

Workers Press Benefit

Proceeds to Workers Press and Bloody Sunday commemoration committee

Venue: Abbey Community Centre, 222 Belsize Road, London NW6

Saturday 30 January, 7.30pm.

Irish music, dancing, bar food
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STRIKE FOR THE N.H.S.

BY THE EDITOR

ARTHUR SCARGILL'S re-election as president of the National Union of Miners shows that great possibilities now exist for building a powerful leadership in the working class. They come as 90 per cent of Ford workers have backed industrial action in pursuit of their pay claim and more and more workers are joining the movement to defend the National Health Service against the Thatcher government.

This leadership must answer Kinnock and his supporters who last week spat on every nurse, ancillary worker and doctor fighting to defend the health service when they threw out Tony Benn's motion at Labour's national executive to support all industrial action taken in defence of the NHS.

Scargill was re-elected for one reason: he led the fight against the Thatcher government's butchery of the mining industry as a prelude to giving it back to big business.

This is exactly what Thatcher plans for the health service. The Tories intend a 'service' for only a handful of the rich and privileged. The poor can go to the wall.

The same force that the miners fought in their year-long strike and still

face today confronts nurses, ancillary workers, doctors and all those engaged in the fight against the Tories.

Scargill met an unholy alliance determined to destroy his re-election campaign. The Tory press was joined by the Communist Party of Great Britain, the right wing in the union and those 'lefts' who went to the courts to try and stop the election.

Health service workers are now getting the same medicine. While nurses flood out of the no-strike Royal College of Nursing to join other health service unions, Kinnock turns his guns not on the Tories but on the Militant Tendency, suspending Southwark and Bermondsey Labour Party.

More than 40,000 miners voted against the line of capitulation to the Tory government — represented during the NUM election by Walsh. This solid group must be made a launch pad for a campaign throughout the movement in support of health service workers.

Nurses and other health workers must now call upon miners to support

their fight, the fight of all those whose lives depend on the preservation of the NHS.

The struggle must be supported by Ford workers ready for industrial action over their claim for improved wages and conditions.

A solid core of miners voted for Scargill because they know that the fight to preserve the industry, to maintain existing work practices and prevent the break-up of the union as a national body involves a political struggle to bring Thatcher down.

Now tens of thousands of health service workers are quickly learning the same lesson. The miners' strike showed that the Tories will not yield to protest and pressure, as the union leaders still desperately hope.

The task of the hour is to transform the widespread sympathy for the nurses into a movement that will bring the Thatcher government down.

We are confident that such a movement can be built. Thatcher's willingness to talk with the no-strike Royal

● continued on page 2



Burnum Burnum, aboriginal actor-writer claims Britain for the Australian aborigines. He planted the red yellow and black aborigine flag underneath the cliffs of Dover on Australia Day, as part of a protest at Australia's treatment of the aborigines. See page 11 for story.

WORKERS PRESS JANUARY FUND

In so far: £1,184.93

The Workers Press monthly fund went up by £179.85 last week. We now need just over £800 to complete the target by 31 January. A mass movement is building up against the Tory government. All sections of organised workers, youth and the unemployed are being drawn into this struggle. Workers Press is a vital weapon in the campaign. Make sure you buy it regularly and sell it to your friends and fellow trade unionists. Ensure that our January fund is completed on time. Send all donations to:

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Workers Press

Death Squads and the loyal opposition

WHEN Ken Livingstone was suspended from the House of Commons on Monday night, he got the backing of just 19 MPs. The Labour Party leaders were, of course, not among them.

Livingstone's crime was to denounce Attorney-General Mayhew as an 'accomplice to murder'.

Mayhew had told the House how 'deeply anxious' he was that officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary might have been guilty of perverting the course of justice. He had merely stopped the Director of Public Prosecutions from doing anything about them.

MPs had to take his word for it that this was in the interests of 'national security' — and keep their mouths shut.

In 1982, several unarmed people were killed by a special unit of the RUC. In one case, over a hundred bullets were pumped into a car. In another, a completely innocent teenager was shot dead.

In 1984, four RUC men were charged with murder at two trials. It was established that RUC officers had been ordered to lie about these incidents, under threat of the Official Secrets Act. The RUC men were acquitted.

After the second trial, the stink became overpowering. John Stalker, Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester, was appointed to investigate the incidents. He discovered that one of the shootings had been recorded on an MI5 listening device. He also discovered that he was prevented from getting a copy of the recording.

Stalker recommended that at least eight RUC men be charged. In May, 1986, he was still struggling to get past the obstructions of the RUC chiefs. Then his boss, James Anderton suddenly complained about Stalker's associations with 'known criminals'.

Stalker was suspended from duty, and, naturally, from his work on the RUC investigation. In August 1986, all charges against him were dropped and he returned to police duty. But he was not allowed to get back on the RUC case.

Now, Mayhew decides, a small matter of perverting the course of justice in a couple of murder cases must not outweigh the interests of 'security'. Kinnoch's men, while complaining about the rather offhand manner of his performance, are much more upset by Ken Livingstone's outburst.

In 1982, we should recall, the private war between MI5 and MI6 was in full swing. The Thatcher government has ever since gone to extraordinary lengths to keep us from knowing the details of that affair. The declaration that there will be no prosecutions in the Lurgan and Ballyneary murders is just one more layer of the cover-up.

Monday's House of Commons incidents, however, do throw some light on the workings of the British state. In pursuance of their war against the Irish people, the imperialists are developing all the techniques of dictatorship. The use of death squads is not possible without bending every procedure of law. This, in turn, demands cover-up operations, whose extent we can only guess at.

But none of this would be possible unless the ruling class were blessed with a Labour leadership of the Kinnoch variety. The sound of the violent actions of the forces of 'law and order' can then be drowned out by the liberal bleatings of an Opposition, whose loyalty to the imperialist State is without limit.

● The case for a labour movement inquiry into the sinister activities of MI5 and MI6 is now greater than ever following Livingstone's suspension from the Commons.



Students on the Alton bill march. They are holding red roses to represent all those women who died in back street abortions

Class reply to Alton

DAVID ALTON'S anti-abortion bill has been given its first reading in the House of Commons.

Support from several conscience stricken Labour MP's helped it on it's way.

There is now a real possibility that the abortion time limit will be reduced from 28 to 18 weeks.

all the steps forward won by the working class over the last 150 years.

This attack on women's rights must be seen as part of a wider attack on

This is the nature of the present battles on education, health, local government services, and the

attempt to break up the mining industry. The solution to the deepening social crisis requires that a real unity in struggle is built.

The campaign against the Alton bill is in it's infancy, even so in the week before Parliament read the bill, there were a series of protest demonstrations and marches

throughout the country. These culminated in a day of action in London. A student demonstration of several thousand was followed by a lobby of Parliament and a rally in Central hall, Westminster

The movement we first saw in the miners' strike is emerging everywhere in struggles in defence of basic rights.

Nurses win MPs support

LAST Friday four Liverpool MPs — Terry Fields, Bob Waring, Eric Heffer and Eddie Loyden made a statement in which they said:

'We applaud the decision taken by hospital workers' unions in Liverpool in calling for a day of action on 10 February.

'If other trade unionists and working class families in Liverpool are sincere in their resolve to maintain and improve health care, they should consider, through their own organisation in the labour and trade union movement, joining with the health workers.'

The Merseyside branches of the National Union of Public Employees have made a request for support.

This call by the Liverpool MPs should be taken up widely by workers on Merseyside and the North West.

Nurses and hospital workers need the support of workers and the community.

There must now be a demand for the trade union leaders in the North West to mobilise their membership in response to this call. This would be a powerful rallying of the forces to bring down this Tory government.

● Strike for NHS

College of Nursing but not with the other health service unions show her weakness. She is trying to play the old Tory divide and rule card.

Her cheap trick must be answered by the widest support for every industrial action taken against her government.

The existing labour leaders have no intention of carrying the fight to protect the NHS through to a finish.

These 'leaders' have far greater fear of the working class on the move than they have of the Tory enemy.

The defence of the NHS needs the building of a new

leadership.

● Full support for the 3 February strike action! Full support for all similar actions planned in other parts of the country!

● Support every strike in defence of the health service!

● Down with the witch-hunt against Militant! Kinnoch must be told: turn your fire on Thatcher or get out of the way!

● To Tony Benn we say: if you want to mobilise a serious movement against the Tories you must fight Kinnoch for the leadership of the Party and fight throughout the movement for support in the struggle to replace him.

Fascist attacks in north-west

A FAMILY in Aughton, Ormskirk, near Liverpool, have been subjected to harassment from fascists since last September.

This has taken the form of threatening phone calls, verbal threats in the street, cutting telephone wires, throwing bricks through windows and drawing graffiti on the house and family car.

One of the family is a member of City Anti-Apartheid. The attacks seem to be the work of Liverpool-based fascist organisers, in conjunction with some local 'boneheads'.

The attackers have threatened arson, rape and knee-capping. The police have been notified but have made no arrests.

These attacks are not an isolated series of incidents. This is a white family, but in the same area an Asian family has received similar treatment.

They have been held at knife point and robbed. Their house has been vandalised. They had only been resident for four days in Ormskirk when the attacks began, suggesting that they were racially motivated.

Rolls 'cost millions'

MILLIONS of pounds of public money may have been given away by the Tories when they privatised Rolls Royce last year, a report issued last week discloses.

The chair of Rolls-Royce, Sir Francis Tombs, forced the government into giving the company an extra £63 million donation by threatening to withdraw his support for the flotation.

This was despite the fact that the government consultants, Samuel Montagu, and the audit office had doubts about its necessity.

The Audit Office would not pass say whether the shares were grossly undervalued, as has happened in all the Tory sell-offs so far, but investors who sold on first day trading made a 68 per cent profit on their shares. Not a bad day's pay for filling in a couple of forms and lifting a telephone.

FORD WAGES

Only all-out strike can win claim

Ford workers have voted by an unprecedented 88 per cent to reject the company's three-year efficiency deal and to take industrial action.

The union leaders have given notice that the 32,000 workers at Fords will strike from Monday 1 February, 'unless the offer is improved'.

A union spokesman was quoted as saying that if the strike took place it would be a tragedy.

In three months' of negotiations the company has rigidly stuck to its demands of a three-year agreement, wide-ranging efficiencies, and acceptance of short-term contract labour in return for a 6.5 per cent pay increase.

The chief negotiators, Mick Murphy (T&GWU) and James Airlie (AEU) have repeatedly emphasised their desire for a negotiated settlement but their vacillation has only strengthened the company's resolve to hold out for the three-year deal.

The unions were to report to the company on Thursday 28 January and were clearly hoping that the company would offer some concessions to get them off the hook and avoid a strike.

Airlie had even opposed fixing a



Ford workers from Dagenham

date for strike action in the hope that the company would offer a little more, demonstrating the leaders' preparedness to retreat from the full claim of a one-year deal, ten per cent and no strings.

World car sales are expected to fall following the October economic crash. To compete under such conditions Fords want to take full advantage of the low wages and high productivity of its British plants. They want to maintain their

massive profits at the expense of Ford workers' living standards and conditions.

Fords is an international manufacturer. Solidarity from Ford workers internationally is vital to stop Fords shipping in cars to break the strike.

The strength of support for a fight for the full claim was demonstrated in the voting in the plants. For example: Bridgend, 97 per cent; Swansea, 96 per cent; Hale-

wood, 95 per cent. Even the electricians voted 88 per cent for action.

The question of leadership has never been more clearly posed than in this pay claim. Ford workers must establish their own democratic control over the strike, led by those who are prepared to carry the fight through to win the claim.

Such a leadership must come forward now to prevent the union officials selling out the claim.

TWO REPORTS FROM GEORGE SMITH

250 bus drivers sacked

THREE SCABS were the only exception when the whole of the platform staff of City Bus, Plymouth were sacked last week. In all 250 bus drivers were given notice for attending a union meeting in working hours.

City Bus is owned by Plymouth city council and managed by D.Fisher.

The company is trying to impose stringent cuts in pay and conditions. These include:

- a reduction of one week in the annual leave
- reductions in the rate of pay
- enhanced rate for Sunday work to be abolished
- eight hours' work to be spread over a 15 hour day without any enhancement.

Despite the severity of these proposals, pickets expressed the opinion that they are only the start of worse things to come, and they are not prepared to accept them.

SACKINGS

Concurrent with the mass sackings the management started an advertising campaign to recruit new drivers. Up to the time of my visit, they had managed to scrape together a miserable bunch of about eight, one of whom was an ex-City Bus driver sacked only two weeks previously for a serious offence. The new recruits were

being offered £3.06p per hour which, whilst I was there was increased to £3.16p per hour.

This news brought a derisive burst of laughter from the pickets. 'He's got to be scraping the bottom of the barrel' they said.

Tanker drivers delivering diesel fuel were giving full support by refusing to cross picket lines. Promise of police escorts failed to achieve any change from any of them.

They are all members of the Transport and General Workers Union.

The strikers are now aiming to win support from the shop men in the depot. They will be the next group to be attacked.

The sackings expose the fallacy of privatisation as a harbinger of prosperity. Privatisation's first concern is with profit. People are not considered, only insofar as they are a market commodity to be bought and sold and exploited for their financial values.

The bus drivers of Plymouth are showing the source of real opposition to Thatcherism: the organised working class.

DEVON GENERAL busworker, Steve Warwick, who was sacked for trade union activity has been speaking to Exeter WRP members about the importance of the issues involved in his dismissal.

First I asked him how important his sacking was from a trade union and political point of view. Warwick replied by saying that essentially he saw it as a political act, because the company suspected him of supporting the Militant tendency and being sent down to Devon to stir up trouble.

He said that the way in which they had tried to justify his dismissal was to concentrate on his past trade union activities. The employers used a reactionary ruling from the 1970s when a worker's dismissal for trade union activity with a previous employer was upheld.

Warwick continued, saying that the fact he had won both this interim and full tribunals unanimously was of vital importance. He pointed out that the company's case was based on totally false information and the tribunals upheld the NUR's plea that he had been

sacked for his present and possible future trade union activity.

WIDER

I asked if he would like to see the wider labour movement involved in this issue. He replied that he favoured the campaign being broadened out. The issue was the property of the trade union and labour movement. He said that it was our duty to make people aware that it was not just a local issue.

It is extremely important for the employers not to be able to sack workers for past trade union activity. If trade unionists can be sacked for past activity, they have no right to go to a tribunal during their first two years with an employer and employers then have an open-ended right to sack workers.

The only reason he himself had the right to appeal to an industrial tribunal was because he had been an official of the

Victimised worker speaks

local branch.

We asked if the privatisation of Devon General had been a factor in his sacking.

He said that the company was now reliant upon profits and was no longer subsidised. This makes it more worried about trade union activities. He saw the company as having taken full advantage of the government's laws and general

crackdown on trade unions in this case.

Reinstatement, he said, would be a vindication of the position the union had taken and it would clear his name.

Warwick summed up by saying that this issue was not about Steve Warwick but was about the ability of management to sack whoever they liked for their past trade union activity.



Steve Warwick

Charing Cross joins the action

CHARING CROSS HOSPITAL workers will be on strike on 3 February.

Meetings of COHSE and NUPE members were unanimous in their feelings towards Thatcher's refusal to give more to the National Health Service and her attack on the decision of nurses to strike.

The strike has wide support throughout the country and is around the demands:

- No Cuts!
- More Pay!
- Full Funding for the NHS!

Low pay and the increasing cost of living in London, the refusal to raise the London weighting on top of massive cuts, has broken the patience of nurses at Charing Cross.

The stress and strain of the deteriorating health service, of poor working conditions and long hours have made the situation intolerable for nurses.

They are determined to fight back.

A local strike committee has been formed by nurses in both unions; plans for picketing and emergency cover have been drawn up.

Members

Nurses see this as only the beginning of the fight. They have called a meeting of their members for the Monday following the strike to discuss their next move.

Other workers are meeting this week to vote support for the nurses action.

There is anger that the

BY JOHN SIMMANCE

Riverside Health Authority which meets on 28 January will be making a decision on the proposed closure of five hospitals in the district and building of one new hospital if funding is made available.

St Stephens hospital will be knocked down almost immediately if the plans go ahead. Last Monday doctors launched a campaign to keep it open.

Riverside Health Authority plans to cut 300 hospital beds by 1994. The St. Stephens' doctors fear that the destruction of their hospital means that these plans have been advanced to the present day.

Supported by local people the unions have formed the Campaign to Save Riverside Hospitals (Camdor).

Last November hundreds of staff from Charing Cross Hospital, including a delegation of 150 nurses, joined a protest march to St Stephens.

Last Monday a riverboat travelled along the Thames to protest to MPs about the planned closures.

On 28 January a mass lobby of the Riverside Health Authority is to take place.

Nurses are determined that patients, relatives and other workers are kept informed. A letter explaining their action has been sent out. They slam Thatcher's slanders and point out that Thatcher is responsible for the cuts.

Retreat

Despite the retreat and crawling by many of the leaders in NUPE and COHSE nurses are determined the 24 hour strike will not be 'a damp-squib day of action — or "in-action"'.

Chris Humphreys, NUPE regional officer, has asked London ambulance drivers not to take action.

Union leaders are desperate to contain the nurses action. Despite this, many other sections of hospital workers have indicated their support.

Strike committees must be formed in all hospitals, districts and regions which should aim to win the support of all workers throughout the country.

● Spread the action to call for all out stoppages.

● Form occupation committees to stop the closure of hospitals, wards and clinics.

● TUC must call national strike to co-incide with the Scottish TUC action.



RCN nurses

Paltry sums for Kings X victims

LONDON REGIONAL Transport is again displaying its complete contempt for its users. These agents of Thatcherism are refusing to pay compensation to the relatives of the 31 victims of the King's Cross fire disaster. Six families will get no compensation whatsoever, except for funeral expenses.

LRT will agree only to pay the statutory bereavement payment of £3,500 per death. It has point blank refused to do anything about increasing that sum, or to widen the

categories of those eligible for compensation.

One of the lawyers handling the case said 'As a result, the families of those people aged 18 or 19 who died will receive nothing.'

LRT said that the claims had been turned down because 'They bear no relation to the sums properly payable in law.'

Money can never bring back the fireman who died to save others, or the young mother and her seven year-old child, or any of the 31 who died in such terror and pain. But those responsible for those deaths will be made to pay — in one way or another.

Tory blood in Greenwich

NURSES, Ambulance staff and ancillary workers are brewing up for an all out fight with the Thatcher Government.

Social workers are threatened by the crisis of local government and cannot be kept out of this fight.

The Kimberley Carlile tragedy in Greenwich, south east London, highlights this situation. Four year old Kimberley died on 8 June 1986 after her stepfather, Nigel Hall, had starved and beaten her to death.

The 'independent' report by Louis Blom-Cooper QC, urged a thorough overhaul of the child abuse protection system and laid the blame for Kimberley's death on individual social workers.

Greenwich Nalgo, the local government union, condemned the report for making a scapegoat out of social worker, Martin Ruddock.

Ruddock was a team leader and should not have been doing this job.

Greenwich councillors also condemned the report. Eddie McParland said, 'It is no exaggeration to say that the Tory cabinet have the blood of Kimberley on their hands.'

Paul Holmes, Greenwich Nalgo branch secretary, rightly said his union would consider advising social workers not to co-operate with future inquiries if their reward was to be crucified in the final report.

BY A WORKERS PRESS REPORTING TEAM

Like all such learned QC's most of them will side with the state: they make their living from such inquiries — the Martin Ruddocks lose theirs.

A 'London Programme' documentary recently highlighted this crisis. This said that as more cases of child abuse are reported social services are less able to meet the demand for help.

It said that social work in the 1980s will be dominated by child abuse cases and that social workers could spend up to 90 per cent of their time on such issues.

In Greenwich there has been a 240 per cent increase in one year in reported cases of child-abuse.

The council's budget is rate-capped and ever since the Tories came to office in 1979, the amount of rate-support grant allocated by central government has been reduced each year. So social work case-loads have been increasing whilst the



This is Cambert Way, Ferrier Estate, where Kimberley Carlile died.

funding to deal with the problems has been drastically cut.

This shortage of resources was shown in the 'London Programme' when their survey of ten London Boroughs revealed that there are two hundred children known to be at risk of serious abuse not under the supervision of a social worker. Nationwide there are 30,000 such cases.

This increase in work load is putting enormous strain on individual social workers resulting in stress illnesses, forcing them out of London or to other jobs.

Next financial year, Greenwich intends making cuts amounting to £5 million in its social services funding in order to make a 'legal' budget.

In the London Borough of Brent, where the death of Jasmine Beckford occurred, a third of the 150 field social worker posts are vacant.

Greenwich has a ten per cent vacancy rate and Southwark 24 per cent. During the last six months in Southwark 63 social workers have left and only 39 have been recruited. There are 35 vacant posts and 78 families on the

'at risk' register with no social worker allocated.

Since the death of little Maria Colwell in 1973 there have been six government inquiries and reports on non-accidental injury deaths, and 28 local authority reports.

In 1987 the Cleveland Child Abuse Inquiry was set up and is still to report.

Underlying these inquiries is the tacit belief that it is possible to stop child abuse through the courts. But tragedies such as the Kimberley Carlisle cases are merely the tip of the iceberg.

The crisis in social services, the NHS, education, housing and elsewhere are a reflection of the crisis of capitalism.

The death of one little girl from the Ferrier Estate in south east London will mean nothing to the arrogant members of this government, but this is not the reason for its refusal to prevent future suffering and death, whether in the NHS or with child abuse cases. It is being forced to create such conditions by the world crisis. It has no choice if it is to maintain its rotten system.'

Strike call winning London-wide response

CAMDEN Council's largest trade union voted last week to join the one-day strike called for 9 March by London Bridge.

London Bridge was set up in March 1987 as a joint union, cross-borough committee of shop stewards to fight cuts in local government jobs and services.

Camden branch of the National Association of Local Government Officers (Nalگو) also voted to campaign for support for the nurses and to organise delegations to visit hospital picket lines on 3 February day of action planned by Health Service workers.

The Emergency Special meeting held on 22 January heard that the present cuts proposed by the Labour Council will mean closure of at least:

- Eight nursery groups
- Two elderly persons' homes
- Several Social Services Day Centres
- One or two playcentres
- Several baths services

BY MARY STONE

- One or two branch libraries
- St. Pancras Reference Library
- The Shaw Theatre

Camden Council's current plans are to reduce the number of council jobs from approximately 8,740 to 6,430 by 31 March 1988, the end of the financial year.

Because of the vacancy freeze imposed last July, the number of workers actually in jobs at present is 7,060.

That means another 630 must go. Management hope that through the voluntary redundancy scheme offered to every Camden worker, they will achieve their target.

No consideration is being given to the effect on council services of a loss of 25 per cent of the workforce within eight months.

In addition, on December 18 the council's grants sub-committee decided the fate of 219 community groups in just over two hours.

With unprecedented haste, councillors nodded through

cuts in funding of between 5 and 100 per cent. Some organisations will have to shut down and many others will face making compulsory redundancies.

Support is growing across London for the London Bridge one-day strike call.

Amongst Nalگو branches which have so far agreed to support the call are ILEA, Haringey, Islington, Ealing, and Greenwich.

Haringey UCATT and Haringey NUT are also in support.

Westminster, Newham, Waltham Forest, Camden, Brent and Lewisham Nalگو executive committees are recommending the action to full branch meetings and the extra-Metropolitan District of the NUT and London Transport NUPE district Committee have voted to send delegations on the march organised for the day.

London Bridge played a leading role in the fight against rate-capping and is now calling for all local authority workers to fight cuts and privatisation.

Local government trade unions and 'fight back' campaigns against the cuts must link up with the health service struggle.

A year-long struggle

TWO TRADE union battles in Manchester have demonstrated a great spirit of resistance. Workers at Salford Plastics and Senior Colman are both fighting sackings and have stood for a year on picket lines while scabs recruited from the Job Centre do their work.

In January last year, Senior Colman sacked four workers who refused to fill in new worksheets without consultation with their union (the AEU). When the rest of the workers went on strike they too were sacked.

Judith Lowe, the wife of one of the strikers has been touring the country raising support. Workers Press asked her about her experiences in the year-long struggle.

'At the start you only see yourselves but as the year went on you realise you're not just fighting for your jobs, you're fighting for your rights.'

'The support has been overwhelming,' Judith went

BY BOB MYERS

on. 'We've had thousands of letters from all over the country.'

Judith is very critical of most of the union leadership.

'Since the start of this strike anything that has been achieved has been done by the men. It's the blokes who have lost their jobs who are doing the fighting.'

'The men should step up the campaign now,' said

Judith. Even if a financial settlement is offered she doesn't think the men should accept it. It would make the whole struggle pointless, she feels.

'They came out for jobs. I don't want my husband to take a payment to clear off as if he's done something wrong.'

Judith sees big changes taking place in Britain in the future. 'Things we've never seen before and thought couldn't happen.'

'Every time there's a strike or something happens people do wake up and realise things have got to change.'

'A year ago I didn't have a lot of hope for the future of the kids but, having met all the people that have come and supported us, it has given me hope that things will change.'

Medical students firmly behind NHS

HOW do medical students feel about the cuts in the National Health Service? Workers Press went along to Liverpool University to find out.

Michael, who has just completed two years at University and is now working both in hospitals and in the community, spoke to us. What did he and other medical students think of the NHS?

All of them were agreed, he said, that it's in a mess. They weren't political but they were committed to the NHS.

What did he think of its being privatised?

'Privatisation is part of Thatcherism,' Michael told us. 'It is expensive and elitist.' Making profit from health care was wrong, he said.

Other students joined in at this stage. Amongst the topics discussed were maternity and psychiatric care, which were both seen as being dramatically affected as a result of the cuts.

The closure of Liverpool hospitals also came under discussion. The distance children from the centre of Liverpool now had to travel as a result of the closure of Myrtle Street hospital was condemned. There was concern too about the intention to close the Womens Hospital and two maternity hospitals as well as St Paul's Eye Hospital.

Michael said he was very unhappy about the training he had received. He thought medicine was taught in a very abstract way. Most doctors, he said, were at a complete loss when it came to dealing with the human and practical side of their practice.

Without the nurses who came from the working class, Michael said, care of patients and the running of hospital wards would be impossible. He supported the strike action by the Manchester nurses.

Although Michael expressed the opinion that nursing staff should continue their training throughout their careers, he disagreed with the Royal College of Nursing idea of teaching the equivalent of a degree at college.

He believed the way in which nurses acquired knowledge through their practice was the reason that they

against the establishment was dangerous and ways would be found to isolate them and that they could fail their exams.

Michael said in conclusion that Liverpool University was not sexist or racist, as some other universities appeared to be, but it was still hard to change things.

Medical students, all of whom are firmly behind the NHS, must fight to change the long hours house doctors are forced to work and to establish better relations with patients rather than be kept apart from them.

BY RAE HUNTER

could cope with some situations better than could doctors. Michael also felt that the RCN attitude to nursing was elitist.

Two years ago, Michael told us, discussion groups amongst students were discouraged by older students. They had said that going

£20,000 Special Fund

THE FUND STANDS AT: £979.66

WE need a little over £19,000 to complete this fund by 1 May. The fund has not moved since last week. We urgently need you to send in donations for the important work to organise an international conference of Trotskyists.

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Scots anti-Poll Tax fight: Nothing illegal considered

A MEETING of 80 labour and community activists agreed in Edinburgh last weekend to set up a local branch of the Labour Party's 'Stop It' campaign against the Poll Tax.

Susan Deakin of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, introducing the discussion, said that the campaign should consider adopting the principle of non-payment of the tax, which goes against the policy of the Labour Party leadership who have specifically ruled out 'illegal' action.

But members of the Labour Movement Campaign Against the Poll Tax, formed at a conference in December, were ruled out of order when they moved amendments to the proposed constitution committing the new body to fight for collective non-payment and non-implementation by Labour councils.

Des Laughney, Edinburgh Trades Council's secretary, said that the proposed

BY HILARY HORROCKS

amendments were policy changes which should not be part of the constitution. If passed, it could prevent Labour Party and trade union branches from affiliating if the official policy from their organisation was against illegal action.

The trades council, said its vice chairman Calum Macrae, had pledged not to pay the tax but this was part of and not an alternative to a wider campaign.

Ian Robertson of the Anti Poll Tax Union said that a distinction had to be drawn between setting up a protest group and one which would fight seriously for non implementation.

Macrae was elected as chairman of a new body but

other members of the Labour Movement Campaign Against the Poll Tax refused to stand for positions on the steering committee. This committee will carry out the strategy decided by a monthly general meeting, which will be open to individuals and delegates from organisations (one per 50 members).

The Labour Movement Campaign Against the Poll Tax is organising a lobby of Labour's national local government conference at which Neil Kinnock is speaking, at the Assembly Room, George Street, Edinburgh, this Friday at 6p.m.

Falkirk, Stirlingshire Trades Council decided last week to submit the following resolution to the Scottish TUC congress in April:

This Trades Council calls on the STUC a) to organise with the Civil Service and Local Government Unions to prevent the implementation of the poll tax. b) to organise workers in Scotland to refuse to register or pay the poll tax.

London march

REPORT BY ANDREW BURGIN

Last Saturday over 5000 people marched through central London to support the heroic struggle of the Palestinian masses. This was the largest march on the question of Palestine for many years and reflected the steadfastness and determination of those Palestinian workers and youth who are fighting to win back their homeland both in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza and within the Zionist state itself.

Led by a 1000 strong Palestinian contingent the march brought together many immigrant organisations and also trade union and political parties from the

the 1985 supporters of Gerry Healy were also present. Vanessa Redgrave representing the pro-stalinist Marxist Party said 'the political revolution in the Soviet Union is under way and is daily undermining Imperialism and Zionism.' This was rich since it is the Gorbachev regime who are feteing Zionism at the moment. Torrance, Price and Kerrigan all led their respective clubs.

The rally and march represented a real development in the solidarity movement campaign which started to mobilise in the latter part of 1987 around the question of the murders of workers and students in the occupied territories. This achievement must be built upon and links established between the struggles for national liberation and for socialist revolution which are intimately bound up with each other.



Vanessa Redgrave.

British labour movement. Amongst the immigrant groups were the Pakistani Workers Association, the Turkish Student Federation and the Kurdish Students Association. Members from the Kurdish Workers Association were present on the march, representing the unity between the struggle of the Palestinians and the Kurds for their respective homelands.

Importantly the banner of the Scottish TUC (STUC) was on the march and STUC Assistant General Secretary, Bill Spiers spoke at the rally which preceded the march. Other speakers included Faisal Oweida from the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, Mike Heiser from the Jewish Socialist group who was given an enthusiastic welcome by the rally, and Sheikh Jamal from the Islamic Cultural Centre.

The splinter groups from



Dr Pauline Cutting who worked in the besieged Palestinian camps in Lebanon.



Many children joined the demonstration.

Down with Zionism! End occupation!



Workers Revolutionary Party contingent on the march

Tel-aviv and Nazareth thousands demonstrate

ABOUT 40,000 Israelis marched through Tel Aviv on Saturday evening, 23 January, in a demonstration against their government's repression of Palestinians, and calling for an end to the occupation of West Bank and Gaza.

Earlier in the day there had been a demonstration of about 10,000 people in the mainly Arab town of Nazareth, in Galilee.

There was applause at the rally there for Arab

Knesset member Abdel Daraisha, who said the PLO was the rightful representative of the Palestinian people, and announced that he was quitting the Israeli Labour party because of its support for repression.

A YOUNG woman died last week of injuries received when police broke up a pro-Palestinian student demonstration in Fez, Morocco.

Over twenty people were injured in the clash, on 21 January. 'A demonstration of support for the movement of Palestinians in the territories occupied by Israel had begun to get out of hand,' according to government officials.

About 2,000 students had taken part in the demonstration.



Piper from the large Scottish turnout on the march.

DEATH TOLL

NEARLY ninety people have been killed by Israeli troops in the occupied West Bank and Gaza strip. Two were reported killed in the West Bank village of Bani al Naim, near El Khalil, on Monday, bringing the tally to eighty-eight.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army has been carrying out the 'beatings' recommended by Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin (a Labour Party leader). Witnesses tell of youngsters dragged from their beds in the night, limbs broken, or hands smashed with rifle-butts.

In the Knesset (parliament) on 26 January, member Yossi Sarid derided government claims that injuries

to innocent people were due to individual soldiers 'going too far'. Rabin had 'let the genie out of the bottle' by talking about 'breaking bones', Sarid said.

Sarid has compiled a list of 200 Palestinians whose limbs were broken by soldiers in the Gaza Strip since 9 December.

Medical authorities in the Gaza Strip have reported a frightening increase in miscarriages among women there, due to the repression, curfews and brutality.

Iraq will use 'any weapon'

IRAQI ambassador Mohammed al-Mashat has defended the use of 'any' weapons against Kurdish rebels in the north. But he refused to give a straight answer on his government's use of chemical weapons.

'If you come to my home to kill me I will use anything in my hand to protect myself. Would you worry what weapon you used?', Al-Mashat said at a London press conference last week.

Along with neighbouring Turkey and Iran, Iraq continues to hold part of the Kurdish homeland, and the Iraqi regime has used chemical weapons in attacks on villages, killing civilians including young children.

Recently, some Kurds from Iraq-Kurdistan were flown to London for treatment for thalium poisoning. But Dr. Al-Mashat denied 'absolutely, categorically and vehemently' an Amnesty International report that 40 Kurds had been poisoned

with thalium by Iraqi forces.

He blamed Amnesty for 'publishing such a sordid report', and said the media had ignored the fact that the poisoned Kurds 'came from Tehran'.

'It is very simple. With one bomb we can destroy them,' said Al-Mashrat, denying it was necessary to poison opponents.

Asked whether his government would allow foreign journalists to tour Kurdish areas and check reports that chemical weapons had been used, the Iraqi ambassador said: 'That is for international bodies — not journalists.'

Concern has been expressed in Britain over the Tory government's refusal of asylum to Kurdish refugees from Iraq recently.



The 'Canberra Coup' in 1975 was met by angry strikes and huge demonstrations. Workers stormed the Sydney stock exchange.

Australian workers showed their anger against the Tories at mass rallies like this one in Sydney's Hyde Park, on 17 November 1975, organised by the Trades and Labour Council. Queen's Governor-General Sir John Kerr and Liberal (Tory) leader Malcolm Fraser were bitterly denounced.

Many were convinced that America's CIA had conspired against Labour. They were right. Now it is revealed that the British MI6 and MI5 were active partners in the conspiracy.

Churchill protected Italy's war criminals

MORE than 1,200 Italians accused of war crimes are named in UN files recently opened for the first time. Only one was ever punished — fascist leader Benito Mussolini, executed by Italian partisans on 28 April, 1945.

Had the British or other Allied forces got there quicker, he might have been saved. It was the Allies, particularly Churchill, who wanted to spare the fascist murderers.

However, Churchill remarked of Mussolini's undignified end, 'at least we've been spared another Nuremberg Trial.' Was he worried about embarrassing evidence?

The UN files, held under seal by the UN War Crimes Commission, deal with atrocities in Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania, Libya, and Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

'Yesterday I led an execution squad,' an Italian soldier wrote home from Yugoslavia, in 1941. 'We shot 30 prisoners, including the Communist bandit leader in Croatia. The bandits attacked, so we destroyed a whole village in reprisal.'

'We killed entire families. Last week we execute another 180 prisoners without trial. I have been congratulated by my officer.'

Out of a population of 360,000 in territory annexed by Mussolini, 67,230 people died. Fascist General Roatto, the 'Black Beast', as his own men called him, had ordered mass reprisal killings.

In Ethiopia, the fascist invaders used bombers and mustard gas to overwhelm the poorly-armed African fighters.

Less well-known is what happened after Italian troops captured Addis Ababa. Captured chiefs were hanged in rows, or drowned with stones tied to their necks. Italian officers, representatives of Western 'civilisation', posed proudly

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

for pictures besides the corpses of their victims.

Coptic Archbishop Petros was publicly executed. Some 500 monks and pupils from Debra Libano monastery were butchered in a church.

After an attempt on the Italian General Graziani's life, mass reprisals were ordered in Addis Ababa. For three days, people were slaughtered, and army lorries carted the corpses away. Altogether, 300,000 Ethiopians were killed so that Fascist Italy could have its 'place in the sun.'

Professor Angelo de Boga, of the University of Turin, whose works on Italian imperialist history led to demands from the army that he be prosecuted for 'vilifying the Italian soldier', points out that those responsible for the atrocities in Abyssinia fell into British hands, and were treated well.

The Duke of Aosta, fascist commander in Abyssinia, was received with military honours, dined with his captors, and was escorted to dignified retirement in Kenya.

It is worth recalling that in 1924, Tory Winston Churchill visited Mussolini, and told him: 'Had I been an Italian, I would have been with you from the start.' He said the fascist dictator had shown the way to deal with Bolshevism.

The British government,

M.I.6 and 'Canberra coup'

BRITISH intelligence collaborated with America's CIA to bring down Gough Whitlam's Labour government in Australia in 1975.

Whitlam's government was dismissed by the Queen's representative, Governor-General Sir John Kerr, supposedly on a constitutional point — that it had narrowly lost a majority in the upper house, the Senate.

Evidence obtained from CIA sources in Washington has now confirmed what many long suspected, that the CIA wanted Whitlam out because his government was not subservient enough. The US wanted to look after its important spy base at Pine Gap, and its imperialist interests in south-east Asia.

Some of the evidence was presented last week in a Central TV documentary made by internationally-known Australian journalist John Pilger, shown as part of a bicentennial series.

Up till 1975, most Australians had assumed the Governor-General's job was just ceremonial. When this archaic colonial relic was used to topple an elected government, in what became quickly dubbed the 'Canberra Coup', thousands of angry workers took to the streets.

The Australian armed forces were not surprised — they had been told what to expect, and were on full alert. Whitlam later acknowledged that the reason Labour had decided to go quietly was fear that the military would move.

In 1974, a senior CIA official had visited Britain to discuss with a leading British politician how to get rid of the Labour government in Australia, Pilger's sources have revealed.

The following year, CIA

although concerned that Italian expansion in east Africa might challenge British colonial interests, went along with Mussolini's 1935 invasion of Abyssinia, hoping to play one fascist power against another in Europe.

In July 1943, when the Allies landed in Sicily, the fascist grand council dropped Mussolini. King Victor Emmanuel appointed Marshal Badoglio, a fascist war criminal.

With Italian workers seizing factories and left-wing partisans taking towns, the British and US imperialist allies decided to support the king. Churchill flew for talks with Badoglio.

'Given the enormous Muscovite advance into the centre of Europe, Italy could turn red overnight,' said Churchill, fearfully. 'There is nothing between the king, with the band of patriots who have rallied around him, and rampant Bolshevism. It is vital to build up their position.'

'Many war criminals have rendered exemplary service to the Allies,' wrote British High Commissioner Sir Noel Charles in a despatch to the Foreign Office. And after the war, the British and US governments opposed any demands for extraditions.

boss William Colby directly approached MI6 chief Maurice Oldfield for collaboration. Later in the year, approaches were made to MI6 and MI5 liaison officers in Washington, to 'plant a seed in the British intelligence community' that Whitlam was a security risk.

It was in the same period that MI5 officers were engaged in a conspiracy against Harold Wilson's Labour government in Britain. James Angleton, the CIA red-hating fanatic who was linked to neo-fascist terrorism in Italy, was encouraging both conspiracies.

British intelligence may have had a direct hand in Kerr's decision — the Governor-General was a former intelligence officer himself. It is also known that the events in Australia were of particular interest to an up-and-coming British Tory, one Margaret Hilda Thatcher.

'It is a serious allegation,' Pilger said last week. 'We are saying that British intelligence involved itself in the affairs of another government — a friendly government. That sounds to me like illegality.'

Many Australian workers have drawn their own conclusions from 1975 about the British imperialist and monarchist connection. Workers in Britain must also draw conclusions, about the parliamentary 'democracy' which Labour leaders worship, while the state agencies are a law to themselves.

World brief

Strauss does business

WEST GERMAN right-wing politician Franz-Josef Strauss and South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha met Jonas Savimbi, leader of South African-backed Unita terrorists in Angola, at a secret base in the Kalahari desert last week.

Strauss also had talks with Chief Buthelezi, which he said were 'fruitful'. He told a chamber of commerce 'There is no doubt that good business is still being done in spite of tension in South Africa.'

Mine Disaster

THIRTY-FOUR miners were killed and another ten trapped underground after a fire in the Cuatro y Media coalmine, northern Mexico, on 26 January. The fire, blamed on an electrical fault, caused walls to cave in.

California gun law

WHEN they heard the dole office wanted to arm its investigators, California legislators had to debate it. That's how citizens heard that no less than 14 state departments have their own cops, more than 1,000 of them carrying guns.

They include the Mental Health Department (88 armed hospital personnel), the Department of Motor Vehicles which issues driving licences, and the Board of Dental Examiners.

Some of the armed bodies of men might be understandable, like the 16 toting gats for the California Horse Racing Board. The 280 'peace officers' employed by Alcoholic Beverage Control take us back to Prohibition days.

But if some bar owner is caught fixing his optic, or watering the beer, is that a job for the Alcoholic Beverage boys, or the gunslingers from Consumer Affairs? That's another of the arm-bearing departments.

If the thought of Employment Department investigators coming out armed to check your unemployment or disability claim wasn't enough, we hear someone in San Francisco was shot dead by Public Housing Police.

Federal departments like Internal Revenue, Immigration and Naturalisation Service, and US Supreme Court bailiffs, are all armed, as

well as those bodies you're more familiar with from TV, like Highway Patrol, the FBI, and US Marshalls.

All these law-enforcers, whether state or federal, are allowed to carry their weapons when off-duty. Even the US Post Office has its own armed cops, as have universities, national parks, and some railways (waiting for Butch Cassidy?).

But it's still those pistoleros from the Board of Dental Examiners that have caught our imagination. 'There are dentists out there who have criminal leanings,' an official said grimly. Sure, dentists' bills in California are pretty high, but...

How come Hollywood, and the companies who supply those TV car-chase cop series we get all the time, have not cottoned on to the possibilities in this one?

DEFEND N.H.S. THE

Battle-front NHS

INTERVIEWS AND COMMENT
BY JOHN REES

ON 3 February nurses and midwives will be on strike in London. They will be supported by other health service workers.

Nurses and midwives in the 'professional' organisations, the RCN and the RCM, will be faced with the prospect of victimisation if they strike; many are leaving these 'bosses unions' to join the ranks of NUPE or COHSE.

In the lead up to the strike a number of things have become very clear:

● Nurses actions across England and Scotland directly links the fight for pay with the survival of the NHS.

● The struggle within the NHS for greater funding has revealed that the Tory government want nothing less than its destruction and the development of a private insurance-based health scheme.

● The reality underlying Tory claims that the NHS is a bottomless pit for public money is that NHS

'overspending' is directly linked to the massive profits accrued by private drugs and surgical equipment companies. Multinationals are making a killing out of NHS contracts!

● Fowler's demands that NUPE gets 'its tanks off the streets', Tebbit's lies over nurses moonlighting jobs and Thatcher's hysteria over patients' care during the strikes are the demagogic front for an assault on health workers.

Nurses will be joining the ranks of the miners and printers who found themselves confronting the private

wealth and standing armies of our rulers.

A member of nursing management who is in NUPE told me that she thought that at least the police would not get heavy with nurses demonstrations.

Following the state's preparations for attacks on the anti-Alton bill lobby and police brutality on the gay rights demonstration, our warning to nurses and midwives is: prepare now! Any so-called traditional empathy from police toward the 'angels of mercy' will evaporate once you begin to challenge the Tory government on the streets of London.

As a COHSE steward said to me last week, 'London will burn'.

I spoke to Andrea Campbell and Jane Batey about these things. What follows reveals that the message from NHS workers to this government is one of defiance and optimism.



THE work of nurses and others in the health service has always won wide sympathy from the working class. They are responsible for bringing babies into the world and looking after the old, sick and infirm.

For years loyalty to their patients allowed Tory and Labour governments to impose low wages and appalling working conditions on them. Now times are changing. Like many others, nurses were inspired by the

heroic fight of the miners against the Thatcher government in 1984-1985. Now health workers are looking to the miners under their re-elected president Arthur Scargill to back them as they confront Thatcher



HEALTH WORKERS M

THROW TORIES OUT

Taking action has become the option

Go beyond 'stop the cuts'

JANE BATEY is a staff Midwife at the London Hospital (Tower Hamlets) with six years' service and four years' training behind her. She is a NUPE shop steward.

To understand our present situation we must look back over the last twelve months.

There is a chronic staffing problem nationally of between 10 and 15 per cent; in Tower Hamlets the vacancy rate is 1.6 higher than the national average. This leads to stress among the nurses and midwives.

I try to reflect what this stress means in negotiations with management — how staff shortage leads to very dangerous situations on the wards.

Unfortunately as a steward I can't go any further on my own. Links must be made with the national struggle over wages.

Wage settlements come about through submitting recommendations to the government from the Pay Review Body (PRB). Normally staff and management negotiate to prepare joint evidence on pay to the PRB.

The government is trying to force a flat rate of £1.20 per hour on special duty payments (SDP). This would mean a 10 to 12 per cent cut in nurses' take-home pay.

The question for nurses and midwives is: why is the government doing this?

They want to fund our pay award by attacking special duty payments and make a profit at our expense through an estimated £420 million saving on SDPs and the pay award is only £86 million!

Locally we have tried to inform people who, because they are working under stress and short staffed keeping the hospital in service, are very shocked at their treatment by the government and feel this is the final straw.

The strike at Manchester was about the same situation we are in here — about SDPs.

You see people do want to work in the NHS and not in the private sector. But that means they must now take action to publicise how low paid nurses and midwives are, how difficult recruitment is and what the link between stress, staff shortage, pay and recruitment is.

'Taking action' has become the choice.

That means first to publicise what's happening and second to affect the outcome of the substantial review of nurses' and midwives' pay.

The PRB makes its recommendations to the government in April. Action now strengthens the hand of our negotiators.

Once the recommendations have been made to Government, that's it. The government will then carry out those recommendations.

That's why we will be on strike on 3 February. In-

stead of taking action over a pay cut we are calling a strike for a substantial pay rise.

Remember a staff midwife on the top increment scale only gets £8,600; with London weighting and SDP that could come to just under £10,000 a year and that is after many years' service and training.

We are very hopeful that a 24 hour strike will take place here in Tower Hamlets.

In December 1987 over 100 nurses attended a protest meeting against local cuts totalling £1.5 million.

Two-thirds of those at that meeting were members of the RCN which has a no-strike clause, yet the majority voted for strike action in principal to defend NHS pay and conditions.

We are going to campaign around four points:

- No health cuts
- No cuts in nurses pay
- Complete funding of any pay awards by the government
- No pay awards for nurses and midwives at the expense of ancillary staff.

Andrea Cambell has worked in the health service, campaigned

on health issues and is a member of the Tower Hamlets District Health Authority as well as a leading member of the Bethnal Green and Stepney Labour Party

'THERE is a potential now for major struggles right across the health service.

Ancillary staff and nurses are fighting alongside each other on privatisation, pay and conditions whilst prominent people in the NHS are publicly criticising the government's actions.

For the first time all the different sections of people in the NHS are saying something has got to be done!

The strikes in Manchester were great! They have shown that industrial action is what really matters. We must take industrial action.

In London we have one of the hardest hit areas of the NHS. Yet people are taking action.

Tower Hamlets is just such an example. We've had two marches, called at short notice, which brought thousands onto the streets against the cuts threatened by the DHA.

These actions involved a whole cross section of health workers in the local area.

In London as a whole we've had massive vocal protests from nurses. In West London, at Riverside, workers have been taking

action against the deteriorating situation in the NHS.

There is a major need for joint action; the focus in the first week of February is the strike and rally on Wednesday 3 February.

This government can be made to bend under this pressure; they have been forced to put in extra money. Tower Hamlets recently got £800,000 as a direct result of action.'

There is a problem that union officials can diffuse the groundswell; that's why at local level we need joint shop stewards committees and a London organisation to co-ordinate these committees.

We have to organise on a district and regional basis for all staff and not leave it to the officials.

The big problem is that trade union officials have links with the Labour Party leadership in which the main thrust of activity is speech-making; those days have gone — we need action now, that's why strong joint shop stewards committees are needed.'

Traditionally its always been easier to get the community involved in health cuts campaigns.

We have to learn from history, the campaigns of the Health Emergency in the early 1980s are such an example.

We need to get workers to decide action and then call bigger joint meetings with the community to discuss how to implement that action.

In occupations the committee must be broader than just the workers involved, but the workers must lead with the decisions on action.

This work must be linked to demands that go beyond 'stop the cuts'. Firstly, we must get maximum information out on the NHS — the way the money is spent at national level.

'A major demand should be for opening the books. This question of finance is linked to the monopoly of the drugs companies, overspending in the NHS is connected directly with vast profits made by drugs companies from their market in the NHS.

Nationalise the drugs companies is a practical demand to stop overspending.

Workers control over their own services underpins all this and of course this demand is linked to the **creation of elected and accountable health authorities.**

Health authorities claim that their role is to ensure health provision for all. DHSS guidelines for the conduct of DHA business claim:

'The chair should be in the lead in inspiring all staff to aim at high standards of service to patients.'

However the guidelines go on to state that the DHA should:

'Aim at loyal implementation of the policies of the government of the day.'

The main thing is to get **co-ordinated industrial action.** If the government doesn't respond, step up the action.

Here in Tower Hamlets, UCATT and the TGWU should mobilise their members to fight cuts in services such as accident and emergency — given the number of building workers who suffer death and injury on London's biggest building sites in Docklands. This links in with the need to set up London-wide workers' committees.

The fight is now on — hospital workers should not be diverted from their tasks — all workers can assist in that struggle; we would urge all readers of Workers Press to contact their local Health Action groups and local health workers unions and volunteer for action.

Health workers themselves should not have to worry about proving they are 'carers', we all know and respect that.

On 3 February **all out** and let management and the Tories sort out and worry about emergency cover.

For too long health workers have been working on less than emergency cover in our hospitals. That's why they are taking strike action now.

We also want to publicise the effects of the Poll Tax on nurses.

1988 has begun with support for the strike and we hope to push this message home throughout the District Health Authority (DHA). Certainly this work has seen an increase in NUPE membership — all the night staff at Mile End hospital are now in NUPE.

On 3 February we will picket the hospital sites and demonstrate all the way to the DHSS in Whitehall. We want to meet Tony Newton, the Minister of Health.

To build up the campaign we have created informal liaison with other hospitals in London. Locally we have the Joint Staff Side Stewards Committee which represents all unions and a whole range of people in the DHA.

We want our demonstration to include many local people in the community to join the 331 NUPE nursing members in Tower Hamlets.

I'm certain that the Manchester nurses never asked permission to strike from any national leaders — and indeed such action helps push the negotiations along.

We want to strike a balance which shows leadership from us as NUPE stewards and yet reflects the feelings of the membership — I hope we get it right!

Vigilance — that must be the watchword for health workers: the government want an insurance-based health service and will use the protests of consultants to bring in such a system — we must be ever vigilant on this, and protect the NHS as envisaged in 1948 and go on to expand it.



JUST NOT FIGHT ALONE

1948 — 1988

The founding of the National Health Service

THE 1939-1945 war changed the face of health and social services in Britain.

The Tory horror of central state planning disappeared overnight as it became necessary to organise production, labour, supplies and services on a massive scale.

The unemployed and even the allegedly unemployed, physically and mentally disabled were all found jobs in the war industries.

In fear of an early bombing campaign two million children were 'evacuated' from the key industrial towns and ports into the countryside. Middle class rural residents were horrified at the poor condition of many children from the slums. Country doctors wrote in hundreds to urge that government make health and welfare provision a priority.

Meanwhile, in the towns a vast health service system was created, the Emergency Medical Service (EMS), in expectation of huge numbers of military and civilian casualties.

Buildings were commandeered, doctors conscripted and medical supplies made available to service an extra 150,000 beds on top of the existing 300,000 in local authority and voluntary (charity) institutions. In the process some 140,000 existing cancer and TB sufferers were bundled out, some within 24 hours, to make way for the expected influx.

In spite of the problems, major advances were made in medical science at this time, for example penicillin and the sulphonamide drugs were developed along with diphtheria immunisation and improvements in theatre technique.

Suddenly, it was recognised that millions of working days were lost through illness and accidents each year. Health education talks were broadcast by the Radio Doctor, Dr Charles Hill, and factories were supplied with their own medical units staffed by doctors and nurses.

CHILD

Similar staggering improvements were made in child care. Welfare offices were set up in every district to supply free vitamins and orange juice and creches were provided for the children of working mothers — a system previously condemned as a sinister soviet system.

Rationing was installed and diet became a main talking point, leading to the establishment of factory canteens and the hugely popular community restaurants.

Great concern was expressed by the new coalition government at the possible 'deterioration of the raw material of the race'. The new provision was therefore to be made 'with no question of ability to pay' (official circular). By 1945, one in three children were getting low cost or free school meals as against one in 40 in 1939. Some 40 years earlier suggestions that hungry children should be fed from public funds had met with a horrified outcry.

New prime minister Winston Churchill could say 'there is no finer investment

BY BERNARD FRANKS

for any country than putting milk in babies' — massive hypocrisy from an arch-Tory who had in the 1930s urged cuts in the dole and workers pay to the level where they could afford no milk at all.

Meanwhile mass x-ray was introduced and cash provided to expand maternity services, refused just six days before the outbreak of war. The hated 1930s means test was abolished and a new supplementary pension provided to cover millions of pensioners currently in poverty.

LIES

These highly popular measures anticipated the provisions of the 'Welfare State'. They also exposed the lies that had been told pre-war about the impossibility of improvement in difficult times.

The factor which initially turned the widespread concern for better conditions into actual policy was the disastrous military position in 1940. For Britain's rulers, the second world war was not at all a battle to save democracy from fascism as they publicly professed but a defence of the British Empire against its economic rivals, threatening to steal its markets and carve up its possessions.

Leon Trotsky pointed out that the imperialist democracies of Britain, France, Holland and Belgium 'rest on the enslavement of colonial peoples' while the United States 'rests on the seizure of the vast wealth of an entire continent' adding 'all the efforts of these 'democracies' are directed towards the preservation of their privileged position.'

The day following the fall of France the British cabinet made clear that it was prepared to promise anything to keep the working class working and fighting.

Labour's leader Clement Attlee said 'We are fighting a conservative war and our objects are purely negative. We must put forward a positive and revolutionary aim admitting that the old order has collapsed and asking people to fight for the new order.' (The Road to 1945, Paul Addison p121).

William Beveridge, a career bureaucrat, was asked to draw up plans for a post-war welfare system. He took the job reluctantly having no particular love for the working class, in fact wanting the job of conscripting and directing labour.

Beveridge defined five giants to conquer: 'squalor', 'disease', 'want', 'ignorance' and 'idleness' (the Church of England complained he had left out 'sin').

He planned himself to deal with 'want'.

He also made clear that he saw the significance of the work to Britain's ruling



Lord Beveridge

class. 'Each individual citizen is more likely to concentrate upon the war effort if he feels his government will be ready in time with plans for that better world' he wrote in his final report.'

BACK - TRACK

With the 'turn of the tide', notably the allied victories of El Alamein and Stalingrad, Churchill and the Cabinet began to back-track on the promises.

Great was the shock then when it was seen that the Beveridge Report and plans to found a national health service were universally acclaimed by civilians and the armed forces. A Gallup poll found that nine out of ten people and 80 per cent of the middle class specifically wanted the Beveridge Re-

port implemented immediately, not after the war.

The Cabinet tried desperately to downgrade the report and Churchill even tried to prevent the distribution of it to the armed forces.

Other Tories sought to divert demands for change. 'If you do not give the people social reform,' said the 'radical' Tory Quintin Hogg, 'they are going to give you social revolution.'

By-elections in which coalition candidates were being massively defeated by independent socialists proved the point.

The British Medical Association had similar thoughts when it offered to provide a plan for a new health structure. 'Those who plan first are more likely to influence the final form' said Charles Hill.

Similarly to welfare, the most radical proposals were forwarded when invasion was hourly expected, but thereafter were systematically watered down. At one stage a ministry policy document was produced advocating a 100 per cent cover (presumably no private practice); doctors to be salaried civil servants liable to be divested to areas of most need.

A shocked Consultants' lobby worked to revoke this and guarantee full rights of operation to both the private and the voluntary sector.

WATERED

Even the watered down version of 1944 was too much for Churchill who objected to its proposal for 36 per cent of its finances to come from taxes. He wanted no call whatsoever on funding towards the post-war reconstruction of capitalist industry.

However the BMA's own poll of doctors in 1944 found that 60 per cent favoured a 100 per cent free service and 62 per cent wanted it on a salaried basis.

Now that military victory was assured the government's great fear was of unrest growing, and the type of revolutionary situation evolving that appeared during and after World War One. Would there be a soviet revolution in Britain?

Their fears proved unwarranted. The Communist Party was not a revolutionary party of the Bolshevik type but a Stalinist party tied to the coat tails of the Russian bureaucracy. It now advocated that workers should participate in reconstructing British capitalism just as it

had urged them to defend it to the last during the war.

The Labour party again came to the rescue.

FOUNDED

Benefitting from the fact that it's backbenchers had backed the Beveridge Report and other minor reforms in the war, Labour swept to victory in the 1945 elections and in 1948 the National Health Service was founded.

Health minister Bevan nationalised the hospitals but caved-in to the consultants on the retention of private practice, including its operation within the public institutions themselves.

Demands that committees of workers have overall control of newly nationalised industries were rejected by Labour.

Also, the fact that insurance companies, drugs companies and equipment suppliers were not nationalised meant that these eventually came to feed off the new public utilities for their own guaranteed profits.

The seeds of erosion were actually built into that original structure and the process of decay set in motion when Labour itself began applying charges, as part of its commitment to funding a new military strategy aimed at the Soviet Union.

Today the battle cannot simply stop at 'fighting cuts' but must go on to seek those fundamental changes in society which ensure that the mass of produced wealth goes directly and solely to ensuring human wellbeing. Only in this way can schemes such as totally socialised medicine prove irrevocable.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Basic Principles of Marxism

Six Lectures at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC 1.

Friday, February 5, 1988, at 7.30.

The Crash of '88.

WHAT are the implications of the financial and economic crisis for the working class?

Thursday, February 11, 1988, at 7.30.

What is Revolution?

MARX understood the revolutionary transformation of society as expressing the conflict between the advance of the forces of production developed by human beings and the social relations between them.

Thursday, February 18, 1988, at 7.30.

What is Capitalism?

WHY does the social system under which the working class is exploited appear to some people to be in line with 'human nature'? How does this system operate, and how will it be destroyed?

Friday, February 26, 1988, at 7.30.

The State and Revolution

HOW does the state exercise power over the working class? Can that power be broken? What will take its place?

Friday, March 4, 1988, at 7.30.

The Russian Revolution, Stalinism and Trotskyism.

SEVENTY years ago, the Russian workers, led by the Bolsheviks, overthrew Tsarism and capitalism, and the world socialist revolution began. The rise of a bureaucracy within the Soviet state led to the betrayal of the revolution, but not its destruction.

Thursday, March 10, 1988, at 7.30.

The Fourth International Today.

FIFTY years ago, Trotsky led those who fought to continue the work to prepare the world revolution in the foundation of the Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution. After decades of crisis, the time has come for the re-founding of the FI.

READING:

Cliff Slaughter, *Marx and Marxism*

Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

Marx, *Wage Labour and Capital*

Lenin, *The State and Revolution*

Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*

Some celebration!



Part of the demonstration last Tuesday organised by the Aboriginal Anti-Bicentenary Solidarity Group, outside Australia House.

LAST WEEK in Australia saw the celebration of its 'discovery' by Captain Cook 200 years ago. There is a sizeable proportion of the population who maintain it was never lost.

When Britain was defeated in the American war of Independence, the new nation declined to have Britain's undesirables dumped there any longer and it became increasingly important to find somewhere else to dispose of the convicts who were bursting out of the jails and prison hulks. Cook founded Australia as a penal colony.

Another group of people had also stumbled across Australia, crossing a land bridge from Asia some 20,000 to 60,000 years before the British captain. These native aborigines, upon witnessing their first convict floggings burst into tears and 'in great distress' implored the soldiers to desist. They subsequently became more inured to 'civilisation'.

The aborigines were depicted as cowardly, lazy and uncivilised, and their spirited resistance to colonisation does not appear in any of the history taught to Australian school children. Pitched battles were fought involving hundreds of warriors in the areas around Sydney. However in the 200 years that the white man has lived in Australia, the aboriginal population unlike most other populations in the world has been drastically reduced.

Perhaps the only successfully completed genocide in the world was that of the Tasmanian aborigines, related to but distinct from the mainland tribes. The last of the Tasmanian people, Truganinni, was kidnapped by

whalers in girlhood to be sexually abused and used as a slave. This was a common fate for aboriginal women, collectively known as 'black velvet'. She was hauled into a whaling boat from a canoe, and her fiancé jumped into the sea and swam after her. As he grasped the gunnels of the boat the whalers chopped off both his hands with an axe. That was the last she ever saw of him.

The history of the colonist's encounters with the aborigines is one of almost unrelieved brutality. There was a tremendous clash between the ideologies of these different cultures, and the conquerors regarded the defeated as subhuman. The behaviour patterns and institutions necessitated by capitalism included competition, aggression, individualism, monogamy, and a worship of private property.

These qualities, which are regarded as something 'natural' or laid down for all time, either by divine decree or simply as part of an unchanging human nature, collided, often fatally, with aboriginal values of generosity, sharing, putting the welfare of the tribe before that of the individual, group marriage and lack of any conception of private ownership.

These values were crucial to their existence as hunter-gatherers in a system where the survival of the individual depended directly on the survival of the group as a whole. Qualities which were stigmatised by the settlers as weakness and laziness and which are sentimentalised in some quarters grew out of the material conditions in which they lived. As far as they were concerned, wandering sheep and cattle on land they had hunted from time immemorial were fair game. To the dourly grubbing ex-English farmer it was incomprehensible that they could not be recognised as 'his' property on 'his' land.

To quote Cliff Slaughter in the Newsletter of August 3 1957 when speaking of the discovery of a 'lost' tribe in Central Australia 'In referring to such peoples as 'primitive', it is customs and way of life that are under discussion. At one time it was thought, even by progressive thinkers like Morgan and Engels, that with higher levels of material culture went greater brain-power.

In point of fact however, there are no significant dif-

BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

ferences of ability between the racial groups in the world.

The culture of these hunting and food gathering people is called primitive because it is based on productive equipment and methods of a very elementary type... Historical chance caused the Australians to be stranded in a land mass with highly unfavourable geographical conditions which not only made excessively difficult the advance from food gathering to agriculture, but which were to isolate Australian society from

all the more advanced centres of civilisation.'

The treatment of aborigines by capitalist Australia has not become more civilised with the passing of 200 years. The statistics are manifold - aborigines are the most imprisoned people in the world, and have suffered excessive numbers of deaths in custody - now the subject of an inquiry. In Alice Springs 85 per cent of children appearing in custody have been beaten by the police, and aboriginal women have been raped in jails.

In Roebourne, a country town in Western Australia every black man, woman or child is arrested, on average, three times a year. In a similar country town in

Queensland it is four times a year.

Unemployment is six times the national average, 90 per cent live in poverty, and their rate of preventable diseases such as leprosy, trachoma and syphilis is amongst the highest in the world. Life expectancy is 20 years below whites.

Land is still being taken by force from aborigines. Desolate tracts handed over because they were thought to be useless have now been found to contain uranium. British and American companies have simply moved in and opened mines with no compensation. One company boasted that it was 'ready to take on the black fellas.'

Labour Prime Minister Bob Hawke, whose role in the CIA coup which ousted a Labour government in Australia has yet to be fully examined, has not yet come up with an answer to the question posed by the black citizens of Australia. 'Just what exactly is it that we are celebrating?' In Sydney on Australia Day 120,000 aborigines and their supporters demonstrated against their centuries of oppression and exploitation. Their demands for the land stolen from them by the multinationals must be met by the Australian Labour government, cash compensation must be given, and their living conditions must be brought up to the level of the rest of Australia.



A policeman with aboriginal prisoners in chains at Wyndham jail, Western Australia taken in 1902.

LETTERS

Please send your letters to Workers' Press, PO Box 745, London SW9 7QS. Letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board. Letters may be cut for reasons of space.

Cuts in local councils

FOR capitalism to prolong its existence, it has to make the working class pay for its crisis.

Thatcher's economics in no way can be reversed or even reformed. Cuts must and will occur if the organisations of the working class do not propose and fight for an alternative strategy which will harness production to need instead of profit.

Faced with such a situation, what have the organisations of the working class, the Labour Party and the unions done?

Clearly very little, and if they have done anything it is only selective strike action and local demonstrations and petitions.

What is clearly lacking for the workers movement as a whole is a strategy to fight Thatcher, despite the defeat of the miners and printers.

Any strategy developed which fails to acknowledge those setbacks and that under reformist leadership those struggles were led to defeat, cannot but lead future struggles along the same path.

Labour councillors, more than ever today, are posed with two alternatives, either to vote for the cuts, or vote against Thatcher's economic recipes. There is no room for a middle path.

'Left' Labour councillors who vote against the cuts do so in the belief that there can be an alternative economic strategy (within the framework of capitalism) and that the government if pressurised enough could change its economic strategy!

Workers in local councils all over England are faced directly with compulsory redundancies.

The officials of the Labour Party and trade unions address these issues broadly by saying a future Labour government will do something different.

We repeat this logic by saying only a revolutionary leadership will solve these problems, again in the future.

The duty of Trotskyists is surely to forge in practice (and not in words) the policy which the movement requires now, and not in the distant future, thus exposing in practice the policy of reformism, both 'left' and right.

We must challenge all the official representatives of the class to fight to get this government out, those who don't must make way for those who will.

All Labour councillors who do not fight the cuts should be forced to resign.

We should be demanding occupations of all services affected by the cuts. Council workers must control the councils and the fate of their jobs.

No to the strategy of isolated strikes. For an all-out strike of council workers!

Vangelis
North London WRP

Support for PLO

IN last weeks Workers Press, under the fraudulent headlines 'Hands Off The Palestinian People', Workers Press carried a statement from the 'Group of Opposition and Continuity of the Fourth International' (GOCQI) (as a well known Yorkshire comrade might say, 'oo the heck are they when they're at 'ome?')

I say fraudulent because whereas the headline might lead one to expect a ringing

call to the workers movement internationally to defend the Palestinians, all we got was a load of abuse against the body which has become synonymous with the Palestinian national identity and struggle, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

We are told that the youth who are fighting so heroically against the Israeli occupiers 'reject the counsels of despair and capitulation' of their political leadership in the PLO. Funny, I could have sworn I saw young people carrying portraits of Yasser Arafat, but perhaps these were faked TV films, and they were really carrying portraits of Trotsky? Leaving aside the odd logic (they have rejected the advice of their leadership, but it is still their leadership), could the GOCQI comrades enlighten us on what 'despair and capitulation' they are talking about?

ACCUSES

Again the article accuses the PLO of dragging the Palestinian people 'from one defeat to another'. What the PLO did wrong, or failed to do, we are not told. Maybe the 'Group of Opposition and Continuity etc' can point to some record of struggles its comrades have led and the glorious victories achieved so that the Palestinians to whom it proffers advice can make comparisons?

The statement says the Palestinian people must have their own state. This is what the PLO demands too. I know some people still insist it must be over the whole of Palestine, or not worth fighting for, but the trouble with the 'all or nothing' brigade is they deliver nothing. Anyway, the GOCQI statement ought to be a bit clearer on what it is calling for, if it accuses the PLO of 'capitulating'.

The statement refers to the betrayals of the Arab regimes (as though Palestinians need telling), mentioning specifically Egypt. But some of the most savage attacks on the Palestinian people came from the Soviet-backed 'progressive' regime in Damascus. Palestinians have learnt not to judge the bottle by the label.

The statement asserts that outside the independent mobilisation of the proletariat 'there can be no salvation'. Well, outside the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, which has affiliated trade unions, medical societies, students and women's groups, you won't find many Palestinians willing to mobilise. That's where the Palestinians are. But like the Zionists, with their 'Village Leagues', the GOCQI want to start somewhere else. A futile pursuit, sectarianism.

The statement claims 'the various leaderships and factions of the PLO have demonstrated their inability... etc.' I suppose that's a charge that can't be levelled at groups like the GOCQI, since they haven't demonstrated anything. You can't be accused of responsibility for defeats, or 'capitulations', when you've never led a struggle. As the statement honestly states, all they have is their banner.

An Arab comrade once remarked 'the trouble with "critical support" is when it turns out, too often, to be 99 per cent "criticism" and only one per cent support.'

If groups like the GOCQI want to proclaim they know better than the existing movements how to conduct a revolution, people are entitled to reply: 'don't tell me, show me!' Meantime, by all means let them make their criticisms. But with a little more fact, and argument, please, and less bloody arrogance.

Charlie Pottins

Reply on nationalism

TOM COWAN (Workers Press letters, 16 January) says my article 'Trotskyism and Nationalism' (2 January) 'missed the whole point of the criticism levelled against Trotsky's attitude toward national liberation struggles'.

The issue was not, he says, whether Trotsky supported national liberation struggles which he clearly did, but whether he recognised their 'significance', their 'role and mechanics, relative to the perspective of socialist revolution'.

Tom Cowan doesn't actually come out and criticise Trotsky, but his whole letter implies that Trotsky did not recognise the significance of national struggles.

He enthuses about 'the genius of Lenin', concluding that 'unlike other Marxists (including Trotsky, presumably) he (Lenin) both recognised and was able to utilise in practical revolutionary politics the transient revolutionary nature of these forces, and so was able both to build a vanguard party and lead a successful socialist revolution'.

My article didn't 'miss the point'. It tried to recount the conflicts over nationalism among socialists during the first world war.

This was important, for one thing, 'because Trotsky's remarks on the 1916 uprising have often been distorted and quoted selectively, by Stalinists, to prove that he ignored the national question'.

How can we discuss Trotsky's attitude to the national question, without dealing with such Stalinist falsifications?

How can we ignore the fact that Stalinists have attempted to iconise Lenin, and therefore made his works widely available, while suppressing Trotsky's equally extensive writings on the national question?

(On top of the material I mentioned in the article, there are his writings on 'The Balkan Wars', some items of correspondence with his Indo-Chinese, South African and Indian comrades, material on the Ukraine written at the end of his life, etc.)

Every Stalinist is working overtime to 'prove' Trotsky didn't recognise the significance of national movements. And Tom Cowan lectures us on the same theme, giving no examples to prove his point.

Does Tom Cowan also believe that Trotsky 'failed to recognise' the revolutionary role of the peasantry? He certainly implies it.

This is the miserable lie the Stalinists have been churning out for the last 60 years, which Trotsky answered in his book 'The Permanent Revolution'.

Judging by Trotsky's practice in the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, and attitude to national minorities when carrying out responsibilities in the Red Army, Soviet government and Comintern, it is clear that his grasp of the issue was just as practical and sensitive as Lenin's, while not identical.

Today the Stalinist bureaucracy can no longer portray Trotsky as a 'fascist agent'. They want to create a Trotsky who was a 'revolutionary' (this has been admitted in the official press in the USSR) — but was wrong on every political point, and finished up betraying the struggle. So we can't let Tom Cowan's half-baked suggestions about the 'practical' Lenin and the 'mistaken' Trotsky go unchallenged.

A few words on Rab Macdonald, who in the same letters column accuses Workers Press of turning to Scot-

land with 'infamous English arrogance', and/or 'transmitting the blind opposition of internationalism to what, in this case, is a progressive republican movement'.

I object. What does Rab Macdonald think of what Workers Press, or its supporters, have said or done about Caterpillar, Fords Dundee, the poll tax, the 'Scottish Assembly' discussion etc?

Ignoring anything we have said about these real struggles of Scottish workers, during which their 'aspirations' have been expressed in a class manner, he fires an empty shell by declaring we have ignored the 'deep-rooted national aspirations of the working class itself'.

Are we right to discuss these struggles as they are, or should we try to pretend, out of some perverse respect for nationalism, that they express the nationalist aspirations of 'us Scots' (what, bourgeois Scots included?)

For perfectly good historical reasons (which have not, it is true, been discussed in detail in Workers Press — least of all by Rab Macdonald) the situation in Scotland is not the same as in Ireland, where as well as manifestations of the class struggle such as strikes, demonstrations on health cuts etc, there is an occupying army of 16,000 fighting alongside a sectarian police force and loyalist murder gangs, against an embattled nationalist population defended by the IRA.

Were Scottish workers to enter such struggles against the British state, it would be the duty of the WRP members here not only to support them, but to be involved up to our necks.

(And to the extent that any manifestations of Scottish nationalist feelings are directed against the capitalist state — and not in support of it, as the Stalinists' campaigns for the 'Scottish people' are — we side with them; but we don't 'support' nationalism as a political philosophy, in Scotland, Ireland or anywhere else).

However, it is also our duty to try and estimate which forms we expect the struggle to take — an in doing so, only an idiot would try to deny the great differences between the way class and national conflicts have developed in Scotland and Ireland.

Simon Pirani
Glasgow WRP

Local govt issues

RECENT issues of Workers Press have drawn attention to Clause 28 (ex-Clause 27) of the Local Government Bill.

Both the report by Louise Cerovicki (Workers Press 2 January) and the later unsigned report (Workers Press 16 January) locate this attack on gay and lesbian rights and services in a wider context.

Louise sees this attack as 'part of the Tory attack on local authorities and their attempt to reduce them to little more than the administration of central government decisions'.

The unsigned report locates Clause 28 in the context of the Alton Bill and the Church's denunciation of gays.

The Labour Party's collusion on this issue is seen as part of a general reversal of equal opportunities policies on the part of a number of Labour councils.

However, it isn't clear why the attack on gay and lesbian rights should be seen as part of the attack on local councils.

The Tories could attack local authorities without attacking gay and lesbian rights and services.

Clause 28 is in essence part of another, deeper attack, of which the attack on local authorities may also be part.

Most likely Clause 28 comes as part of the attack on the local authorities because this is the easiest way to implement it.

The unsigned report notes that Clause 28 'coincides with' the Alton Bill and the Church's denunciation of gays.

But it does not indicate the connections between them.

The Alton Bill does more than attack women's abortion rights.

By seeking to prevent women controlling their own fertility, Alton is also affirming the traditional Christian belief that sex is for procreation and for procreation alone.

Like Clause 28, the Alton Bill is also an attack on the free expression of sexuality.

Both attacks coincide with a report on divorce by the Church of England entitled 'An Honourable Estate'.

Writing in the 'Times' (18 January), Clifford Longly states that the report affirms marriage to be 'a pure case of natural law'.

'Over against those who feel that the pattern of human sexual relationships is infinitely flexible, and every possible option is as worthy as any other, there is a deep instinct that knows otherwise, and insists that there is one way of doing things which is better than all the others. It suggests order, and it suggests design: and they in turn suggest a source of the order and an author of the design'.

In other words, heterosexual monogamy, probably subordinated to procreation, is natural and good; all other forms of sexuality are unnatural and inferior, and prejudice against those who deviate from this norm is part of the divine order.

The Church of England report, Clause 28 and the Alton Bill coincide with the Tory offensive against the Welfare State.

Their aim is to reinforce the bourgeois family.

Capitalism must continually produce and reproduce its workforce.

Traditionally it has been left to each individual working class family to reproduce itself.

With the rise of the welfare state the bourgeois state took upon itself a larger share of the burden of reproducing the workforce.

Of course, this did not, and probably could not, end the double oppression of women.

But it did relieve the working class family of a certain amount of responsibility for caring for the old, the young, the sick and the handicapped.

The workforce can be reproduced either by the family or by the state, or by some combination of the two.

To the extent that the bourgeois state relieves itself of the burden of reproducing the workforce, it must force the family to take an increasing share of the responsibility.

Hence the attack on the Welfare State must coincide with attempts to strengthen the family.

To do this it must also attack anything that challenges or threatens the family.

Thus it must attack sexual 'deviance' or at least any form of sexuality that deviates from procreative heterosexuality.

In this context it is relevant to note Herbert Marcuse's claim that: 'The societal organisation of the sex instinct taboos as perversions all its manifestations which do not serve to

prepare for the procreative function'. ('Eros and Civilisation' p149, 1955)

In so far as the 'perversions', he says, are characterised by their 'rejection of the Procreative sex act', they 'express rebellion against the subjection of sexuality under the order of procreation, and against the institutions that guarantee that order'. (ibid, p150)

Marcuse is not saying that all individuals that reject procreative heterosexuality are consciously rebelling against the existing order.

The claim is that to reject procreative heterosexuality is to threaten or challenge a social order that subordinates sexuality to procreation whether one does so consciously or not.

This is one reason why the attack on the Welfare State coincides with the attack on abortion rights, the attack on gays and lesbians and the Church of England report.

The reports on Clause 28 in Workers Press are correct to locate it in a wider context rather than seeing it in isolation from other developments.

But although Clause 28 takes the form of being part of the attack on local authorities, in essence it is part of a wider and deeper attack on the Welfare State.

David Gorman
Liverpool WRP

'Two camp' theories

AT the time of the Chinese revolution, social revolution was reduced by Stalin to anti-imperialist struggle. Stalin and Bukharin had already put forward the nationalistic thesis of 'socialism in one country'; the connection between these two discussions was very strong. After World War II, under cold war circumstances, Stalinism developed the position further.

His purpose became 'to force Washington to recognize the division into zones of influence within the framework of a world wide compromise guaranteeing bi-partite control of the world by the two superpowers.' (F Claudin, 'From Comintern to Cominform' part 2, Monthly Review Press, New York page 466)

In 1949, the Cominform was described by Stalin and Zhdanov, a Stalinist theoretician, as one side of the world divided into two camps. As far as their theories were concerned this meant: the imperialist and anti-democratic camp on the one hand and the anti-imperialist democratic camp on the other.

Since then the thesis of 'two worlds' or 'two camps' has become the basic political yardstick of Stalinist parties all over the world. Their conception of socialism in one country and their interpretations of 'independent countries' and 'national democratic revolution' have a connection with each other and the same ideological root.

The second version of the 'two camps' theory was formulated by Cuba, after the revolution. The foreign policies of Cuba launched the notion of the 'anti-imperialist front' of radical countries. Later on China also based itself on the 'anti-imperialist struggle' thesis shown 'as anti-imperialist block of Third World countries'.

The latest version of the 'two camps' theory was put forward by the Workers International League (LIT) — the thesis 'revolutionary front and counter revolutionary front' in the LIT manifesto.

On the other hand Nahuel

Personal Column

Peter Fryer

Stand by the nurses

THE future historian of these troubled times, I'd like to think, will date the beginning of the end for Thatcher from that incautious outburst in the Commons last week when she slagged off the nurses and other hospital workers.

'It is the patients they are hitting at', she screamed hysterically. 'And they are hitting at them deliberately.'

It's hard to imagine anything more calculated to strengthen the hospital workers' determination and to enhance patients' sympathy and support. Most patients know full well who it is that has been hitting at them, deliberately, for the past eight years.

There are few of us who don't owe something, and many of us owe a great deal, to the care and devotion of these ill-paid and long-suffering health workers.

It's easy to fall into sentimentality when writing on this theme, and that's the last thing the health workers want. That sort of thing is best left to Tory creeps like John Moore, the social services secretary, who waxed maudlin in the Commons about his mother's death from cancer and how well those 'Angels' had looked after her.

Sentimentality doesn't make a noise in the frying-pan.

But I have to say that when I recall the nurses and other workers who looked after me so patiently and well during a short stay in London's Whittington Hospital a couple of years ago, I think of them as if they had been, for however short a time, members of my own family.

And that, I'm sure, is how millions of people think of the hospital workers in general, the nurses in particular.

If Thatcher imagines we are going to desert our sisters and brothers in their struggle, she has a disagreeable shock coming to her!

All the indications are that there is massive public backing for the hospital workers, whose growing militancy and self-confidence have taken their own union bureaucrats completely by surprise.

I wrote of these as troubled times. They are likely to get more so. But they are also promising times.

Something new is in the air, when patients threaten to tie themselves to their beds to prevent the closure of their ward; when the government unprecedentedly capitulates before the first unprecedented local wave of nurses' strikes; when nurses in the traditionally no-strike Royal College of Nursing start leaving it for other unions — the Confederation of Health Service Employees and National Union of Public Employees — in order to go on strike.

The nurses, porters, and cleaners are not only fighting in their own interests; they're fighting on behalf of the rest of us, too. We can't afford to let them lose — and there's no doubt whatever that, with our support, they can win.

And a working class that rallies solidly behind the hospital workers is a working class strong enough to bring down this government and end at last the untold suffering it has caused.

Peeping Bill

TWO kinds of publication were inadvertently omitted from my list last week of the British Library's little-known, and quite inaccessible, collection of suppressed books.

One kind is printed confidential lists showing the credit status of various citizens: not of much interest, perhaps, except to biographers and historians.

The other kind is of much more general interest. It consists of police publications for general use. I don't know which of these the BL currently receives and trucks away, for the 'Police Journal'.

For some undisclosed reason the full series of the 'Police Journal', dating back to the 1920s, was desuppressed a few years ago. An entry duly appeared in the catalogue, and any reader can now send for the magazine.

To give you some idea of the riches this treasury of top coppers' thinking contains, here's a little gem from one of the earlier issues.

In an article on the entrapment of male homosexuals, Bill was instructed to make use for observation of the peepholes sometimes gouged by voyeurs in the partitions between public lavatory cubicles, — and was advised to enlarge with a penknife, if necessary, the diameters of such ready-made peepholes.

No doubt it was such blatant encouragement of unlawful action by police officers that led to this journal being withheld from public scrutiny for so long.

Precisely the same rationale was to be observed in last week's comment by the Master of the Rolls, Sir John Donaldson, that it was essential in the public interest for MI5 to break the law, and silly to say they were obliged to follow the letter of the law.

In my naive way I'd always thought it was a leading maxim of bourgeois law that, as one judge put it a couple of years ago, 'Be you never so high, the law is above you.'

Not, apparently, if you're in MI5 or the Vice Squad.

Scots in arms

READERS seriously interested in the his-

torical aspects of the national question in the British Isles should get hold of 'The Scottish Insurrection of 1820' by P. Berresford Ellis and Seumas Mac A' Ghobhainn (Gollancz, 1970).

This admirable volume is an eye-opener, particularly for the English reader (as indeed is Ellis's later 'A History of the Irish Working Class', Gollancz, 1972).

English historians, however 'progressive', have always played down the scale and significance of the April 1820 rising, a solidly working-class affair in which weavers played a foremost part under the banner: Scotland Free or a Desert.'

One of the Glasgow weavers prosecuted for high treason was Matthew Bogle, a 'man of colour', probably from the West Indies. I like to think he was a relative of Paul Bogle, the peasant smallholder and Baptist preacher who was to be one of the leaders of the savagely suppressed 1865 uprising in Jamaica, but I know of no evidence either way.

Matthew Bogle pleaded Not Guilty, and eventually the charge was dismissed on the request of the Lord Advocate. Discharging the prisoner, the Lord President of the Court of Session invited him to 'return to sobriety and honest industry'. Quite possibly he did, but his name vanishes from the records at this point.

Another prisoner cleared of high treason at the same time was the radical poet Alexander (Sand) Rodger, who wrote afterwards in his poem 'The Rising' these words that surely have a message for our own times:

The laws were suspended — the prisons were glugged Indictments preferred, and Juries enclosed But mark! In her own wicked efforts outwitted Corruption at once is defeated — exposed For truth must prevail over falsehood and error In spite of the Devil, Corruption and Spies Who down to their dens shall be driven in terror While man to his scale in creation will rise.

LETTERS

Moreno divided the definition of colonial struggle into two parts, as Leninist and Trotskyist, and said: 'the Trotskyist movement put aside for decades any other definition of anti-imperialist struggle, including the Leninist definition of independent countries'. (N. Moreno, *Are They Allies Of The Revolutionary Working Class? December 1986. Working Class Opposition*)

Now in edition 109 of Workers Press we see that Bill Hunter has attempted to exhibit a British version of the 'two camps' theory. He described the Gorbachev line as building a counter-revolutionary front with imperialism, but introduced many of the same definitions of the Soviet Union as the Maoist movement.

His position is covering up more and more questions about the Soviet Union, the evolution of degenerated Workers States, and their relationship with the world imperialist capitalist system.

Marx warned his supporters against the dangers of both normativism and the reification of theory. Reality cannot be described only at the level of ideology or categories isolated from practice. To make an analysis of ideology or an adjustment to political reality in concepts instead of analysing political history and putting forward revolutionary strategy and tactics is playing with concepts and catch words.

Erol Refik

A time and a place. . .

COMRADE Norah Wilde's letter (Workers Press, last week) raises some important

questions that must be answered if the WRP is to grow as a movement in the working class.

It is impossible to do this in one letter and I intend to take up all the points fully in a future issue of the paper.

Here I deal with a few of the points.

Norah Wilde criticises the Industrial Correspondent for not making clear our differences with Scargill at this 'most appropriate time' which she describes as 'his fight for re-election in the midst of furious opposition'.

Only a party dedicated to remaining forever isolated from the working class would adhere to such a formula whose logic is: the more furious the opposition of the capitalist state the more appropriate the time is to explain our differences.

What is being said is: 'if we state our differences, clarify in words the differences between us as Trotskyists and Scargill as a centrist, we will have done our duty as Trotskyists. We will remain pure and demonstrate that we are not 'opportunists' and will not adapt to centrists.

Our revolutionary consciences will be clear.

If your paper and party aren't engaged in the struggle then stating your differences won't have any effect anyhow. However, if you are engaged every day in a fight for every vote for Scargill, if you are down a pit arguing to win over dissenting miners, if you are aware how finely the forces are balanced, how crucial every vote is, the last thing you consider is emphasising your differences.

In this situation you correctly conclude that this is certainly not the appropriate time to express differences with the candidate you are urging the men to vote for. You conclude that the long

term interests of the working class are at this point best served by Scargill's election and you give not one crumb of comfort to the opposition.

In this way you create the conditions in which your differences will be taken seriously by miners who listen to you only when they respect you as a fighter.

We have surely learned the past lessons of the Solidarity controversy. In 1983 the Party was absolutely correct to raise the differences with Scargill on his opposition to Polish Solidarity.

The time and manner that these differences were raised resulted in a serious tactical blunder. By raising them at the 1983 TUC conference in the midst of a press attack on Scargill, it appeared to many miners that we were aiding that witch-hunt against him and gave the Stalinists the conditions to have our own paper witch-hunted. It divided us from thousands of miners at a most vital time.

Most important of all it actually prevented a real discussion on the question of Solidarity with these miners. This was only resolved in 1984 when the miners learned the nature of the Polish state through their own bitter experience.

The question of when and how we raise differences with trade union leaders, especially those who command the loyalty of the best and most advanced fighters, is a tactical question. The paramount consideration is how we raise the consciousness of the working class to a revolutionary consciousness, and train a revolutionary party.

Dave Temple, Chairman Workers Revolutionary Party

LISTINGS

Listings are published free by Workers Press for organisations within the Labour movement. Please send details of any function or event you want to advertise to arrive by mid-day Monday for publication the following Thursday.

'Glasnost' and Soviet national problems. JSG meeting with Stephen Shenfield, Sunday, 31 January, 8pm Friends' International Centre, Byng Place (off Torrington Place), WC1. (nearest tube Goodge St.)

BULLETIN OF THE IRISH HUNGER STRIKE COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE (BIRMINGHAM) Now available on subscription: £2 per year (3 issues incl. pp). From: Tioclaidh Ar La c/o IHSSC, PO Box 540, Sparkhill, Birmingham, Bill

CURRENT CONTROVERSIES IN EVOLUTION. A series of 10 lectures. Starting Thursday 14 January 7pm. £1 (includes light refreshments). Lecturer Mike Howgate. Venue: Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1.

PUERTO RICO SUPPORT COMMITTEE. Public meeting, Saturday, January 30th, 5pm. Latin America House, Priory house, Kingsgate place, London NW6.

FRANK STAGG' COMMEMORATION. Wakefield Prison Sunday, 7th February at 1.30pm.

VALENTINE'S EVE SOCIAL. Organised by Tower Hamlets Hackney and East London Workers' Revolutionary Party. Saturday February 13. From 8 o'clock. Venue, 169 Leytonstone Road, Stratford, E15. Adm. £2. Unwaged OAP £1. Proceeds for the special fund for international work.

JUMBLE SALE. Saturday 6 February 2pm. Bryant Street Church Hall, Bryant St, Stratford. E15. Refreshments, tombola. Tower Hamlets and East London WRP.

PUBLIC MEETING! Labour campaign for Lesbian and Gay rights. Monday 8 February 7.30 pm. Highfields Community Centre, Melbourne Road, Leicester. Meeting theme 'Lesbians and Gays fighting the backlash'. Further information contact Marie Critchley 0533 550946.

PALESTINE OCCUPATION — 1948 — 1967 — 1988. Public meeting organised by the Labour movement campaign for Palestine with speakers from the British and Palestinian labour movements. Monday 15 February 7.30 pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion square, London WC1.

RELEASE JAILED MINERS

SOUTH WALES

Harborough, Leicester.

DEAN HANCOCK:

Oakdale - Eight year sentence. Gartree Prison, nr Market Harborough, Leicester.

RUSSELL SHANKLAND: Taff Merthyr - Eight year sentence. Gartree Prison, Market

DURHAM

MICHAEL STEPHENSON: Wearmouth - Three year sentence from June 1986. RF8756 HM Prison Acklington, Morpeth, Northumbria.

REPUBLICAN PRISONERS OF WAR

LONG LARTIN

HM Prison Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, W11 5TZ

LIAM BAKER, 20-year sentence, 464984. JAMES BENNETT, 20-year sentence, 464989.

PETER JORDAN, 15-year sentence, H22338. EDDIE BUTLER, 15-year sentence, 338637.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM, 20-year sentence, 131877.

GERRY CUNNINGHAM, 20-year sentence, 132016.

JOHN MCCOMB, 17-year sentence, B51715.

HUGH DOHERTY, Life sentence, 338636. VINCE DONNELLY, Life sentence, 274064.

MAIDSTONE

HM Prison County Road, Maidstone, Kent

DONAL CRAIG, 4-year sentence, L40579.

PARKHURST

HM Prison Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX

PATRICK HACKETT, 20-year sentence, 342603.

PAUL NORNEY, Life sentence, 863532.

SEAN McSHANE, B75898.

TOMMY QUIGLEY, Life sentence 69204.

PETER SHERRY, Life sentence, B75880.

WAKEFIELD

HM Prison Love Lane, Wakefield, W Yorks. WF2 9AG

NATALINO VELLA, 15-year sentence, B71644.

NOEL GIBSON, Life sentence, 879225.

ALBANY

HM Prison Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS

MARTIN BRADY, Life sentence, 119087.

HARRY DUGGAN, Life sentence, 338638.

BILLY GRIMES, 10-year sentence, 78847.

SEAN KINSELLA, Life sentence, 758661.

GARTREE

HM Prison Gartree, Leicester Rd, Market Harborough, Leics, LE16 7RP

RONNIE McCARTNEY, Life sentence, 463799.

STEPHEN NORDONE, Life sentence 758663.

JOE O'CONNELL, Life sentence, 338635.

PATRICK McLAUGHLIN, 30-year sentence.

ROY WALSH, Life sentence, 119083.

FRANKLAND

HM Prison Finchale Ave, Brasside, Durham

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG, Life sentence, 119085

BRENDAN DOWD, Life sentence, 758662.

PAUL HOLMES, Life sentence, 119034.

CON McFADDEN, 20-year sentence, 130662.

MICHAEL J McKENNEY, 16-year sentence, L46486.

EDDIE O'NEILL, 20-year sentence, 135722.

LEICESTER

HM Prison Welford Rd, Leicester, LE2 7AJ

HAM KAVANAGH, Life sentence, 1888.

GERARD DONNELL, Life sentence, B75882.

BRIAN KEENAN, 21-year sentence, B26380.

PATRICK McGEE, Life sentence, B75881.

DURHAM

HM Prison Durham, Old Elvert Street, Durham.

MARTINA ANDERSON, Life sentence, D25134.

ELLA O'DWYER, Life sentence, D25135.

REMAND PRISONERS: BRIXTON

HM Prison, Jebb Avenue, Brixton, London SW2 5XF.

LIAM MCCOTTER, LB83693

PATRICK McLAUGHLIN, LB83694.

LIAM QUINN, 49930

INNOCENT MEN AND WOMEN FRAMED BY THE BRITISH POLICE:

CAROLE RICHARDSON, 290719. HM Prison Styal, Wilmsholw, Cheshire

PATRICK ARMSTRONG, HM Prison Gartree.

G. (DANNY) McNAMEE, 25-year sentence. HM-Prison, Parkhurst

PATRICK McLAUGHLIN, 30-year sentence. HM Prison, Gartree

GERARD CONLON, 462779. HM Prison Long Lartin.

PAUL HILL, 462778. HM Prison Long Lartin.

JUDITH WARD, HM Prison Durham.

HUGH CALLAGHAN, 509499. HM Prison, Wornwood Scrubs.

JOHN WALKER, 509494. HM Prison, Wornwood Scrubs.

BILLY POWER, 509498. HM Prison, Wornwood Scrubs.

GERARD HUNTER, 509495. HM Prison, Wornwood Scrubs.

RICHARD McIKENNY, 509497. HM Prison, Wornwood Scrubs.

PADDY HILL, 509496. HM Prison, Wornwood Scrubs.

They are all serving life and in the case of Carole Richardson, indefinite detention.

We thank An Cumann Cabhrach, British section, for supplying and updating this information.

ROBSON'S CHOICE



Marcelle Proust, Sunday

On **Saturday**, at 2.10p.m. (BBC2), the 1952 musical **Singing in the Rain**. At 7.55p.m. (BBC2), **The Human Voice** features the black American soprano Jessye Norman. At 9.10p.m. (BBC2), **Tutti Frutti**. At 10.10p.m. (Radio 3), **Camden Jazz Festival**. Also at 10.10p.m. (BBC2), Lino Ventura and Simone Signoret in Jean-Pierre Melville's film **The Army in the Shadows**. At 11.15p.m. (ITV), the film **Suddenly Last Summer** based on the play by Tennessee Williams'.

On **Sunday**, at 7.35a.m. (Radio 3), **Piano Concerto No.3 in Schnabel's Beethoven Concertos**. At

1.30p.m. (C4), Alban Berg's powerful opera **Wozzeck**. At 1.45p.m. (Radio 3), Donizetti's opera in two acts, **L'elisir d'amore**. At 5.05p.m. (BBC2), arts Review. At 7.15p.m. (BBC2), part four of **Eyes on the Prize**, an account of the Civil Rights movement in the US. At 8.45p.m. (C4), **Ten Great Writers** features Marcel Proust's **Remembrance of Things Past**. At 9.50p.m. (C4), Truffaut's charming short film **Les Mistons**. At 10p.m. (BBC2), **Stanley**, a film based on controversial artist Stanley Spencer. At 10.30p.m. (ITV), **The South Bank Show**.

On **Monday**, at 12.25p.m. (Radio 4), part-two of Raymond Chandler's **The Lady in the Lake**. At 6p.m. (BBC2), an RKO movie made in 1936, **A Woman Rebels**. Also at 6p.m. (C4), **Information Technology** looks at fibre optics. At 8.10p.m. (BBC2), **Horizon** makes the point that in Britain today 'Death has a class bias'. It investigates the theories behind the shocking statistics in **Death of the Working Classes**. At 8.15p.m. (Radio 4), August Strindberg's **The Father**, starring Peggy Ashcroft and the late Trevor Howard. At 9.30p.m. (BBC1), **Panorama** looks at the

crisis gripping the National Health Service. At 10.55p.m. (C4), beginning a short season of Arab films, **Alyam Alyam**.

On **Tuesday**, at 11a.m. (Radio 3), **Music for Two Guitars**. At 12.25p.m. (Radio 4), part-four of **The Spy Who Came in from the Cold**. At 3.30p.m. (Radio 3), music for cello

played by **Jacqueline du Pre**. At 9.30p.m. (BBC1), **Normal Service**, a play by John Byrne, the author of **Tutti Frutti**.

On **Wednesday**, at 11a.m. (Radio 4), part-three of **The Year of Dreams**, a review of the year 1968. At 5p.m. (BBC2), **Charlie Chaplin in The Cure**. At 6.30p.m. (Radio 3), **Bach's Suite in**

G minor in **Music for Guitar**. At 8.10p.m. (BBC2), **Timewatch** looks back at ways in which the state has exerted political and financial control over the mass media. At 10.30p.m. (C4), part-two of **Porterhouse Blue**. At 10.20p.m. (BBC2), **Harrison Birtwistle's Endless Parade**.

On **Thursday**, at 2p.m. (Radio 4), Rossini's opera in two acts, **Il Turco in Italia**. At 8.30p.m. (BBC2), a unique glimpse of North Korea courtesy of the intrepid cameraman Erik Durschmied. At 9.30p.m. (C4), the film **Another Country**, inspired by the Burgess and MacLean defections, written by Julian Mitchell.

On **Friday**, at 6.30p.m. (Radio 3), **The World on a String**, with **Stephane Grappeli**. At 9p.m. (BBC2), **Arena** presents **The Emperor**, by Ryszard Kapuscinski, based on Haile Selassie's final days as ruler of Ethiopia. At 10p.m. (Radio 3), **Andre Gide's modern satyr Prometheus Mismatched**. At 12.10p.m. (C4), **Claude Chabrol's film Poulet au Vinaigre**.



'Another Country', Thursday

Tom Scott Robson

IN THE absence of any solid reason to be optimistic about the economy in 1988 the Reagan administration clutched at the November trade figures published 15 January to claim that the situation was improving.

In fact, while the deficit on merchandise trade was down to 'only' \$13.2 billion for the month the figure for the whole of 1987 is likely to be up on last year. The president's claim that the economy is in good shape was made, ironically enough when he was off for a medical check-up.

A check up of the economy shows little basis for optimism. In fact, in the aftermath of the stock market collapse of 19 October the denizens of Wall Street, like administration officials, looking for a ray of hope, gave the trade figures exaggerated importance. Experts not in a state of psychological jitters point out that little can be concluded from one month's figures.

Temporary factors may have checked imports, while the weak dollar, although assisting exports, did so only through squeezing profit margins. The fact that Wall Street rose sharply on the news and that the dollar also recovered some of the ground it had lost in recent weeks was a pathological expression of the uncertainty which prevails in capitalist circles since the crash.

BASIS

There is no rational basis for such an interpretation of the trade figures. Neither the administration nor the market have offered any grounds for the restoration of confidence. The view in foreign markets remains that it will fall further. The claim that a lower dollar will choke off imports sufficiently to bring the trade deficit down significantly has few takers abroad. The currencies of some of the 'newly industrialised countries' which send cheap exports to the US are tied to the dollar.

Japanese firms are cutting costs and may be willing to accept lower profit margins to hold their place in the US market. On the other hand there are only limited fields in which US exports can be competitive on the world market. Many industries which might have

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BY GEORGE LORMIN



been able to contribute to the export drive have been closed down in recent years and are not likely to be re-opened.

Some bourgeois economists are saying that the dollar will therefore have to go much lower both to reduce the trade deficit and to bring down the volume of external

debt, which now makes the US (on some calculations) the world's largest debtor country. Unless this is done, they admit, a serious depression both for the US and for the world economy within the next two

The ostrich-like attitude of the Reaganites reflects the total bankruptcy of their policies. The claim that the economy could be revived and made more competitive by tax cuts and balancing the budget proved to be a mirage. The much-vaunted expansion of the Reagan years has only been made possible by the piling up of a huge volume of debt — by consumers, business and the government. There are already signs that consumer spending is flagging for lack of further credit. The rich used their tax concessions to consume more extravagantly and to speculate on the stock market, thus contributing to the bull market which collapsed on 19 October last.

Business has been increasingly focused on mergers, take-overs and acquisitions, bringing huge paper gains while investment in industrial plant and equipment has been neglected. This helps to explain the huge import penetration of foreign firms in recent years, while many American plants have closed down and the big corporations have shifted their manufacturing facilities to low-wage countries. This has been the major cause of the yawning balance of trade deficit.

Meanwhile, instead of balancing the budget, the Reagan administration has watched the deficit balloon to unprecedented size, to the dismay of foreigners. The increase in government spending has consisted to a large extent of big contracts to the giant corporations which form part of the sinister military-industrial complex whose activities were in part brought to light by the Iran-Contra affair last year.

PARASITIC

What is often overlooked is the extent to which US capitalism is kept going by parasitic activities which, in turn, ensure markets for foreign industry. The obvious example is Japan which for years has run up an enormous trade surplus with the United States. Without this outlet the Japanese economy would have faced a tremendous overproduction crisis. Many of the dollars acquired by Japanese by the sale of cars, cameras, electronic equipment and the like have been accumulated in the United States in the shape of stocks and bonds, including government securities, real estate and direct investments in banks and branch plants. The Japanese are now left holding vast sums in depreciated dollars while exports to the US become increasingly expensive.

The Japanese are caught in a web of contradictions which they can do little about. While calling for a reduction in the budget deficit they overlook the fact that without it the US would probably be in a depression and thus able to buy fewer Japanese goods. For the Japanese to stop lending to the US would be just as disastrous as being unable to sell as many goods in the American market — which is what will happen if the dollar continues to fall in relation to the yen. The apparent strength of the Japanese economy conceals serious weaknesses. It is obvious that Washington will try to exploit those weaknesses, forcing the Japanese to make concessions to the advantage of US capital.

All these questions should be seen in relation to the ever-increasing interdependence of the capitalist countries. Present-day contradictions play themselves out on an international scale. More about that in a future article.

NHS: THATCHER'S WATERLOO?

AS THE conservatives prepare to give huge tax handouts to the rich, thousands of health workers are taking industrial action to defend the NHS against Tory plans to undermine and destroy it.

They have demanded a halt to the destruction of misery-ending, life-saving services millions use each year.

Consultants, cleaners, professors, doctors, ambulance workers and community health councils have all warned about the nature of the crisis.

Nurses are realising that the real danger to patients doesn't come from temporary loss of cover while they go on strike, but when staff are forced to leave, medical supplies dry up and hospitals are shut down and given away to property speculators.

The communities from which the patients come are 100 per cent behind the nurses' action, and have in many instances been ahead of them.

Vast marches, lobbies and demonstrations have been held by local trade unionists, parents, pupils, students, tenants, pensioners and ethnic, women's and other community groups to keep open wards, accident units and hospitals.

The word from the Thatcher government is always the same, whether it be to pensioners waiting years for hip replacements, or six week old hole-in-the-heart babies queueing for operations. If you want to get seen, go private.

Meanwhile any form of

BY BERNARD FRANKS

private undertaking is encouraged in the NHS — the use of outside contractors, employment of agency nurses on extra duties rather than existing staff (£64 million was spent on this last year alone) or paying private hospitals to treat NHS patients (100,000 cases in 1987).

Debt

As for 'efficiency savings' and 'cost cutting exercises' these are no more than systems for cutting provision further and for piling increased work and responsibility on staff for no extra pay.

In fact many health authorities have been 'economising' for years and have pared to the bone but are still millions of pounds in debt: Paddington to the tune of £3.5 million, West Lambeth £2.5 million, Waltham Forest £2 million, Cambridge £1.6 million.



Meanwhile similar cuts in local authority services ensure a parallel destruction of the allegedly alternative 'community care' which is supposed to cover for the emptying and closure of long-stay hospitals and the early discharge of acute patients.

In practice the true home-carers, mainly female relatives of patients, are in despair and are near mental collapse from lack of back-up services.

Those without families are

ripped off by unscrupulous hoteliers charging huge sums for board and lodging.

A new crisis is imminent as some of the most severely mentally ill and mentally handicapped people are to be ejected. Closure of psychotherapy units will be a savage blow to disturbed adults and children as well as their relatives.

The truth is, hospitals are part of the community, not an alternative to it, as a few minutes spent in any out-patients visiting area will show.

The only other 'alternative', private health care, is proving a terrible trap even for the better-off.

Unlike national insurance, where contributions end on retirement, private cover ends when the premiums stop.

Old age — the time of most illness — is a period private firms least want to know about. On the other hand a cash transaction to achieve quick relief from an agony of worry and pain can turn into a nightmare of debt as a fixed-price operation meets with 'unforeseen complications'.

Pay
Nurses pay is not a separate issue from the defence of the health service. Low pay is a key factor in undermining provision.

Staff in the big cities, who are under enormous stress at work simply cannot house themselves or live properly on present NHS wages.

A third-year student nurse gets £5,170, a nursing assistant a maximum of £5,855 after six years, an enrolled nurse £7,750 after six years of qualifying experience.

According to the low pay unit, 40 per cent of nurses take home less than its £32.27 a week minimum threshold.

Violent

The police start on the pay that staff nurses and midwives receive after eight years!

Porters, domestic staff, clerical workers, medical laboratory technicians and other support staff (radiographers, physiotherapists) can tell the same story.

Thatcher's violent and hysterical outburst in parliament to the effect that nurses are deliberately endangering patients to get a pay rise, should speak volumes about the real face of Toryism.

No wonder morale is collapsing, as trained nurses leave at the rate of 30,000 a year and one in five of those remaining has a second job — condemned by the noxious Tebbit whose Tory mates all derive huge incomes from multiple directorships.

Early

Demoralisation in the service benefits the Tory destabilisation plan, for it means run-down takes place through 'natural wastage' rather than the more expensive redundancy or early retirement.

Most city hospitals are on the verge of disaster because of staff losses. In London they are 25 per cent down — 50 per cent in some intensive care units — as young people with the necessary qualifications look instead for jobs in banking and insurance.

The Pay Review Body's plan to replace special duty payments with a flat rate of £1.20 per hour (to 'save' the NHS £458 million a year) was withdrawn hurriedly in face of the Manchester nurses' strike. However, the proposal has not gone away and may reappear in a later pay package.

Similarly, the plan to scrap 'lead' payments for work with mentally disturbed and elderly patients has not disappeared.

The Manchester strike shows that it is action by workers, not the number of MPs who walk through a lobby, that is decisive.

The Tories are not pleading poverty, they are currently not short of cash or ways of raising more. They have sold off nationalised industries and are raking in money from tax on profits (currently 15 per cent up) from ruthlessly rationalised and depopulated industries — public and private. There is also increased cash from workers' pay (up by an average of eight per cent last year in industry in spite of Tory opposition) and an increased VAT total from rising prices.

The Tories, as British capitalism's managing directorate, have decided to privatise all public services and put provision out to the market place.

Their primary concern is to set aside enough funds to give £3 billion's worth of tax concessions to their yuppie and shareholding supporters who lost out on the stock

market crash.

However, whether the government is awash with cash or totally bankrupt is irrelevant. Free health provision for all, to the highest level attainable, is a basic right which must be defended unconditionally.

Any government which cannot or will not protect this right must be driven out.

The NHS and the rest of the welfare services were established in their present form in the crisis conditions of wartime and post-war Britain, arising out of the demands of the great majority of the population.

True, a ruling class having to make concessions saw welfare rights as a lesser evil — a diversion from the real question of the establishment of a workers' state in Britain.

A Labour government not only saved the day for British capitalism, but took only incomplete measures to ensure the security of the reforms it was implementing. Thus workers' control of the newly nationalised industries and services was actively opposed, while nationalisation of all major drug, equipment and many suppliers (banks, insurance companies) was rejected.

Current

The current action by nurses in particular is vital for sorting out the issues of the necessity of strike action — a process already gone through by many other health workers previously.

NHS workers must not be left to fight alone. Their leaders must not be allowed to ditch the working class and middle class support which has already shown itself in hundreds of campaigns.

The union leaders — and above all the TUC — must be forced to co-ordinate the local struggles and lead a national fight against the Tories.

To date we have heard only of a 'proposal' by union leaders to go cap-in-hand to Thatcher for more money and Labour's health spokesman, Robin Cook, condemning the nurses action.

Cook stands in direct opposition to a general mood which, on matters of health, is approaching that which originally brought the NHS into being, and which will just as easily break any government which threatens to destroy it.



STATEMENT BY THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

BLOODY SUNDAY REMEMBERED

BLOODY SUNDAY, 1972, was the date of the slaughter of 14 innocent Irish people, but not only that — it was the revenge of British imperialism on a community that challenged its rule.

The struggle which began in 1968 for civil rights — equality of housing and employment opportunities for Catholics — rapidly became a struggle against the sectarian six county state itself, which could not concede these demands.

Intimidation by loyalist gangs and the sectarian Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) led to the organised defence of the Catholic Bogside and Creggan areas of Derry, and — to varying extents as the conflicts developed — the exclusion of state forces from this area, 'Free Derry'.

As attacks on Catholic communities throughout

the six counties intensified during 1969, recruits streamed into the IRA (which had been virtually dormant since 1962). The refusal of weapons to defend the embattled communities, by the Stalinist-dominated leadership of that time, was a central issue in the IRA split between Officials and Provisionals in December 1969.

The brutal methods of the British army, and in August 1971, internment — the mass, indiscriminate jailings which the imperialists hoped would terrorise nationalist areas — only renewed determination. The march down Rossville Street which ended in the state-planned massacre of 14 unarmed civilians on 30 January 1972, was one of a series, called by Republican civil rights groups in defiance of a ban on all demonstrations. It was not until six months later that the British felt confident enough to mount 'Operation Motorman',

which finally destroyed 'Free Derry' and other no-go areas.

Causes

WE CALL on all our readers to join the march commemorating 'Bloody Sunday' this weekend. But this would be an idle gesture if we did not think about the causes of the momentous challenges to imperialist rule in the early 1970s, and their implications for today.

Firstly, these were working class struggles, for basic democratic demands that capitalism could not give; they followed history's biggest general strike in France in 1968, and coincided with the British workers' struggles which led to the bringing down of the 1974 Heath Tory government; they involved unprecedented resistance to the state forces.

Secondly, they exposed the mortal weaknesses of British imperialism in decline, which — unable and unwilling to satisfy the civil rights campaign's most basic demands — was compelled to support the blatantly sectarian Unionist leaders with ferocious state violence.

In the years prior to the civil rights struggles, the Unionist prime minister of the six county estate, Terence O'Neill, had tried desperately to expand the economy, which was as parasitic as that of its imperialist master but pathetically smaller. The resulting increase in jobs for Protestants meant more blatant than ever religious discrimination. Derry's fast-growing young population felt it hardest.

All this was the inevitable left-overs of the 1922 compromise between British imperialists and Irish capitalists to partition Ireland, deepen the division in the working class, and forestall the threat of workers' revolutionary struggles. Britain's 'Irish problem' — which became an increasingly 'working class problem' with Ireland's

IRELAND

BLOODY SUNDAY



Mourners at funeral of one of the Derry 13

industrialisation — thus came home to roost.

Torture

TODAY, when many 'lefts' and Communist Party 'new realists' are telling us how Thatcher (i.e. British imperialism) is strong and unbeatable, these contradictions have not gone away, but intensified.

In the 16 years since Bloody Sunday, the state under both Labour and Tory governments has used torture, internment, summary execution and frame up trials to try to defeat the nationalists of the six counties. The military resistance of the IRA — the courage and defiance of which cannot be explained outside the class issues mentioned above — has proved an impossible enemy to destroy. The cooperation of all Labour leaders with the dictatorial and barbaric occupation of the six counties is their worst and most bloody crime against the working class.

The incarceration of more than 1,000 prisoners of war, far from breaking the spirit of the Republican movement, has hardened it.

It is not only courageous nationalist defiance which presents British imperialism with an insoluble problem. It

is the fact that unemployment (which stands today at 19 per cent, more than double what it was on Bloody Sunday), poor living standards, and state discrimination, are as bad as ever. Major working class struggles — which are already erupting in the 26 counties with the gigantic movement against spending cuts — must come in the north too.

We say to Protestants workers in the north: capitalism has no future for the working class in Britain or Ireland.

The army is building a new HQ on the Irish border. But this will no more provide protection against the economic and political factors which make Ireland British imperialism's Achilles heel, than a British helicopter's armour could shield its occupants from the Libyan missiles that the Tory press now claim are being sent to the IRA.

Responsibilities

THE IRISH struggle imposes great responsibilities on the Workers Revolutionary Party, and all socialists in Britain — the oppressor nation.

Every Party member and supporter is obliged to familiarise themselves with the contradictions in which British imperialism is caught by its oldest

colony. There is no better example of the impact of the world economic crisis on imperialism today. History will give no second chances to British socialists who do not take account of this.

On a practical level, we can best commemorate imperialism's 'Bloody Sunday' victims by campaigning within the working class movement against British occupation of the six counties.

Working as closely as possible with Irish immigrant organisations and others, we must take up the fight in the unions and Labour Party against the pro-imperialist leaders who have so much Irish blood on their hands. Resolutions on strip searching, the prevention of terrorism act, religious discrimination, and other issues, must be fought for — as part of a campaign for total British withdrawal from Ireland.

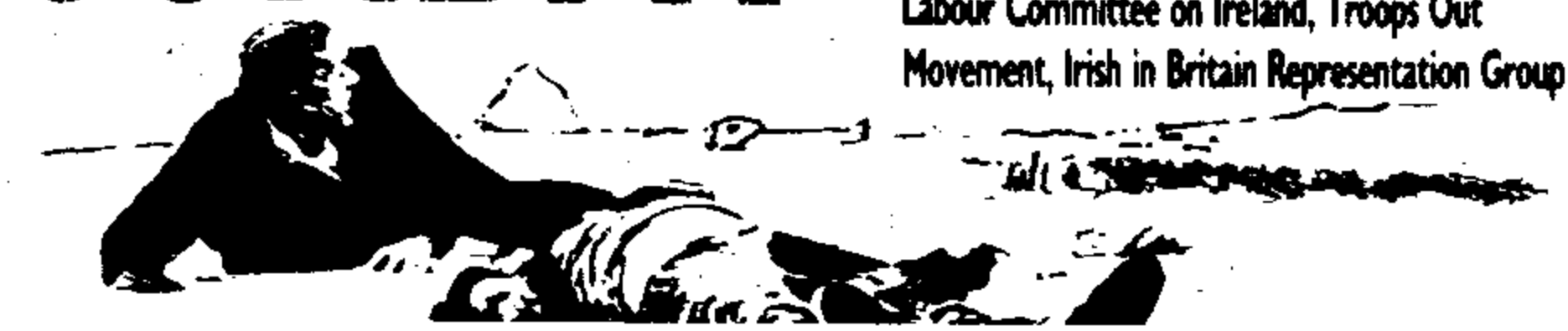
One of our central priorities must be the defence of Republican prisoners of war. Subject to repeated attempts by both British and Irish governments to special intimidation, denied rights such as repatriation to a jail in Ireland, and denied help by such bourgeois agencies of 'conscience' as Amnesty International, the working class must consider them our prisoners.

SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY

**DEMONSTRATE
FOR BRITISH
WITHDRAWAL**

**LONDON
SATURDAY
30 JANUARY**

Labour Committee on Ireland, Troops Out
Movement, Irish in Britain Representation Group



● ASSEMBLE 12.30p.m. Whittington Park (nr Archway tube)