, or getting yourselves out of a pile-up on the M1.

'You can't let ordinary people into the studio to run their own programmes. They're absolute idiots.'

Angela Rippon talking. Our local link-girl on Westward TV. We were discussing something rude I'd said on camera about regional television. I gave her the old boggle.

'You don't mean all those people out there are idiots, do you? I mean ter say, that's your audience, isn't it?'

'Oh, well,' she says, 'If they aren't idiots in their own homes they certainly are when we get them in the studio.'

Well, Angie, that's where you're wrong.

Break out a crate of Newcastle Brown. The Beeb's declared its Faith in the People. From April on they're throwing open the studios to anyone who wants to get in front of a camera.

Forty minutes everyweek, Monday night, 11.30pm, BBC2.

Just form yourselves into a group and ask Mr Rowan Ayers to consider your case. He'll ask Mr Alasdair Milne to consider your case, and he'll get his committee to consider your case.

Any cases left over after that are free to romp about live in front of the cameras as long as they don't talk politics, further industrial disputes,

advertise, appeal for money, be obscene or indecent, make personal attacks or incite to riot or racialism.

Mr Robin Scott, the controller, doesn't think we'll do anything like that. What he's afraid of is that we'll come on 'pussyfooting and aping BBC mannerisms so as not to alienate the audience.'

Who does he think we are, absolute idiots or something?

THE IBA is handing over a slice of Anglia's territory to Yorkshire TV. People have been writing to the Times saying it isn't right for good honest Anglians to be turned over to crafty Yorkshiremen.

The honest Anglians with their savings in the business have got their MPs up off their arses in the House of Commons. John Hill, Conservative, put his mouth where his money is and told the House that it isn't because he's got shares in Anglia that his blood's boiling. It's because he thinks having Yorkshire taking a slice out of his viewing area will upset the environment.

Sir John Eden, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications kept saying over and over that it wasn't any of his business what the IBA did with its areas. The members got crosser and crosser with him.

Then they all calmed down. Sir John shut them up properly. 'It would be wholly wrong,' he said, 'to intervene in determining what should be the appropriate contract areas. There are big commercial



interests involved.'

And that won't be news to Lew Grade—or anyone else for that matter. It's a funny world, though, isn't it, when any old judge who gets the knee-trembles can stop the IBA in its tracks when a government minister can't?

NEXT ITEM. Close attention please. I may have to use some long words to you absolute idiots.

A chap called Sir Robert Cockburn—you all know how to pronounce it—was asked by the government to report on the technical and commercial possibilities of the much-heralded breakthrough in communications technology. Video cassettes, cable-TV, home electronics and so on.

He says he did hear some funny noises but when he last looked it had gone away somewhere and the message is that it won't be back for at least 10 years.

Now, any of the electronics tycoons will tell you that Sir Robert's

talking through his Cockburn. They'll lay you on a twenty-channel cable-circuit with access to a computer-controlled video cassette library sooner than you can say Open University. They'll sell you videoplayers, recorders, and so much gadgetry you can put Mum in front of the cameras and tape your own Coronation Street.

And that's a business which is going to make steam telly look like what happened to the corner shop.

So what's the 10 years all about? Well, you may have come across a number of little news items saying the government doesn't want to start talking about BBC and ITV Charters in 1976. They'd rather leave it till 1981.

Because under present legislation they've got the whole business sewn up tighter than Harold Wilson's abdominal support. They don't want you running your own local cable-TV circuits or taping your own programmes for your own videoplayers.

Because you're all absolute idiots who go pussyfooting around aping BBC mannerisms.

Or worse still it might turn out you aren't all absolute idiots and you won't go pussyfooting around and it's ten-to-one in devalued dollars you won't be aping the BBC, even its mannerisms. See what I mean?

Tom Clarke

Eamonn McCann

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The International Socialists is a democratic organisation whose membership is open to all who accept its main principles and who are willing to pay contributions and to work in one of its organisations.

We believe in independent working-class action for the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a classless society with production for use and not for profit.

We work in the mass organisations of the working class and are firmly committed to a policy of internationalism.

Capitalism is international. The giant firms have investments throughout the world and owe no allegiances except to themselves and the economic system they maintain.

In Europe, the Common Market has been formed for the sole purpose of increasing the trade and profits of these multi-national firms.

The international power of capitalism can only be overcome by international action by the working class.

A single socialist state cannot indefinitely survive unless workers of other countries actively come to its aid by extending the socialist revolution.

In addition to building a revolutionary socialist organisation in this country we also believe in the necessity of forming a world revolutionary socialist international independent of either Washington or Moscow. To this end we have close relationships with a number of other socialist organisations throughout the world.

We believe in the necessity to unite socialist theory with the day-to-day struggles of working people and therefore support all genuine demands that tend to improve the position and self-confidence of the working class.

We fight:

- For rank and file control of the trade unions and the regular election of all full-time officials.
- Against secret negotiations. We believe that all settlements should be agreed or rejected by mass meetings.
- For 100 per cent trade unionism and the defence of shop stewards.
- Against anti-trade union laws and any curbs on the right to strike, whether the strikes are 'official' or 'unofficial'.
- For equal pay and a better deal for young workers.
- Against productivity deals and job evaluation and for militant trade union unity and joint shop stewards committees both in the plant and on a combine basis.
- For a minimum wage of at least £25 a week.
- Against unemployment, redundancy and lay offs. We support the demand: 'Five days' work or five days' pay.'
- For all workers in struggle. We seek to build militant groups within industry.
- Against racialism and police victimisation of black workers.
- Against immigration restriction.
- For the right of coloured people and all oppressed groups to organise in their own defence.
- For real social, economic and political equality for women.
- Against all nuclear weapons and military alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.
- Against secret diplomacy.
- Against all forms of imperialism. We unconditionally give support to and solidarity with all genuine national liberation movements.
- For the nationalisation of the land, banks and major industries without compensation and under workers' control.
- We are opposed to all ruling class policies and organisations. We work to build a revolutionary workers' party in Britain and to this end support the unity of all revolutionary groups.
- The struggle for socialism is the central struggle of our time. Workers' power and a world based on human solidarity, on the increasing of man's power over nature, with the abolition of the power of man over man, is certainly worth fighting for.
- It is no use just talking about it. More than a century ago Karl Marx wrote: 'The philosophers have merely interpreted the world. The point is to change it.' If you want to help us change the world and build socialism, join us.

THE UNIONS

BARLOW'S TASK FORCE ON THE SITES

Building is a tough industry for trade unionism. It is more difficult to organise because of the short-term nature of its operations and because of the ruthlessness of the employers who through the fifth column of so-called self employment (lump) are determined to hold out against any threat to their power.

For the past two years building workers in Birmingham have fought and organised through the Building Workers Charter on a city-wide basis against the employers. Last summer Birmingham was in the forefront of the builders' national struggle against the employers and the Tory government. And they have since strengthened their rank and file organisation to combat the continued and intensified attacks.

Rank and file militancy has also been channelled through the official union structure. One factor has made the task more than a little easier. Ken Barlow, Midlands region secretary of the Union of Construction and Allied Trades and Technicians, is far from being a died-in-the-wool reactionary who collaborates with the employers or a man who lives in permanent fear of the top union leadership.

Barlow has lined up with the Birmingham militants on many issues. He believes that the abilities of the militants had to be harnessed if the union was to grow instead of decline in the face of an all-out challenge from the employers. He recently gave Socialist Worker an interview on his part in the movement.



BARLOW: undercut blacklist

or not to go along with them. I decided that I thought they were the lads who could help me build the union.

Of course I knew that there would be disagreements. But I felt we could sort these out between us. The regional committee of the union has been very good, giving lots of encouragement in the struggle to build the union.

The developments that have taken place are indeed down to the rank and file. But I believe that the work of organising the industry could not have been so successful without the full time officials.

What we have learned here is that if you build up a core of shop stewards and activists, then between us we can do anything. Official sanction for action can enormously strengthen your hand.

But then there are many, many situations where the initiative must come from below and you've got to be in a situation where people don't look around for official sanction as an excuse for doing nothing themselves in the first instance.

I wanted to be the regional secretary and to be honest there was no other way for me apart from appointment. I didn't come from one of the heavy voting areas and therefore the system of appointing officials helped me.

But there are real criticisms of the appointative system. If a man is unelected then to an important extent he is unanswerable. But I do not accept that saying all union officials must be elected full stop is an answer. It is a question of really making democracy work, of channelling militancy through trade union channels.

When I started out in Birmingham my main line of thinking was along administrative lines. When the merger with the Amalgamated Union of Building Trades Workers came in, it was announced that

there would be no replacement of their full time officials. So it was impossible to build with just full time officials as an organising basis. Nothing would have been possible without the group of militants.

Our recent victory in protecting Pete Carter, who Bryants sought to victimise out of the city's construction industry, has been a major step forward. Construction is difficult precisely because you can organise splendidly on one job, the job finishes and the organisation breaks up.

We can now give our stewards protection and this no longer happens. We have managed to undercut the whole system of blacklisting and victimisation here in Birmingham. The situation is becoming much more like factory-based industries where you can maintain trade union organisation over longer periods of time.

THREATENS

What is certainly true is that we are now managing to deal with the most pressing problems—trade union organisation, the lump, wages and the like. But there are many other questions that remain to be tackled in the industry—safety is one of the most important of those.

One thing that the struggle in Birmingham certainly has done is to consolidate the employers as never before. I'm sure they'd just love to see me out of the office I now hold. And there's plenty of others they'd look to get shot of. The fact of the matter is that they see any normal trade union activity as red revolution because it threatens their power.

We've always owed Bryants a debt of gratitude. They create the situation time and time again where we can actually move forward. The big national contractors lie lower. They are managed by tacticians who feel perhaps that they got away with it for a long time and should come to terms. I've no love for them though. They're just more intelligent.

I'm not particularly a political animal. But I do see the need for true socialist control and planning of industry in the widest sense.

The employers certainly don't separate their organisations and activities from politics. And I don't think you can in any way seek to keep politics out of trade unionism.

WHEN I first came into this job in January 1971 there were exactly two organised construction sites in Birmingham. Our membership was almost entirely in the engineering factories and in local authority departments. Now after all the struggles of the past two years there are over 100 sites in Birmingham organised with shop stewards.

Before this job I was a district official with the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (the biggest part of the merged union) in the north west Midlands. I was very mild and very non-militant. I believed everything could be dealt with by negotiating—I was, I thought, a fine negotiator.

Given the terrible state the union was in, I had to decide on what basis it was possible to go forward. I had heard the name of one or two of the younger militants and something of their wild antics.

I felt that this was overstated and had to decide who could actually help in building the union. I had to decide whether

NIRC boycott wins

JUST BEFORE Christmas the British press elected two new members to its gallery of heroic patriots and freedom fighters—James Goad and Joseph Langston.

Of the two, Langston was by far the more worthy candidate. He was a man determined to exercise his 'right' to leave the union, hold on to his job and take on the dreaded closed shop, which incidentally secured his wage rates and conditions.

Goad had two faults. Although a scab, he insisted on being a scab with a union ticket. And though deeply religious, he named his price for doing a disappearing act—a mere £30,000.

Despite these slight blemishes the National Industrial Relations Court backed Goad to the hilt and levied massive fines against the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers which boycotted the hearings. Around 750,000 workers struck in defence of the union.

Last week the other hero bit the dust. NIRC president Sir John Donaldson ruled that Langston, as an individual worker, could not bring a complaint of unfair industrial practice against the AUEW.

With the AUEW boycotting the NIRC, the court had to make Langston's employer, Chrysler, a party to the case. Chrysler's QC, Mr R Harvey, successfully argued that only the company had the power to bring any such case before the

NIRC. And the company did not chose to do so.

'We live very much in the real world,' he said. 'An individual worker bringing this kind of action does not have much to lose. While, judging even from the history of this court, an employer has a great deal to lose.'

The section of the Industrial Relations Act under which Langston was proceeding is in fact fairly clear in saying that it is the employers' freedom the Act is concerned about so far as complaints of unfair industrial practices are concerned.

Remarkable case

A scab like Langston would only have a remedy against the union through the civil courts in an action for intimidation or the like. He would have a remedy against the employer if they sacked him as a result of union pressure. But he would only have the basis for a complaint of unfair dismissal. If he succeeded he would be 'compensated' and he need not be reinstated.

What is remarkable about this case is that it really points up the fact that the law of the land is not something fixed outside and above the balance of forces on the industrial battlefield.

If the state had really wanted a confrontation with the unions over Langston then some obscure re-interpretation could have been put on the section of the Act that seemed to prevent

Langston complaining against the union. And the union would have been done and fined.

The major factor preventing this was the stance of the Chrysler workers and of the AUEW as a whole. In addition of course there was the whole series of defeats inflicted on the Tories in trying to implement their legislation last year.

Given this situation there were major advantages to the government in letting the Langston action proceed as long as possible through the NIRC. This, it was hoped, would keep the heat on the AUEW engineering section leadership and help to get them to abandon the principled stance the union was taking.

Alas, for the employing class, that strategy has not been a success. The AUEW has held firm. The right wing in the union has been unsuccessful. And the strategy of boycotting the NIRC has been vindicated yet again.

After Langston's case was dismissed last week, the press was strangely silent. For in a twisted way, the dismissal of Langston's action proves what militant trade unionists and socialists have said all alone.

The Industrial Relations Act has nothing to do with freedom. With one exception—the employers' freedom. And as the Langston case also shows, unity and determination will prevent Chrysler and others going anywhere near the NIRC. Tory freedom is strictly for the employing class. For scabs and dupes like Langston, it fails to materialise.

THERE ARE IS BRANCHES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS

- SCOTLAND**
Aberdeen
Cumbernauld
Dundee
Edinburgh
Dunfermline/
Cowdenbeath
Glanrothes/Kirkcaldy
Glasgow N
Glasgow S
Greenock
Stirling

- NORTH EAST**
Bishop Auckland
Durham
Hartlepool
Newcastle upon Tyne
South Shields
Spennymoor
Sunderland
Teesside E
Teesside W

- NORTH**
Barnsley
Bradford
Dewsbury
Doncaster
Grimsby
Halifax
Huddersfield
Hull
Leeds
Pontefract/
Knottingley
Scarborough
Selby
Sheffield
York

- EAST**
Basildon
Beccles
Cambridge
Chelmsford
Colchester
Harlow
Ipswich
Leiston
Lowestoft
Norwich
Peterborough

- NORTH WEST**
Barrow
Blackburn
Bolton
Burnley
Crewe
Kirkby
Lancaster
Manchester
Merseyside
Oldham
Preston
Rochdale
Salford
St Helens
Stoke
Stockport
Trafford
Wigan
Wrexham

- WALES and SOUTH WEST**
Bath
Bristol
Cardiff
Exeter
Gloucester
Llanelli
Mid-Devon
Neath
Plymouth
Swansea
Swansea Valley

- GREATER LONDON and HOME COUNTIES**
Bexley
Camden
Chertsey
Croydon
Ealing
East London
Enfield
Fulham and
Hammersmith
Hackney and
Islington
Harlesden
Harrow
Hemel Hempstead
High Wycombe
Horseley
Houslow
Ilford
Kilburn
Kingston
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
North Herts
Paddington
Reading
St Albans
Slough
Tottenham
Walthamstow
Wandsworth
Watford
Woolwich

- MIDLANDS**
Birmingham NE
Birmingham S
Coventry
Derby
Dudley
Leamington and
Warwick
Leicester
Loughborough
Mid-Derbyshire
Milton Keynes
Northampton
Nottingham
Oxford
Rugby
Warley
Wolverhampton

- SOUTH**
Brighton
Canterbury
Crawley
Eastbourne
Guildford
Portsmouth
Southampton

Voting for a change

LAST WEEK'S by-election results should be taken seriously by the International Socialists. They confirm the pattern which emerged from the Sutton and Cheam and Uxbridge contests that the electorate no longer find Tweedledee an attractive alternative to Tweedledum.

Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has not benefited from the Tory government's unpopularity, and this is clearly causing concern to the Labour leadership. Harold Wilson's recent party political broadcast was full of dire warnings about the dangers to our 'democratic system'

from the extremists and militants.

Up to now this political crisis has been largely contained within traditional channels. It has been the Liberals, the Nationalists and Independents like Taverne who have reaped the anti-Tory and anti-Labour votes.

But working people are being squeezed too hard to be satisfied for long with such an insipid alternative. Whole sections of the working class are being driven down below the poverty line by the attacks of this government, and it is not just living standards that are taking a hammering.

Political ideas and expectations of the last two generations are beginning to break up, but the development is uneven. The success of the Tory freeze so far is a tribute not only to the cowardice of the trade union leadership but also to the grip that reformist ideas still have upon the working class. The will to fight back is undoubtedly there but workers are confused by arguments of 'law and order' and 'sectional interests'.

Somehow the International Socialists have to impress their ideas and organisation on a larger working-class audience, and I believe that parliamentary by-elections offer just such an opportunity.

If an IS candidate, campaigning on a clear revolutionary programme, could get something like the vote secured by the National Front in Rochdale and Uxbridge it would provide a boost towards the building of IS into a significant revolutionary party.

If, however, we only succeed in attracting the usual fringe vote we will lose nothing except our deposit.—DAVE PEERS, Newcastle.

Letters to Socialist Worker are welcomed on all topics. They must arrive first post Mondays and should be written or typed on one side of the page only. Letters may be cut for space reasons. Please keep your letters short so that we can print as many as possible.

Taverne morass

WHAT a morass of apolitical thinking comes from the election of Dick Taverne. Taverne goes against the general opinion that people did not want to go into the Common Market and still gets re-elected. He refused the general discipline of a majority and yet expects workers to accept the general discipline of a wage freeze. I hope that the people of Lincoln realise that the general discontent they sought to express, is one of discontent with parliamentary system, which sustains the idea of 'elect me to do as I like'.—G WRAY, Leeds.

Telly strength

'SHOUTING back at the box' is a cheap and easy form of participation but as Tom Clarke says our record is not good.

Several years ago there was a programme on the history of negro protest called 'Freedom Road' on ITV. Hoping to encourage this unexpected trend I phoned in and was told the switchboard had been jammed with complaints the rest of the evening.

Perhaps we could test our strength by asking the BBC for repeats of good plays such as 'The Lump', and 'The Big Flame' by Jim Allen and 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists' by Robert Tressall. We could also ask for more appearances of Paul Foot on the radio. One day we might even get the words of Alex Glasgow's songs in Socialist Worker if we persevere.—JULIE FANCY, South London.

Ancient and modern

WHEN an election is imminent we hear what the parties would do for the 'old, disabled and sick.' Then we are quickly forgotten until there is a gas or hospital strike when once again we hear about the 'old, disabled and sick.' Workers use their strength to create chaos to get a reasonable wage. If they did not, their wages would be £6.75 a week. If anybody doubts this they should ask their old, disabled and sick.—JACK MARTIN, Huddersfield, Disablement Group.

LETTERS

Wages and the mature viewpoint...

AS a regular reader, may I offer one criticism of Socialist Worker? It is one of the most worthwhile, informative papers around, and I only wish it could come out daily. But I do feel that issues are often portrayed immaturely, as protests against misdemeanours of capitalists, when the whole point is that the capitalist system is untenable in its very essence. To deviate from this is dangerously naive, leading to frequent awkward shifts as local demands are met and moral criticisms conceded—leaving capitalism flourishing unscathed.

Central to revolutionary socialism is the understanding that capitalism is not merely unjust and exploitative, but is ultimately unworkable and destructive of human potential. The struggle is to destroy not just wicked capitalists, but the system which, irrespective of the natures of particular capitalists, cannot, by its own nature, fulfil the lives of those employed in it. Heath etc must go—not because they are malicious men grinding the faces of the poor, but because they uphold this system. If they also happen to be malicious men, etc, that is a side-issue.

Again, I feel your line on wage-claims could even become absurd. You have always supported every wage claim as being justified in capitalist society terms—ie, as a fight for a 'reasonable wage'. But instances are already arising where this view of strikes is plainly insufficient: demands where a 'reasonable wage' already exists (which will increase) clearly show that we must support strikes as expressions of socialist consciousness, not just as instruments of gaining a living wage.

This latter view also neglects the likelihood that capitalists would shell out enough to appease underpaid workers if they could only stay in power by so doing. That capitalism possesses this much flexibility should be obvious by now.

But what capitalism cannot do is to abolish itself and institute full workers' control. The crucial failure of capitalism is not that it cannot provide material needs. It is that it can only work by exploiting the increasing alienation of man and by preventing working people from ever achieving a fulfilled existence.

This alienation can only be overcome by the disappearance of capitalism, replaced by a genuine workers' democracy, where meaning is restored to productive activity and to all life-experience: this is the level of awareness at which political activity must be conducted.

Politics is about the whole of life, and a man's consciousness of the society and his position in it comes from experiencing social relationships, family life, the arts etc, as well as his work situation.

Strikes must be supported as one part of the defiance against the power structure that condemns the worker to this position. It seems a failing in a revolutionary socialist paper not to show that strikes have implications far beyond the actual wage claims under dispute.—CHRIS SMALL, North London.

How the snivelling mill hand grovelled to the kindly King

J R CLYNES, PC, MP, DCL, would have welcomed even insults from one as blue-blooded as Paul Foot. Read the following description for snivelling deference and spinelessness from a 'representative' of the working class. The date is 1924 and the first minority Labour Government has been elected.

'King George sent for Mr MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, J H Thomas and myself accompanied our leader to Buckingham Palace to that fateful interview of which we had dreamed, when a British Sovereign should entrust the affairs of the Empire to the hands of the people's own representatives.

'As we stood waiting for His Majesty, amid the gold and crimson turn of Fortune's wheel, which had brought Mr MacDonald the starveling clerk, Thomas the engine driver, Henderson the foundry labourer and Clynes the mill hand, to this pinnacle beside the man whose forebears had been kings for so many generations. We were making history.

'We were, perhaps, somewhat embarrassed; but the little quiet man whom we addressed as "Your Majesty" swiftly put us at our ease. He was himself rather anxious, his was a great responsibility, and I have no doubt that he had read the wild statements of some of our extremists, and I think he wondered to what he was

Law and order—the sad truth

ONE reason for the detention of Pakistani prisoners-of-war is the unwillingness of Pakistan to recognise Bangladesh.

This detention gained renewed publicity after the deaths of the two Pakistanis in London who were armed with knives, an acid spray and toy guns. Most of the shots were fired to keep heads down while positions were taken up. Surely to copy or ape the Black September organisation is to risk one's life, even in dear old London.

Your leader on the subject (3 March) seems to assume the existence of a Utopia where law and order, even of a socialist, are unnecessary and where 'armed' hold-ups be treated as charades.

Labour MPs are 'contemptible scoundrels', not for the reasons you gave, but on the basis of an exact analysis. But the terminology you gave is not of today and takes us back to Lenin who himself suffered an assassination attempt in post-revolutionary and 'socialist' Russia.—ANIL DUTT, West London.

Praise be to IS!

AS a non-IS reader (I belong to the Labour Party) I must add my praise to that of other readers who are not members of the organisation. Your paper is one of the best left-wing journals around, and I wish you continued success. I find your pieces on the arts interesting, especially on pop music.—MRS CAROL WAIN, Twickenham, Middlesex.

In 1960 the council tenants in St Pancras, London, fought against a rent scheme which contained many of the elements which have now been incorporated in the Housing Finance Act. The story of that fight is told in this pamphlet by Dave Burn, with an introduction by Hugh Kerr of the Harlow Tenants Federation.

Rent Strike: St Pancras 1960

Dave Burn
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Dead man's warning

THE review of Haffner's 'Failure of a revolution' (24 February) headlines Eugen Levine's 'We communists are all dead men on leave.'

These words formed part of his brave speech before being sentenced to death by a Munich court for his part in the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919. This quotation should, however, be taken with great caution as, divorced from the surrounding historical events, it may tend to foster reckless and/or elitist attitudes as was shown in the period following the execution.

The conviction of being 'men on leave from death' may prove of little use to a militant fighting long battles in a country where oppression takes forms less final, less crude, but sometimes no less effective than the death penalty.—J TURPIN, East London.

Now for something really different

THE FLOATING POUND is doing Britain proud, according to the Sunday Express editorial last weekend. In case readers doubted it the paper had news elsewhere about the 50,000 gasless homes in the Midlands, the stoppages of hospital workers, the locomen's work-to-rule, and the threat of action by the miserably-paid London teachers.

The paper's main story was the frantic eve-of-Budget BATTLE FOR £ BY BARBER, which threatened all the calculations that the hapless and hopeless government had made. There was no suggestion from the editorial, of course, that the situation was the Tory government's fault.

Neither did the News of the World or the Sunday Mirror, whose pages also told of the woeful plight of the pound.

Incredibly, while the Tory leaders were reeling from one crisis to another, the News of the World, ever anxious to put the boot in, devoted its main headline to the question: WHAT'S WRONG WITH LABOUR?

To answer they trundled out Lord George-Brown, who complained that the Labour leaders weren't interested in what he had to say. The possibility that their few million readers would be similarly unenthusiastic over the moanings of a superannuated Labour hack appears to have been ignored by the News of the World's editor.

In the interests of their legendary objectivity and impartiality the Sunday Express and the News of the World had pre-Budget bore-ins from ex-Tory Ministers Reginald Maudling in the Express and Edward DuCann in the News of the World.

The fact that what they had to say could have only an accidental relevance, in view of the latest writhings of capitalism, did not deter these two great bastions of the Sunday press from printing the rubbish anyway.

After all it had been commissioned and written ages earlier, at great expense, and could therefore not be wasted merely because of another currency crisis.

Eager Beaver

THE Sunday Express betrayed its vicious attitude to censorship in an editorial on the killing of 12-year-old Kevin Heatley by troops in Newry.

The troops who gunned down the unarmed boy claimed that they were fired on. Television newscasts carried interviews with a witness who swore that the soldiers were the only ones who fired. But more damning than this was that a tape-recording was being made at the time of an interview, and the recording, played to reporters, carried the sound of only one shot.

All this is dismissed by the Sunday Express as 'IRA propaganda' and the work of their 'hordes of collaborators'.

But the great defender of press freedom, the Sunday Express, goes further and suggests that the BBC and commercial television companies should not screen such evidence.

If there is an explosion in Belfast it is the work of the IRA, regardless of the evidence. If a little boy is shot by a trigger-happy bunch of troops it is an IRA plot, regardless of the evidence.

The Sunday Express, of course, campaigns against propaganda. It stands fearlessly for the truth and the unfettered freedom of the news media... unless, of course, the truth and freedom of expression don't suit the Sunday Express.

Ron Knowles

Sit-in students seek union backing

STUDENTS at Thames Polytechnic in South London have now been occupying their college for more than a week. They are protesting at the low level of student grants and hope that their militant action will stimulate other colleges to follow suit.

In the last 10 years students' grants have fallen in value by about 25 per cent. And the grant means tested, so that parents earning more than £22 a week are supposed to contribute to the cost of their children's upkeep. Many working-class families just cannot afford to.

The situation of students is aggravated by the shortage of housing. Students are forced into a competitive housing market because of the refusal of the government to build accommodation. Landlords then force working-class families out of houses and replace them with students who are forced to pay high rents to live in crowded conditions.

Firm Links

Because of this Thames Poly students have raised the joint demand for grants and housing, and have gone out of their way to establish firm links with local working-class organisations. The students' union has participated in tenants campaigns and has put its resources at the disposal of both national and local strikes by workers in the area.

Local organisations of the labour movement are now responding. Messages backing the students have been received from Greenwich Trades Council, Greenwich Tenants and Residents Campaign Committee, and the Greenwich Labour Party.

Over the past few days the students have written to trades councils, trade union branches, shop stewards' organisations and tenants associations.

At the same time the students' union has been establishing links with other colleges throughout Britain, urging them to join in a campaign over the grants issue that is much more militant than the purely token action so far taken by the official, Communist Party-dominated, leadership of the National Union of Students.

NUT LEADERS TRY TO STIFLE DEBATE

by SW reporter

THE EXECUTIVE of the National Union of Teachers showed how out of touch it was with its own London members last week. It closed down a 2000-strong protest meeting in the Central Hall Westminster on Tuesday rather than let the feelings of 90 per cent of the teachers present be expressed.

Since then it has been feeding the press with deliberately biased reports of what took place. During the strikes by large numbers of teachers for

their claim of £300 a year on the London allowance, the executive has done little to organise any activities. When Lambeth and Wandsworth branches took the initiative in organising a demonstration in Hyde Park, it approved—until it heard that other groups of workers, such as civil servants and technical teachers were being invited to attend.

The executive's line is that the teachers' claim

must be separated off from that of other workers facing the freeze. Nevertheless, a march of 3000 set off for an officially organised evening meeting.

More than 2000 teachers crowded into the meeting. An official motion patting the executive on the back was read out and two Communist Party members of the executive—including the union's vice-president, Max Morris—made trite speeches. They called for a fight for 'free negotiations' and spoke of putting pressure on parliament. There was no mention of the claim for £300.

Then questions were invited from the floor. A succession of speakers demanded to know whether there could be amendments to the official resolution or alternative resolutions. In particular, there were references to a motion in the name of Wandsworth NUT

The union president, in typical headteacher fashion, simply refused to permit any such expression of feeling, even though it was clear that the overwhelming majority of teachers present were opposed to the timid and dictatorial approach of the platform.

MAJORITY

A questioner from the floor asked all those who favoured hearing the Wandsworth resolution to stand up: a clear majority of those present did so.

The president and the executive members were determined to ignore such feelings. In their attempts to deny the meeting its basic democratic rights, they denied the microphone to Eric Porter, one of the officials of the Wandsworth teachers.

And when he tried to read out the resolution through a megaphone that had been used to organise the earlier demonstration, he was physically set upon by several executive supporters.

Rather than let the large number of teachers express their feelings the executive members then decided to end the meeting. They left the platform and had all the lights in the hall turned off.

Members of the Rank and File Teacher group who were present restored order in the hall. They continued the meeting using light from cigarette lighters and, by an overwhelming majority the Wandsworth resolution, was passed calling for strikes into and beyond the government's Phase Two deadline.

Since then the executive has been attempting to use the events at the meeting as a pretext for witch-hunting Rank and File supporters. Among those who has helped to orchestrate this campaign is leading Communist Party member Max Morris.

Right-wing union boss bows out

by Geoff Woolfe

THE RESIGNATION last week of Walter Anderson, General Secretary of the National and Local Government Officers' Association, must have surprised those who thought that the largest white collar union in the country was all set to toe the government's line on the pay freeze. But the writing has been on the wall for some time.

Anderson was appointed in 1957 at a time when NALGO was outside the TUC, outside the mainstream of the trade union movement, and controlled by the right wing from top to bottom. The Tories' clampdown on wages in 1961 helped NALGO into the TUC in 1964 by a ballot of the membership.

But Anderson's attitude to NALGO's role in the labour movement was totally at odds with the growing shift towards trade unionism among the membership. Successive annual conferences voted against any form of incomes policy.

Anderson and the right wing always thought that NALGO should co-operate



even after the 1966 Labour government freeze blocked a pay rise for local government workers for nine months.

Since then, Anderson and his supporters have acted as nothing more than agents for the Tory government in the trade union movement. In 1971, at the Croydon and Blackpool TUC conferences, Anderson 'threatened' to take NALGO out of the TUC if the union decided to register.

He was in favour of registration at a time when the members voted against the Act at annual conference. At the TUC General Council, he voted against the

one-day strike called in defence of the jailed dockers last year. He also voted against the expulsion of registered unions from the TUC, but at last year's congress NALGO's delegates voted for expulsion.

Recently, Anderson's statements on the freeze have been completely out of touch with majority opinion in the union. He has shown himself to be in favour of collaboration with the Tories' attacks on the working class by voting for union representation on the Pay and Prices Boards.

But the recent decision of the national executive of NALGO not to co-operate was too much for him. Coupled with the Metropolitan District resolution calling for a General Strike to break the freeze, the right wing in the union have been shaken rigid.

Pay Board job?

There are a number of lessons to be learnt from Anderson's resignation. He has shown how far the trade union bureaucracy are prepared to go in support of the ruling class. Anderson himself, the day before he announced his resignation, was appointed to sit on a Royal Commission on compensation for victims of violent crimes. It is not inconceivable that he will sit on the Pay Board later in the year. After all, he would not be the first union general secretary to sit on a Tory government body.

But the fight for the right policies and actions in NALGO will not end with one right-winger's downfall. There will now be a move from a number of areas to delay a new appointment in the hope that a motion to be put at the June annual conference calling for the election of the General Secretary and other officials will be carried.

Meanwhile, at a local level, more NALGO branches are taking part in public sector alliances against the freeze, particularly in London. The union leadership so far have failed to express any more than verbal opposition, but in contrast the rank and file NALGO Action Group is calling for immediate plans to be drawn up for industrial action in each section of the union as part of this year's pay claims.

WHAT'S ON

Copy for What's On must arrive by first post Monday morning. Charges are 5p per line, semi-display 10p per line. CASH WITH COPY. No insertions without payment. Invoices cannot be sent.

IS MEETINGS

WANDSWORTH IS SOCIAL
Friday 9 March
Live entertainment, disco, bar
The Wheatshaf, opp Tooting Bec tube
Admission 25p 8pm-12 midnight

NW Region IS Tenants Conference
Sunday 11 March, 2-6pm
Liverpool Polytechnic
Clarence Street entrance

STRET FORD IS
Socialist Worker Benefit Concert
Alex Glasgow, Roy Bailey
and full supporting bill
Dog and Partridge, Chester Road, Old Trafford (by United football ground)
Friday 9 March, 8pm
Tickets 25p in advance from IS,
30p at door if any left
All proceeds to printshop fund

CHELMSFORD IS
public meeting
SMASH THE FREEZE
Speaker Paul Foot
Tuesday 13 March, 8pm
Chelmsford Civic Centre

LEEDS IS
Public Meeting
The Communist Party: Past and Present
Speaker: Ray Challinor
Thursday 15 March, 8pm
Trades Hall, Upper Fountain Street

PADDINGTON IS
public meeting
SMASH THE FREEZE
Speakers: Mike McGrath, CPSA
Graham Jones, NUPE
John Palmer, NUJ
Friday 9 March, Marquis of Clanricade,
Southwick Road, W2 (off Praed St:
tubes: Edgware Road and Paddington

L.LANELLI IS public meeting: Beat the Freeze. Speakers from NUM and CPSA AUEW building, Queen Victoria Street, 7.30pm, Monday 12 March.

LEAMINGTON IS public meeting: George Peake (UCATT) on Revolutionary movement in Southern Africa. Tuesday 13 March, 7.30pm, Prince of Wales, Warwick Street.

READING IS public meeting: Smash the Freeze. Speaker Tony Cliff, Tuesday 13 March, 7.45pm, AUEW Hall, 121 Oxford Road, Reading.

LONDON REGION IS lectures: Meaning of Marxism and the Struggle for Socialism. Friday evenings, 7.30-9.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (3 mins from Holborn tube). Friday 9 March: Nigel Harris on the Underdeveloped World and the Chinese Experience. Friday 23 March: Stephen Marks on the Nature of imperialism and the anti-imperialist struggle today.

OTHER MEETINGS

SOCIALIST MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
Day Seminar: Health Care, Social Needs, and Educational Requirements for Children. Sunday 25 March, 10am-5pm. Assembly Hall, Unity House, Euston Road, London NW1.

YORKSHIRE INDOCHINA SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE
Speakers: Tariq Ali, Lek Hor Tan (representative from the National United Front of Cambodia), Malcolm Caldwell, trade union speaker
Saturday 10 March, 10am to 7pm
Tickets 10p from La Park Hole, Harehills Avenue, Leeds 8

GREENWICH tenants and residents campaign committee: Join miners, Manchester Action Group and Clay Cross Councillor in high rent protest march from Blackheath War Memorial, Saturday 10 March, 2pm to Kingsman Parade, Woolwich for public meeting.

WEST LONDON Anti-Internment League Social, Kings Head, Fulham Broadway, Friday 16 March, 8-12pm. Disco-Bar, Admittance 30p.

NORWICH weekend 10-11 March conference 'Inco-China: After the cease-fire, what next? Speakers from IS, IMG, CP, CFGB, Tricontinental and AREAS. University of East Anglia, Weekend ticket 50p (films included). Free floor space. Further information, R Manners, c/o Students Union.

MANCHESTER United Trade Union Demonstration against the Freeze Saturday 17 March, 2pm Meet at Albert Square Called by Manchester Trade Union Alliance Against the Freeze

BRITISH ARMY terror in Ireland: joint meeting of local branches of AIL, Clann and ICRA (NICRA). Thursday 22 March, Co-op Hall, Seven Sisters Road, 8pm.

NOTICES

IS BOOKS can now undertake to obtain any paperback under the following imprints within a week: Aldine, Armada, Arrow, Bantam, Bantam, Corgi, Coronet, Everyman, Faber, Fontana, How and Why, Knight, Lions, Mayflower, New English Library, Paladin, Pan, Pan Piper, Panther, Paperbac (fiction only), Peacock, Pelican, Penguin, Piccolo, Puffin, Signet/Mentor, Sphere, Tandem (not soft-cover library), World Distributors. Write to IS Books, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.

ROOMS available in West Kensington flat. Phone Mick: 385 3536.

FEMALE COMRADE, 23-year-old teacher, seeks own room in mixed flat or house in South West London. Ring 01-684 8339.

SPECIAL OFFER: Bids invited for two (incomplete) sets of back numbers of Socialist Worker. See SW grow from a monthly to a weekly, from 4 to 16 pages. Ideal for branch or individual library. All proceeds to printshop fund. Top bids received by conference (IS members only) win: Set one: from issue 75, Sept 1967 (missing nos. 99, 102-3, 105-113, 118, 126) Face value nearly £6. Minimum price £20. includes 14 SW Specials (engineers, builders rail, miners, Czech, Irish, students) 236 papers in all. Set two: from issue 76, Oct 1967 (missing 77, 80, 99, 102-3, 105-113, 118-9, 126, 130, 178). Face value £5.50, includes 10 specials, 218 papers total. Minimum £15: Contact Colin Barker, 19 Chalfield Road, Manchester 21.

FINE TUBES National Picket: Monday 19 March, 8am, London Region IS are organising a coach. For details ring Alan Woodward at 01-808 2369.

PLUTO PRESS urgently needs typists for manuscript work at home. Please contact Diane at 01-722 0141 during day.



GEC strike over sacked steward

SHOP FLOOR ORGANISATION at GEC Diesels in Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire, has been under attack for several months. Large amounts of work have been sub-contracted out while management has provoked trivial disputes. It even forced rate fixers into a two-week strike which threatened the works with lay-offs.

While piece workers' wages have risen sharply in the factory, job evaluated time workers' have stood still. And stewards have

SW Reporter

now collected sufficient information to indicate that management has been fiddling average earnings, affecting the wages of workers whose wages are determined by the averages to the tune of £5 a week.

Embarrassed by disclosure of this fiddle and the recent militancy of time workers, management resorted to the victimisation of machine shop steward John Deason last Friday.

Deason was sacked for telling an assistant supervisor to 'F-off'. But the management claims that his dismissal is not for the use of bad language but for 'the manner and intent'.

At a mass meeting on Monday the workers voted by an overwhelming majority to down tools until he is reinstated. Staff stewards have also agreed to press for John Deason's reinstatement and have indicated their willingness to recommend direct action by the staff if the management does not budge.

In spite of artificial work shortages (due to excessive sub-contracting) and the complication of other issues, most members recognise that this victimisation is a direct challenge to shop steward organisation and are prepared to fight all the way. The success of the time workers' claim and the challenge to average calculations depends on defending the strong shop stewards' organisation in the factory.

Donations and messages: George Harrison, 431 Downall Green Road, North Ashton, Nr Wigan.

Support grows for Fine Tubes

SUPPORT has been pouring in for the Fine Tubes national picket on Monday 19 March.

Among the 600 names that have already been received are delegates from Ansell's Brewery, Birmingham, the Rolls-Royce combine, the British Leyland Combine, the BAC combine, Yarrow shipyards on the Clyde, Chrysler Stoke, Ford Swansea and the South Wales executive of the miners' union.

The picket begins at 6.30 in the morning and many delegations will be travelling down over night. But the Fine Tubes strike committee points out that the locomen's industrial action will stop trains on the Sunday before the picket, and delegates should not rely on getting to Plymouth by rail.

For further details about the mass picket, contact Fine Tubes Strike Committee, 65 Bretonside, Exeter Street, Plymouth, Devon. Phone 0752 65459/65667.

Black R-R Derby move

A MEETING of the Bristol Engines Division combine of Rolls-Royce held in Birmingham agreed to black the Rolls-Royce Derby factory from 15 March if the firm does not stop using Fine Tubes products on the RB 211 engine.

Drivers will be instructed not to deliver or receive anything from Rolls-Royce Derby and the unions will cover any financial loss to them through collections.

It was stressed at the meeting that something drastic has to be done to bring attention to the Fine Tubes dispute. Derby should be as 'black' as any other factory using the tubing.

If the blacking were run properly it could halt production of the RB 211 and bring the Plymouth dispute to a head.

At Rolls-Royce Bristol the unions have been tightening up on blacking after repeated pressure from sections within the factory. A contingent of stewards and workers will be on the national picket and the district committee of the AUEW is organising a coach.

Far left polls well in French election

by Richard Kirkwood: Paris

RESULTS of the first round of the French elections gave the Communist Party 21 per cent of the votes and the Socialists and Left Radicals 20 per cent between them.

Groups to the left of the Communists, (the PSU and the revolutionaries) got 3 per cent between them. Adding in some independent lefts gives a total of more than 46 per cent for the left.

The conservative coalition, which is the outgoing government majority, have 36 per cent and the centre 'reformers' 13 per cent.

At first sight it might seem that the 'left' had won. But this is far from certain. The complicated two-round system together with the constituency boundaries which favour the right give a good chance of the conservatives retaining power. All depends on who withdraws in favour of whom, on the second ballot on Sunday.

Last Sunday saw the end of the elec-

SW Reporters

GAS WORKERS throughout the country have been stepping up their strike action over the last week. And they have been demanding that the main union involved, the General and Municipal Workers, gives a more positive lead in extending the scope of the strike.

A conference of gas men's representatives throughout the south west and South Wales took place in Cardiff last Thursday. It called for an all-out national strike to cripple the country's gas supplies.

The union's regional secretary, Gordon Reeves, said afterwards that the conference had passed unanimously a resolution stating that it was the duty of the GMWU national executive to provide clear leadership.

In the North East the men have extended their strike for a further week. They want to shut down town gas plants completely and they have demanded that the union executive gives them permission to do so by the weekend.

ESSENTIAL

In Chesterfield, where the gas strike is entering its second week, workers have stressed that it is essential that the union spreads the strike. Mick Wilson, a member of the local strike committee, told Socialist Worker that it was vitally necessary for civil servants, gas workers and hospital workers to unite in the fight against Phase Two.

In Southampton the men are coming out in a series of one-day strikes. These plus the overtime ban are already affecting industry in the area. The gas men have successfully hit the local Ford plant

The press has spread rumours that the action is not fully supported in the south. But in Southampton the strike is 100 per cent solid.

As one of the shop stewards said: 'The government propaganda machine has tried to split up the areas to give us the impression that some gas workers in some areas aren't pulling their weight. But the anger and dedication in the South is here as much as anywhere else.'

tion campaign of Lutte Ouvriere (Workers' Struggle) and the Ligue Communiste. The results were quite cheering. In the 171 constituencies where Lutte Ouvriere put up candidates they got an average of 2.31 per cent.

The Ligue's 91 candidates seem to have got slightly lower percentages but nearly 200,000 people voted for Lutte Ouvriere and almost 300,000 for the two groups together. Some results were particularly significant such as the 2400 votes (3.27 per cent, at Montbeliard, a constituency dominated by the Peugeot car factory where the LO candidate is a well-known militant, or the 3.26 per cent, 3.24 per cent and 3.15 per cent in the three constituencies of the Cher department.

In general Lutte Ouvriere found that workers responded to finding that at last they had candidates who were concerned about their daily struggles and shared their doubts about a 'Left Union' which includes bankers and political opportunists

'Make it national'

call as gasmen step up fight



FIGHT BACK BY WELSH TENANTS

PONTARDAWE:-280 tenants in the area with arrears of more than £10 have now been threatened with court action. Under the Housing Finance Act this could lead to attachment of earnings.

And the South Wales council is preparing further rent increases. A treasurer's report to the council in January spoke of increases for April of 50-70p.

But the tenants are fighting back. Four Labour councillors who opposed implementation of the Rents Act are refusing to pay any increases, and one of them, Jack Mairders, told a 70-strong meeting of tenants that 'the fight must go on'. He criticised his fellow councillors who had decided 'to feed tenants to the wolves of Zurich'-the property speculators who took 65p out of every pound paid by the local tenants.

South London tenants to stage rents march

TENANTS in Greenwich, South London, will be demonstrating against the Housing Finance Act this Saturday. The march, which will be led by the Kent miners' band, will leave Blackheath War Memorial at 2pm to march to Woolwich via Charlton.

CAMDEN tenants marched through several council estates in the No. London borough on Sunday urging tenants not to pay rent increases due this week. The demonstration was organised by tenants from St Silas estate and the Camden Federation of Tenants.

Speakers urged tenants not to pay the 85p a week increase and to join pickets outside the local rent office. Jack Fireston of Camden Community Tenants linked the struggle with price increases. 'Not to pay the increase,' he said, 'is part of our fight against inflation.' At present the council collect £3,500,000 in rent. By contrast it pays out £5,250,000 in interest charges money lenders.



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Tories set signals for big rail clash

THE GOVERNMENT and the British Rail Board are still as determined as ever that the train drivers' and guards' claim for an adequate wage structure and compensation for higher speeds, heavier loads and longer distances should not be met.

At the time of last year's crisis on the railways, the Associated Society of Loco Engineers and Firemen got an agreement from British Rail that their long-standing claim for such pay adjustments would be dealt with.

Since then British Rail has dragged its feet on the issue to such an extent that the claim is caught up in the freeze. In addition the government is insisting that it must be dealt with as part of the 1973 claim and negotiations.

The drivers' claim is a simple one. In 1965 the Labour government was busily peddling productivity deals. ASLEF along with the other rail unions signed such an agreement.

In the seven years since ASLEF membership has been reduced by 40 per cent to 27,000. The deal 'consolidated' the old system of bonus payments and drivers were paid on a timed scale for extra miles worked. In 1968 these payments were frozen at 44p an hour and have not changed since. If they were related to increases in basic pay, they would very nearly have doubled.

Over the same period, however, train drivers' conditions and responsibilities have changed drastically. Loading on goods trains has become heavier. Speeds have increased year by year until 100 mph is commonplace.

The driver is required to be able to handle more and more types of engines. And while technology is more sophisticated it also demands more resourcefulness and concentration.

Time and time again ASLEF leaders have pushed for serious negotiations and got nowhere. Meetings have been set up only as a result of direct action.

So far the union has staged two one-day strikes with another due this week.

Train drivers have also implemented a policy of general non-co-operation, refusing to work rest days until their claim for a £40 basic weekly wage plus proper mileage payments is met.

Water action

GLASGOW:-The next group of workers to confront the government over wages, the water workers, show signs of following the example of others in the public sector.

Following unofficial meetings of Scottish shop stewards, 600 men employed by the Lower Clyde Water Board have decided on a one-day stoppage from Friday. The main union, the General and Municipal, has attacked the stoppage and called on workers to wait for the next national meeting with the employers on 14 March.

STEP UP THE FIGHT

From page one

meetings, joint pickets and demonstrations must be organised NOW.

Strike committees of gas men, hospital workers and teachers must begin approaching other workers' organisations in their area for this kind of help NOW.

The most effective way of organising the necessary activity is through joint action committees of delegates from the different groups of workers engaged in the fight against the freeze. Such action committees should set up joint mass meetings and organise picketing.

And they should take the initiative in drawing other groups of workers into the struggle.

Finally, and crucially, other groups of workers like the miners with claims outstanding must insist that their unions take action now and do not wait while gas men and hospital workers fight on alone.

Socialist Worker

MASSIVE BACKING FOR HOSPITAL STRIKE

MORE THAN 240 hospitals all over Britain have now been affected by the hospital workers' strikes. The response of rank and file workers has surprised the union leaders who resisted calls for all-out action.

The press has been making desperate attempts

SW Reporter

to rouse public hysteria against the workers. But it does not seem to have had much success in persuading people that those who take home less than £15 for a full 40-hour week should have their pay increase restricted to a mere £1.84 by the government.

It is not only the ancillary workers in hospitals who are affected by the freeze. Negotiations on the nurses' claim end on 27 March. Already nurses who belong to the Confederation of Health Service Employees have voted four-to-one for industrial action.

In South Wales, 4500 ancillary workers were out on strike by last Friday, compared with 3000 planned by the unions. Strikes that were planned for one-day became three-day stoppages and laundry staff came out for indefinite stoppages.

In Swansea the unions have warned that if any attempt is made to use scab 'voluntary' labour, all emergency services will be withdrawn. Dustmen in the General and Municipal Union have refused to cross picket lines. In Monmouthshire, union leaders have reported difficulties in holding strikers back.

A total of 54 hospitals are now involved in the struggle in the North West. Solidarity has been magnificent, despite lack of leadership from local union officials.

In the United Manchester hospitals group, a flying picket has been organised to prevent scabbing and promises have been extracted from the management that no volunteers will be brought in and that nurses will not be instructed to do strikers' work.

At the geriatric hospital in Salford an administrator knocked down a woman picket. In response all the ancillary workers walked out for the day.

But weaknesses have been revealed in South Manchester. At Crumpsall hospital night workers walked out but day workers crossed the picket line.

SUPPORT

In Sheffield attempts have been made to use removal vans to carry dirty laundry to be cleaned in Stockport, but such efforts to undermine the strike are not being successful. Said Graham Laver, COHSE shop steward at the Northern General hospital: 'If the management puts a foot wrong, there'll probably be all-out action, feelings are that high. Mind you, it's nice to see the gaffer going round with a bag of laundry on his shoulder.'

Sheffield Trades Council has passed a motion of complete support for the hospital workers and undertook to make collections.

In Wolverhampton, strikers withdrew emergency services after an attempt to bring in non-union kitchen staff. The NUPE branch secretary, Tom Griffiths, said that 'the responsibility of the withdrawal of emergency services lies with management. We are not prepared to allow our fight for a living wage to be sabotaged by strike breakers.'

Ambulance men threatened to strike when an ambulance liaison officer used his day off to scab in the laundry. Within an hour management backed down and sent him home.

All major hospitals in the Tyneside area are affected by selective actions. At Newcastle General and St Nicholas the laundry staff are out. In the Royal Victoria Infirmary the general stores and all other ancillary workers are to be pulled out in a series of weekly two-day stoppages.

The laundry at Newcastle General handles washing from 11 other hospitals in the area.

The newspapers are raising a scare about the health dangers from piles of unwashed bedding, but Rose Markwick, COHSE steward in the laundry, pointed out that the laundry workers are exposed to these dangers every day. For handling soiled and foul linen, which can often contain infected razor blades, hypodermic needles and broken glass they get an extra 50p a week.

100 pipefitters employed on maintenance work at Esso's Fawley refinery in Southampton struck for the day on Monday in support of the hospital workers. The men, mainly members of the Electricians and Plumbers Union, have also collected more than £100 for the hospital workers' strike funds.

Building workers on Higgs and Hill's Southampton General Hospital site are also giving the hospital workers money. They decided in favour of a 25p per man weekly levy in solidarity.



Delegates to the special TUC Congress on Monday were confronted by a 1000-strong lobby outside Central Hall, Workers demanded all out strike action against the government.

Union chiefs behind Ford retreat

ON TUESDAY Ford workers at Swansea, the Halewood body plant and the KD plant and paint, trim and assembly A shift in the Dagenham complex returned to work after their three-day strike in support of the £10 a week pay claim, shorter hours and longer holidays.

The three-day strike was a retreat from the all-out struggle which Ford convenors decided on at their meeting in Coventry three weeks ago. The retreat was a direct result of the attitude of the official unions, particularly the two biggest the Transport Workers and the Engineers.

Ford has never been in a better position to meet the unions' wage claim in full. The company's profits are at record levels. But Ford's hand has been immensely strengthened by the Tory government and its wage freeze order that Ford workers must have no greater share in the massive

profits they produce.

Yet throughout the period when the Ford claim was coming to a head, the leaders of the AUEW and the TGWU said not one word about organising any official action.

By their silence, the union leaders left the way open for the gutter press to do its usual thorough job in trying to sow dissension in the ranks.

At the 14 December meeting of the Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee last year, the unions formally tabled their claim. And at that same meeting the trade union side gave a guarantee that they would not put out propaganda among the members in support of the claim.

A spokesman for Ford confirmed to Socialist Worker this week that this followed a request from Ford's labour relations boss, Bob Ramsey, for 'professional, businesslike negotiations this time round.' 'Replying for the unions,' the spokesman added, 'Moss Evans stated that it was not the unions' intention to publish the claim.'

By that time the Tory freeze had already been implemented. The outlines

of Phase Two and Three of the Tories' anti-working class incomes policy and anti-strike laws were clear for all to see. Ramsey knew that the big business newspapers would put the company's case anyway.

The strategy of the unions was to leave the matter completely in the hands of the convenors and shop stewards. On a national scale the Ford militants were not well enough organised to do the job themselves.

In the event the press and the lack of leadership from the unions combined to isolate the militants. Halewood, Swansea and two sections of Dagenham alone responded to the revised three-day strike call.

But the three-day strike has shown that important sections are willing to fight. They and militants elsewhere will have to fight to ensure that implementation of the overtime ban and selective strikes is not left up to this or that individual plant. National co-ordinated action is vitally necessary.

In so doing they can still build towards a situation where effective national strike action is a real possibility and the company and the government is really hit

PUBLIC SECTOR UNITY

NORTH LONDON:-Groups of public sector employees have been working together in the last week in an effort to unite their struggles. The Camden and Islington Public Sector Workers Action Committee has tried to achieve this with a united rally on Wednesday.

Five big hospitals in the area are out for week-long strikes and each of them will be considering whether to extend the action. After a mass meeting at Bar-

tholemew's hospital a delegation was sent to seek support from Smithfield meat porters.

Hospital workers will be visiting gas depots during the strike to canvass the idea of a joint demonstration. One gas steward said the idea would probably be supported if put to a stewards' meeting.

For details of the local public sector action committee, contact F Williams, 79 Bayham Street, NW13.

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