

# workers' ACTION

No.39

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10p

## THE CABINET AND THE CUTS

# NOW LET THE RANK & FILE DECIDE

## Call a Special Labour Party Conference

A SECTION of the Cabinet says it does not agree with the imposition of any more cuts. "There isn't anything left to cut anyway", says one Minister, according to the press.

One of the Cabinet 'Left', Peter Shore, the man closest to the council cuts of this past year, says: "The cry for very major cuts in public expenditure is part of a massive Conservative attack on the very foundation of the welfare state, and our present economic situation provides them with a smokescreen behind which to act — though it is far from providing them with any good reason for doing so".

Benn says it is time to operate what he calls 'The Alternative Strategy' — import controls, an enlarged role for the National Enterprise Board and a partial nationalisation of the big financial institutions.

**That is what they say. But what are they doing?**

*The Labour Cabinet plans more cuts and new wage curbs with IMF boss Witteveen [below] and backs them up with red-baiting. What about the voice of the rank and file? At Labour's last Conference and on November 17th [right] the call was "Change Course"!*



More to the point, what are they doing to see to it that the rank and file of the Labour Party, which, at its last conference, **voted against the cuts**, can have its say?

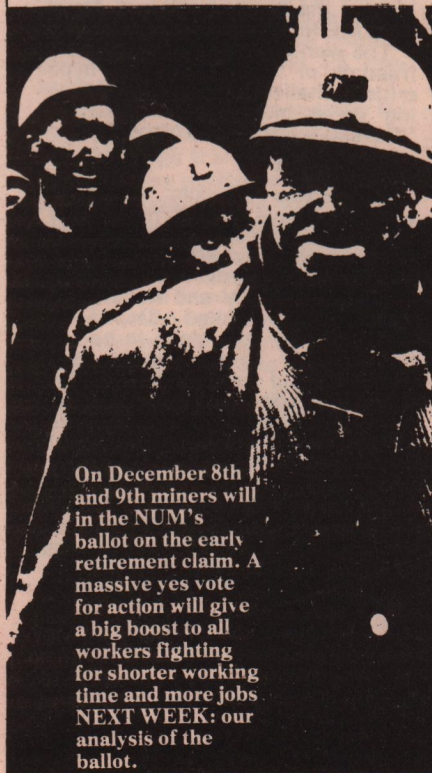
They should be leading the call for an Emergency Labour Party Conference to debate the

present economic situation. The Labour right wing, continuing its crusade against what it calls 'the extreme left', has a lot to say about 'democracy'. But any elements of real democracy — like letting the ranks of the Labour Party decide on policy — makes them shake with fear.

We say: come out into the open! Let the ranks of Labour have the facts and give them the power to decide. The lefts must lead a fight for an Emergency Party Conference now!



## PIT BALLOT



On December 8th and 9th miners will in the NUM's ballot on the early retirement claim. A massive yes vote for action will give a big boost to all workers fighting for shorter working time and more jobs NEXT WEEK: our analysis of the ballot.

## LEN MURRAY'S NEW WAGE CURB THREAT

LAST WEEK Len Murray used one of Labour's broken promises as an excuse to visit the Prime Minister. He told the press he was going to No. 10 to complain about the Government's abandonment of a promised plan to have statutory safety representatives in industry.

But when he came out the complaint about the broken promise was forgotten. Instead he made a clear commitment to **continue the social contract, in the form of new wage curbs.**

Meanwhile in Parliament Healey was talking about the need for a two- or even three-year 'stabilisation plan'. Here were all the signs of a carve-up: Healey recognised that the Cabinet would not agree to the £3 billion worth of public spending cuts recommended by the Treasury as blood-money for the IMF loan; at the same time he also realised that the social contract would not

survive so massive an attack on working class living standards.

So Healey moves towards a compromise, while on the other side Murray uses this 'concession' to sell another couple of years of wage freeze.

Everyone in the Cabinet knows that whatever the final deal, it must not cause the social contract to collapse. And so does the IMF. They don't want a blow-up in Britain. The British economy is near to blowing a fuse — but the world system of which it is a part can still afford to take some of the overload.

A deal exchanging the £3.9 billion loan for limited cuts and continued wage curbs would serve their purpose. That is Murray's view too, speaking as the voice of the working class while all the time vibrating to the pressures of international capitalism.

But rising unemployment and falling living standards will not serve for the working class.

Instead of wage curbs, we need, as a minimum, automatic cost-of-living pay increases, £1 for every 1% rise in a working-class-monitored cost-of-living index. No new wage limit!

Instead of throwing workers on the dole, working-time should be reduced. Each shop stewards' committee should calculate a work-sharing system, under workers' control and with no loss of pay, to stop any loss of jobs. No cuts; no productivity deals which reduce jobs.

Instead of allowing the needs of British capitalist recovery to control our pay and conditions, we should begin to fight to impose **workers' control** on these issues.

Murray's cap-in-hand approach of gratitude that the IMF didn't want to push the British welfare state to the point where the fuses blow, and therefore we should make an agreement to help out — this is the approach of a lackey of Callaghan and of the capitalist system the Callaghan government represents.

The power of the state, using taxes and the social services to manipulate real incomes, united with a union bureaucracy that is 'running scared', creates a solid class-collaborationist stranglehold. It is the passivity of the 'big battalions', of the organised working class, that completes the class-collaborationist circle.

The passivity is voluntary — and that is the break in the circle. The strength of the working class, if it wants to use it, is formidable and real. So formidable and real that its latent threat ousts the Treasury's version of the IMF demands.

We need to make it more than a latent threat — a real open threat, not only to the Treasury, but to Callaghan, Foot, Healey, and the policies they represent, too.

## NO HANGINGS IN DUBLIN

ANY DAY, the Dublin Supreme Court could announce that it has decided Noel and Marie Murray will hang. 200 people demonstrated in protest in London last Saturday, joining demonstrators all over Europe including Madrid. JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO STOP THE DUBLIN HANGINGS!



**A FEW YEARS AGO** Gerry Fitt remarked that Northern Ireland required its own Race Relations Act because they too had a colour discrimination problem, the one between orange and green. Now it has one.

Last week the Fair Employment [Northern Ireland] Act came into force. Religious and political discrimination in Northern Ireland is now supposedly illegal.

A whole series of laws from this government have set out to promote equal opportunity, fair employment practices, and industrial peace: the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974, the Employment Protection Act 1975, the Equal Pay Act [1970, but coming into force in late 1975], the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Race Relations Act 1976 [soon to come into force].

## Channels

None of them have succeeded in abolishing the discrimination and injustices they supposedly deal with. But success is not what they are about. These laws offer genuine concessions to the trade union bureaucracy and the conservative leaders of the black community, and try to direct conflict arising from sex, race, and class oppression into safe channels.

But the fraudulence of this legal abolition of discrimination is doubly clear in the case of Northern Ireland. A foreign power (Britain) is occupying the North-East corner of Ireland. The statelet maintained by the occupation not only frustrates the aspirations of the Irish people for a united and independent Ireland, it promotes, maintains, initiates and variously reproduces circumstances which necessarily discriminate in every sphere of life against Catholics. The Northern Ireland statelet is organised discrimination.

The Army of occupation systematically attacks the Catholic community, while leaving the Orange paramilitaries relatively untouched. The police force and bureaucracy are heavily Protestant-dominated. The Harland and Wolff shipyards labour force is almost entirely Protestant. In the Short Strand area in East Belfast (a Catholic enclave of 3000 people), there is 70% unemployment; and right in the middle of the area is the Sirocco Engineering works, employing just four Catholics.

## Nonsense

The idea that the British state which initiated and maintains this statelet can legislate its fundamental features away in an anti-discrimination law is nonsense.

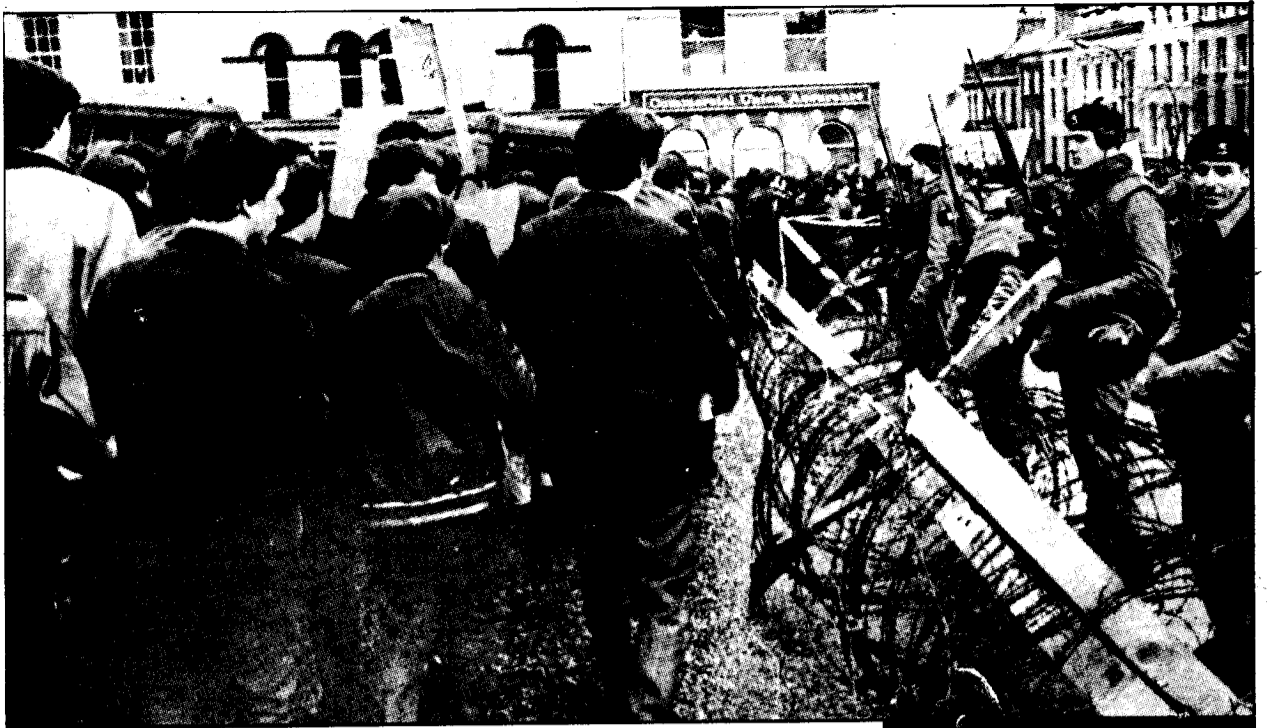
The Act has more in common with the old (1968) Race Relations Act than the new (1976) one and its partner the Sex Discrimination Act. The Fair Employment Agency for Northern Ireland which the Act establishes is not the 'strategic' type of body

the Equal Opportunities Commission or the new Commission for Racial Equality are. Its constitution and powers are more like the old, soon to be defunct, Race Relations Board (RRB).

The difference is that the Agency is to deal only with employment, whereas the RRB was supposed to cover housing, education, colour bars in public places, etc. as well. Complaints are not to be taken by individuals to industrial tribunals or courts; rather the complaint is referred to the Agency, which, like the RRB, attempts conciliation and decides what action it should take if conciliation fails.

Its range of possible action is as narrow as the old RRB, plus a few touches of black comedy. For instance, the Agency is, in time, to produce a declaration of commitment to the principle of equal opportunity, and seek signatures for it from various employers and trade unions. The Agency then keep a register of those who have subscribed to the 'Declaration of Principle and Intent' and issues Equal Opportunity certificates.

The Agency can punish people who do not practise equal opportunity but who have signed the declaration — after the failure of concil-



A future on the dole for these Catholic kids — in a set-up policed by Britain

## Northern Ireland's 'Fair Employment' Legislation

# CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES WITH A DUSTER

lation, of course — by removing their name from the register and cancelling their certificate. To be fair, of course, they have right of appeal to the Fair Employment Board, which is set up for the purpose.

The Board does consider other sorts of appeals, involving conciliation, declarations of intent, and so on, before the courts or fines are involved.

## Fluctuate

The prominence and importance of the Act will probably fluctuate with the gyrations of the various political groupings and the resulting balance of forces. It is even possible that just as the Industrial Relations Act in Britain became a dead letter while still officially a law, the struggle against the other IRA could produce a similar fate for this law.

The whole enterprise — dealing with sectarianism in Northern Ireland, individual case by individual case — is like trying to cleanse the Augean stables with a feather duster.

The Race Relations Board was an educative body, and so is the 'Fair

Employment Agency for Northern Ireland'. The Act comes in shortly after the publication by the government's review team of their report 'Economic and Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland', and is certainly seen as part of an attempt to promote 'equal opportunity' while tackling unemployment in Northern

Ireland. The Agency will be attempting to educate Northern Ireland employers, officials, trade union bureaucrats, out of their bigotry and prejudice, to nurture the moderate Protestant bourgeois/Catholic bourgeois bloc on which Britain's waning hopes of a docile Northern Ireland rest.

ALAN CARTER

## IMMIGRATION OFFICERS UNLEASHED AGAINST OVERSEAS STUDENTS

Against the background of a generalised attack on students in higher and further education, overseas students have been singled out for special attention.

Tuition fees have been increased massively. And in a recent draft circular, the Department of Education (DES) has got together with the Home Office to outline a scheme "to maintain an effective immigration control". The circular seeks the cooperation of college authorities to enforce this.

The fees are rising to £650 for

undergraduates, £750 for graduate courses. There is to be a 25% rise for non-advanced and part-time courses, which particularly affects colleges of further education.

There is, on the face of it, parity between what home and overseas students pay. But it is an illusion. Overseas students have to find the money themselves, while any students on a local authority grant have their fees paid. In their case, it is simply a matter of money being transferred from one public authority to another.

In a flag-waving variant of "squeeze the rich", demagogues like Tory Education spokesman Rhodes Boyson have called for fee increases as an assault on the "oil-rich". (Though they certainly wouldn't support a revolutionary assault on the oil sheikhs and Sultans by their oppressed peoples...)

But in any case, it won't be the few rich students who suffer: the increase is a small hurdle for them. The majority of overseas students come from under-developed countries. The real victims will be those whose families have borrowed money at extortionate rates in order to send their children for education overseas — an education that just wouldn't be available at home.

In many cases, overseas students are the mainstay of certain courses. To cut down their numbers will simply mean that many courses are closed down and cease to be available to anyone.

The Cabinet apparently also considered raising the fees for overseas students to over £2,000 (i.e. a "full cost" figure). This was rejected for the time being, but is by no means ruled out.

The DES/Home Office circular contains some astounding proposals. For example immigration officials (without exception the most ignorant and bigoted racials) are given sweeping powers to "check that the applicant's documentary evidence of his educational qualifications is valid; that it meets the requirements laid down by the college for the course of study the applicant proposes to follow and that the proposed course is not clearly beyond his capacity — having regard in particular to his command of English". This the official is empowered to do even after a student has been accepted for a course and despite the

fact that the same document (in an obligatory nod in the direction of decency) says that the Entry Clearance Officer is not to be made an arbiter of educational standards.

Another proposal is that students who fail exams during their courses should be deported!

Thus the machinery is being wheeled into place to keep out foreign students, or deport them as soon as they fail an exam or are late paying their fees.

There have been two different responses so far to this attack.

At Teesside and Middlesex Polytechnics, students occupied administration buildings in response to threats to deport fellow students and to get their college authorities to oppose the DES/Home Office Circular. But while Teesside and Middlesex led the way, the NUS leadership advised students against spreading the struggle on the grounds that it would be tactically wrong at the present time to 'offend the Labour Government'.

In a document misnamed "Fighting the Fee Increase", they suggest pressure on governors to hold the fees down, and if this fails, contingency plans to set up a hardship fund in response to the DES/Home Office circular, NUS profess to be "extremely concerned" about "aspects of immigration control". But nowhere does this concern run to a single statement of opposition to immigration control of students or anyone else; just "aspects" of it.

The message is clear: action like that at Middlesex and Teesside can win victories. The NUS approach will win nothing but a kick in the teeth.

Against any attempts to restrict access by overseas students to education in this country, all students must involve themselves in the fight-back. We should mobilise around the following demands:

- Scrap tuition fees — no fees for overseas students!
- No immigration controls! No deportations!
- Full mandatory grant for all students!
- No college closures, no cutbacks.
- The Broad Left NUS leadership must not be allowed to backslide. They must be forced to link up colleges that occupy in the fight for the above demands.

STEVE PUNTER

# Tottenham Weekly Herald RACISTS ON THE RUN

NORTH LONDON BRANCH of the National Union of Journalists last week endorsed complaints against three journalists from the "Tottenham Weekly Herald". Articles written by these journalists — one of them the paper's editor — constituted "material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race", the branch decided. These complaints now join several others against reporters, editors, sub-editors, and cartoonists, awaiting consideration by the Union's National Executive.

Action against racism in the "Tottenham Herald" was initiated with a meeting, organised by the Campaign Against Racism in the Media (CARM), between Herald journalists and some of their black and trade-union victims. The paper has also been picketed twice by local anti-racist groups. And at last the chapel (office NUJ branch) is beginning to crack.

Kevin Kavanagh, chief reporter and a target of the complaints, sought last week to commit the chapel to his defence, but a motion to that effect was soundly defeated. The chapel went on to pass a resolution acknowledging that some of the stories in question should have been handled differently, and asserting that the chapel as a whole had the responsibility of seeing that the NUJ race relations guidelines are observed.

Two members of the chapel have now joined CARM.

CARM's tactics of working through the NUJ machinery and at the same time mobilising the local community are proving to be highly effective.

Meanwhile, Kavanagh is having to look elsewhere for support. The "Daily Telegraph" last week devoted two columns to peddling the most lurid red-baiting stories, supplied by him, about CARM and the authors of the complaint. He is also angling for the backing of Hugh Rossi, Tory MP for Hornsey.

The war-cry, as usual, is "defend freedom of the press". This hypocritical challenge is every day taking on a more precise meaning: "Defend racism in the press".

The 'Press freedom' merchants will soon have bigger fish to fry. CARM has launched an open letter to the labour movement, aimed at keeping the National Front and National Party off TV and radio at the next general election, despite the fact that they may claim to be 'entitled' to air time under the Representation of the People Act. The open letter also urges media workers as well as blacks and labour movement organisations to consider following the example of CARM's activities around the "Tottenham Herald" whenever racist material appears in the local press. Organisations are asked to endorse the open letter and return it to CARM by 31st January next year together with any amend-

ments they would like to make.

"We/I the undersigned resolve to give full support to those media workers prepared to take a stand against racist propaganda. We urge National Union of Journalists branches and chapels and other media unions to hold meetings with labour movement and black representatives to discuss race coverage. We urge black and labour movement organisations, particularly Trades Councils, to initiate such meetings where an approach has not otherwise been made.

These meetings should insist that the media should not be used for the expression of overt racist views and policies, except in the context of exposing the nature of racism and fascism. Where the coverage is racist and the media workers unresponsive to discussion, actions such as pickets and demonstrations should be undertaken.

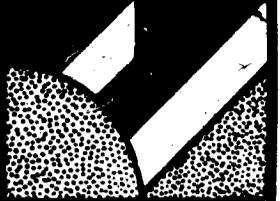
We also recognise the extreme danger posed by any future General Election, where the main fascist parties threaten to stand sufficient candidates to 'entitle' them to newspaper reports and party political broadcasting. Such a powerful means of incitement would place black people in extreme jeopardy.

We call on the labour movement, including Labour MPs, but particularly the Association of Broadcasting Staffs, the National Union of Journalists, and the Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians, to take all necessary action to prevent the National Front and National Party from turning the General Election into a vehicle for racist incitement.

Copies of the full open letter can be obtained from CARM, 13 Cleve Road, London NW6. JAMES RYAN

Let the Labour ranks decide

# CONFERENCE NOW!



THE MEN FROM THE I.M.F. have made their secret demands on the Labour Government. The Cabinet is divided, we are told, into three factions that are moving towards a compromise: Callaghan's cohort of right-wing faithful; the unlikely alliance of anti-deflationists said to be lining up behind Crosland, Lever, and Shirley Williams; and semi-lefts around Foot, Shore and Benn.

They are manoeuvring and juggling in order to find a deal that will satisfy both the IMF's demands for a further squeeze on the working class and the Labour Government's need (appreciated by the IMF) not to strain the 'Social Contract' too much.

Dr Witteveen, the IMF's managing director, has been in London to discuss the deal. The US Treasury chief, Mr Simon, has also been to London for consultations. And representatives of the British Treasury and Foreign Office have been to Washington and Bonn for further consultations.

Everybody is in on the act except for the members of the Labour Party themselves. Neither the National Executive Committee nor the Labour Party Conference has been consulted. Why not? There can be no doubt that this is one of the biggest political issues for a long time, and the decision should not be left to the Cabinet... even if the Cabinet's record were not so notoriously anti-working-class.

The November 17th march against the cuts had this to say to the Government: It's time to change course. Who can disagree with that? But the point is: change the course to what? and how to change the Government's course when the Government is clearly intent on following the course of Toryism?

We say the Government's course must be to break with the bosses and bankers, and take measures in the interest of the working class. But how? For the Government is not going to make that turn itself.

The answer lies firstly in direct action by the working class, including direct action against the Government when it does not change course — and also in the Labour Movement bringing maximum pressure to bear on the Government within the Labour Party itself. That means calling an Emergency Labour Party Conference. Let the ranks of the Labour Movement decide!

You can talk about democracy as much as you like, but there is none without at least an Emergency Labour Party Conference, with the delegates from both the unions and the constituencies mandated by the rank and file.

Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, and Labour Party General Secretary Ron Hayward last week all came out to attack the "infiltrators in the Labour

Party". Wilson, speaking in Batley, attacked what he referred to as "the extreme left" as "political asset-strippers". Callaghan, speaking the day before in Leeds, claimed, "There are too many of these people who have infiltrated this party already. Get them out!" And usually mild-mannered Ron Hayward added his weight to the band-wagon with the claim that the left were plotting to destroy the work of Labour MPs.

This is their response to the exercise of a little democracy in the Labour Party on the part of those activists who carry the weight of constituency organisation, who are the Labour Party in their localities. The real asset-strippers, of course, are those MPs like Wilson and Callaghan themselves who have in their respective Governments stripped the Labour Party of much of its only great asset, the support of the working class.

Let them explain the results of the 1970 election. Let them explain the mass exodus from the Labour Party during Wilson's 1964-70 term of office. Let them explain the results of the recent by-elections at Workington, Walsall North, and last week at Cambridge.

Wilson's solutions are to tighten the Labour Party rules to make MPs practically immune to attack from below. Callaghan's seems to be to lead a witch-hunt — perhaps he in-

tends to unearth National Party Organiser Reg Underhill's document, shelved last year by the NEC, investigating the activity of Trotskyists in the Labour Party.

As far as Hayward is concerned, it probably means that he is pushed by the right-wing opposition in Transport House which says that it will refuse to work with the newly-appointed National Youth Officer, Andy Bevan, whom the "Daily Express" describes as a "self-confessed Trotskyite".

As usual, the attack by the Labour Government on the working class goes hand in hand with an attack directly on the organisations of the working class. These attacks, like the press and Parliamentary campaigns for postal ballots in the unions and this current attack on the Labour Party left, are usually made in the name of "democracy".

Their method is simple: to oppose the active elements and rest on the broad support of the inactive and worst-informed.

The occasion for these attacks is, of course, the attempt to unseat more right-wing MPs after the successful campaigns against Reg Prentice in Newham North East and Frank Tomney in Hammersmith North. The latest target is Neville Sandelson, MP for Hayes and Harlington.

An additional motive may be that Wilson and Callaghan are

clearing away any obstacles that might stand in the way of a "government of national unity". That is not an option they want immediately; but they want to have it available.

Certainly this does seem to be part of the motivation behind Reg Prentice's pointless show of disavowing his Transport and General Workers' Union sponsorship. Once again the self-proclaimed democrats renounce all those things that tie them to the mass of the workers or the party activists. Stripped of his trade union sponsorship, what "assets" will Reg Prentice have to recommend himself?

The Labour Party is neither a party of democracy nor a party for democracy — and more's the pity. Certainly the only elements within it who are in favour of there being democracy within the Party are on the left.

In the case of "Tribune", a stand for democracy has been rare. In the case of the "Militant" tendency, it has been less rare, but far from frequent. Workers' Action is for the fullest possible democracy inside the Party. We say:

**Stop the witch-hunt!  
No bans against individuals and groups basing themselves on the interests of the working class!**

**For an Emergency Labour Party Conference! Let the membership decide!**

## REES DOES THE CIA'S GAG JOB

WHEN HOME SECRETARY Merlyn Rees mounted the platform at the Labour Party-TUC demonstration against racialism on November 21, he was intending to deliver a homily about the sanctity of freedom of speech. Perhaps luckily for him, nobody heard it: he was drowned out by supporters of American journalists Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball, whom Rees had announced a few days previously were no longer to be allowed to exercise that 'freedom' in Britain.

The deportation orders against these two journalists show more than the depths of hypocrisy to which men like Rees will sink. They show above all the extent to which the British state holds our supposed democratic freedoms in the palm of its hand.

Firstly, exposure of the activities of the British secret police on the scale of Watergate and the subsequent revelations of FBI and CIA activity in the US would be virtually impossible here. The British Official Secrets Act dwarfs anything on the

statute book in America. Secondly, the methods available to the British government for dealing with political dissidents and others thought undesirable are so crude as to be embarrassing even to some of the Government's staunchest supporters. Though he would not have done so if the issue had been 'merely' the deportation of blacks, Ian Mikardo has spoken publicly against the use of the 1971 Immigration Act against Agee and Hosenball.

This case has served to publicise one weapon in the armoury of the British state. The use of deportation, denial of legal representation and refusal to lay charges against accused persons had anyway become everyday practice against Irish militants through the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Rees has no doubt many reasons for wishing to exclude Agee and Hosenball from Britain. Not least of these is of course the longed-for IMF loan, to which political as well as economic conditions may attach. The United States government is likely to have sought direct control over two of its citizens who have damaged their ability to supplement their 'overt' policies abroad with less obvious methods.

If Agee is deported to the United States he will, at the least, be required to submit the manuscript of everything he writes to the CIA for censorship. This has already been done to Victor Marchetti, the author



Agee (top) & Hosenball

of "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence".

Effectively, therefore, he will be prevented from finishing projects he is working on now, including an analysis of the CIA's work in Europe and an index of CIA agents throughout the world.

CIA activity in Europe has recently assumed far greater importance than for the last decade. With the volatile political climate in Europe as a whole, in the first case in Portugal and Spain but also in Britain, we can expect that US 'covert' activity has now surpassed the level of the 1950s, when the apparently genuine US 'Socialist' leader Norman Thomas was used by the CIA to recruit British trade unionists in the cause of de-



Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

feating the Bevanites in the Labour Party. From the point of view of the Pentagon, there is far more to lose in Europe than there ever was in Chile, or in Jamaica (where Agee recently blew the cover of several US Embassy 'operatives').

But Rees has his own reasons for wishing to silence Agee and Hosenball. Although it is true that neither journalist has published any significant information on the British intelligence network, nevertheless their exposure of the CIA threatens our 'own' law-enforcement agencies. It is impossible to separate the activities of the CIA from those of the British secret police, either here or elsewhere in the world. The two intelligence services share a great deal of common information — for instance, on the left in Britain, and no doubt on Jamaica as well. The connection with the South African secret service BOSS, with which Mark Hosenball's work has been mainly concerned, is also close.

Stopping the deportation of Agee and Hosenball is therefore not merely a question of fighting for the rights of two men, nor only of ensur-

ing the uninterrupted flow of information about the plans of the CIA.

A successful campaign should aim to repeal the Immigration Acts, and also open the way to a thorough exposure of the British secret service as well. The result Rees most feared from the continued activity in this country of Agee and Hosenball must be consciously fought for as part of the campaign in their defence.

The Agee-Hosenball Defence Committee has already organised one successful public meeting in central London (successful despite the drivel coming especially from the mouth of Judith Hart, for whom the issue was to 'fight for the image we have of ourselves that we are a free and democratic country'). A Day of Action has been called for December 8th, including a mass picket of the Home Office and an all-day teach-in on the CIA. Already several trade union bodies have declared a strike on that day. Among them is the National Union of Journalists chapel at Penguins, where Agee's first major work was published, and where his second may still be!

JAMES RYAN

Mass picket at the Home Office, 12 noon on Saturday 11th December, followed by a march to the US Embassy in Grosvenor Sq. Outside London, organise a meeting in your own. Agee is touring Britain, and recordings of his speaking and TV film on the CIA are available. Write to the Agee-Hosenball Defence Committee, 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1X 9DE, or ring '01-278 4575 or 11-251 3495.



**THE POPULAR POWER** movement of Angola was an autonomous working class movement. Coming into existence in mid-August 1974, it grew continuously, became more militant and, after the Transitional Government was set up in January '75, its demands became no longer purely economic.

The workers organised in this movement called into question the state apparatus and the Transitional Government; they turned against the presence of the FNLA and UNITA in the Transitional government.

The central perspective was the conquest of "Popular Power" — which meant for them two very concrete things: the end of the colonial fascist system, the end of exploitation; and the power of the workers themselves through their autonomous organs such as the workers' commissions and the neighbourhood committees. From about January '75 onwards, "Popular Power" was the slogan at the centre of the struggles of the working class movement.

Shortly after the formation of the Transitional Government there took place in Luanda the first "Week of Struggle for the conquest of Popular Power", and this event gave a boost to the unity of the working class around this perspective of struggle. It included a very large Popular Assembly, which gave final and decisive proof of the existence of a workers' movement independent of the MPLA, with a programme going well beyond the content of the MPLA's idea of Angolan national liberation.

This first Week for Popular Power involved the participation of more than 100,000 workers. It adopted three resolutions which were sent to the government.

These contained a list of demands defining the aims of the workers' movement: a government formed from the workers' commissions and the neighbourhood committees.

By May Day 1975 this movement was in growing conflict with MPLA and FNLA. The FNLA tried to prevent May Day celebrations; the government (which included MPLA) also adopted this stance. But finally May Day was celebrated — on May 22nd. Thousands of workers took part, though the FNLA put sentries around the Muceques (a black quarter) to prevent the workers going to the assembly point.

## Slogans

The central slogans of the 'First of May' were "Down with the murderers of FNLA-UNITA" and "For the establishment of Popular Power". This slogan expressed the resolve of the workers' movement to take the struggle through to the final destruction of exploitation in Angola. The workers knew the



# ANGOLA: AND THE

ON THE BRITISH left, there has been little discussion of the significance of the MPLA's victory in the Angolan civil war. Even the information is not available with which such a discussion should begin. More particularly, it is not generally known that there existed in 1974-5 a working class movement, mainly based in Luanda, which formed its own organs independently of the MPLA. These aimed to install a regime of 'popular power' and were crushed by the MPLA in the initial stages of the civil war.

It is to redress this lack of information and, we hope, to start a discussion on these questions that we are publishing this interview with

Paulo Quicuchi, a member of the Angolan Trotskyist group 'Grupo Revolucao Socialista' [Group of Socialist Revolution], which took place with a member of the German group 'Spartacusbund' in August 1976 and has been published by the Spartacusbund as a pamphlet.

Comrade Quicuchi was active in the movement he describes, which was led by the Maoist group, the CAC, and also by the GRS, the only organisation to argue consistently for the independence of the working class from the petty-bourgeois MPLA.

There are many criticisms we would make on the positions the comrade puts forward in the inter-

view [particularly on the lack of a clear position on the nature of the Angolan state or on the MPLA government]. However, the interview affords information otherwise unavailable on the British left, and, more importantly, its publication is an act of solidarity with those comrades suffering from the repression which the MPLA has unleashed against the activists of the Independent workers' movement.

The first extract we are printing describes the aims and structure of the movement for 'Popular Power'. Comrade Quicuchi explains elsewhere in the interview how the Independent workers' movement [based on the strong proletariat in

Luanda which came into existence in the last '60s] was formed as a reaction to the continuing Portuguese presence in Angola after April 1974 and racist attacks of the whites on the workers' quarters in Luanda. This initially resulted in the formation of self-defence committees and, after a strike wave, in the formation of workers' commissions and neighbourhood commissions.

The first article deals with the development of the movement from the constitution of the transitional government in January 1975 [in which the MPLA sat with the FNLA and UNITA] until the beginning of the civil war and the Stalinist repression in the late summer of last year.



example of Zaire and many other countries. They knew about the life of the workers in these countries. They knew exactly what a transition of Angola from a colony to a neo-colony would mean.

Their programme of struggle was aimed precisely to hinder this development.

Other events brought out the growing combativity and resolution of this movement. There was a series of strikes, including some pretty militant ones. Particularly important had been the strike at Textang, coming right at the start of the independent workers' movement in September 1974. This strike was of enormous political significance, giving a decisive impulse to the self-organisation of the workers' movement.

The Luanda dockers struck

three times within a year. One of these strikes, in March 1975, was against the conscription of the dockers by the Transitional Government. The MPLA within the Government supported this measure of repression aimed to boost productivity and end the many small struggles in the port.

## Control

The movement of strikes and demonstrations against this measure was so strong that the Government had to back down and withdraw the draft.

■ Can you describe the organs of Popular Power, particularly the neighbourhood committees. In Portugal these limited themselves throughout the revolutionary process of a few problems like the building of new houses. In general they had no comprehensive control over the life and political development of a neighbourhood. In which neighbourhoods of Angola, or Luanda, did the committees exist? How did they function and what political tasks did they fulfil?

□ Eventually, there were neighbourhood committees in all parts of Luanda, and some had a special significance — those of the districts of Sao Paulo,

Prenda, Sambizanga, Marcal.

In contrast to what generally would be expected in a period of dual power, the workers' commissions played, for almost the whole time, a secondary role in the political leadership of the workers' movement to that played by the neighbourhood committees. Without any doubt, the latter developed more quickly and took on a greater significance than the former.

The neighbourhood committees were formed in Popular Assemblies. They had a certain number of members, and formed sub-committees themselves: for information and propaganda, for political education, for technical questions (building work, etc), for health, and so on.

## Suppress

The committees had two parallel tasks. Firstly there was the improvement of the living conditions and general conditions of life of the workers, the creation of jobs, the organisation of regular medical care; investigations were set up into the workers' conditions of life to determine the most urgent needs and dwellings were improved.

At the same time, the two sub-committees for information and propaganda carried out extensive work of political education and enlightenment for the working people and organised discussions on the political perspectives for the workers' movement.

One fact explains why the neighbourhood committees played a more significant role than the workers' commissions in the whole process: almost from the moment of their creation (from January 1975, that is) the struggles between the FNLA and MPLA, including armed clashes, was taking place in the urban districts. The FNLA was doing its best to suppress the working class movement there.

In addition, the workers' living conditions were miserable in the extreme, so workers felt most sharply the need to organise themselves in this sphere, to discuss their problems and struggle for change through the neighbourhood committees.

It may also be significant that from the start the CAC★ laid more emphasis on their work in the neighbourhood committees

than in the workers' commissions — perhaps because they had more of an implantation in the neighbourhoods than in the factories.

## Final

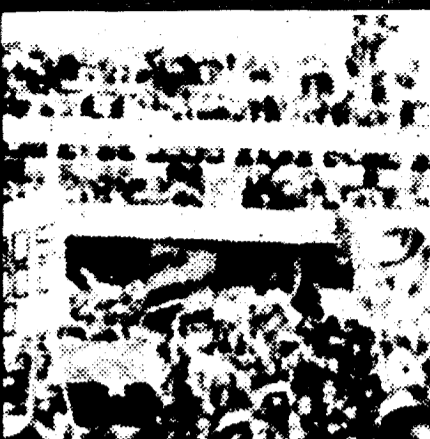
The stronger development of the neighbourhood committees eventually allowed their centralisation in the Orgao Coordenador, while the workers' commissions were not centralised. There was in fact an attempt to centralise them in the final phase and a meeting of workers' delegates was planned. But this was prevented by the events of August/September 1975.

With regard to demonstrations, calls to action etc. the initiative lay in the hands of the Orgao Coordenador (often with individual neighbourhood committees within it taking the lead in these initiatives), which then turned to the rank and file, i.e. to the Popular Assemblies.

In all parts of the city, Popular Assemblies took place every



# THE MPLA WORKERS



A further article will deal with the course of repression since then and the comrade's current perspectives for the Angolan revolutionary left. We also hope to publish some of the resolutions of the Popular Assemblies and the Luandan dockworkers [who were the spearhead of the movement].

Many issues which are not dealt with in these articles [for example, the role of the extreme left, the current divisions in the MPLA] are discussed elsewhere in the interview, which we may eventually be able to print in its entirety as a pamphlet. We may also be able to arrange a speaking tour for comrade Quicuchl in Britain

Sunday. The neighbourhood committee would give a report on its activities during the week; workers presented their problems, and the neighbourhood committee discussed these problems with them. In addition, the current political situation was on the agenda of all these meetings, as was often the question of the tactics for the creation of Popular Power.

■ ■ What was the level of participation of the workers in these Popular Assemblies in the different phases of the revolutionary process and in the civil war?

■ ■ The level of participation was always good, though it went down nevertheless — and this must be emphasised — when the war came to Luanda i.e. during the four battles of Luanda during which the FNLA aimed more at attacks on and murders of the workers and preventing the functioning of the neighbourhood committees, than at fighting the MPLA. Several comrades

were at this time taken prisoner by the FNLA.

But after these battles, the level of participation always rose again sharply.

The peak came in the period of preparation for and in the first phase of the civil war, when the Orgao Coordinador and the Neighbourhood Committees put forward the slogan of the armed people's militia as the only way to carry forward the revolutionary process and to take part in the civil war against FNLA and UNITA.

## Polls

Although there was already a situation of civil war, there was at this time a high level of participation. It fell only with the intervention of the Stalinists, with the bureaucratisation of the neighbourhood committees. Once this happened, the 'high point' of participation was as low as the 10% turnout in May of this year for the elections to the neighbourhood committees.

These elections took place with a united slate proposed by the MPLA leadership, in which it was a foregone conclusion that the Stalinists would get posts.

This 10% turnout is in stark contrast with the earlier participation in the Popular Assemblies, and in struggles and demonstrations. I am convinced that if the workers didn't go to the polls, this was because of their lack of confidence in the chances of these committees taking action once they had been bureaucratised — not because of their lack of awareness of the need for such organs.

\* The CAC: a Maoist group which, together with the GRS, was in the political leadership of the autonomous workers' movement. Distancing themselves from Chinese foreign policy, they believed that the MPLA could be transformed into a 'Marxist-Leninist party' and therefore worked within it. This made them easy targets for the repression in mid-1975, since when they have retreated to classic sectarian Stalinist positions. Linked to the Portuguese UDP, they now hardly exist.



Top: Angolan workers and peasants celebrate their victory over Portuguese colonialism. Top left: Angolan President & MPLA leader Agostino Neto. Lower left: Angolan guerrillas before their victory. Centre: Children in an Angolan neighbourhood.

"IN COMMON with other women, we have met with more defeats than victories under the Act" — General and Municipal Workers' Union. [From a study by the Equal Pay and Opportunities Campaign].

THE GROWING disillusionment with the workings of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts is beginning to cause Government bodies some concern. There is talk of strengthening the legislation in an attempt to reassure women and the trade union movement that everything can be solved by a few amendments to the existing legislation.

What has brought this about, and would a strengthened Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act at long last give women their rights?

The last ten years have witnessed a sharp increase in the organisation and activity of women workers. The Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts were a by-product of the fight that women have waged in such historic struggles as those at Fords, GEC, and a thousand other workplaces.

The passing of the legislation was a means to reassure women that their needs were being catered for and protected by the Government, that they had won their struggle and could now sit back and enjoy the benefits.

The reality is somewhat different. Loopholes in the legislation have enabled the employers to manipulate and manoeuvre around the Acts in such a way that not only are women not benefiting, some are worse off than they were before.

The legislation, has, however, heightened the awareness of women. It 'legalised' the idea that women have a right to equal pay and opportunities. The Equal Opportunities Commission was flooded out with enquiries and complaints when the legislation became law.

However, the Government not only laid down precise definitions of what counted as discrimination. It also laid down a certain procedure that had to be followed — the courts and industrial tribunals. (The courts deal with all cases except those in the employment field, which are dealt with by the Industrial Tribunals).

It was this procedure that the women strikers and AUEW battled during the Trico dispute. They boycotted the Tribunal and completely disregarded it when it found against them. They continued the strike and won, proving that direct militant action is a thousand times more effective and powerful than the Tribunals.

The victory had an effect. The Government and media finally had to concede that there were inadequacies in the Acts and something was badly wrong.

The strengthening of the Acts should be supported. It is a concession to women and will create better conditions for taking the fight forward. But the legislation is one thing; how the Government wishes to see it implemented is another. Individual women may succeed in winning their cases. Three cases have been won on appeal since the victory at Trico.

However, our attitude to the industrial tribunals must be governed by the fact that their overall purpose is to foster an increasing reliance on the machinery of the state and to stifle the self-organisation of women. Increasingly attempts are being made to contain any outburst of militancy, and to channel it through set procedures, advantageous to the Government and the employers and policed by the trade union bureaucracy.

A common myth is that the Tribunals are completely neutral.

# TRIBUNALS SHAKEN UP BY TRICO VICTORY

that they merely arbitrate between employer and employee. In reality, the structure and procedure is completely geared to the interests of the employers and the ruling class. It is long, complicated and costly, militating against working class women; with a lawyer (in the chair), a management representative, and a trade unionist on the Tribunal, it is heavily weighted against women and the working class. Even if the trade union representative is a supporter of women's rights — which is far from certain — the legal profession and management are not noted for their enlightened attitude on women's rights.

A woman who takes her case to a Tribunal stands alone before the panel of 'judges'. She does not have the collective strength of her workmates around her. The discrimination is treated as an individualised case. Jackie Bat-Isha took her case to a Trib-



unal. Cheddar Caves refused to hire her as a guide. "The public don't like women guides". She won and got £38 compensation for travelling costs and "hurt feelings".

She attempted to argue that the Tribunal must take action against Cheddar Caves to stop their discriminatory employment policies. The Tribunal refused, stating that they were only concerned with her as an individual, they were not interested in the "broader question" of Cheddar Caves. In this way the fight for equal pay and opportunities is split into a thousand different cases.

## Findings

The anti-working class nature of the Tribunals is indicated by their findings. Out of 100 equal pay cases, 20 were successful; out of 20 Sex Discrimination Act cases, five. The intended workings of the Acts have suddenly taken on a completely different meaning. "Broadly similar" work has become 'identical'. Sue Waddington was paid £400 less than a man whose job she created and supervised. The Tribunal stated that she had more responsibility, therefore the jobs were not similar; and she was refused equal pay!

Also used to maximum effect has been the escape clause in the Equal Pay Act which states that it is not similar work if it can be proved that there is a 'material difference'.

In the Trico dispute, it was this

very clause which the Tribunal used. They accepted the claim of the employers that the fact that the men had done night-work constituted a material difference and that therefore the women were not entitled to equal pay even though they were doing the same job.

## Rights

The Tribunal findings have been completely contradictory, almost always in the favour of the employers. They are a block to women fighting for their rights. The Government and the employers know the demoralising effects on women after a negative ruling. The fact that the employers are given 'legal' backing by the tribunal, plus the time factor, means that it is virtually impossible to start any further form of action. Even if a woman does win her case, the Tribunals have no teeth. Employers cannot be legally bound to comply with the findings. Refusal to stop discriminatory practice means for the employers a nominal fine or being done for contempt of court.

It is absolutely vital that if any kind of industrial action is taken, any attempt by the trade union leadership to use the Tribunals as a 'soft' option must be fought. If the union goes ahead and takes the dispute to a Tribunal during such action, it is important to argue that no reliance should be put in them. The pickets must remain at the gates and the attempts to gain support from the labour movement must be stepped up.

Should we then advocate the boycotting of the Tribunals in every situation?

The Equal Opportunities Commission survey, although finding that many unions were suspicious of the Tribunals, reported that the over-riding feature was the lack of interest and the ignorance shown by unions concerning discrimination against women on the shop floor.

"In most cases there is little or no machinery whereby union head offices can monitor the problems of their women members on the shop floor level — many do not even know whether any of their members are taking complaints to Tribunals!"

For many women the sad reality is that there is little trade union organisation in their workplace, and if there is, nine times out of ten, the union will have backward views when it comes to taking up a fight over women's issues.

It is important to relate to the levels of organisation and consciousness within the labour movement. To mouth the need to boycott the industrial tribunals in every situation is useless. In many cases the trade unions will be only too happy to oblige and leave women to go to the Tribunals alone. The union at the Electrolux factory in Luton refused to provide assistance to women who took their case to a Tribunal, stating that it was their "individual decision" and nothing to do with the union.

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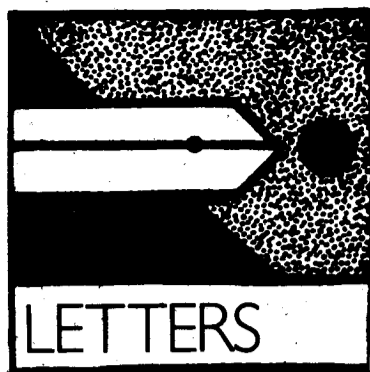


I HOPE YOU will let me take up some of the points raised in your reply to my letter on Scottish nationalism. As you no doubt realise, the issues involved are not only of a serious political nature (what side do we take in current arguments) but also a profound scientific nature, referring to the history of Scotland and the nature of imperialism and nationalism. Unfortunately your reply makes far too little of such issues, sliding as it does round many of the theoretical questions involved.

Let me give a couple of examples. You say that the 'Jacobite rebellions can scarcely be presented as a national-democratic movement' and that such a movement was thoroughly reactionary. My original letter did not refer to the Jacobites as such a movement — I only implied they were mainly a nationalist movement. Of course, the Jacobite movement was feudal in character and based on one of the most backward sections of the Scottish people, the Highlanders. But so what?

If you remember, Trotsky was prepared to support the Ethiopians fighting for national independence from their Italian conquerors even though the movement was led by a reactionary, feudal king. Similarly, in the case of the Ukraine he was

# Face the facts about Scottish nationalism



prepared to support bourgeois nationalists against representatives of a degenerated workers' state. In no writings on the national question did Lenin or Trotsky use the backward nature of the social group which was pressing for national independence to deny that group the right of self-determination.

Nationalism is precisely the expression of such a group's desire to improve its conditions. It may not be the highest necessary expression — but it is an advance.

Later on you appear to deny the identity of Scotland as a nation. This is asserted rather than proved — indeed, I would like to see you try to prove it. Scotland had a distinct history, culture, religion, and form of government up to the Act of Union in 1707. It was separated and developed independently from Britain far longer and in a more advanced fashion than Ireland, and today that national legacy is still there.

still no argument against moves for Scottish independence. In a sense, you recognise this by seeming willing to accept that if the majority of the Scottish people want independence by expressing their wishes through a referendum, then you will be prepared to let them have it... big deal! In effect you are denying them the justice of their case, while saying that if they are duped into nationalism all revolutionaries can do is stand aside and let them get on with it. For you, the sting in the tail of that argument is that it condemns revolutionaries to complete impotence in the enormous debate that will certainly be taking place around devolution and independence.

A Scottish nationalist movement has existed, in one form or another, ever since the 18th century. Contrary to your belief, the majority of the Scottish people did oppose the Act of Union. The Scottish parliament itself was heavily bribed to make it docile to the wishes of the English government. Even so, one of its members claimed that there "wasn't a man in Scotland who wished to see the Union". It was shortly after this that the Jacobites rose up against the English oppression. What could be clearer than that that was a nationalist revolt?

Comrades, face the facts. The SNP according to the latest electoral projections, will sweep Labour out of power in Scotland. I agree that that will be so because of the failings of the Labour government, but that is

I find it ironic that the same issue of *Workers' Action* which contains your reply also contains an article supporting independence for Québec. For the life of me I cannot see any

fundamental differences between the Scottish and Québécois nationalist movements... and I suspect most of your readers can't either.

Surely, comrades, this shows the pedantic nature of your arguments against Scottish nationalism. Wake up, comrades. Nationalism is sweeping Scotland: revolutionaries should be linked to that movement by offering it critical support. If you don't change your line, Scottish readers of *Workers' Action* will not be swimming against the stream — they'll be swept away by the flood that is moving in the right direction.

RICHARD HARGREAVES.

## REPLY:

# Acting as the catspaws of reaction

LET US FIRST recapitulate the elements of the Marxist theory of the national question.

As trade comes to play an increasing role, so (over a long period) the unit for economic life extends from the household, the village, the tribe, or the lord's estate, to a larger scale. The boundaries of these units are chiefly determined by — and determine — geography and communications, including the most important means of communication, language, and the forms of culture built up round it.

The decisive stage in the development of nations is the emergence of capitalism and the associated massive increase in trade, mobility of population, and communications generally. Then, as the "Communist Manifesto" puts it, "independent, or but loosely connected provinces with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, become lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier, and one customs-tariff". National political institutions — political parties, trade unions — also arise

## Last refuge

This development of nation-states is progressive as against semi-feudal particularism; it opens the way to the advance of the forces of production and the more extensive organisation of the working class. Thus Marx and Engels considered progressive the struggles for the unification of Germany and Italy, and (in retrospect) the creation of a uniform national market and state system by the French Revolution; and when the Tory Dr Johnson declared that "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel", he understood 'patriotism', not as we would understand it today, but as synonymous with democracy, radicalism, rule by the majority of the nation.

International trade develops even before the flowering of capitalism; and capitalism itself creates a world market and the close economic interconnection of every area of the world. If capitalism developed in an even, straight-line fashion, it would long ago have progressed from the nation-state to continental or worldwide state forms.

However, capitalism develops unevenly. Even before the consolidation of the classic nation-states of Europe was complete, those states were plundering and oppressing large areas of Asia, Africa, and America. Certain small nations in the more advanced sectors — particularly in Eastern Europe, but also Ireland and Québec — also suffered the fate of becoming economic and political vassals of the major states, rather than being integrated into or developing an autonomous state.

## Provinces

In Spain, there has been a peculiar development where the massive incompleteness of the bourgeois revolution left the state as nothing more than a collection of provinces held together by bureaucratic imposition of the authority of Madrid. The national question has remained alive, especially in Catalonia and Euzkadi (though revolutionaries in those reg-

ions do not fight for separation).

With the more-or-less complete division of the world by the major capitalist states, by 1900 — that is, the epoch of imperialism — the national question took a different aspect. The nation-state has become obsolete in comparison to the tremendous development of the forces of production, but the rival bourgeoisies have been unable to transcend it. The best they have managed is the feeble federalism of the EEC. Thus the tension between the needs of economic development and the nation-state framework has been expressed in the creation of colonial or neo-colonial empires, and continual disputes between rival imperialist bourgeoisies trying to expand their empires at each other's expense. The two World Wars were the most bloody of these disputes.

'National self-determination' and 'national defence' have thus become obsolete and reactionary slogans for the major imperialist nation-states of Western Europe and America — because in reality they mean the 'determination' and the 'defence' of colonial or neo-colonial empires. (A limited and partial exception to this generalisation can be made for the national question in certain countries while they were overrun by Germany during the second World War — but that is a side-issue for the present discussion).

Meanwhile, however, since world war 1 especially, the national question has become a burning issue in the oppressed nations. Marxists believe the nation-state is obsolete; yet we have supported dozens of national liberation struggles. In those struggles we fight for the working class to take the lead, and thus to take the struggle forward to socialist conclusions. Yet we support the national liberation struggles against oppressor powers even if they remain under the leadership of petty bourgeois or bourgeois forces.

## Nation-state

Why? The nation-state is obsolete from the standpoint of world history. But from the standpoint of nations, or nascent nations, whose development as nations has been aborted by imperialism, it is far from obsolete. They have no prospect of emulating the classic West European nation-states, that is, of their statehood being the basis for massive and organic bourgeois development (though some real development certainly is possible). However, the demand for these oppressed nations or semi-nations to have their own government is an elementary bourgeois-democratic demand.

Bourgeois democracy, too, is decaying and obsolete. Yet Marxists continue to fight for basic bourgeois-democratic rights, because the more such rights are achieved, the more widely can the working class organise and the more clearly can it see the fundamental class issues in society. We are ultimately for a worldwide federation of nations — but a voluntary federation on the basis of equality. Modern imperialist nations are — as a matter of economic law — incapable of establishing democratic and equal links with 'third-world' nations. Marxists therefore support the struggles for national liberation of oppressed nations.

We do not cease to fight politically against the nationalism of oppressed nations, any more than we cease to combat the ideology of bourgeois democracy. Indeed, our support for national liberation struggles derives not from any sympathy for nationalism, but from our bitter opposition to the (anti-democratic) nationalism of the oppressor nation. To deny the right of one nation to separate from another is to endorse the 'right' of the dominant nation to control the dominated nation — it is thus to endorse the nationalism of the dominant nation.

What, asks comrade Hargreaves, is the difference between Scotland on the one hand, and Québec or Ireland on the other?

Scotland was certainly not a fully-developed nation prior to the Union of 1707, still less so prior to the 'regal union' (the merging of the monarchies of England and Scotland into one person) of 1603. There was no national economic integration, no common language, not even (as comrade Hargreaves suggests) a common religion.

and Hugh MacDiarmid's crack-pated 'ramblings were just about the high points prior to today's oil-fired SNP exploits), and political institutions — especially those of the working class — have developed on an all-British, not Scottish, basis. Indeed, Scottish militants have often played a major role in the British labour movement.

On an Austro-Marxist definition of a nation — hinging on some vague concept of distinctive 'culture' — Scotland might be characterised as a nation. With a Marxist method, treating economic development and class struggle as basic — not and if it is a nation, without doubt it is an oppressor nation.

Comrade Hargreaves' comparison of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 with the Ethiopians' war against Italian imperialism in the 1930s is — to use the kindest word possible — eccentric. (So also is his comparison with the Ukraine; but one thing at a time). John Foster writes of the Union showing "the need of English capitalism at this difficult stage in its development to gain the adhesion of culturally similar forces elsewhere or at least to prevent the inevitable alternative: the precipitation of feudal,

invade the North; after unification there were substantial revolts, led by priests and agents of Francis II, in the South; and even today the South is a deprived area of Italy. Would comrade Hargreaves consider King Francis II to be the leader of a nationalist movement to be supported against Garibaldi? Or would he define Southern Italy as a nation?

## Wildly inaccurate

One statement, and a wildly inaccurate one at that, from a member of the Scottish Parliament, scarcely stands as evidence of massive popular opposition to Union — certainly not if put against the lack of serious popular anti-Unionist agitation. Also, most importantly, there is no evidence at all of the Union establishing an imperial/colonial relation between England and Scotland at all comparable to Italy's to Ethiopia. John Foster firmly declares that it was a non-colonial relationship, "a position of near partnership, the result of a careful grafting of one capitalist economy and culture onto another". Tom Nairn concedes "the rapid progress of Scotland's new, bourgeois civil society". "In the extremely favourable conditions of the Union". "Few, even among perfervid nationalists, would regret that the country escaped so sharply from the age of witch-burning and feudal futility".

What of Québec and Ireland? They were subjugated by colonial conquest. They have a distinct economic and geographic identity — not of a fully-developed nation-state, obviously. They have a distinct language (in the case of Québec), distinct religion and culture (for the majority, at least), distinct political institutions, and a militant history of national struggle.

National independence (and national unity in the case of Ireland) is an essential democratic demand on the road of clearly uniting the proletarians of those nations against their 'own' bourgeoisies.

In the Scottish case, separation would hinder the unity of the working class. It is on that consideration, and on no 'pedantry', that our policy is based.

## Right direction?

If comrade Hargreaves wants an example from Canada, he would find a better analogy in Canadian nationalism (which is a strong feeling, directed against the USA), or in the separatist sentiments emerging in some Canadian provinces like British Columbia. Would he consider those to be 'in the right direction' too?

Revolutionaries who argue against Scottish particularism, while conceding the general right to self-determination, are no more condemned to 'complete impotence' than revolutionaries who likewise upheld an internationalist policy against strong popular feeling by saying workers should vote "no" in the EEC referendum. (Though, if comrade Hargreaves is logical, he will conclude that the 'no' vote, being nationalist, was also 'in the right direction'). On the contrary, those would-be revolutionaries who argue (albeit with inaudible 'criticism') for Scottish separatism are condemning themselves to be the catspaws of reaction.

## INTERNATIONAL

WORKING MEN'S

## ASSOCIATION.

CENTRAL COUNCIL, 12 GREEK STREET, LONDON, W.

FOUNDED ON 20th SEPTEMBER, 1904, AT A

PUBLIC MEETING held at St. MARTIN'S HALL, London.

The Address and Statutes issued by the Provisional Central Council fully explain the Association's objects and aspirations, which, however, may be summed up in a few words. It aims at the protection, advancement, and complete emancipation, economical and political, of the Working Classes. As a means to this great end it will promote the establishment of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in EACH COUNTRY, and the co-operation of the Working Classes of DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

The development since Union has not been a colonial development, but one of integration into the British national economy. Even the Scots-nationalist writer Tom Nairn concludes that "Scotland had in Scott's own time left the category of 'subject nations' for good and joined the ranks of the 'imperialists'", and notes "Scotland's participation in two centuries of Great-British exploits, in the subjugation of many genuine 'subject nations'". As regards the distinctive economic characteristic of imperialism, export of capital, John Foster records that "it seems clear that Scotland contributed far more than its share of the British total" before 1914. Today, one third of British finance capital is in Scotland.

Some autonomous development of social institutions — law, education — does persist in Scotland. But this is to be attributed to the notorious un-radical nature of the British bourgeois revolution, which leaves us/also with such medieval remnants as the monarchy and the House of Lords. There is no serious history of national struggle in Scotland (the Parliamentary efforts of the Scottish Home Rule Association in the 1880s

highland-based counter-revolution". The Jacobites represented just that feudal counter-revolution. To the extent that the rebellions were "nationalist" (which was not much: the Pretenders aspired to the common throne of Scotland and England; the 1745 rebellion penetrated deep into, and raised forces in, England; and there were more Scots involved in defeating the '45 than supporting it) they represented the revolt of particularism against bourgeois economy. It was not one of the national-democratic movements characteristic of European politics in that epoch, but just the opposite.

The case of Ethiopia, impelled into revolt against modern imperialism long before bourgeois-democratic movements would organically have developed there, is something quite different. Certainly, for example, Haile Selassie laid no claim to be King of Italy!

If comrade Hargreaves wants to make comparisons with Italy, it would be nearer the mark to compare the war of 1860 in which Garibaldi defeated Francis II and made possible the integration of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies into a united Italy. Francis II previously had plans to

# ACAS and Ryder men against Jack Sprung

THE ANTI-WORKING CLASS nature of the government's Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) was quite clearly shown in last week's decision by the Birmingham Industrial Tribunal, finding against victimised Leyland Canley shop steward Jack Sprung.

Jack was sacked last April for allegedly inviting a film crew into the Leyland Canley plant during the work-in, and using a production car as a 'get-away vehicle' to smuggle them out, avoiding security police. Since then Jack has been on the dole and waiting for this hearing.

The chairman of the Tribunal, Mr Robert Chapman, claimed that British Leyland were justified in sacking Jack, saying "the only reason for having the film crew inside the factory was to give adverse publicity to British Leyland. The purpose appeared to have been to show that management were interfering with the proper production of cars while workers were keen on keeping production going".

So, the crime is knocking the British Leyland management! But the Financial Times has been doing that week in, week out, for years — and even the Ryder report is not very complimentary. Perhaps criticism from workers is a different matter!

As for what the film crew was supposed to have shown: it is common knowledge in the Canley plant and indeed in the Coventry area that the best cars ever to have come out of Triumph Canley came out during the work-in when the workers were in control, and all management did was to try to sabotage the operation.

The film crew were, then, showing the truth, unlike the popular press and the television, which had hysterical reports about vandalism and anarchy. Local reporters got into the plant illegally during the work-in — they still told lies, and, surprise, surprise, were not chased off by the security police.



In fact this is not the first time during Jack Sprung's 26 years at Leyland Canley that the bosses have tried to sack him. He is known as one of the finest militants in the Coventry area; and stakes are getting higher now. Jack Sprung opposed the Ryder workers' participation plan, and got the Canley plant to turn it down against the recommendation of Eddie McGarry, TGWU convenor and secretary of the Leyland shop stewards combine committee.

Jack Sprung was also known to have been successful in organising the work-in. With Jim Griffin, AUEW convenor, leaving the plant, Jack could well have been elected to the convenor's position.

Several Canley shop stewards — even stewards from the security police — spoke in Jack Sprung's favour at the Tribunal. His own gang stated that they had no intention of electing a new steward, since Jack Sprung was still their steward as far as they were concerned. Despite this overwhelming support from the shop floor, the Tribunal found for the company.

It is significant that the AUEW in Coventry, right-wing and vicious with it, gave Jack no backing. Eddie McGarry cooled down the shop floor, saying "he'll be OK with arbitration".

No wonder that some people say that workers' participation is class collaboration. And the same lesson goes for ACAS. This or that individual anomalous case may be won at ACAS. But in any serious fight, we need to rely on our collective strength, as the Trico workers did to win their strike, deliberately ignoring the bosses' tribunal.

DAVE SPENCER

# LEFT STUDENTS FACE UP TO TORY CHALLENGE



NUS President Charles Clarke

EITHER THE revolutionary left will go on the offensive, with a fight for a political, campaigning union, or the Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) will be fair set for a field day at the National Union of Students Conference on 10-12 December in Blackpool.

Some 100 delegates and observers gathered at a conference called by Manchester Poly Students' Union, on 4th December, "For a Fighting, Campaigning NUS", preparing a left challenge to the Broad Left-dominated NUS Executive.

For a long while, the Executive has been fighting the increasing number of disaffiliations from NUS on the basis that disaffiliation means the loss of cheap NUS travel services. With the collapse of the NUS travel and printing service comp-

anies, the ground has been cut out from under their feet.

The FCS generally (though not FCS Wales) is opposed to disaffiliation. It hopes to use the travel services crash to unseat the Broad Left and prepare the way for its own domination of NUS. And if it fails to do that, it could well stop opposing disaffiliation.

The FCS will probably opt for a national federation of local student travel bureaus. This in no way takes up the problem of the 200 workers who have been sacked — or the principle of whether the NUS should make itself a capitalist entrepreneur.

NUS must be committed to campaigning for the nationalisation of the NUS service companies, under workers' control, thus guaranteeing re-employment for the sacked workers — and also for the nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control of the whole travel industry.

Most of these points were incorporated in a resolution passed at Manchester for submission to the Blackpool conference. It also called for a vote of no confidence in all the NUS Exec members bar Andy Durgan and Graham Threlfall, the only ones to vote against the redundancies and for the nationalisation of the travel services.

DAVE JEWSON

# TRIBUNALS SHAKE-UP

## CONTINUED FROM CENTRE PAGE

Such attitudes must be fought against. If unions are not prepared to support their women workers in the fight for equal pay and opportunities, a first step in changing that can be a fight for the union to provide financial and legal assistance to women forced to take their cases to Tribunals. Also, any positive rulings must be seen as a green light to apply the findings to all similar cases.

In such cases, taking the case to the Tribunal can help mobilise women workers in the union, not demobilise them.

However, there is one instance where it would be impermissible to use the Tribunals. Since they are capitalist state institutions, they are hostile to the independent organs and activity of the working class. This means that we are against ever taking a trade union to them for discriminatory policies.

Such policies obviously exist. The National Graphical Association did not allow women to become compositors.

The only effective way of combatting such policies is to wage a struggle inside the union to combat the chauvinism which exists. If we take the unions to court, the court may find in favour of an individual woman; but it would also provide the state with an opportunity to weaken the organisations of the class and would therefore be in the long run against the interests of working class women as a whole.

PAT LONGMAN

# ONE YEAR ON FROM THE SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT — A RALLY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

11am, February 26th at Alexandra Palace, London.

# EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads, 8p per word; block ads, £5 per column inch. Send copy to 'Events', 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

FRIDAY 10 DECEMBER. RCG Manchester public meeting, "Women's Oppression under Capitalism". 7.30pm at the Basement Theatre, Town Hall Extension, Albert Sq.

FRIDAY/SATURDAY 10-11 DECEMBER. "Critique" conference on "The Working Class and Political Change in Eastern Europe". Speakers Bill Lomax, Eugene Smolar, Jan Kavan, Ivan Hartel, Edmund Baluka. 7pm on Friday 10th and 9.30am on Saturday 11th, at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1.

SATURDAY 11 DECEMBER. Picket against the deportations of Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball. Noon, Home Office, Whitehall.

MONDAY 13 DECEMBER. "Agrarian Reform in Portugal", meeting organised by the Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese Working Class. 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

MONDAY 13 DECEMBER. Manchester Workers' Action readers' meeting on "Women's Liberation". 8pm at the People's Centre, Moss Lane East, Moss Side.

TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER. Cardiff Workers' Action readers' meeting on "The Struggle in Southern Africa". 7.30pm at the Rhymney Hotel, Adam St, Cardiff.

WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER. Central London Workers' Action forum: "2. The Erfurt Programme and the Second International". 8.45pm at the 'George', Liverpool Rd, London N1.

advertisement  
Public statement on the split within the Revolutionary Communist Group: What are the political differences that underlie the expulsion of nearly half the membership of the RCG? This statement by the expelled members — now the Revolutionary Communist Tendency — explains the real issues at stake. Copies of the statement and more information available from John Hill, 103 Helix Rd, London SW2. Send s.a.e.

advertisement  
International-Communist League Public Meeting  
"THE STRUGGLE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA"  
Speaker: Tom Harrison. 7.30 at the Roebuck, Tottenham Court Road. 12th December

# Red Weekly waves the wrong flag again

"RED WEEKLY", in its editorial of 25th November, argues against the demand raised by 70 Labour MPs for a referendum on devolution or independence for Scotland.

"For these worthies", "Red Weekly" exclaims, "the 'national question' is something which arises in the colonial world like Vietnam or Angola, or as part of the struggle against autocracy, in the shape of the struggle of the Basque nation against Francoist oppression."

"But the national struggle in Ireland, the sweeping victory of the Parti Québécois in Canada and the likelihood of similar victories for the SNP in the next General Election have brought the national question into the heart of the so-called 'advanced democracies'."

"These worthies", it must be said, are surely less confused on the national question than Red Weekly.

The 'national question' has been "in the heart of the so-called 'advanced democracies'" for some time. The propaganda of 'national interest', 'our' Empire, 'our' war effort, has been dinned into workers' ears for decades. There is a strong and growing political party basing itself on the 'national question' — it is called the National Front.

"Red Weekly" itself remarks on how many left Labour leaders "wave[d] the Union Jack so enthusiastically during the EEC campaign against 'foreign' rule from Brussels" — while, with sickening hypocrisy, omitting to mention that "Red Weekly" also waved that Union Jack, only trying to emphasise the red segments of the flag and conceal the blue segments with hammers-and-sickles and "United Socialist States of Europe" insignia.

"Red Weekly" seems to see the rise of the national question in the "so-called 'advanced democracies'" — the oppressor nations of the world, in plain English — as a great revolutionary advance. Just the opposite is true.

What a socialist MP should do on the 'devolution' debate is this. He or she should state loudly and emphatically that he/she condemns Scottish particularisms and will set about campaigning in the Scottish labour movement against that particularism and for a class response to the issues — cuts, housing, wages — fuelling it. At the same time he/she will declare that he/she upholds the right of the Scottish people to self-determination. He/she will boycott any Westminster parliamentary vote on 'devolution' and insist the question should be decided by demo-

cratic consultation of the Scottish people — i.e., practically, a referendum, in Scotland.

This was the attitude Lenin lined in reply to a protest against policy that Polish Marxists oppose independence for Poland. Great-Russian Marxists support Poland's right to secede from the Tsarist empire. An opponent asked which way a Marxist would vote in a Russian parliament if there were a majority in Poland for independence. The whole point of determination, said Lenin, was it was not for the Russian parliament to decide whether Poland seceded or not.

Elsewhere Lenin commends Swedish socialists for upholding the right of the majority of the Norwegian people (expressed in a referendum) to independence Sweden.

"Red Weekly" says that a referendum blocks self-determination. That is obviously true of a referendum over England, Scotland, Wales, as proposed by the 70 but not of a referendum in Scotland. The bourgeois-democratic right self-determination presupposes we find out how the (bourgeois-democratic) majority wishes to determine itself. That means either vote in an elected Assembly (which does not exist) or a referendum.

Certainly a referendum, like other bourgeois-democratic procedure, is likely to be manipulated. Certainly we condemn any manipulation. Certainly, also, we condemn the collaboration of devolution Labour MPs with devolution Tory MPs. We are against devolution because we are for the unity of the labour movement and you cannot campaign for unity of the labour movement in tandem with Tories!

Workers' Action is for the right self-determination — and for Scottish people using that right to maintain unity with England. Determination includes the right to refuse a separate Parliament as the right to have a separate parliament.

That is, we are for a referendum in Scotland, for an anti-devolution in that referendum, and for ensuring the majority will express that referendum. "Red Weekly" its anxiety to coat-tail reactions to Scottish nationalism, rejects (apparently) any referendum, and thus rejects self-determination in favour of foisting nationalist demands on Scottish people whether they like or not.

# WORKERS' ACTION supporters' groups

BASINGSTOKE, BIRMINGHAM, BRISTOL  
CAMBRIDGE, CARDIFF, CHELMSFORD,  
CHESTER, COVENTRY, EDINBURGH,  
HUDDERSFIELD, LEICESTER, LIVERPOOL  
LONDON, MANCHESTER, MIDDLESBROUGH  
NEWCASTLE, NEWTOWN, NORTHAMPTON,  
NOTTINGHAM, READING,  
ROCHDALE, SHEFFIELD, STAFFORD, STOKE

Write for details of meetings and activities to:  
WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27



# WORKERS IN ACTION

## 15,000 strike against the cuts

15,000 WORKERS in the Midlands took part in a 24-hour strike against the cuts on December 1st. 3,000 joined in a demonstration through Birmingham, and 55,000 were involved in other actions, such as bans on overtime or working to rule.

The actions were organised at NUPE area level as part of the national NUPE campaign against the cuts in social spending. So far the Midlands has seen the cancellation of building projects, natural wastage of jobs, services allowed to deteriorate, and looming redundancies.

Many of the workers on the Birmingham demonstration were school ancillary workers; hospitals, road maintenance, and other services were also affected by the stoppage.

Following up from November 17th NUPE Head Office has instructed the areas to carry on a campaign against the cuts which includes organising around:

- No covering;
- No extra work without appropriate extra pay;
- No re-arrangement of rotas;
- No rest day working and no overtime; and
- Opposition to all cuts.

The areas are also advised to set



up local committees against the cuts to be supported by local Labour Parties and to organise demonstrations and other actions in their areas.

The massive response to the Midlands day of action, like November 17th, shows that any sort of fighting lead will bring a rank and file response. The questions now need to be asked: Why don't other unions join NUPE in these actions? (Some TGWU members did take part in the

Midlands day of action; but no other union made a mobilisation anywhere near like NUPE's). Why does not NUPE openly call for a national 'fight the cuts' committee of all the trade union bodies who supported November 17th, plus the Labour Party NEC? Why does NUPE still support the 4 1/2% wage limit, twin sister of the cuts? Why does NUPE not make a call for an emergency Labour Party conference to call the Government to order on the cuts?



THE WORK-IN and occupation to prevent the closure of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital for women is continuing. The health service is running as normal, with the workers monitoring those entering and leaving the hospital, ready to stop any equipment being moved out.

David Ennals has announced that the remaining in-patients should be moved to the Whittington Hospital by the end of the year. The EGA workers are demanding the Area Health Authority and the DHSS should enable the hospital to continue on its present site by mending the lifts and carrying out the necessary repairs.

This Saturday, December 11th, the EGA joint stewards' committee have called a conference to discuss the occupation and how to fight hospital cuts throughout London. All organisations of health workers and the broader labour movement are invited to send representatives at: The New Ambassadors Hotel (The Gold Room), Upper Woburn Place, London WC1 (11am to 4pm).

With 120 hospitals threatened in London alone, it is vital to support this occupation.

### GRUNWICKS: STRAIGHT OUT OF THE DICKENS ERA

THE STRIKE of mainly Asian and West Indian workers at Grunwicks in North West London is now entering its 15th week, and looks like it will continue for some time yet.

The management, having agreed to let the government conciliation service, ACAS, ballot the workforce, turned round on November 22nd and refused to allow ACAS to conduct the ballot on the disputed question of union recognition. Grunwicks bosses did not want the strikers balloted, saying they had been sacked and so were not legally part of the workforce.

Now management have sought legal advice and may go to Court over the issue.

The Grunwicks bosses sacked these strikers (in breach of the Employment Protection Act) for trying to organise a union to end the sweatshop conditions and low wages. As Laurie Pavitt MP said, the management could have been lifted from straight out of the Dickens era.

There is no guarantee that they will even accept the ACAS ruling unless it is in their favour.

It is essential for a swift victory that the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) must refuse to handle mail for the firm, and other workers should black the company and its subsidiaries. The strikers need money and they need support on the picket line.

A defeat at Grunwicks would be a humiliation for the labour movement and a severe blow to black workers who are attempting to organise against similar bad pay and conditions. It has been a bitter fight in difficult circumstances, but Grunwicks strikers are standing firm and intend to stay out until they win.

Robert Johnson

## The price of double murder— £150... so long as you're white!

WORKERS' ACTION no. 19 (May 27) carried a report of how two black students were knifed to death in a street attack by four white youths in Woodford, East London. Last week, at the trial of the four, the courts revealed themselves as scandalously racist, operating a dual standard on young offenders. Three of these vicious thugs were fined £150 and given suspended six month sentences — the fourth was

"detained during Her Majesty's pleasure".

Significantly, the trial was rigged to load the guilt onto the youngest of the four. Alan Jones, aged 16. He was sent to borstal, while the 19-year old accomplices got off lightly. Jones is supposed, according to the story that the court chose to believe, to have produced the knife and killed the two men, while his companions were 'shocked' to find that he even had the knife. They were sentenced for 'making an affray'.

That Chelmsford Crown Court should swallow such a story from a gang of racist hoodlums erodes the credibility of 'British Justice'. But when this is placed against the words of Judge Morris on the subject of 'muggings' in South London, the very notion of 'impartiality' fades away. Handing out prison sentences of up to seven years on six members of a gang, the Judge declared that Brixton and Clapham had been "peaceful, safe, and agreeable", until immigrants moved in and turned them into a high crime area. He went on to go as near as he could to advocating racial 'vigilante' squads. If he would not have approved of the Woodford murders, and the murder that came in Southall shortly afterwards, he would at least have

dealt lightly with them, as did Chelmsford Crown Court last week.

Violence against the individual is abhorrent. It is bred by the miserable conditions of bad housing, under-financed education and mass unemployment that face youth as British capitalism tightens all the screws it can in its attempt to survive competitively. But the courts are prepared to deal with the murder of blacks by whites as an accident. They "only meant to give them a bit of stick... to rough them up" as the court heard.

When the situation is reversed, it is a totally different matter. Not that the identification of 'mugger' with 'black' makes any sense anyway. The term 'mugging' has no precise meaning, and areas of high incidence of violent street crime include Glasgow with very few black inhabitants.

The infamous comments of Judge Morris do have a lesson, if and only if their intention is reversed. While whites have the dubious protection on the streets of a police force which is demonstrably racist, potential black victims, like those in Woodford and Southall, can only rely on their own self-defence. We must build active labour movement support for that black self-defence.

BOB SUGDEN

### IRANIAN STUDENTS' HUNGER STRIKES IN 6 COUNTRIES

AN UNLIMITED HUNGER STRIKE by 20 members of the Confederation of Iranian students (CISNU) began in London on December 1st. The hunger strike is in protest against the detention of two Iranians in France, accused of the attempted assassination of Homayoun Keykavousi, head of the Iranian secret police (SAVAK) in France, on November 2nd. Hunger strikes are now going on in France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Sweden and the USA.

A number of Iranian students were arrested in France, four were deported and two of them detained and charged with the shooting. An organisation called the 'Reza Rezaei International Brigade' has claimed responsibility for the assassination attempt, but denies the detained students were involved. The CISNU believes that the students are innocent.

The two students were identified by a policeman, brigadier Coctem, who was wounded during the incident, and all he could see was "a resemblance between the silhouette of the first gunman and that of Takbir" (one of the students).

The local magistrate ruled that one of the students should be released, but this was over-ruled by the public prosecutor. It is clear that the French authorities — who have important economic deals with the Iranian regime — are victimising Iranian oppositionists. Otherwise why the four deportations?

The CISNU are demanding that the French authorities either put the students on trial, or, if they have no evidence against them, that they release them immediately.

MARIAN MOUND

THE PRINT FIRM "Alacra" has decided to close its factories in Sharnersdale and at Park Royal, West London. Against a background of high unemployment in both areas — in West London thousands of jobs have been lost by factory closures over the past 10 years — the print union at Alacra has agreed to redundancies and has negotiated what Mr Jack Quirk, a union representative, called, "one of the best deals ever negotiated on the Park Royal Estate. We have been promised four weeks redundancy pay for everyone even if they are new to the firm. And some of our men have been here for 40 years".

However, those who are now happy to accept the saccharine-coated sack will find it difficult to get a job in the West London area and virtually impossible to work in the this when he negotiated the deal which also applies to the Sharnersdale plant: "I think the future is grim and we feel a lot of our members will never be employed in the trade again. Some of the older members will never be able to work again and the rest of us will have a struggle to remain employed. I'm only in my thirties but there is no certainty of a job for me when I leave", he said.

Thus this 'best agreement' amounts to mass sackings with the prospect of the dole queue after the 'golden handshake' has been spent.

The union should have defended its members' interests by opposing all redundancies and fighting for the nationalisation of Alacra, with no compensation, to guarantee employment.

JOE MACDONALD

### BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY TRIES TO SMASH ASTMS TECHNICIANS

ASTMS TECHNICIANS at Birmingham University are on official strike, demanding an extra five days' holiday a year. This extra 5 days was included in the agreement made between the workers and the universities nationally in 1974, and was even agreed by the government's conciliation service, ACAS.

It has already been implemented by several universities, but the Birmingham University management have consistently refused. McCracken, the University's 'industrial relations officer', has offered many 'arguments' on this, the latest being that it is outside the social contract.

The strikers last week called a demonstration with support from delegates from ASTMS branches throughout the country. They are now mounting a successful 24 hour picket. Management are only getting a few things in by using the time-honoured trick of smuggling them through in private cars.

The Tory-dominated students' union (Guild) has agreed to support the dispute, and has called on its members not to scab by doing the technicians' work. However, some academics and students are scabbing.

And the Guild has failed to mobilise support for the dispute; that has been done only by the organised left (IS, IMG, CP, I-CL). However, morale among the striking technicians remains high.

They point out that the dispute is not just about holidays. Massive cuts are coming on campus, and the management is trying to use the dispute to weaken and demoralise ASTMS, the most militant union on the campus.

Thus, victory for the ASTMS technicians is in the interests of all campus unions including the AUT and the NUS, and should be supported by all workers and students. Messages of support and donations to: Gordon Darkes, Birmingham University ASTMS, Edgbaston Park Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham.

JIM HOYLE

## Cuts: We're halfway there in Bury!

"HE CALLS US to revolt and fight with him for what is just and right" — the old Sunday School text written on the blackboard at Elm Street School was taken up with force and energy on Tuesday 30th November as the Bury Action Group discussed the closure of Sefton Street Day Centre for the Handicapped and Elderly of Whitefield, Bury.

The council had hoped to axe 11% (£320,000) from its social services budget in July, but because of the cuts Action Group's campaign Radcliffe Day Nursery, Whitte Pike Adult Training Centre and Hillcrest hostel have already been saved from closure. And because of the official "non-cooperation" action of NUPE and NALGO, the other cuts have been frozen.

But some cuts were hard to freeze. You can't force the Treasurer to make out a cheque to keep the old people's Luncheon Clubs going. The Scrooges on the Council have so far managed to save £20,000 by refusing the traditional Christmas treats and parties for old people, and withdrawing their holiday grants. Several months ago, also, the council managed to close an

Old People's Home and a Day Centre for the elderly.

At the 30th November meeting, one woman told us that she was partially blind, had suffered epilepsy for years, and had undergone 40 operations. She lives alone and the only time she goes out of the house and sees anyone is to go two days a week to Sefton Street Day Centre.

The main concern of the meeting was the Council's immediate plans to close Sefton St within two weeks of NALGO lifting their ban on cooperation with the cuts, and the NALGO AGM was this week. A picket of support for NALGO's action was organised for their AGM, and NALGO has now deferred their decision to another special branch meeting. Clearly, however, some stronger action is needed to force the council to stop the cuts, for non-cooperation is simply a delaying tactic, and all the time the old people are kept in suspense.

On 4th December 120 people turned out in freezing weather in support of Sefton St. The next step has yet to be organised. The

users of the Day Centre are adamant that they will fight to the end to keep it open, and the staff there and the Action Group support them in this. A work-in along the lines of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital is obviously a possibility.

We now need ambulance drivers to refuse to move people from Sefton St, Direct Works department to refuse to close the building, and so on. The Trades Council & Labour Party cuts coordinating committee needs to report speedily and get the message across to all Bury trade unionists that the cuts do affect them, that the running down of the social services means a cut in their living standards. We need to carry on showing the way to the rest of the country.

Cuts such as Bury's will happen elsewhere. But they can be fought — delayed — and finally reversed — if people begin to organise against them.

We're half-way there in Bury, and still fighting!

SUE ARNALL  
[Bury Action Group & Bury CLP]

BILL JONES, regional deputy general secretary, has overturned the Newham North East Labour Party Executive Committee decision to suspend Prentice supporters Ray Massey and Eddie Lee from the Party. However, the November meeting of Kensington ward [at which Lee and Massey took over the posts of chairman and secretary, and for malpractice at which they were suspended], has been ruled unconstitutional, and anti-Prentice activists Rich Probert and John Plant have been reinstated.

Furthermore, the 'visitor' from Oxford CLP, J M Lewis, who orchestrated the right wing takeover bid of Kensington ward in October, has now moved into the borough, as part of a concerted attempt by Prentice supporters to gain control of St Stephen's ward.

I.H.

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